

**EXPANDING THE EVANGELISTIC BOUNDARIES OF CHRISTIAN  
EDUCATION TO REACH MILLENNIALS IN THE GREATER FAITH  
BAPTIST CHURCH, BRONX, N.Y.**

A professional project submitted to the Theological School  
of Drew University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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## **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

1. Surveys
2. Evaluations

## INTRODUCTION

“Church leaders and pastors are to go into the community, getting to know and building relationships with the unchurched people.”<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the project is to show hospitality and openness to church growth by working alongside of a specific focus group of millennials who will engage our existing ministerial staff at The Greater Faith Baptist Church (“Greater Faith”) and the Lay Advisory Committee (“LAC”). The goals of engagement are a sustained, planned, and facilitated dialogue over a period of four weeks that incorporates listening, learning, and developing a relationship with the focus group. The purpose of the focus group is to enlighten Greater Faith in discovering the many ways millennials can assist us with church growth by having critical and reflective conversations with them about the empty pews within our ministry context. We want them to help us understand what can be done to reach this specific group and invite them to become a part of our church community in this location. Millennials will be using their own narratives in our evangelistic thrusts to reach the unchurched. It is our goal to listen to the stories of those who are unchurched and help them come to Jesus Christ without judgment on our part. In order to be most effective in reaching our goal, Greater Faith will work hand in hand with the LAC and the focus group in our neighborhoods. This is a very nontraditional way to expand church growth in that the very people we seek to attract have made a commitment to partner with us in a more constructive and purposeful way. The focus group can ascertain the information from the unchurched that will help us get to know, build, and prepare our

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls - Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN 2002) 17.

church to minister to those who are unchurched. This is the initial stage to a wider evangelistic effort, which will come after the focus group meetings and themes. This broader evangelistic effort is not a part of this project. However, to be clear, this project charts the discovery of what Greater Faith is called to in relationship with the focus group and others like them within our neighborhood.

One of our primary objectives is to listen to what the members of this particular group have to say about God, the church, and our seeming inability to attract them to Greater Faith without superimposing our thoughts over theirs. The focus group will be comprised of 6 to 8 people between the ages of 18-35 who are a part of our community, as well as a few leaders of Greater Faith. The goal is to develop a series of questions, which allow the focus group to share their hopes, dreams, views, and understanding of faith with us. In this sacred meeting space, there will be a “no judgment zone.” In other words, we will all share our views, but try to understand, listen to, engage, and allow space for their expressions of what church, God, community and faith really mean to them without judgment. In so doing, we hope to establish a relationship of mutual trust and acceptance, which aids church growth at Greater Faith. Those asked to be in the focus group are young adults from within the local neighborhood who genuinely want to become a part of a larger community of faith. In order to achieve this goal, we must expand our evangelistic boundaries to think outside of the box. It is clear that we must develop fresh methods to connect with millennials within our ministry context. Our hope is to transform Greater Faith, make new disciples, and stimulate church growth. In charting our journey with our project, this paper will consist of 5 chapters. Chapter 1 will focus on my views about the church, leadership, and transparency concerning our



inability to reach millennials. Chapter 2 will detail the views of my son, Joshua (“Josh”), who is a millennial. It will also outline some of the views of the focus group and LAC as it relates to how we can come together to reach the unchurched. Chapter 3 will highlight our theological reflections. Chapter 4 highlights the four areas of concern for this project. Finally, Chapter 5 will detail the project, the surveys conducted, and conclusions for our future.

## CHAPTER 1

### MY INTERNAL GRIEF<sup>1</sup>

“I had become their pastor, and had shared the love of Christ with them [yet I was still grieving the loss of my husband and friend who was our pastor.]”

In speaking to the issue of church growth with millennials, I also was forced to deal with my own association between church growth and personal loss. I was a widow who was also thrust into the position of being the pastor and looking at empty pews. Not only was Greater Faith mourning the loss of their pastor, his leadership style, and tradition, so was I. As their new pastor, I didn't have sufficient time to grieve the loss of my husband, friend, partner, and pastor. I also had to understand how my husband's death affected Josh and our family. We were all grieving in our own way. What became apparent to me was that not only did we lose our pastor, but I also lost my life partner and confidant.

Our church community knew that Greater Faith needed to chart a new journey. Yet we were comfortable with remembering what our pastor used to do. We were at ease with trying to hold on to his memory by doing things the exact same way that he did. However, God was doing something new with me serving as the I pastor. My leadership style differed from the former pastor, my husband. I embraced change and growth more readily than he did. My husband was steeped in tradition. Greater Faith was used to his

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls -Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched* (Abingdon Press, 2002), 49.

leadership style. As a whole, they were not ready for change. In fact, there was a resistance from the senior members of the church with respect to effectively addressing church growth in a meaningful and constructive way. They were accustomed to a male-dominant hierarchy within the church. Men held the major leadership roles within the church. Therefore, having a female pastor with a new vision for church growth was difficult for them. Moreover, the transition of power was unique because I was the pastor's wife. However, I served as the co-pastor, because of my husband's illness. I led the church for several years while he was sick. Greater Faith was comfortable with it because my husband was still alive. Even though I had the title of co-pastor, I was also known as the first lady of the church, a status the pastor's wife holds in the Baptist denomination. Generally speaking, in the Baptist denomination, the first lady served in a "seen but not heard" role. In our unique circumstance, I had now become their pastor and had to care for them in their loss, while demonstrating a new vision of leadership of my own as a female pastor. Some of the members had doubts about my leadership capabilities even though I was their co-pastor. In order to minister effectively, I had to establish myself as their new leader. Some left the church once my husband died and I became their pastor. Others stayed, and I had to reassure them that Greater Faith was called to build disciples for Christ. In addition to the church grief, pain, and loss, I also had to recognize the feelings that Josh had. He was walking with a lot. In some ways, Josh was resistant to my new leadership. I soon realized that in order for Josh and I to help Greater Faith reach millennials in our neighborhood, we needed to accept our hurt, loss, and grief. We also needed to embrace my new leadership as their pastor. I also needed to acknowledge Josh's feelings and how he viewed my leadership as his pastor.

Josh serves as an integral part of Greater Faith's new vision. We needed to be of one accord. Seemingly, we were not.

## CHAPTER 2

### JOSHUA'S GRIEF

“The role of the visionary is to ask, “What do we need to do now in order to realize the best possible future for [Greater Faith?]”<sup>1</sup>

Josh is my son and is a millennial. We have our differences as mother and son and in ministry. However, we are able to respect and understand what millennials in ministry are experiencing. I also realized that Josh was experiencing his own grief with the loss of my husband, who was his father and pastor, as well. By coming together for this project, I realized that we needed to hear one another and work through our individual grief and loss. I sought his story because he and his friends are millennials. Some of them are a part of the church, and I wanted to know their views.

#### *Joshua's Reaction*

The death of a loved one has a way of leaving a void, which also results in having uncertainty about the future. One Tuesday morning in October of 2012, approximately a month before my father Reverend Preston Wingate, Sr., passed away; the Lord spoke to me in prayer and informed me to prepare myself for his death. I saw a vision as I had seen before when praying for him with his bout with multiple illnesses. The vision consisted of him lying in an open casket at The First Union Baptist Church. When I prayed against death, the casket would disappear. On this particular Tuesday morning, as I was praying, again death the casket closed with him in it. I knew his life was coming to

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<sup>1</sup>Adam Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls -Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched* (Abingdon Press, 2002), 132.

an end. I did not know exactly when, nor did I want to accept it. I prayed that what was revealed and spoken to me would change with prayer and fasting. It did not. A few months before his death, my father began to prepare me for his departure. One evening as my family prayed in his bedroom, he had me to kneel before him and he anointed me and passed his mantle on to me. I will never forget these words: “Son do you believe what God is doing?” I replied, “Yes dad, I believe.” I felt an empowerment that very evening. A week before my father’s passing, he charged me to “guard my mother; to take care of her; to guard the church and to help her take care of the church.”

I realized there would soon be a changing of the guards. Moses was leaving, and Joshua would have to rise. The following Sunday my father (Moses) passed away at Mt. Sinai Hospital at 7:23pm with his family surrounded by his bedside. I was at the head of his hospital bed. After I closed his eyes, it was apparent that Moses the servant was dead. It was unequivocally true that I was indeed Joshua. Yet I wasn’t ready to be Joshua. My leader, my father, pastor, friend, and confidant was now gone, and I was alone. I knew life would never be the same. I felt a hedge of protection lift from over me as I gazed at my father’s now lifeless body. All that he had taught and imparted into me became realized. My father insisted and made sure my middle name would be Joshua. I could count one hand the times he actually called me by my first name, Chasson. He named me Joshua and groomed me to be a Joshua. God blessed me in a major way with such great impartation that I didn’t even fully realize it until 6 years after my father’s death. Even with all that was imparted into me, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally, I was not ready to pick up the mantle and carry it. I was broken.

The death of my father was surreal. Walking out of Mt. Sinai that evening, I knew I had to immediately become strong. Moses was gone, and I was left to carry out what had been charged to me by my father. Waking up the next morning in tears to the realization that my father was no longer present caused much trepidation in my heart. The fear of the unknown caused me much anguish. I now had to navigate through life and my Christian walk without my father's love, guidance, and spiritual leadership. Being a young strong man, I was able to endure, to persevere, and achieve many things as he instilled within me.

He died on a Sunday, was buried on a Friday, and we were back in church moving full steam ahead that following Sunday. Walking into Greater Faith that Sunday without the presence of my father was the coldest moment of my life. I felt alone and empty. I remembered as he taught me that in trying times we are to praise God even more. As I lift my hands to worship that Sunday, the presence of God fell upon me and I was strengthened. My father's death had such an effect on me. I was mourning the loss of my father, my pastor, and his leadership. Yet, I still gave God praise. However, we were broken as a family.

The death of my family affected me in many ways. It left me with so much uncertainty. There was literally no time to grieve after my father's passing. My family and I resumed our ministry roles the following Sunday after my father's passing. I had many concerns about this. I was used to my father's style of leadership and all that it entailed. My mother was now the pastor, because I wasn't ready to step up and take this role as leader. I wasn't ready for her to lead our church, either. In my mind she was a wonderful wife, mother, caretaker, preacher, and co-pastor. However, I was not confident

in her ability to pastor. I was used to the leadership and strength of my father, our Moses. Someone had to lead, but I wasn't ready.

Before my father's passing, he had set in motion for my sister Kirsten and me to become licensed ministers. He died a month before we were licensed to preach the Gospel. The pain of not having him present to witness what he set in motion by the leading of the Holy Ghost was painful. My father was supposed to be there to lead and guide in me in ministry. Having to carry on without him was mind-boggling. The week of the licensing service, I constantly asked myself "Who Was I?" I now had to identify myself as Joshua Wingate and not as Joshua, Rev. Preston Wingate's son. The effect of losing my leader and pastor caused me to question and be angry with God. I felt as if God took away from me what I needed to succeed in life and ministry: my father. All I really needed was the guidance of God. Not having that strong male presence in my life and in the church bothered me in so many ways.

I've never been sexist, but I was used to male authoritative leadership. My father was a loving and patient man, but his leadership skills and abilities were very strong and dominant. I wasn't sure if my mother was capable of leading and guiding the congregation the way my father had. He was assertive, patient, strong, and loving. Yet, he was a no-nonsense pastor. In my mind, she wasn't Preston and could not lead us to the promised land. My heart, hopes, and dreams were shattered. Ministry was supposed to consist of my family, the cohesive unit: Preston, Helen, Kirsten, and Joshua. My view of ministry was forever changed.

The effects that my father's death had on my ministry were twofold. It caused pain, sorrow, doubt, and confusion. In my mind, my father would have been with me to



guide me through ministry. Before and after my initial sermon, I doubted myself and my abilities to be a preacher, because of the way I wanted it to go. I felt alone in ministry and no matter how great the support system was, it didn't suffice, because Preston was not there to guide me. Many Sundays I was just going through the motions and going to church. That is how I was raised and what was required of me. I was there to support my mother and the ministry. I couldn't allow my father's vision and labor of love be diminished. Therefore, I operated in the capacity expected of me, while bleeding all the way through it. I did not want to receive leadership directives from my mother. Having to go forth without what I perceived to be clear directives caused me much annoyance and sadness. My father's death also caused me to become bold and courageous. After my "pity party" and not having my way, I came to myself. I held on to all that my father had instilled within me.

Whether it was on the floor in my bedroom or at the church, I cried out to God. Jeremiah 33:3 states, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." I cried unto the Lord and He heard me and gave me a different perspective and directive. My father's death caused me to seek God in a new way, and it taught me to lean on God, my father and not Preston, my father. It caused more intimacy between God and me. During this time of my life, I felt God was all I had and the only person that I could turn to. He became my refuge and my strength as the word said He would be. The death of my father taught me to rely on God and His promises and not the promises of individuals who reneged on promises made. Even though I was mourning the loss of my father and his leadership, I was learning to trust God for what was next, which was my mother as the next leader of the congregation and

me supporting her. It took much prayer and humility to accept my mother as the new Pastor of Greater Faith. I viewed her as weak and passive. I never took into account that she was not only grieving the loss of her husband, but her pastor, as well. She was given major responsibility during a sensitive time in her life. My father's leadership was loving and patient, yet strong and direct. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said. There was clarity and a sense of dominance there. The congregation respected him and took heed to directives given by him. The congregation viewed him as a strong leader. They trusted his leadership, because there was such consistency with his leadership. He was great with conflict resolution and knew how to shepherd the flock that was entrusted to him. On March 17, 2013, my mother was installed as the Pastor.

With my mouth I praised her, but with my heart I doubted her abilities to pastor. I found myself frustrated with decision-making and what was allowed to transpire during the beginning of her leadership. Many Sundays, I left the church frustrated and angry, never wanting to return. I examined the congregation many Sunday mornings, and it was evident that the leadership of my father was missed. It wasn't because my mother was a terrible pastor, but the congregation wasn't accustomed to her style of leadership. It was clear that the congregation was mourning not only the loss of their pastor, but also his leadership. When new ideas were implemented, it was often said, "well Pastor wouldn't have done it this way. Pastor would have handled this differently." I often found myself thinking and saying to her, "I miss daddy. He knew how to handle situations and would let things slide." We were all mourning the loss of Moses and couldn't accept the fact that he and his leadership style was gone. The church was also used to male leadership. During the time, we couldn't appreciate or respect my mother's approach to ministry and

leadership, because our focus was mourning what was. The Lord was doing a new thing, and we had to learn to embrace it or stay stagnant.

I held onto the word of God. The pain of his death caused me to lay prostrate before the Lord many nights. I also finally realized that my Mother, my pastor, was also hurting. Once I understood God's plan for Greater Faith, I embraced my Mom as Pastor.

### ***My Response to Joshua***

I am blessed to have the opportunity to have Josh serve in ministry with me. He is a very unusual millennial. He is outspoken, bold, and confident in his relationship with Jesus Christ. He relies on Jesus as a Savior and protector. He is adamant about ministry. He is very serious about millennials who are not disciples of a local Church. He has the spirit of evangelism. He is able to talk to other millennials. He understands their language, and he is relatable and concerned about their salvation and what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. For him, being a Christian is not merely becoming a member of a local church. It is also about having a relationship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. He has engaged the millennials in ways that give them the opportunity to come to our church to participate in workshops, seminars, platform services, and our weekly worship experiences. He is very engaging when it comes to the working of the ministry.

Josh is the catalyst between me, Greater Faith, and our millennial members. Once he embraced the reality that he is very important to me, and to my role as his pastor, Josh was better able to assist me at Greater Faith. Josh now serves as my assistant. He is able to reach and engage the millennials from a different perspective than me. Through his unique ability to reach millennials, I am able to hear their voices, which allows me to

address their concerns about the sustainability of the church's future, as well as their return to church. I found out that millennials are very resourceful; they have gifts and talents, which our church has not yet tapped into. These gifts and talents can be beneficial to the church, as well as our community. They are very proficient in technology, and resourceful in keeping the church connected via social media. Millennials are connected socially through the various devices of social media, which can be beneficial to any church. In today's society, the church and millennials must find ways to reconnect and work together to advance the kingdom of God. Millennials want to be heard and feel that their views of the church are important and will be taken into consideration. If we are going to bridge the gap that exist between the church and the millennials, the church must be willing to listen. Each person must be willing to listen to each other's complaints and work together to find solutions that will help millennials and the church to move forward.

The church's primary responsibility is to win souls for the Kingdom. We have been commissioned "to go into all the world and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). If we are going to make disciples, then there must be ongoing evangelistic dialogue between the church and millennials. Therefore, having a son who is a millennial has helped me to look at the needs of millennials in the church, their concerns, and what they are looking for from the church. My son often tells me, that I am not in tune to the needs of millennials, which I thought I was. The millennial perspective on church, family values, peace, unemployment, education, justice, violence, war, religion, and morality is, of course, different from mine because we grew up in a different era. I was raised to be respectful and obedient to my parents, as well as other adults. I did not call my parents my best friend. I was never their equal. There were certain conversational lines that I did

not cross. I never injected my thoughts into their conversations or sat in their company when guests were in our home. You did not interrupt their conversations because children were told to stay in their place. You were seen and not heard. The church was the primary place of socialization when I was growing up. All, or most of our social activities, came by the way of the church.

It was very difficult to see so many millennials unchurched. Being a member of our local church was not a question of, “Are you going to be a member?” The question was “When?” Today, millennials are not flocking to our churches. They are looking for ways they can have critical conversations about the church and their roles within the church. They are assessing how they can find the time to attend service with all their commitments to family, social, and political organizations, as well as time for themselves.

Many millennials, as I have learned through Josh, believe in God, read the Bible, and pray. They want to be in the local church, but not according to the way the church operated years ago. Millennials want freedom to express themselves by engaging in conversations with church leaders and other millennials. As I understood from Josh, they are looking for authentic, truthful leaders who exemplify what they are preaching in their lives. They are looking for ministers and churches that are living out the Gospel in their lives. My son often reminds me that millennials are also looking for accountability and stewardship. They want to see the love of the church in action. Addressing issues of racism, hunger, marginalization in justice, oppression, unemployment, healthcare, violence, and housing must be done, because these issues speak to them. They are of great concern to millennials. Even though they are not in the church, they are expecting the church to champion these causes. One or more of these issues affects the local

congregations. Therefore, they want the church to play a major role in the things that continue to stifle the economical and spiritual growth of our churches and communities. Since our church is comprised of those living in our community, if the community is healthy, the church can be healthy.

As we look at ministry from a generational perspective, hopefully we will find common ground, on which baby boomers will be able to connect with and reach unchurched millennials. Therefore, Greater Faith has decided to assemble a focus group to engage millennials in critical conversation as to why they are unchurched. Hopefully, by having this focus group we can understand, learn, and be open to suggestions, criticisms, and advice as to what the church can do to attract, engage, and keep millennials in church. Certainly, what was done years ago is not working. Therefore, we must lay aside our traditions and allow millennials an opportunity to speak and be heard. We need to find out what can be done for millennials to reconnect with the church. I believe that the church can reach millennials by partnering with them and letting them be active participants in all parts of church life. It takes a Pastor and church that are able to show the love of God and who are genuinely concerned about the physical and spiritual welfare of those who are unchurched to reach millennials. The pastor must be willing to carry out the vision God has given, for which God has called one to serve. Pastors must be devoted to doing the will of God. The church must be prepared to minister effectively to those who are unchurched. The pastor must be able to engage millennials through the biblical narratives and allow their voice to be heard in these stories. They must engage in pastoral listening to the personal narratives of the unchurched, which help millennials relate to the bible, the Pastor, and the church. Mary Clark Moschella asserts, "Narrative

models recognize the importance of storytelling as a hallmark of human experience.”<sup>2</sup> Millennials have experiences that have caused them to never become a member of a local church or even led them to walk away. Narrative and storytelling can help us to put a human face to problems that exist in the local church, as well as suggest a resolution. Therefore, we must know their stories in order to help them connect or reconnect to the church. Moschella asserts, “often found things in their personal narratives that help them to resolve the problem they had reported.”<sup>3</sup> Some of the problems of unchurched millennials can be resolved by leading with our stories. The sharing of stories can lead to a meaningful changes in our lives as well as theirs.

My son and I have great hope and expectations of what our church can become. Together, we have realized that millennials share their stories, dreams, hope, fears, and their religious beliefs. We may not agree on every aspect of how we operate in ministry. We are able to discuss our differences and came to a solution that is amicable for all. In having an honest conversation, our ministry has taken a new direction. More millennials are participating in our weekly religious services and have assumed leadership roles. They have helped me to visualize leadership from a millennial’s perspective. Our churches need millennials to carry on ministry, to proclaim the gospel, to bring others into the household of faith, and to make disciples. This evangelistic endeavor can be further realized when they take on leadership roles in the church.

What will happen when Baby Boomers, and Generation X are no longer able to carry on leadership roles? Mentoring millennials is very important. Millennials need to

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<sup>2</sup>Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice* (need location of publication The Pilgrim Press Cleveland, 2008), 51.

<sup>3</sup>Id. at 17.

hear the narratives of the Baby Boomers, which can help millennials. They need to be trained to assume their leadership roles. If the church is going to be prepared to continue to exist and serve others, millennials must be included in our plans. The church must prepare millennials now for the future wellbeing of the church. Through my interactions with Josh, we have learned together that many millennials are intelligent, educated, and savvy and needed at Greater Faith. This particular group is necessary for their own encounters with Christ as well as for transformation at Greater Faith. Now that we are operating on the same page, our work for reaching millennials in our neighborhood can begin.

*One Accord*

Perfect community is to be found at the intersection of the two segments of the cross - where those who are reconciled with God are reconciled together - where we love God with all we have, and we love our neighbor as ourselves....it is the place of transformation.

Michael Christensen  
with Carl E. Savage,  
Equipping the Saints

Now that we were travelling down this journey together and in one accord, we were in search of the perfect community for Greater Faith with millennials under my leadership. This new type of reconciliation required Josh and I to be in one accord. It also called for us to dig deeper and have meaningful conversations with other young adults. Therefore, I enlisted feedback from my eighteen-year-old grandson, I found out that millennials say that we are telling them how to live, what they should do and how they should do it. This seems to suggest that they aren't amenable to us telling them how to think and act, but are more receptive to an invitation to hear their own authentic voices. They want a safe space where they can talk about their career, marriage, sex, social



justice, children, drugs education, relationships, and where to live. They are looking for someone who is willing to listen to them. The world has its expectations of them, which appear to be more in the form of conforming to their own carved out views of young adults. However, they have not embraced the box our church has placed them in. I have discovered that millennials yearn for the church to listen with an understanding ear to their concerns, which may be different from what the church is accustomed to hearing. If we don't become more flexible, who are they going to talk about the controversial issues and challenges that they face daily?

Josh and I have seen a mass exodus of the millennial group from our churches. There are those who say that attending church is not important. They have left the pews, and the decline in church attendance is at an all-time low. More than half of the millennials who were raised in our churches have dropped out. Therefore, the church needs to find ways in which to attract millennials back into the sanctuary. My grandson continues to reiterate what his millennial friends are saying: "Millennials are the least likely age group to attend church." He has this view because church does not relate to their needs. My grandson tells me that church is sometimes boring or out of touch with the issues of their day. Looking around the congregation on Sunday morning, I can see the reality of what they are saying. Despite an alarming number of churches with low attendance, some churches are still doing business as usual. As a result, some churches have fewer and fewer millennials present.

Millennials believe that no one is listening to them. They want their voices to be heard and received by the congregation. Millennials also want to have input, to change and shape the ministry of the church. I am grateful that I have my son, as a young

minister who is able to and has the desire and skill-set to connect with millennials. Our church has begun to plan Bible Study, social functions, and group meetings with them. We are also discussing a new missional statement to encapsulate the true mission of the church. Millennials want a missional statement that will help the church to reevaluate how to reach and to minister effectively to them. If we do carve out this missional statement, it can serve as a start to improve the relationship between millennials and the church.

Oftentimes millennials feel that they are better off without the church, because their needs are not being met. Therefore, they tell each other that they are better off on their own. Truthfully, many times they are. Millennials want to see the church in action. They want to see the church helping the poor and the displaced in our community, and providing services while using the church resources wisely. Millennials have dreams and goals as well. They want the church to be supportive of them and encourage them to move forward.

I believe that changes should be made to attract millennials. However, there are some churches have relaxed certain rules to accommodate their worshippers. I do not believe that using cell phones and texting during services is appropriate unless the entire congregation is using the digital device together. I found that millennials were turned off by the church's conservative viewpoints and judgmental spirit. They wanted a more relaxed atmosphere and sermons that are relatable, encouraging, and different. I have discovered through conversations with millennials that a clear majority of them who are in their twenties are not affiliated with any church or have no religion at all. Therefore, church leaders are asking "why" and what can be done to attract millennials back to the

church. Millennials want to be told the truth, whatever it is. Taylor Snodgrass of the “Church and Its 20-Something” asserted that “if churches are not authentic, millennials will leave.” I have discovered in my interactions and conversations with the focus group they are looking for an authentic church.

Based upon our interactions with the focus group, we have learned that millennials are not disillusioned with tradition. They are frustrated with idle expressions of religion. Millennials are not looking for entertainment, but rather they are looking for an authentic church that is following Jesus. Millennials want to be challenged to think about issues that are affecting our lives and society. They are not getting what they want from the church as it is. They feel that the church has a fear of questioning. Questioning is the heart of education. It leads us into deeper knowledge, not unbelief. Millennials want to be engaged intellectually. Their views of the church are dim. Yet, they are waiting for something to change spiritually. In my discussion with my granddaughter, I learned millennials need to experience the life-changing love of God through other people and to be able to live it as well. Millennials are optimistic about the culture, because this is the model of Jesus. Jesus loves all types of people, does ministry in the city, and engages culture. To reach people today, the church must be immersed in the community for the glory of God. Millennials want to know that they are welcome into the house of worship. Ironically, our church offered what we thought the young adults wanted, which was a good meal and the preached word given to them. Yet from our interactions with the focus group, we learned that millennials wanted fellowship, but also a deeper relationship with God that could be strengthened through sacred space gatherings

with us. This space would serve as a place for them to have uninhibited, real discussions about church, community, and relationships with God and one another.

Our church is mostly comprised of adults. We call people to follow Jesus, and that is our primary purpose, to follow the “Great Commission.” If you follow Jesus, this leads to serving and justice. This method seems to be just what millennials want: a simple, clear, authentic Christian sermon or message with no frills. Millennials are comfortable in worship at Greater Faith. It has become a place of worship, learning, and experiencing community, and millennials there have found that it is a different kind of place than they have found anywhere else. Millennials want to be more than a number in our local churches; they want a more individualized approach in the way of seeing people. The relational component of church is more relevant than any program, method, or musical and preaching style. The number one way I believe we can reach millennials is through the Church as a relational, community model where we love God and love others.

Millennials are still trying to figure out their lives. It is the church’s responsibility to try to show them the goodness of God and the goodness of being in community. The way to create a sense of community for millennials is to acknowledge them, greeting them as they enter the church, and learning how to be hospitable to them by engaging them in conversations. Some of the millennials in our ministry context and from our focus group were rich in material goods, but poor in relationship dynamics. I found that some of them did not relate well to others whose views differed from their own. Millennials want to make connections with and learn from older adults. Yet at the same time, some want to maintain their own voice and not get lost in assimilating to existing church culture. They are hungry to relate to the wisdom and friendship that they

possessed. It has been determined that more millennials who have older mentors in their church stay in church than those who do not.

Mentoring is very important in our local congregation. Millennials can also mentor the Baby Boomers by sharing their knowledge about how to navigate life in the digital age and reciprocal in their sharing between generations. This mentoring is beneficial to the church. The future of the church rests on our ability to connect the generations together. Millennials do not want to take a back seat in church. Millennials want to have a seat at the table and be valued in meaningful discussions. They do not want to sit on the sidelines and observe what is going on. If they are going to be a part of the church, it must have value and meaning. If it does not, they will find something that does have meaning and value.

Millennials want to participate. They want to be taken seriously and given real responsibility. Therefore, if the church leaders do not have millennials' input, they cannot know why they are leaving the church. We all have different suspicions about why millennials do not find Church relevant or do not want to go to church. Some may say it is because of Bible teaching, preaching, or cultural differences. Some believe that the church leadership has not changed since their childhood. Their grandparents' and parents' generations dominated the leadership at church. Therefore, they do not have a voice in the affairs of the church. The millennials of this particular category are doing the same thing, the same way and getting the same results. The church leadership has not changed since their childhood "We do not do it this way" was the recurring theme that they heard. Church became dead to them. I want to change this antiquated narrative with them. We

want to move forward together by mentoring them for ministry and missional impact our community.

I believe that Baby Boomers and millennials can coexist together in our local churches. Each group can mentor each other by sharing their stories, witnessing, mentoring each other, using their gifts and talents, and honoring a truthful connection about the church, ministry, and responsibilities. If we do this, we can move Greater Faith forward by making preparations to engage millennials. They are counting on it. I believe that this endeavor will help Greater Faith to grow with millennials and the seasoned saints. I also believe that the church's leadership, millennials, and seasoned saints can work together as a cohesive group to stimulate church growth.

Greater Faith must prepare and cultivate the soul to be ready to receive church growth. We not only want to mentor millennials for church growth, but we want them to assume leadership roles, as well. If millennials and the pastor are going to work together, we need to establish the parameters of the working relationship. Being a part of the team ought to be the entrance to establishing a trusting friendship with the pastor. Instead of a stiff, standoffish Pastor-member relationship, I'm proposing an alternative. The pastor, ministers, and millennials should strive to carve out the grounds to build a trusting friendship. It is not easy to do ministry with someone you do not trust. You cannot form any kind of bond with them. Ministry is not only about preaching, teaching, and visiting the sick. It is also about building long lasting relationships with the people we minister to daily. Therefore, in order for the church to move forward, we must be intentional in our evangelistic thrust, because God has commanded us to go fishing. We must "launch out into the deep" (Luke 5:4). Let's explore the theological mandate of our project.

### CHAPTER 3

#### RETHINKING TRADITION AND PREPARATION FOR EVANGELISM TO REACH MILLENNIALS BASED ON A THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL RATIONALE

We treasure the concept of transformation because radical change is the heart of the Christian message [and] because the power of the gospel changes everything, lives churches, and communities.<sup>1</sup>

The title of this chapter is central to what is needed at Greater Faith. This chapter is all about our theological and biblical rationale for doing this project. Our plans need to be biblically based. Moreover, as the pastor, my heart's desire is to see our church reach millennials through the power of the Gospel through evangelism. As the leader, I recognized the need for adequate preparation. We needed to be trained on how to effectively reach this group. However, there were certain things that got in the way of genuinely connecting with young adults, even though we shared a love of the Gospel. In short, we needed to "rethink tradition" within our ministry context and relate our thought process to scripture. Therefore, we petitioned God in prayer for guidance in our evangelistic approach by engaging the LAC, the ministerial staff, and focus group (Luke 5:4). More specifically, our LAC and focus group met for workshops conducted by a few noted reverends that were fully invested in our project. We revamped our traditional models in favor of a new way. This new way had to be shared with Greater Faith and the

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church* (Nashville, TN: B& H Publishing Group, 2010), 1.

LAC. It also required some feedback from the focus group. So, our meetings and preparation process began.

I took the lead for the LAC small group meetings because I realized that “small groups change lives better than any other ministry in the church.<sup>2</sup>” As the leader, I presented a workshop on May 28, 2018 called “The Path to Discipleship.” The purpose of this workshop was to talk about how we might discover our path to building disciples by following the path of Jesus Christ. In examining what Jesus did to make disciples, we talked about counting the cost of following Christ and the difficulties we’ve encountered. At times, some of the members of the Focus Group who grew up in church felt alone. Others felt betrayed by the church. We discussed the truth of our faith journey. In being transparent, some of the LAC talked about how our faith waivered when trying to speak to others who were hurt by existing church members. We talked about life and mission as it relates to being open to newness of others. I discussed the two words of Jesus Christ: “Follow Me” taken from Luke 5:4. Some of the ministers talked about how we might apply these two powerful words to Greater Faith. What are we willing to let go to be models of Jesus Christ? What ways are we willing to keep so that we might draw the unchurched to Christ? These pressing questions helped us to engage in more meaningful discussion with the focus group. During this workshop, we talked about the need to “go fishing” to reach the unchurched as a part of the Great Commission. However, the focus group cautioned us to allow God to clean the fish. We continued our theological

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<sup>2</sup> Bill Easum and John Atkinson, *Go Big with Small Groups: Eleven Steps to an Explosive Small Group Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 3.



discussion by hearing other voices as we read, re-read, and deconstructed the selected biblical texts.

The scriptures we used during our workshops with the focus group and with the LAC meetings were Luke 5:1-4, 17-20 and Matthew 28:19-20. In Luke 5:1-4, Jesus told the disciples to launch out into the deep and let down [their] nets for a catch.<sup>3</sup> Just as Jesus spoke to the disciples back then, I believe those same instructions ought to be applied to us today. If we want to reach new disciples for Christ, we must be willing to lay aside our traditions and launch out. Launching out calls for us to move away from our traditional way of waiting for people to come inside and join the church. Jesus instructed the disciples to let down their nets. These gospel passages spoke to our focus group and to the LAC, because we realized that in letting down our nets, we were letting go of tradition. Moreover, we saw that Jesus is moved when we act communally to help someone else in need. Finally, I realized that God was calling us now, as God did back then, to go and make disciples. However, before we were to delve into this new way, it was important to talk about the traditional models of Greater Faith and assess the reasons why it did not work for reaching millennials. It is also important to address what our new way would look like. Once I laid out those two methodologies, then I discuss how we were in preparation for evangelism through the meetings with the LAC and the ministerial staff, the workshops, discussions with the focus group, and sharing about the selected biblical texts.

#### **A. The Traditional Model of Greater Faith**

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<sup>3</sup>“When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (Lk. 5:1-4 NKJV).

The way in which we have routinely done ministry at Greater Faith was to have a meeting, read scripture, conduct a training session with the pastor and a few select church members, most of whom were older, and then implement what was to be done as directed by the pastor. The pastor, who was my husband, conducted the training session. The people who were trained consisted of a small team (Elder Earlene DeVaughn, Deacon Cherrod Allen, Minister-in-Training Joshua Wingate and I). There was little discussion about how we would reach out to younger people at this time. We just thought they would come into our church through an invitation. Even though we knew we needed to do more, we didn't. We just never got around to a discussion about "how." Once the pastor died, our focus shifted to keeping the church together with its existing members. There were standard ministry initiatives that we used under this traditional model that if tweaked a little bit, could serve as an excellent tool for evangelism for millennials. At Greater Faith, the traditional models of programming included the following:

1. *Unity in Community Service*: This service occurred once a month and Joshua was in charge. It lasted for 2 years. In this service, Greater Faith partnered with Latino sisters and brothers for a worship service at our church. The worship services were conducted in Spanish along with a translator. The Praise and Worship part was also in Spanish. Because Greater Faith rests in an area of the Bronx that is heavily populated with Spanish-speaking people, this Unity in Community Service was an excellent way to connect with them. We now rent space to one Latina pastor who has her services at our church on a weekly basis. However, there ought to be a more of an ecumenical focus. Now it is solely a gathering space for her church service at Greater Faith. I rarely see others who are not Latino attend.

2. Thankful Thursdays: I was the leader of this weekly, one hour of power worship service. It was from 12:00pm – 1:00pm every Thursday. Afterwards, I stayed and talked to the people who attended about life, the community, and God. At times, this would turn into a prayer meeting afterwards. This service was my way of getting to know the people within our community. We don't do this anymore due to a lack of adequate staff.

3. Soup Kitchen: I took the lead in Greater Faith feeding the hungry every third Saturday of the month. The young people participated by helping the older members serve the food and clean up afterwards. This was the primary initiative that combined the older members with the younger ones. We stopped doing this initiative, as well, because we need more staff to help.

4. Good Friday Service: My husband, the former pastor, took the lead in organizing this worship service. We invited other preachers from various churches to preach one of the 7 Last Sayings of Jesus Christ. Before the preaching, we had food, fun, and fellowship. We have tweaked this Good Friday Service to invite younger preachers and women.

5. Order of Service: Greater Faith has way too many church announcements during the service, which takes away from a spirit-led format of worship. While it is good to keep the members informed, the length of the announcements proves to be too distracting to the worship flow. Moreover, there are way too many hymns and not enough contemporary songs. However, this was the tradition that the members seemed to enjoy.

6. Candlelight Communion Service: My husband took the lead in this multicultural and ecumenical service. It was powerful because there was a mixture of all

faith denominations and all ages worshipping God together. There was also a part where we turned off the lights and had service by candlelight. The young people really enjoyed this service.

Admittedly, these traditional models of Greater Faith were effective for that season in the church. However, once our community expanded and became more diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, and culture, it was clear that we needed to rethink our traditional model to reach others, especially millennials. As the leader, I proposed a new way.

### **B. The New Way**

Under my leadership, I have licensed three people to assist me in reaching other millennials. Joshua Wingate, Kristen Holden, and Cherrod Allen are now licensed ministers. Elder DeVaughn is still serving as a part of the ministerial team. Under the new way with my leadership, the following changes occurred:

1. *Trustee Board*: In the traditional model at Greater Faith, the male pastor made all the decisions. Now, I've implemented a trustee board, which is comprised of younger members to make critical decisions for our church.
2. *Ministerial Team*: In our traditional model, the ministers were in their late 50s. Under the new way, the ministers are younger (late 30s, early 40s).
3. *Administration*: Under the traditional model, I worked alongside of my husband, who was our pastor. Under this new way, my son Joshua is the church administrator. He and the trustees play an integral part in the decision-making process of the church, travel arrangements, church bills, conferences, and in strategic planning for the church. Minister Joshua, as well as Minister Allen, a trustee are millennials.

4. Deacon Board: Under the traditional model, the entire deacon board was all male. Under the new way, the deacon board is all female.

5. Finances: Under the traditional model, we had a mortgage to pay. Under the new model, our mortgage has been paid off. We own the building free and clear. We can now give more money to foreign missions and have funds to do more ministry work at the church and in the community.

6. Pastoral Leadership: Under the traditional model, my husband was the pastor. Under the new way, I am the first female pastor of Greater Faith. I am Board Chair of the Bronx Sheppard Restoration Corporation. I also serve as the First VP of the Baptist Ministers Conference of greater New York and Vicinity, which for the first time has elected a female as their First Vice President. It gives me more credibility as a leader at Greater Faith when the church sees me in leadership positions outside of the church.

This new way helped Greater Faith recognize change internally. However, it also spoke to what needs to be further developed externally to reach millennials. While we had a few young adults on the trustee board and serving in ministry, we still needed to assess why they did not come and fill our empty pews. To live out our new way, while still examining some of the traditional models that may be beneficial to reaching millennials within our ministry context, I enlisted the help of Rev. Dr. Kimberly K. Holmes, Rev. Dr. Zoleka Adams, and Rev. J. Loren Russell. These three dynamic individuals conducted workshops on our theological focus to help prepare the LAC and ministerial team for evangelism. The focus group also provided valuable insight in terms of how to reach them through the Gospel.

The workshop from Dr. Holmes focused on the biblical and theological rationale for this project. She assisted us greatly with figuring out how we might respond to millennials based upon our understanding of our focus scriptures (Luke 5:1-4; and Matthew 28:18-20). As a group, we talked about how God spoke to us in terms of being hospitable and the theological meaning of that word. We also discussed the biblical meaning of becoming fishers of people. After our biblical and theological discussions, we recited the litany on evangelism.

After the first workshop presentation by Dr. Holmes, we asked her back to lead a workshop on the theological link between the bondage of sickness and the church's outreach response. We felt this was crucial because we needed to engage biblical text and put it in conversation with what we were doing at Greater Faith. Along those lines, we discussed how Luke 5:17-20 spoke to us and catapulted us into working collectively.

“When the cries of these slaves came to God's ear, God claimed them as [God's] people and determined to free them from bondage and misery.”<sup>4</sup>

Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. When He saw their faith, He said to him, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.

Luke 5:17-20 (NKJV)

This Gospel message tied in very nicely with our project focus and the quote from *Missional Leader*. I asked Dr. Holmes to conduct a theological workshop for our focus

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<sup>4</sup>Alan J. Roxenburg and Fred Romank, “*The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*” (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 7.

group and LAC that spoke to God's movement on behalf of those who were lost and outside of fellowship with believers. In our workshop, Dr. Holmes invited us to talk about the ways in which people are in bondage and need help from us. In that discussion we talked about crying out to God when we are lonely, depressed, or in need of food and shelter and a relationship with God. We also talked about the many ways we could help one another as a collective body.

In the Gospel cited above, Jesus was moved to heal the paralyzed man because of the actions of the others who were with him. To get the paralyzed man on the housetop and let him down to get healed was a bold move, but they did it. Likewise, it is a bold move to go outside of Greater Faith and invite the very group we seek to attract to come inside to sit and talk with us. Just as Jesus saw "their faith" and healed that paralyzed man, I believe Jesus will act when Jesus sees our faith shown towards those who are paralyzed in fear, crippled with pain and unforgiveness and are desperate seeking to belong. Moreover, the quote used states that when the cries of the slaves came to God's ear, God moved. In this theological reflection time, we talked about how God moves when we act corporately. It doesn't matter if we cry together or help someone enter through the roof. The key is that we work together to help a soul longing for completeness. We discovered in this session, that God moves when we seek God together. We realized that Jesus acts when he sees our faith. Interestingly, however, we also learned that visible faith can be realized through technology in dealing with millennials. For them, the use of iPads, cellular telephones, telephone conferences, Skype, and other modern technologies in all aspects of church life was more convenient and preferable.

Millennials have a preference for modern technology as a means of communication, given their busy schedules. Moreover, the use technology helped greatly in terms of time, expense, logistics, and convenience. In responding to their preferred method of communication, Rev. Dr. Zoleka Adams conducted a workshop by way of a telephone conference. Moreover, they were in a non-judgmental zone by being in the comfort of their own homes and on the telephone. In keeping with this ease of modern communication, the focus group and the LAC had a theological workshop with Dr. Adams on May 30, 2018. This was a unique tool of preparation for evangelism that seemingly worked well for them. I also participated on this training session. Dr. Adams used the very same biblical texts that Dr. Holmes discussed with us. It was equally as powerful to engage one another absent seeing our facial reactions. During our call, we talked about the various ways we can fulfill the Great Commission. Interestingly enough, reaching this specific group called for us to do something outside of the box. The notes of Dr. Adams are provided below. There were 6 millennials and the members of the LAC on the call. The scripture basis of the conversation was Luke 5:1-4. During this conference call meeting, we discussed these specific areas for preparation to evangelize:

1. There is a need to read Scripture from different translations, including a more contemporary and paraphrased edition, because it makes more sense and makes the text more relatable to young people, which is important. On this call, we read the selected text in the New King James Version and the Message Translation for deeper and clearer meaning. In so doing, more people participated on the call.



2. We talked about how the pulpit of Jesus was non-traditional and how he broke away from the Temple. In so doing, the young adults talked about the need to break away from some traditions that prevent them from attending church.

3. We discussed the need to be willing to go into deeper waters to catch fish. They talked about the need to come outside of the church to meet them where they are.

4. We also talked about the need to be willing to catch all kinds of fish and not just the “church looking folks,” but also the tattooed, the LGBTQ, and the opinionated millennials. They want to be a part of the church community of faith too.

5. We discussed what comes after hearing the Word. For young adults, some are ready to be caught and taught by the Gospel, but not necessarily a full sermon.

6. We also talked about reaching millennials by going where they go. It came up that a favorite gathering place is a restaurant called Buffalo Wild Wings, because it is affordable and millennial-friendly. Dr. Adams then talked about how she went to a movie with a friend and visited Buffalo Wild Wings, which was next to the Magic Johnson Theater in Harlem. Much to her surprise, the place was filled with groups of millennials who were chatting, debating, laughing, eating, and enjoying each other’s company. The lesson was that if we listen respectfully and attentively, millennials will tell us where to find them and what they need.

7. Finally, the group affirmed that there are millennials who are travel ready to catch fish outside the church. Is the church ready to receive them? The process of engaging millennials must be two-fold. We discovered that to create a more welcoming atmosphere at church, we need to rethink how we do worship and/or bible study (i.e. a

Buffalo Wild Wings Bible Study). We found that we might need to reimagine evangelism so that it is more creative and inclusive.

Based on the feedback of the focus group and the discussion of the LAC for both workshops, I decided to have further discussions on the Gospel over meals and in the dining hall, as opposed to inside the sanctuary. I thought it would be more creative and inclusive if I made what they like to eat and just listened as they discussed the Gospel and the Great Commission. Millennials deserved a seat at our table in order to have a place in church, in ministry, and in decision-making. The focus group sessions were instrumental in helping me to realize this important concept.

What became clear from the focus group session is that we were afraid to go beyond the four walls of our church. We were afraid of being challenged. We are afraid of people who do not look like us or talk like us. Unfortunately, some people are not prepared to go out to evangelize to young adults. We, as seniors, must allow millennials to see what we are doing. We must go and tell our stories of what the Lord has done for us. David Stark asserts that we can connect by indicating that we are also on a spiritual journey to know God.”<sup>5</sup> By sharing our experiences with millennials, I believe we will help them to see that we share some of the same experiences. Stark assert that millennials “have many areas of common ground that they can work together.”<sup>6</sup> I believe that millennials and Baby Boomers can come together and do some wonderful things for our church and our community. Millennials can be reached by these both Baby Boomers and millennials working together to spread the gospel. Starks further asserts that “they are

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<sup>5</sup>David Stark “*Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging a Younger Generation*,” (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2016), 54.

<sup>6</sup> Id. 56.

open to mentoring by older generations, they want to be ‘missionaries’, without the ‘God-part’ necessarily by helping the needy all over the world.”<sup>7</sup>

As commanded by Jesus Christ, Greater Faith desires to engage millennials as we go out to make disciples. Stark goes on to say that we must “take time to give in-depth answers to their questions, knowing that they are aware that people have very difficult answers than we do to life’s central questions. Using phrases like ‘in my opinion’ and ‘from my perspective’ and ‘what do you think’ are critical to having a conversation, not giving a lecture.”<sup>8</sup> Millennials want to be engaged theologically and biblically. Stark surmises that this type of personal experience, after interacting and developing relationships with Christians, speaks to the need in the younger generations, given the resolute individualism.”<sup>9</sup> Greater Faith has partnered with the unchurched millennials by listening to the concerns of the Focus Group. Stark asserts, “a partner relationship with outsiders in our community can go even further in building trust and openness to gospel.”<sup>10</sup> With all of us working together using the new way, we can reach a greater number of souls for the kingdom.

Authors Shawana Songer Gaines and Timothy Gaines assert that “*The Great Commission* has given us not only a theological foundation to suggest more than clever solutions and growth strategies, but also ways of being Christ’s disciples together, which will naturally open places for young people at the table and help the church to more

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<sup>7</sup>David Stark “*Reaching Millennials: Proven Methods for Engaging a Younger Generation*,” (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2016), 54.

<sup>8</sup> Id. 92.

<sup>9</sup> Id. 91.

<sup>10</sup> Id. 157.

faithfully be a sign and symbol of God’s kingdom.”<sup>11</sup> When the church shows hospitality by welcoming strangers, outcasts and others, the Gospel becomes realized and perhaps baptism may occur. “God is calling the church to be a way that all people can find a place at the table.”<sup>12</sup> Once we had a moment of reflection after the conference call conducted by Dr. Adams, we agreed that millennials’ voices need to be heard. We also realized that they need to be invited to share their ideas, as well as having a seat at the table.

Through our theological sessions, I also realized that the perception millennials have about the church varies according to their age, race, gender, and church affiliation. Millennials are very concerned about the spiritual aspect of their lives and the role of discipleship. Millennials ask the question why they need Christ. Adam Hamilton asserts that “[God] opens the door to a whole new world for us. He enriches every life he touches. He changes the world one person at a time, as his kingdom expands across the globe.”<sup>13</sup> When millennials work together with the body of Christ, they can have a powerful impact upon the household of faith by combining their resources and spiritual gifts to advance the kingdom of God and make disciples.

My views on the biblical basis for discipleship were strengthened during the theological session for this project by Dr. Holmes. As I see it, after the resurrection, Jesus gave the Great Commission to the disciples. Jesus gave three commands; go, baptize, and teach. The disciples were told to take action by going into the midst of those who are not

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<sup>11</sup> Shawana and Timothy Gaines *“A seat at the Table – A Generation Reimagining Its Place in the Church,”* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Id. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Adam Hamilton *“Leading Beyond the Walls” Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched,* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 23.

yet disciples. Accordingly, to become a learner or follower of Jesus Christ, teaching must be done. The traditional form of baptism in our church gains younger adults as disciples. There are a few ways we can change this form of baptism to reach the younger generation. One way is to have a communal baptism where candidates would be baptized in a place where young people gather for other social activities, like in a local pool or gymnasium setting. However, in order to do this, I believe teaching and educating those seeking baptism ought to be done to gain a greater understanding of the Great Commission and its significance to them as new believers.

Moreover, the disciples were to teach what Jesus taught. If we follow the commands of Jesus, the church in its evangelistic thrust, becomes the extension of the ministry of Jesus. As the new pastor, I want this ministry to serve as an extension of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Greater Faith needs to go, teach, and baptize. Again, in looking at our church tradition, we have not done a good job in baptism as a means of reaching millennials. We failed to conduct workshops on what it means to be baptized. We neglected the real need to keep in contact with a young adult once baptized. We invited them to eat a meal, but failed to engage in meaningful fellowship, which entails listening to understand, not to simply respond. There are other ways to teach baptism and evangelize at the same time. For example, Greater Faith can have baptism at the beach. I learned through the focus group that millennials love the beach. Why not use the beach as a means to explain baptism and evangelize at the same time?

As I see it, baptism is a symbolic gesture of being initiated into Jesus's fold. As I understand, for millennials, baptism is a way to start anew. It is a way to accept the newness of that person and not what we think their newness is. From members of the

focus group, we learned that they see baptism as a way to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. They see it as symbolic of Jesus Christ. We learned that for them, baptism means that God has accepted them and that they have accepted God. If God has accepted them, their question becomes, why hasn't the church? If we are to follow the model of Jesus Christ, we must invite them to come "where the practice of being the Body of Christ forms us into the image of the Son." We put our faith in action by being available.<sup>14</sup>

Minister McDonald, a millennial who was a part of our focus group, told us that the church needs to become available to attract other millennials. For him, the number one problem with Christians is their unavailability to God. As he sees it, whatever God asks of us, we should be available to do. He sees the church as wanting to deal with God on its own terms and not according to the gospel. There are times when the church has to be uncomfortable for the sake of the gospel. For example, we may be called to go to the very places that millennials dwell in order to reach them. I'm not so sure the church would be willing to meet at a chicken restaurant with bar stools to attract young adults. However, he challenged us by asking what do we need to leave behind in order to become available to follow Jesus to reach millennials and catch people. As I see it, there are several reasons why Greater Faith has been unable to become fully available to God to reach this specific group of people. We were prideful. We didn't want to come out of our comfort zone. We were comfortable with things staying the same. Yet in staying the same, everything will always remain the same if we remain there, empty. In other words, authentic change requires us to be open to doing church a different way. In order to bring

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<sup>14</sup> James K. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Post Modernism*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Bookers Academic, 2006), 30.

about an authentic change in our church and in our community, Greater Faith needed to let some things go, come outside of the church and be available to listen in order to reach millennials. God required it of us according to the selected scriptures. Once we engaged one another in theological reflections based on our selected Gospel scriptures, we then focused our attention on the four areas of concern of this project.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE FOUR AREAS OF CONCERN

The four areas of concern for our church leaders to reach millennials were:

1. Coming out of the church walls;
2. Laying aside assumptions;
3. Enlisting Partners; and
4. Laying aside traditions.

Based on the feedback from our focus group, and the workshops/meetings with the LAC and Ministerial Team of Greater Faith, we were able to clearly see what was required in order to reach millennials within our ministry context.

#### 1. *Come out of the Church Walls*

Greater Faith expanded its evangelistic boundaries by enlisting the help of and opinions from a focus group. The newly created focus group worked in partnership with other members of the ministerial staff who have been trained in discipleship building and in teaching of God's Word. We recognized that it was essential to partner with millennials to accurately identify their specific needs and concerns. What became clear to Greater Faith was that millennials were an essential part of the present and future church. By intently listening to their concerns, we were able to grow as individuals. We wanted to be a little disturbed by coming out of our comfortable surroundings, which was our church. Yet the ever-lingering question was, "How do we do it?"

Through this project, I set an agenda, which included open-ended questions for reflection. There were also surveys provided to the focus group to glean their opinions.



Next, I provided sacred space to create a free and non-judgmental time to answer and share their honest views and feelings with us about us. The very group we sought to attract was a part of the focus group. This was a non-traditional, out-of-the-box move for Greater Faith, because we were accustomed to a pastor-driven ministry. This new research format allowed us to learn the unsullied truth from young adults which proved to be beneficial to our project. The challenge for the focus group was to be open and courageous enough to speak truthfully about why some of them were not coming to worship with us. They began by telling us that we needed to come out of the church walls to meet them.

We learned from them that Greater Faith can make an even larger impact if we stepped outside of our comfortable and insular surroundings. The focus group told us that an authentic, transformational impact might happen if they saw us on the outside, along with them. I learned that “God called us to make a transformational impact on the world and not to provide a carnival of frenetic activity for ourselves.”<sup>1</sup> A transformational impact can be felt by having real conversations in non-traditional places. It can also happen when we are open to critique by this specific group of people. Through our interactions, we also found that the focus group didn’t come to our church because they didn’t know us. We did not have a relationship with them.

Now that we’ve begun to talk, eat, and worship together, Greater Faith has become a little more open to engaging millennials. By stepping outside of the church and inviting the focus group into our community of faith, we soon realized that they were looking forward to having these genuine conversations regarding their concerns about the

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer *Transformational Church Transformational Church* (Nashville, TN: B& H Publishing Group, ,2010), 3.

role of the church in our community. Likewise, we were looking for ways to attract, engage, and keep millennials in our church. Because we are genuinely concerned about their salvation and our growth as believers, we ventured outside of our church community. By doing so, we showed them that we care. We soon realized through our interactions that coming outside of the church was the beginning of a relationship with the focus group. Once that happened, we began to witness to and with them. Through this radical process of gleaning from a focus group, a relationship built on mutual respect was developing. Ed Stetzer and Tom S. Rainer assert, “We treasure the concept of transformation because radical change is the heart of the Christian message because the power of the gospel changes everything: lives, churches and community.<sup>2</sup>” Coming out of the church walls was an innovative and risky technique for us, because it was different and new. To invite comments and concerns from unchurched as well as church young adults was necessary. It was a risk because it was extraordinary. It was radical because we were steeped in our own assumptions of who they were and what they believed. Our beliefs were based on media depictions and a lack of understanding as to who they truly were. But when we decided to venture out, we began to experience the power of the Gospel changing our lives as well as theirs. The gatherings were amazing!

The focus group met on the following dates:

1. June 8, 2018 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm;
2. June 23, 2018 from 1:00 pm to 3:00pm;
3. June 27, 2018 from 7:00pm to 9:00pm; and
4. July 11, 2018 from 7:00pm to 9:00pm.

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<sup>2</sup>Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church* (Nashville, TN: B& H Publishing Group, 2010), 176.

Through listening, we learned that the church must go beyond our own neighborhoods to meet millennials where they are as opposed to where we wanted them to be. The focus group told us that believers are called, challenged, and commissioned to evangelize to those who may not look like, talk like, and act like them. We learned that we needed to go beyond our four concrete church walls and reach out to them to do church differently as well. But in order to reach them, we had to be willing to meet them. The focus group told us that they were seeking to develop a relationship with those in the church. They informed us that we could start by inviting them to a worship service specifically tailored for them and introduce them to other members. They told us that millennials want to feel comfortable and welcomed in church. We found out how they felt about Greater Faith during our June 8, 2018 meeting.

At that time, I administered a “Pre-Test,” a “Post-Test,” and an “Unchurched Millennial Survey” to the focus group (*See Appendix*). I initially thought they would not want to answer these questions. This view was based upon my assumptions of young people being disinterested in church life. I was wrong. Based on the feedback of the tests administered, the LAC and Ministerial Team learned that some 32-year-old females are interested in social justice issues and are looking for a social network of support. We also learned that while young adults are leaving the church, a lot of them are members of a local church. They have just been disconnected. From the perspective of a 21-year-old male, we learned that millennials believe that the church is too judgmental. They would like to see the church focus on “making disciples” and “relationship building.” This young man also felt that there was too much hypocrisy inside the church walls. However,

he also said that if he were to join a church, he would be totally committed. Finally, this young man wants the church to listen, appreciate, and include millennials in church life.

Based on the test results and conversation afterwards, it was clear that we misunderstood them. The members of this focus group want to engage us and be a part of something that includes their thoughts and views about life, ministry, community, and God. We could no longer assume that we knew how they felt. Therefore, we had to lay aside our assumptions about millennials and meet them where they were.

## 2. *Lay Aside Assumptions*

The next time the focus group met was June 23, 2018. At that time, we centered our discussions on laying aside our assumptions of them. I administered an “Unchurched Millennial Survey” to the focus group (*See Appendix*). This gathering space proved to be an eye-opener for us! From them, we learned that the church must stop assuming what millennials think and what they know. Instead, the focus group advised us that we must invite them to church and have meaningful conversations with open feedback. They said that the church must not only hear them, but also listen intently to what they are saying. As we understood, once this active listening and engaging process happens, we can begin to address their needs and desires of the church and community. Instead of assuming what they think, know, and feel, the focus group talked about how we might ask them what they are seeking from us. Based on this overarching need to ask, we talked about some of the assumptions the church had about millennials. They listened to us.

We stated that some millennials appear to be lazy, entitled, high maintenance, resentful of authority, drifters of responsibility, addicted to social media and technology, and want accolades for their accomplishments. Some of these views were based on

interactions with young people in our families and from social media news outlets. Based on these assumptions, there was very little interaction with millennials in the church absent some traditional church programs (such as feeding the homeless and New Year's Eve Service). From the focus group, we learned that these assumptions do not accurately depict all millennials. Some might just be uninterested in church life. However, that small percentage does not describe all of them. We realized that millennials are innovative, critical thinkers and truth seekers. Many of them are college-educated, while others are comfortable working with their hands. Many are getting married and starting their own families. Many are concerned about spiritual growth. The focus group informed us that some of them are ready to assume leadership roles and belong to a church that is responsive to their needs. They asked us to look at them through the prism of who they are as opposed to the assumptions of a few. As their need for a relationship with a church increases, the focus group talked about how they view church, change, ministry, and leadership. I've attached 4 survey responses that were submitted by individuals who couldn't attend the meeting that day, but still were a part of the Focus Group. I've summarized their responses below.

**Genese Waithe:** Genese believes that church traditions can be relaxed somewhat to help others come to know Christ and grow. She also views the church as a hospital that should have folks lead others to Christ. The church ought to "assist and uplift" others.

**Tanyelle Farrison:** Tanyelle is a member of another church. As she sees it, her church has begun to break away from tradition. They now are free to worship in jeans, which is groundbreaking for them. She sees the church as a "beacon of light where you are loved to pieces." She sees the church as a place where healing occurs, but also as a place where you can be nurtured into your purpose."

**Shakeda Davis:** Shakeda believes that the church should have "meet and greets" with millennials so that they can see what the church is all about. Her greatest concern about the church deals with people developing

misconceptions of church. For her, the church ought to “open the eyes of non-believers to what God can really do.”

**Darius Hutchings:** He believes that the church is not taken seriously by those in and out of the church. He doesn't want to be judged or looked down upon at church. Darius believes we can attract them by “staying connected to the community.” His greatest concern is that millennials are “made a mockery by the ones inside of the church.” Darius believes that the church should be the “center of the community like it used to be.”

The honest dialogue in the June 23rd meeting, coupled with the written feedback of the 4 surveys, was necessary and important in order to dispel assumptions, which tend to divide, destroy, and discourage millennials from coming in and growing our church. After much discussion, we realized that laying aside assumptions allowed them to come to the conversation table on the same footing. Once they were perceived as our equals, truthful conversation began. Upon reflection, I now see that this was not complicated. We simply needed to spend time with very people we wanted to attract. As a ministerial team, we also discovered that when we opened ourselves to critique and suggestions from them, the relationship of respect was slowly being developed. The more we got to know one other, the more we grew. The more we grew, the more we wanted to come together as equals. This coming together through fellowship allowed us to break tradition and encourage millennials to sit on the empty pews.

We learned that our traditional way of attracting millennials does not speak to them. Traditionally, the invitation to discipleship is extended after the preaching of the Word. Those who are unchurched are invited to come to the altar and give their lives to Jesus Christ. Our focus group told us that millennials are not responding to this type of evangelistic pressure. Millennials love the individual approach to discipleship. The focus group also told is that they prefer a one-on-one conversation with someone. They want to hear faith formation stories and personal witness accounts of those who have accepted

Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They are responsive to small group gatherings where we talk about the Bible. Bill Easmus and John Adams assert, “Small groups change lives better than any other ministry in Church.”<sup>3</sup> Our small group meetings with the focus group did just that.

We learned that in order to effectively engage millennials, we must know their culture and needs. In order to become “fishers of men” we must use the right bait that is attractive to millennials. We must be careful to use the right language and the right approach. We learned that millennials are great thinkers who ponder on matters before making a commitment. We discovered that they are bold and outspoken people who yearn to be taken seriously. They want to partner with us.

### 3. *Enlist Partners*

The next time the focus group met was on June 27, 2018. As this was our third gathering, we were more at ease with one another than when we initially met. More than feeling comfortable, the playing field was leveled. In doing so, each person involved was a part of the process. All views were now valued, respected and welcomed. In the beginning, we exchanged pleasantries, but were not fully engaging. However, once we heard them, the LAC and Ministerial Team soon realized that the members of the focus group played an integral part in helping us grow as they grew. They were coming to the table of partnership.

The focus group suggested that we enlist trained young adults who can further help reach unchurched people like them. They even offered names of young pastors, preachers, and community organizers who are smart, educated, and know how to draw

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<sup>3</sup>Bill Easmus and John Atkinson *GO BIG: Eleven Steps to an Explosive Small Group Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 3.

millennials into church. They also told us that some millennials pose a unique challenge, since they seem to be abandoning the traditional church form of faith formation and worship, which included traditional evangelistic methods. To address their needs and provide a hospitable place for them, the focus group suggested that Greater Faith host events for millennials and partner with other millennials from other churches to lead the gathering.

What we learned that in order to attract, energize, and retain millennials, the church must specifically reach out to and plan with young adults as equal partners. If we do this, the preconceived notions and presumptions they have about the church could begin to diminish. We learned from the focus group that Greater Faith should not plan an event and then invite them to attend. Doing it that way simply means that they are spectators. If we asked them to partner with us from the very beginning, they will take ownership in the event and invite others like them to participate. We were told that they bring expertise to the table and that their voices need to be a part of the discussion. We realized that we need their ideas, energy, and feedback to get to know one another and share experiences that impact our church and community. They are looking for people who are Christ-committed, culturally conscious, and community-connected Christians. By coming together, the church and millennials could meet at a point of intersection, which will allow room for reevaluation and frank discussion about what divides us.

From listening to understand, we learned that everyone is needed to carry out this great evangelistic thrust. The pastor, ministers, members, and millennials must be able to work together to grow, to build, and to unite. The focus group informed us that there must be a collaborative effort made by the church to enlist them as partners. It can't just



be the pastor alone, because those efforts will go away when the pastor isn't there. What I learned is, that if millennials, who are the largest segment of our population, remain unchurched, they will remain outside of the church. Therefore, it is imperative that the church begins to listen to their legitimate concerns about God, community, and church. The LAC realized that we must learn to listen to their stories and have a point of intersection where we can just come together. Nothing may be resolved overnight, because it takes time. However, we can begin by treating them as valuable equals who we can learn from based on our ministry context.

At Greater Faith, our partners include the focus group, the LAC, the ministerial staff of the Greater Faith, and the millennials. These partners have played an important role in the implementation of this project. As partners, we realized that Greater Faith does not have all the answers. We would not have been able to fully grasp the meaning of this project without all of these partners. Each set of partners had a specific role to play. The church gave insight about tradition and existing programs. The ministers provided spiritual insight on long-standing traditions and the relevance of scripture. The focus group truly helped us realize what to do and what not to do in order to have them be a part of our journey. As the pastor and doctoral candidate, I realized that I needed to be stretched to reach out to this specific group of people. I also realized that I have a voice as the new leader. My voice was different from my husband, the former pastor. I began to trust in my instincts and leadership capabilities, which included thinking outside of the traditional box. I enlisted and empowered them as partners. From the surveys given to the focus group, we learned a little more about partnerships. I've summarized a few of their responses below.

**Jewell Curry:** Jewell observed that millennials are open-minded and free-thinking people. She cautioned the church about condemning their views or questioning their beliefs if we want to partner with them. She asked that we be open to their passion for justice and issues impacting our community. For Jewell, the church, as the “backbone of the community” should partner with them to address homelessness, a lack of jobs, gun violence, and the killing of black men.

**Suzette Bailey:** Suzette believes that some young adults can be stubborn. However, she also says that they should be “spoken to not spoken of.” In other words, treat them as equal partners. Suzette asked that the church begin to use social media to engage them. She asked that we do more “outreach at social events” by use of the media. She sees the church as a “haven for the community.” Suzette would like to partner with us to make sure that we hear her voice concerning social media and safe space for truth telling about the church.

**Jeremy Johnson:** Jeremy is a minister. For him, he’s there to assist the church and pastor in teaching scripture to young people. He sees his role as a partner who assists in delivering one “cohesive message” to young people. His one critique of the church is that some pastors don’t fully embrace the various social platforms young people use to communicate with one another. To partner, we must understand that the future generation of the church is our young people. Jeremy believes that the church should partner with the community on social justice matters, as they are a real concern for millennials.

From these surveys of the focus group, we learned that millennial partners are responsible and dedicated people who are willing to launch out with us. In order to do so, we needed to lay aside tradition.

#### **4. *Lay Aside Traditions***

Tradition is “an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action or behavior such as a religious practice or social custom.”<sup>4</sup> Traditionally and culturally, the African American Church has been the apex of our community. Today, the church provides the community with a safe space for Christian education, spiritual practice, worship, organizing childcare programs, schools, food pantries and soup kitchens. The

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<sup>4</sup>Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2018).

church has been the fundamental driving force in our community. The community relied upon the leadership of the church as a moral institution that gives spiritual care to the members and guides them in their spiritual lives.

From our focus group, we learned that in addition to coming out of our church walls, laying aside assumption, and forming partnerships, we must lay aside the traditions of the African American Church. What worked for my generation will not work for millennials today. Millennials do not like to do things because “this is the way we used to do it.” Traditionally, the church has gone about doing church the same way for more than fifty years. What worked then is considered to be obsolete by millennials. In order to grow, we must see that “it is not new programs but a renewed vision, and a new way about thinking about and doing church.”<sup>5</sup> There has been a decline in our mainline churches. Leaders must use the right concepts and strategies to foster changes and producing the right results while “cultivating in their church a heart for the unchurched.”<sup>6</sup>

From the focus group, we discovered that millennials want the freedom to be able to question why one is doing something. Their approach to ministry is different from the Baby Boomers. According to the millennials in the focus group, traditions are partly responsible for the decline in their church membership. At Greater Faith, the church leadership has not changed in 20 years. Yet change is necessary in order to carry out ministry properly. Surprisingly, the focus group shared with us that some traditions should be kept. Our family continues to come together on Sunday afternoons and all holidays. Our meals are reserved for our extended family, friends, and some church

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<sup>5</sup>Adam Hamilton “*Leading Beyond the Walls*” Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Id. 14.

family. We are four generations of relatives who are gathered to eat our meals together, talk about issues that affect our families, and enjoy one another's company. We are intentional about our relationships across generations. Our God is a God of generations. He "is a God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Genesis 28:13). Most of the focus group wants to maintain this tradition. Yet they want us to make way for them to come into our fellowship, as well.

How can the church carry on the work of God across generations, if a segment of our society is unchurched? God's work goes from one generation to the next, and we cannot afford to lose a generation of millennials. It is beneficial for millennials to be mentored by our elders. Regardless of our age, we all need people who will steer us in the right direction and help us to stay the course. One of the greatest blessings of my life has been sharing time and space with my mother, who is 98 years old. She has shared her stories, lessons of how she overcame and persevered in her faith, during difficult times in her life, especially during the Jim Crow Era. The stories have served as a source of strength and hope for the future. Our millennials need hope. They need those who have gone through life challenges to assure them that God is present with them in their life journey. God has promised "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Therefore, leaders should be trained in our churches to cultivate a mentoring ministry that are not only ethnically diverse, but also cross-generational.

Millennials in the focus group advised us that they learn a lot from previous generations that have gone on before them. I shared with them a story about this very concept. My grandfather told me when "Roots" was first televised that his father and eleven other family members bought the community of Dunbar in which they lived. The

property was purchased from owners of the Rice Hope Plantation, in South Carolina. They bought 630 acres at \$0.25 per acre. This acreage was purchased for \$157.25, which was a lot of money for poor Black folk. This was a part of our family history I did not know until my grandfather began telling me about my family history, and he learned something from me as well. Just as we learned from one another, so too must millennials. They want to be mentored in Bible study or small groups. Yet, they want to be treated as rationally thinking adults who have valued opinions. Traditionally speaking, this was not the case. Young people were seen and not heard in terms of major decision making in the church.

The church can no longer afford to wait for millennials to attend church on Sunday morning. We must go outside and invite the millennials in. The church has been commissioned to “go yet therefore into all the world” (Matthew 28:19). We must be able to witness, tell our personal stories and talk about our relationship with Jesus Christ. In order to reach millennials, we must be willing to go where they are or invite them to a safe space, less intimidating than the Church’s sanctuary. “Mentors provide a safe, confidential place for them to tell their unedited stories of life in ministry.”<sup>7</sup> I agree that a safe place is important for millennials to feel free to talk about issues that affect their life and ministry. Millennials want to cultivate a relationship with a mentee who can have an impact on their lives. A committed mentoring relationship allows millennials to witness firsthand the relationship and presence one shares with Christ. Moreover, “we shape our lives and give meaning and coherence to them through telling personal stories, family stories, group stories, faith stories, and cultural histories. Likewise, we are shaped

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<sup>7</sup>Richard L. Hester and Keli Walker-Jones “*Know Your Story and Lead With It*” (Herdon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009), 41.

by the family's cultural and religious stories we hear from parents, school, media and the house of worship all around us.<sup>8</sup> In the African American Church, mentoring is a crucial part of fellowship, spiritual development, spiritual discipline, and social justice.

Traditionally, the church has been a place where millennials did as they were instructed. The focus group told us that some of them felt that we considered them to be immature and ill-equipped to handle the affairs of the church. Millennials are individuals who are born during the years 1980-2004. This group is about 75 million in the United States. The church today has seen a great "falling away" of millennials from our local congregations. If millennials continue to follow this pattern, the church will lose some valuable resources that millennials can provide for the ongoing operation of the church. In certain cultures, millennials were not a part of certain areas of ministry. They were not allowed to take on leadership roles. The younger people and millennials ushered, sang on the choir, and participated in the annual programs (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, Children's Day, and Christmas celebrations and plays) that were supervised by adults. Therefore, the young people and millennials, in a sense, stayed in their places.

From the focus group, we learned that the church needs to move away from what was traditionally done. If we don't, we'll continue to see this sharp decline in young adult membership. In order to lay aside our traditions, the focus group said the church must define what ways she might reinvent herself and reevaluate a fresh approach to ministry that includes them. The church must understand that millennials are more than an age group. They are a group of individuals who are tech-savvy and who care about the political, socio-economical, and spiritual direction of the church. We are living in a

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<sup>8</sup>Mary Clark Moschella "Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice" (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 5.

changing and diverse world and the church must be equipped to lead those who are unchurched. The church must be prepared to minister effectively to those young adults who are unchurched.

Since the primary purpose of the local church is to draw the unchurched people to the Christian faith, church is evangelistic in its purpose. Because reaching those who are unchurched is the ultimate purpose of the church, everything the church does from preaching to teaching, worshiping, and evangelizing should be determined by the needs of the unchurched. I have spoken to several millennials who have expressed their needs and desires. They want the church to address many issues. They feel that the church today is out of touch and doesn't have the faintest idea of what their concerns are. That may be true for some churches. Moreover, 20% of millennials surveyed by the Barna Group feel that God is absent from church. In fact, 31% felt that church was boring.<sup>9</sup>

Narrative researchers Carl Savage and William Presnell assert that "people and groups will often hold a portrait of their own self that cannot be sustained when viewed from other perspectives."<sup>10</sup> I have realized through the feedback from the focus group that what we think about for the church may not coincide with their thoughts of the church. From their perspective, we needed to do more. From our perspective, we thought we were doing just fine until we weren't.

Traditionally, Baby Boomers in my ministry context believe that if you are a Christian, you will become a member of the local church where you can carry out the Spirit of the church covenant. However, millennials from our focus group believe in God,

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<sup>9</sup> Barna Group, "What Millennials Want When They Visit Church," March 4, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research Ministry, A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities* (Louisville, KY Wayne E. Oats Institute, 2008), 31.

but do not necessarily feel the need to be a member of a church. Older people feel that they must be a member of the church to have a relationship with God. This is not so for millennials. It does not mean that they are not interested in religious matters. They believe in the existence of God, but not in the traditional religious format of worship inside a church building.

We learned that the church must discover innovative ways to engage millennials in critical conversations about a sense of belonging. Traditionally, the church has used the biblical text in sermons, testimonies, witnessing, and personal stories as a way to reach millennials. In this project, we took a sharp departure from tradition to reach them. We listened to the focus group and implemented another recommendation of bringing in a speaker to talk about evangelism for the 21st century. More specifically, on July 11, 2018, Revered Laron Russell, a church strategist, conducted a workshop on evangelism specifically geared towards millennials (*see attached*). Based upon the feedback of those in attendance, we learned a few more facts from unchurched millennials.

**Abdour Diallo:** Abdour is 19 years old. He is most concerned about poverty, crime, and a lack of affordable housing. Those are the issues that a church of the 21st century ought to be addressing. He would like the church to treat young adults with respect and love. He would totally commit himself to a church that speaks to these issues.

**Monique Miller:** Monique is 26 years old. The key issues for her include mental health, education, and social justice. She would like to see a church of the 21st century deal with discipleship building and evangelism. She would like to be a part of a church that meets you where you are and “not judge you right off the bat.” Like Abdour, she would be totally committed to a church that speaks to these issues.

Now that we’ve discussed the four areas of concern, our next task is to explore our purpose. Chapter 5 explains how we’ve placed the concerns in conversation with millennials to further unite Greater Faith in our quest to reach them.



## CHAPTER 5

### MOVING FORWARD

#### Reflections of the focus group process

The focus group was beneficial and informative. It has helped the church to look at millennials in a non-judgmental way and provide a safe space to listen and hear what is needed to attract, engage, and maintain millennials members. In this safe space, millennials were able to express themselves freely. The focus group will be an ongoing ministry of the church, because they connect with God more effectively in small group settings. The millennial participants want the focus group to continue after the completion of the project. They feel that the project is a valid avenue through which they will be able to reach the unchurched millennials continuously. They see that through this group they can convince others to come, ask questions, and express themselves. The new ministry will be named the “*WIN-GATE Focus Group*” (the winners’ gate for those who want the church to succeed). This ministry will be comprised of youth, adults, and seniors. They will all come together in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere and talk about issues pertaining to millennials and the church. A post-test and a debriefing form were given to each member of the focus group at the end of the project. We will also focus our efforts on “*mentoring millennials*” who have a calling on their lives to enter ministry. Finally, we will create a “*safe space for children of pastors*” to just breath, exhale, and talk to one another for they are in desperate need. These initiatives were birthed because of this project.

The project was implemented, and the results were shared with the LAC and ministerial staff of Greater Faith. A series of 3 questionnaires were given to the millennials, some of whom were churched, and some were unchurched. By churched, I mean members of a local church. Moreover, the unchurched are folks who do not belong to any local church. After evaluating the information, Greater Faith was able to assess the needs within the church and this specific age group. What we discovered was as follows:

1. Millennials were concerned about the welfare of the community;
2. Millennials want to see with church in action within this community;
3. They are concerned about the church's role in the community;
4. They want to be heard and have voice in the overall operation of the church;
5. They are concerned about social justice issues (racism, inequality, sex, drugs, housing, crime, violence, housing, education, police brutality, and unemployment);
6. They are concerned about the funds of the church and how monies are spent;
7. They are looking for a safe non-judgmental space to have meaningful conversations;
8. They want to see the core of Jesus Christ lived out in the life of the community;
9. They want to see an authentic and transparent pastor; and
10. Attracting and keeping millennials will require the concerted effort of the church.

Considering these revelations, I reviewed some material from the Religious Landscape Study of the Pew Research Center. In doing so, I realized that Greater Faith will need to reevaluate our Christian Education Ministry, reorganize our evangelism ministry, and train our Hospitality Ministry to be more hospitable and friendly to the unchurched who visit us (*See Appendix*).<sup>1</sup> Our engaging and attracting this specific group will require us to be more creative and open to new and fresh ideas that will inspire and empower them to work with us. We have already begun this process with our evangelistic thrust to make disciples. As the spiritual leader, it was important for me to make sure that millennials know that we support and believe in them. At the same time, however, I also recognize that some are unchurched and need guidance as to how a specific task needs to be carried out. I have observed that some of them struggle with what to do next when put in leadership positions. Therefore, the mentoring aspect of making disciples is very important to me. Accordingly, the results of the sample survey previously discussed served as valuable tools in our quest to partner with millennials and come to terms with their honest assessment of us. Moreover, in reevaluating how we do church and attract millennials based on those results, I was reminded of Jolene Cassellius Earlacher's perspective. Earlacher asserts that:

...millennials have grown up in culture where everything has been programmed or supervised for them. Therefore, when young adults are given freedom, they must also receive support to empower the implementation of their ideas.<sup>2</sup>

From our review of the surveys, we learned that millennials desire the support and feedback from us when they are given a task to do. They are concerned about what we

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<sup>1</sup>Pew Research Center; Religion & Public Life.

<sup>2</sup>Jolene Cassellius Erlacher "*Millennials In Ministry*," (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2014), 98.

think and how we view their work. They also want the pastor to be concerned about “their dreams and care about how we are going to reach them.”<sup>3</sup> In addition to these findings, 50% of younger millennials believe in God with absolute certainty and find religion to be very important in life.<sup>4</sup> These additional findings from the Pew Research Center let us know that millennials are serious about God and relationships with others in church.

I have learned a lot about myself as a spiritual leader, pastor, and mother throughout this process. Ministry is not easy. Moreover, enlisting partners (focus group, LAC, the Ministerial Team, and other clergy) is essential for any ministry to grow and operate effectively. It is necessary to work with millennials and share ideas as leaders so that God may be realized in the lives of all people involved in church growth. I believe God has a plan and purpose for the church. Moreover, I believe that “God’s Holy Spirit desires this generation to discern God’s will and competently lead the church through to seasons to come.”<sup>5</sup>

In reviewing the results, God not only allowed me to see me, I also saw those who can serve in leadership roles, evangelism teams, and in preaching/teaching the Word of God at church. Therefore, this project has reintroduced me to millennial populations from diverse denominations who are serving in various roles. The focus group allowed me to examine strategies to effectively engage, mentor, and empower millennials in ministry. The focus group also challenged Greater Faith to learn how to relate to millennials whose

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<sup>3</sup> Id. 98.

<sup>4</sup>Pew Research Center; Religion & Public Life.

<sup>5</sup>Id. 128.

worldview, preferences, and expectations may differ from their own. As Thomas S. Rainer asserts, “we have learned much.”<sup>6</sup> Because of this transformational experience, I have accepted the responsibility to motivate the unchurched to become a part of our community of believers. The “unchurched provides us with insights that we have previously heard,” but didn’t fully understand.<sup>7</sup>

I also realized that the focus group shared our narratives when we engaged one another. These conversations helped us gain valuable insight into “the unchurched who hold to some theistic beliefs.”<sup>8</sup> We also discovered, through engaging one another, that some of the unchurched believe in God, despite not belonging to an organized local church. In coming to this realization, Greater Faith must find out what unchurched millennials are seeking from a church. They have “unique gifts and insights into our churches, leaders, worship services, and evangelisms.”<sup>9</sup> In order to reach them, we need to find out what they need from us. Another revelation that came to me because of these surveys is to expect the unexpected. The focus group, LAC, and Ministerial Team exceeded my expectations. The millennials did not pacify me to get me away from them. I was amazed at their honesty, love, and commitment to the project and willingness to partner with us. They were energizing in their questions and wanted specific answers to the issues posed in the surveys. Their level of devotion to this project impressed me. Based on their answers, millennials are looking forward to what’s next and for further

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<sup>6</sup>Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer *Transformational Church* (B& H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN, 2010), 29.

<sup>7</sup>Id. 41.

<sup>8</sup>Id. 43.

<sup>9</sup>Id. 51.

engagement. They want the focus group to continue to reach out to others within our ministry context and geographical location. We are now of one accord! I think God is pleased.

My recommendation for Greater Faith is to continue to evangelize by partnering with millennials in our area and surrounding our church. I would like to invite them to our worship services, as well. Because the focus group wants to continue and it is healthy for our church, I will also conduct monthly meetings with our Ministerial Team to strategize and chart our progress in outreach to this specific group. Finally, we will continue to live out the love of Jesus Christ in our lives. In addition to these recommendations, the following ministry initiatives were birthed because of this project:

### ***1. The Win-Gate Focus Group***

Hamilton's sentiments spoke to members of the focus group:

The two times when the unchurched are most likely to attend worship are Easter or Christmas .<sup>10</sup>

Our members know that Easter and Christmas are for the unchurched and that the sermons will be very basic. They will be aimed at helping nonreligious person understand the significance of Easter and Christmas for their daily lives.<sup>11</sup>

In order to attract millennials, the church needs to go on a fishing expedition.<sup>12</sup>

I must add that God not only speaks during the holidays, but all year round.

Moreover, Greater Faith must see themselves as a part of God's narrative in reaching others. In reaching the unchurched, we them become ambassadors of Jesus Christ. It is as

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<sup>10</sup> Id. 51.

<sup>11</sup> Id. 80.

<sup>12</sup> Id.

if God is making God's appeal through us for the world. In accepting this awesome role, we must move out of the antiquated notion that the holidays are only for us to save those who are lost. "We are the church that embraces and brings together traditional and contemporary expression[s]" to reach all people.<sup>13</sup> One of the purposes of this ministry initiative is to continue our dialogue of wringing souls for Christ all year round and not just on holidays. Moving forward, the "WIN GATE Focus Group" will meet monthly on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm. After each meeting, a fellowship hour will be held where group members and new attendees will get an opportunity to meet each other and ask questions of concern.

## ***2. Mentoring Millennials in Ministry***

Mentoring is an essential part of faith formation, especially when a local church wishes to reach millennials. This requires a process that entails recruiting mentors who are knowledgeable about and know how to preach to share with those who wish to learn.

When nonreligious persons think of sermons in the context of a church service, they often describe them as long, boring, or irrelevant.<sup>14</sup>

In listening to some of the responses to our biblical focus scriptures, it became apparent that some of the millennials have a calling to preach the Gospel. However, they need mentors to help them along the way. They need someone to show them how God can be seen in what may be a long, boring and or seemingly irrelevant sermons. God gave me a vision to partner with a few clergy to create small group sessions with those millennials who would like to be trained in practical protocol tips in ministry. It is my

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<sup>13</sup> Id. 205.

<sup>14</sup>Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls, Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, , 2012), 78.

prayerful expectation that this small group will teach them how to lead worship, create sermon manuscripts, and just be a mentoring presence for them.

### ***3. Safe Space for Children of Pastors***

In having a few group meetings and intently listening to their conversations, I realized that children of pastors, who are now young adults, are hurting. Some of these are millennials. My own son, Josh, made this painfully clear at the very beginning of this journey. I have come to realize that we, as pastors, can spend an inordinate amount of time tending to the needs of others and forget about our own children. We can be a public success but a private failure. While we are helping the world, our children are thinking unspeakable things (suicide, drug abuse, depression). There needs to be a safe space for them to talk, to seek help, and to heal. I am so moved to create this safe space for children of pastors. It is desperately needed.



## CONCLUSION

Is it possible for mainline churches not only to survive but the thrive? <sup>1</sup>

In order for our churches to increase in membership, not by ignoring our historic mainline roots and theology, but by embracing them and translating these for a new generation. <sup>2</sup>

The sentiments articulated by Hamilton speak to my journey in this project at Greater Faith. As we saw from the very beginning, we knew a change was coming based on our pastor, my husband's illness. Yet, we did not know that change was already percolating in the hearts and minds of some of our members. Indeed, we are a church that has been steeped in the tradition advanced by and fully embraced by my husband. It was great for that time period. However, we were changing and our community was evolving. Our ministry context needed to invite millennials into our church community. Greater Faith is a church that is growing into embracing our rich tradition, but also making room for "contemporary expression of faith and worship" that the millennials advance. <sup>3</sup> Through our partnership with the focus group, we soon realized that God speaks to all peoples, church and unchurched. Once we embraced this biblical principle, we slowly began to see that Greater Faith is a part of a larger mission to change the world through acceptance, faith, and fellowship. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls, Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 202.

<sup>2</sup>Id. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Id. 205

<sup>4</sup> Id. 208.

As the pastor and doctoral candidate, I also saw how Thom S. Rainer provided valuable information to help me lead Greater Faith to reaching the unchurched. Rainer said, “A church must have a purpose, it cannot wander aimlessly and hope to make a difference in the kingdom.”<sup>5</sup> Our purpose was deconstructed then reconstructed in our journey. We tore down the old way of thinking that the older church members knew what was best for reaching the unchurched. We dismantled our antiquated notion of doing church the same old way and seeing no results. We begin to embrace openness of new thought. By having a focus group comprised of the very people we wanted to be a part of our church community, we opened ourselves to critique, but also to growth under the Great Commission. Our work together was energizing, fulfilling, and informative. I was truly blessed to have had the opportunity to hear the concerns of the unchurched as well as listen to the sharp but genuine critiques of my leadership from my own son, Joshua. It has made our relationship stronger as mother and son and as pastor and minister.

Moreover, our interaction with millennials through their honesty, love of God, and sincerity was transformational. I thought I knew what they were thinking. I was wrong. I was able to help some members lay aside preconceived notions, prejudices, and biases towards this group of people and listen to them. They know something about the love of God and about church. They spoke to the judgmental spirit of our church. Through our safe space during these focus group meetings, I learned how adamant they are in their beliefs of who God is to them and how the church ought to meet their needs. During our meetings, we learned that millennials are not going to respond the way we want them to just because we said so. They will act and do what they will in any given

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<sup>5</sup>Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer *Transformational Church* (B& H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN, 2010), 65.

situation. It's not to say they are a wayward group of young adults. Instead, we saw a rationally thinking group of people who admitted to needing some help from us. They are a new, exciting generational group of believers and unchurched group that have positive qualities. They are open, liberal, and expressive and want to collaborate with us.

In the beginning, I thought I would have to practically beg them to participate. Boy, was I out of touch! They were just as willing and open to dialogue as we were. They were grateful to have a forum for which they could discuss issues that confront them about church, God, community, and faith. This focus group was extended to other millennials from churches within our surrounding communities. When we came together, the millennials were able to share fellowship and speak to evangelism, which awakened a liberating consciousness in all of us. From our meeting together, we began to talk about how to reach this group in nontraditional ways. I vividly recall a conference call meeting with Rev. Dr. Zoleka Adams. The millennials talked about reaching Jesus Christ over lunch at a new restaurant called "Plant Wings." It is known for serving great chicken wings. Who knew! From that conference call meeting with the focus group, I soon realized that to get this job done, I needed the millennials as allies. Through the power of prayer, God provides the provision for these new allies at Greater Faith. Moreover, I firmly believed that this project was a God-ordained move. As such, I knew within my heart that it was worth the risk. God, through Jesus Christ, was a risk taker. Jesus took a risk on us when Jesus told us to go, teach, preach, and baptize as a way of making disciples to all the nations. Jesus didn't say who would be included or excluded but that Jesus would be with us.

Greater Faith, the focus group, and I took this journey together and did unusual things by out of the box thinking. We didn't go in the traditional front door to meet millennials. We took the roof off of our minds by doing something so unique and different. We sat down and invited them in. They came and sat down with us. It was amazing! It is my prayer that you, the reader, have gained some insight from our journey. I also pray that it assists you in examining church growth with millennials within your ministry context. Trust me they are waiting just for your invitation. Amen.

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Luke 5:1-4; 17-20

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**Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Kimberly K. Holmes**  
**“Expand our Boundaries, Reaching the Millennials”**

**Focus Scripture(s):** Luke 5:1-4; and Matthew 28:18-20.

**Luke 5:1-4 New King James Version (NKJV): Four Fishermen Called as Disciples**

5 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, 2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. 3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

**Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)**

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

***Word-shop Objectives: Discuss ways:***

To organize and train an evangelism team who will partner with the church;

To reach millennials who are unchurched in our community;

To expand our evangelistic boundaries;

To target a certain segment of the population, ages 18-35 who are living in our surrounding community;

To energize, transform and make new disciples; and

To stimulate church growth.

**Look at this picture and explain what you see?**



**Volunteer Reader: Luke 5:1-4**

**Reflection Questions:** Explain what is meant by launch out? In what ways might we launch into the deep? What does it mean to let down? How might we let down our nets to catch fish?

**Section 1: The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19): What is evangelism?**

- A. teaching others about Jesus Christ and salvation
- B. a lifestyle—living our lives simply and in order to draw others to the light of God.

**Note:** Israel was established as a nation to be a blessing and a light to the nations around them, and then draw people to God through their example. Likewise, we should also be salt and light to the world...drawing people to the Lord by our example.

C. faith and belief in the “good news,” that is shown in Jn. 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

- D. share how the Lord has changed our lives.



**Note:** One way to explain the good news of the gospel of Christ is in Rom. 10:9 when the Paul wrote “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

**Reflection Question:** What are you talking about when you see a young person?

**Section II: 4 Requirements of God in Matthew 28:19-20: Focus Areas Are:**

- Go
- Make disciples
- Baptize them
- Teaching them

OLD MODEL	NEW MODEL
Interruption	Engagement
Reaction	Interaction
Attendance	Empowered Participants
Big Promises	Personal Gestures
Members	Partners

**Reflection Question:** In what ways might we adopt the New Model to meet the requirements of Matthew 28:19-20?

Explain the difference between interruption vs engagement?

How does reaction differ from interaction?

What is the difference between a member vs. a partner or disciple?

**Section III. Expanding our Borders to Reach Millennials: Focus Areas Are:**

“Christians are called to be evangelists and to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to all people. We cannot be afraid of or embarrassed by this call, but rather we should embrace what the apostle Paul states in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

***How?***

- Sharing, preaching and teaching about Jesus in the streets or in our homes to everyone in our path;
- Living as a light or a shining example of what a Christian represents;
- Showing that God is love;
- Mirroring and reflect that love to everyone through our words and actions;
- Loving as Christ loved, filled with the fruit of the spirit; and
- True evangelism flowing from following Christ.

**Look at this picture and explain it means to you?**



**Parting Evangelism Reflections:**

**Reflection 1:** If we follow Jesus we'll be hospitable like he was and we'll fish like he did too!

**Reflection 2:** Fish first in the pond you know best, the church. Invite millennials to baptisms, baby dedications,

**Reflection 3:** Fishers who love to fish love to fish in new waters, too! Practice hospitality evangelism in your own church first, but let the Holy Spirit pull you into fishing new waters, to reach "outsiders" for Christ.

*Evangelism Litany*

*“Expand our Boundaries, Reaching the Millennials” “*

1. **Reader:** Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).

**All: I am committed.**

2. **Reader:** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20).

**All: I am committed.**

3. **Reader:** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd (John 10:16).

**All: I am committed.**

4. **Reader:** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

**All: I am committed.**

5. **Reader:** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

**Conclusion: Volunteer:** Prayer for God to Give us God's heart so that we might evangelize.



# Pew Research Center

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## Religious Landscape Study

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 TOPICS & QUESTIONS ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/#TOPICS-QUESTIONS](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/#TOPICS-QUESTIONS))  
 USER GUIDE ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/ABOUT-THE-RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/](http://www.pewforum.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/))

### Religious composition of younger Millennials

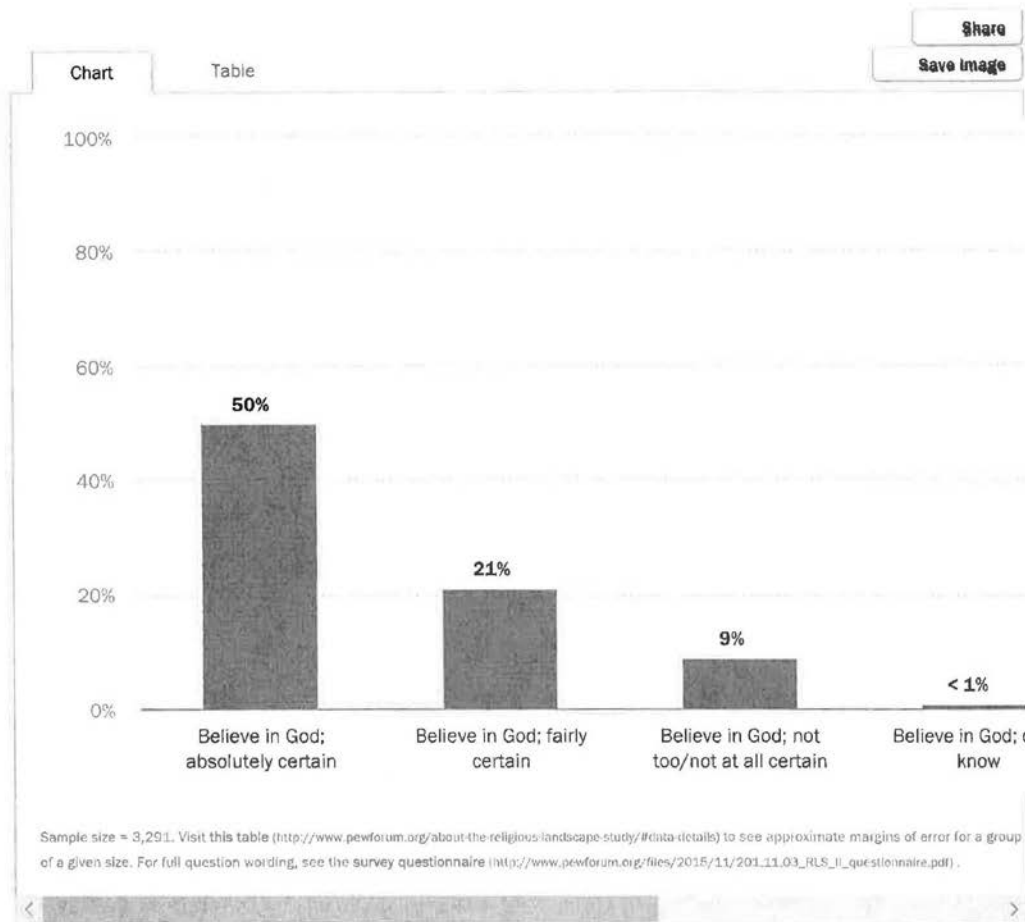
<b>Christian</b>	56%
▶ <b>Evangelical Protestant</b>	19%
▶ <b>Mainline Protestant</b>	11%
▶ <b>Historically Black Protestant</b>	6%
<b>Catholic</b>	16%
▶ <b>Mormon</b>	2%
▶ <b>Orthodox Christian</b>	1%
<b>Jehovah's Witness</b>	1%
▶ <b>Other Christian</b>	< 1%
<b>Non-Christian Faiths</b>	8%
<b>Jewish</b>	2%
<b>Muslim</b>	2%
<b>Buddhist</b>	1%
<b>Hindu</b>	1%
<b>Other World Religions</b>	< 1%
▶ <b>Other Faiths</b>	2%

<b>Unaffiliated (religious "nones")</b>	36%
<b>Atheist</b>	6%
<b>Agnostic</b>	7%
<b>► Nothing in particular</b>	23%
<b>Don't know</b>	1%

BELIEFS ★ AND ★ PRACTICES

**Belief in God among younger Millennials**

*% of younger Millennials who say they...*

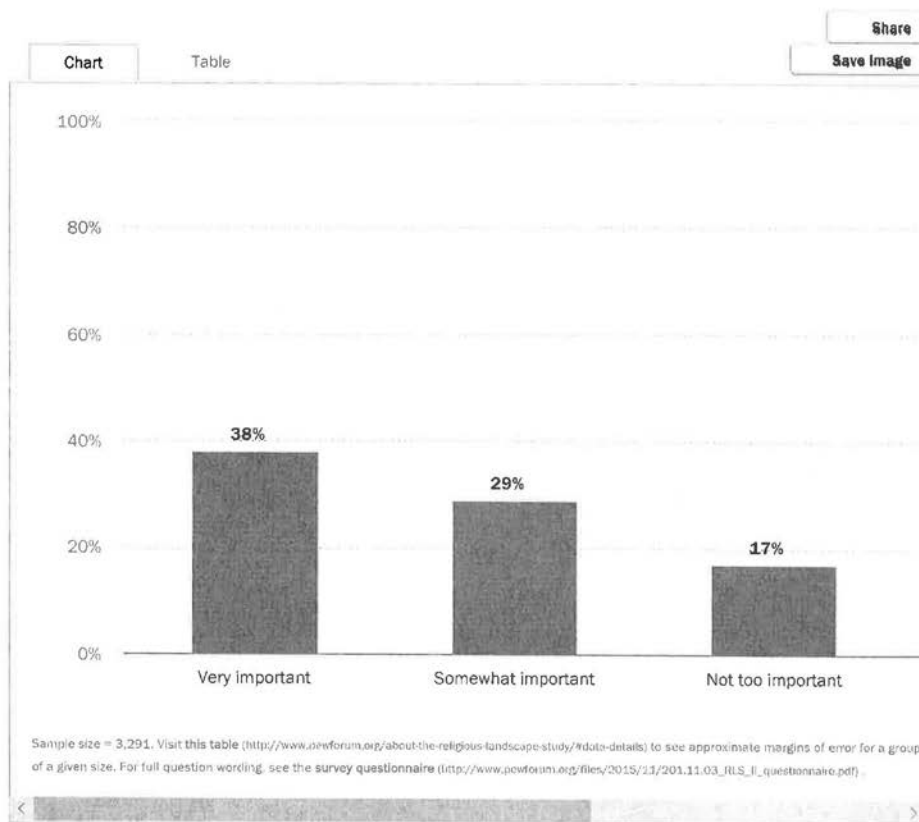


**COMPARE:** BELIEF IN GOD BY GENERATIONAL GROUP (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/belief-in-god/by-generational-cohort/>)

**LEARN MORE:** BELIEF IN GOD ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-GOD/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-god/)), BELIEVE IN GOD; ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-GOD/BELIEVE-IN-GOD-ABSOLUTELY-CERTAIN/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-god/believe-in-god-absolutely-certain/)), BELIEVE IN GOD; FAIRLY CERTAIN ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-GOD/BELIEVE-IN-GOD-FAIRLY-CERTAIN/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-god/believe-in-god-fairly-certain/)), BELIEVE IN GOD; NOT TOO/NOT AT ALL CERTAIN ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-GOD/BELIEVE-IN-GOD-NOT-TOO-NOT-AT-ALL-CERTAIN/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-god/believe-in-god-not-too-not-at-all-certain/)), DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-GOD/DO-NOT-BELIEVE-IN-GOD/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-god/do-not-believe-in-god/))

### Importance of religion in one's life among younger Millennials

% of younger Millennials who say religion is...



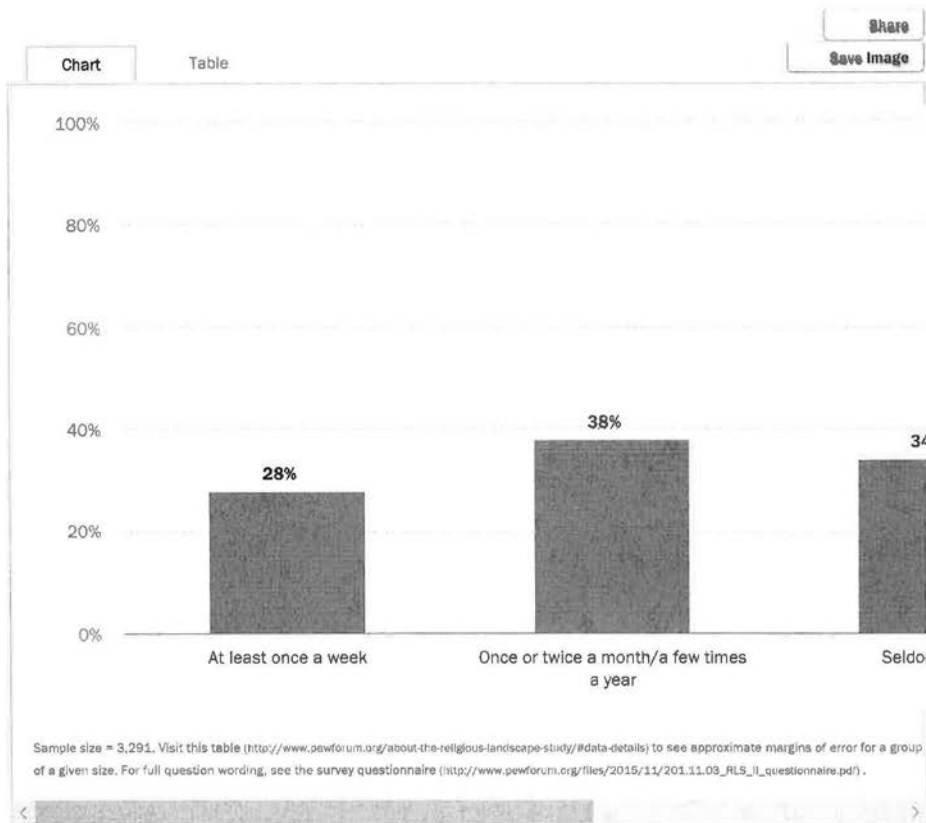
**COMPARE:** IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION BY GENERATIONAL GROUP ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/IMPORTANCE-OF-RELIGION-IN-ONES-LIFE/BY-GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/by-generational-cohort/))

**LEARN MORE:** IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN ONE'S LIFE ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/IMPORTANCE-OF-RELIGION-IN-ONES-LIFE/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/)), VERY IMPORTANT ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/IMPORTANCE-OF-RELIGION-IN-ONES-LIFE/VERY-IMPORTANT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/very-important/)), SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/IMPORTANCE-OF-RELIGION-IN-ONES-LIFE/SOMEWHAT-IMPORTANT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/somewhat-important/))

LIFE/SOMEWHAT-IMPORTANT/), NOT TOO IMPORTANT ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/IMPORTANCE-OF-RELIGION-IN-ONES-LIFE/NOT-TOO-IMPORTANT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/not-too-important/)), NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/IMPORTANCE-OF-RELIGION-IN-ONES-LIFE/NOT-AT-ALL-IMPORTANT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/not-at-all-important/))

### Attendance at religious services among younger Millennials

% of younger Millennials who attend religious services...



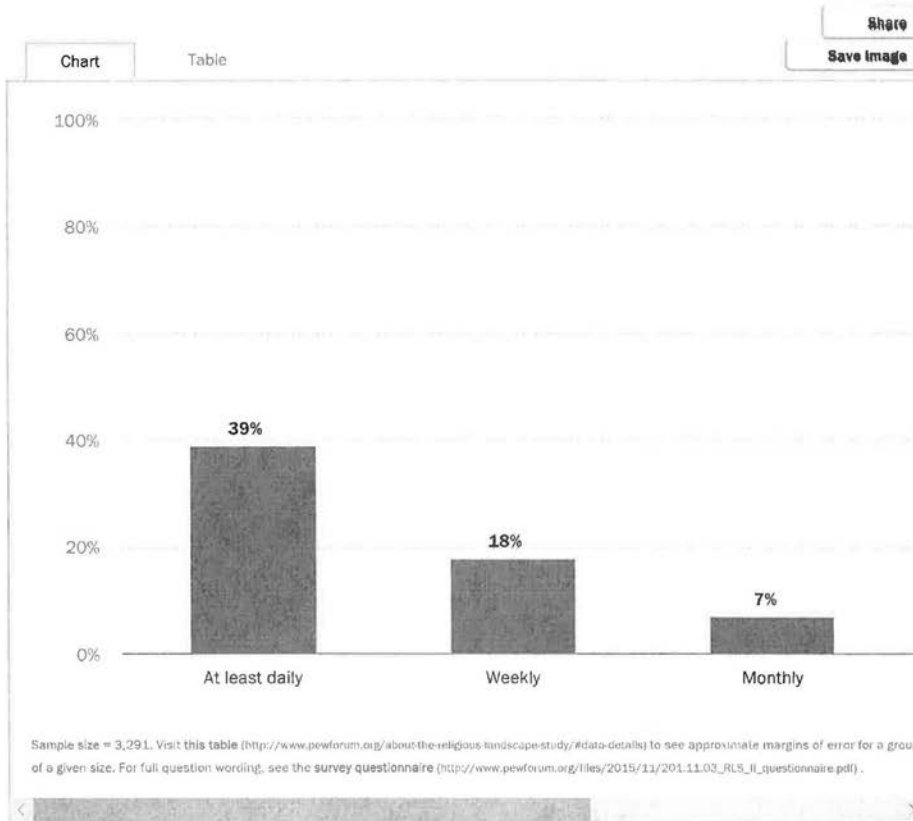
**COMPARE:** RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE BY GENERATIONAL GROUP ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/ATTENDANCE-AT-RELIGIOUS-SERVICES/BY-GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/attendance-at-religious-services/by-generational-cohort/))

**LEARN MORE:** ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/ATTENDANCE-AT-RELIGIOUS-SERVICES/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/attendance-at-religious-services/)), AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/ATTENDANCE-AT-RELIGIOUS-SERVICES/AT-LEAST-ONCE-A-WEEK/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/attendance-at-religious-services/at-least-once-a-week/)), ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH/A FEW TIMES A YEAR ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/ATTENDANCE-AT-RELIGIOUS-SERVICES/ONCE-OR-TWICE-A-MONTH-A-FEW-TIMES-A-YEAR/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/attendance-at-religious-services/once-or-twice-a-month-a-few-times-a-year/)), SELDOM/NEVER ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/ATTENDANCE-AT-RELIGIOUS-SERVICES/SELDOM-NEVER/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/attendance-at-religious-services/seldom-never/))



## Frequency of prayer among younger Millennials

% of younger Millennials who pray...



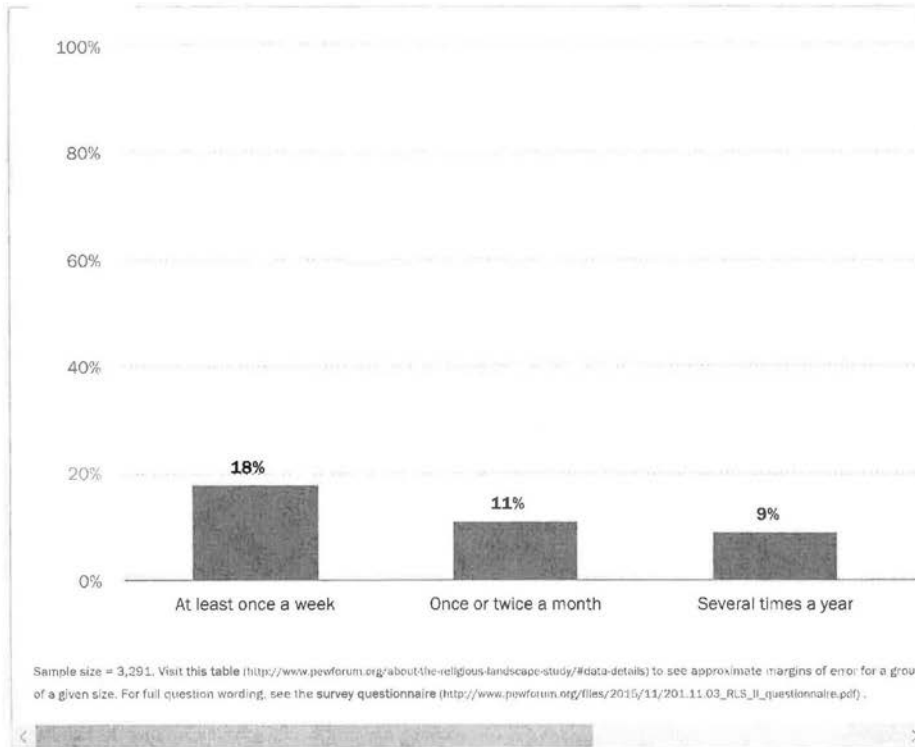
**COMPARE:** FREQUENCY OF PRAYER BY GENERATIONAL GROUP ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/FREQUENCY-OF-PRAYER/BY-GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/frequency-of-prayer/by-generational-cohort/))

**LEARN MORE:** FREQUENCY OF PRAYER ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-PRAYER/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-prayer/)), AT LEAST DAILY ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-PRAYER/AT-LEAST-DAILY/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-prayer/at-least-daily/)), WEEKLY ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-PRAYER/WEEKLY/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-prayer/weekly/)), MONTHLY ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-PRAYER/MONTHLY/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-prayer/monthly/)), SELDOM/NEVER ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-PRAYER/SELDOM-NEVER/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-prayer/seldom-never/))

## Frequency of participation in prayer, scripture study or religious education groups among younger Millennials

% of younger Millennials who attend prayer group...





**COMPARE:** ATTENDANCE AT PRAYER GROUPS BY GENERATIONAL GROUP (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/frequency-of-participation-in-prayer-scripture-study-or-religious-education-groups/by-generational-cohort/>)

**LEARN MORE:** FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATION IN PRAYER, SCRIPTURE STUDY OR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION GROUPS (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-participation-in-prayer-scripture-study-or-religious-education-groups/>), AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-participation-in-prayer-scripture-study-or-religious-education-groups/at-least-once-a-week/>), ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-participation-in-prayer-scripture-study-or-religious-education-groups/once-or-twice-a-month/>), SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-participation-in-prayer-scripture-study-or-religious-education-groups/several-times-a-year/>), SELDOM/NEVER (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-participation-in-prayer-scripture-study-or-religious-education-groups/seldom-never/>)

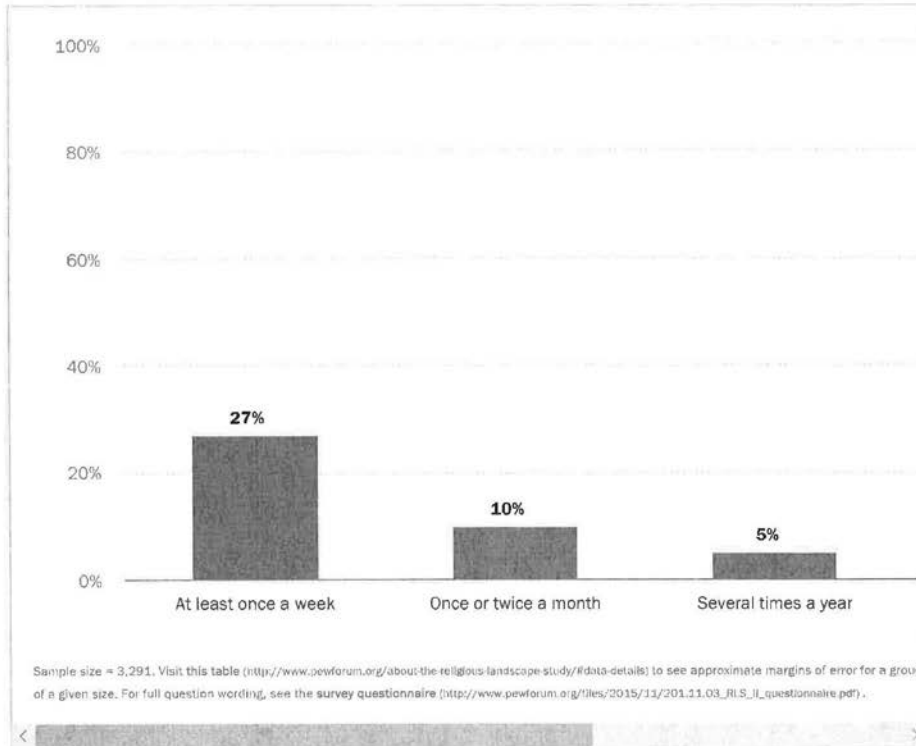
### Frequency of meditation among younger Millennials

% of younger Millennials who meditate...

Chart Table

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**COMPARE:** FREQUENCY OF MEDITATION BY GENERATIONAL GROUP ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/FREQUENCY-OF-MEDITATION/BY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/frequency-of-meditation/by/generational-cohort/))

**LEARN MORE:** FREQUENCY OF MEDITATION ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-MEDITATION/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-meditation/)), AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-MEDITATION/AT-LEAST-ONCE-A-WEEK/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-meditation/at-least-once-a-week/)), ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-MEDITATION/ONCE-OR-TWICE-A-MONTH/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-meditation/once-or-twice-a-month/)), SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-MEDITATION/SEVERAL-TIMES-A-YEAR/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-meditation/several-times-a-year/)), SELDOM/NEVER ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-MEDITATION/SELDOM-NEVER/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-meditation/seldom-never/))

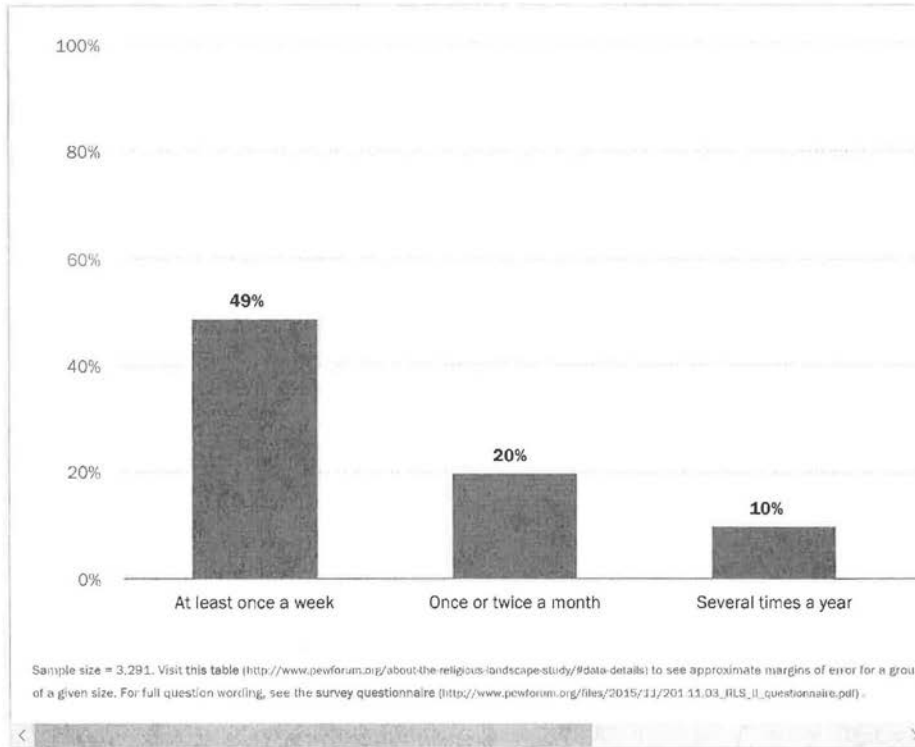
### Frequency of feeling spiritual peace and wellbeing among younger Millennials

*% of younger Millennials who feel a sense of spiritual peace and wellbeing...*

Chart

Table

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**COMPARE:** FREQUENCY OF FEELINGS OF SPIRITUAL WELLBEING BY GENERATIONAL GROUP ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-SPIRITUAL-PEACE-AND-WELLBEING/BY-GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/frequency-of-feeling-spiritual-peace-and-wellbeing/by-generational-cohort/))

**LEARN MORE:** FREQUENCY OF FEELING SPIRITUAL PEACE AND WELLBEING ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-SPIRITUAL-PEACE-AND-WELLBEING/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-spiritual-peace-and-wellbeing/)), AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-SPIRITUAL-PEACE-AND-WELLBEING/AT-LEAST-ONCE-A-WEEK/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-spiritual-peace-and-wellbeing/at-least-once-a-week/)), ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-SPIRITUAL-PEACE-AND-WELLBEING/ONCE-OR-TWICE-A-MONTH/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-spiritual-peace-and-wellbeing/once-or-twice-a-month/)), SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-SPIRITUAL-PEACE-AND-WELLBEING/SEVERAL-TIMES-A-YEAR/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-spiritual-peace-and-wellbeing/several-times-a-year/)), SELDOM/NEVER ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-SPIRITUAL-PEACE-AND-WELLBEING/SELDOM-NEVER/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-spiritual-peace-and-wellbeing/seldom-never/))

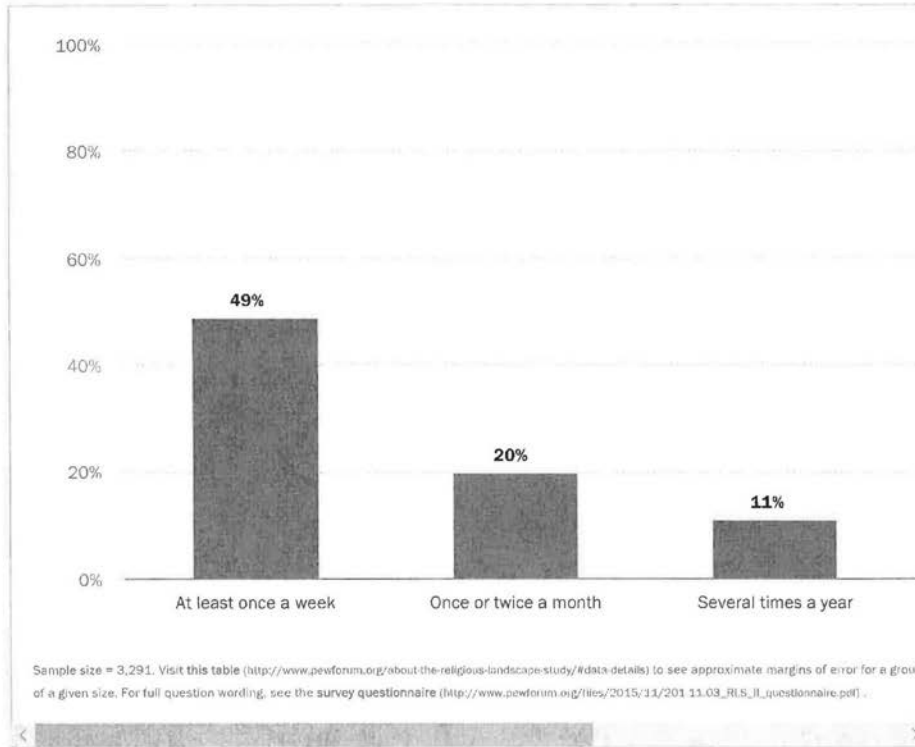
### Frequency of feeling wonder about the universe among younger Millennials

*% of younger Millennials who feel a sense of wonder about the universe...*

Chart

Table

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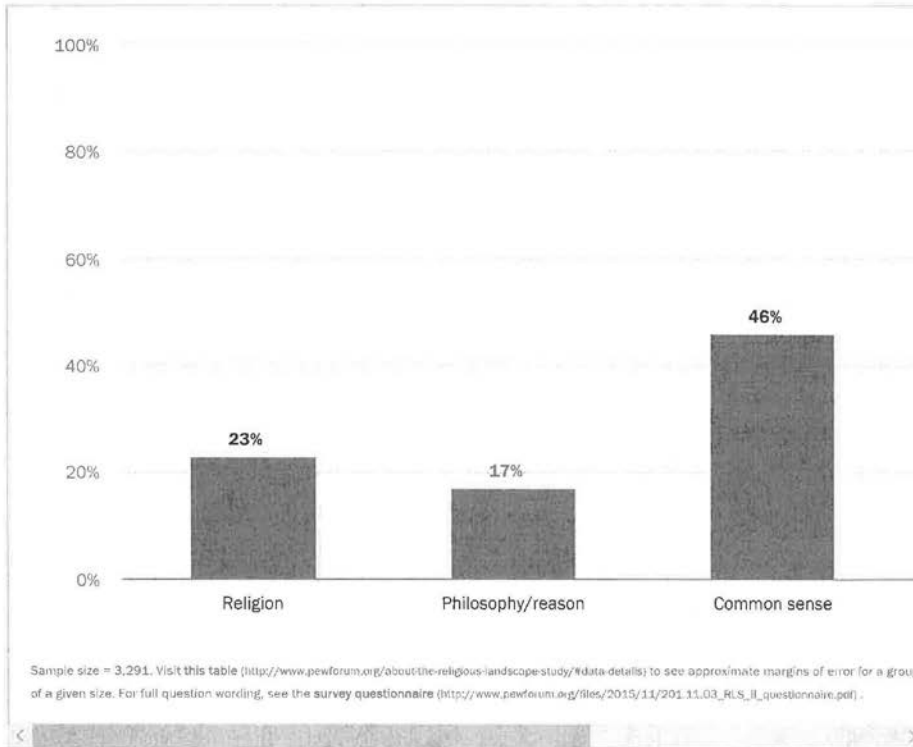


**COMPARE:** FREQUENCY FEELING A SENSE OF WONDER ABOUT THE UNIVERSE BY GENERATIONAL GROUP  
 ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-WONDER-ABOUT-THE-UNIVERSE/BY-GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/frequency-of-feeling-wonder-about-the-universe/by-generational-cohort/))

**LEARN MORE:** FREQUENCY OF FEELING WONDER ABOUT THE UNIVERSE ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-WONDER-ABOUT-THE-UNIVERSE/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-wonder-about-the-universe/)), AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-WONDER-ABOUT-THE-UNIVERSE/AT-LEAST-ONCE-A-WEEK/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-wonder-about-the-universe/at-least-once-a-week/)), ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-WONDER-ABOUT-THE-UNIVERSE/ONCE-OR-TWICE-A-MONTH/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-wonder-about-the-universe/once-or-twice-a-month/)), SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-WONDER-ABOUT-THE-UNIVERSE/SEVERAL-TIMES-A-YEAR/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-wonder-about-the-universe/several-times-a-year/)), SELDOM/NEVER ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/FREQUENCY-OF-FEELING-WONDER-ABOUT-THE-UNIVERSE/SELDOM-NEVER/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/frequency-of-feeling-wonder-about-the-universe/seldom-never/))

**Sources of guidance on right and wrong among younger Millennials**

*% of younger Millennials who say they look to...most for guidance on right and wrong*



**COMPARE:** SOURCES OF GUIDANCE ON RIGHT AND WRONG BY GENERATIONAL GROUP ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/SOURCES-OF-GUIDANCE-ON-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/BY-GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/sources-of-guidance-on-right-and-wrong/by-generational-cohort/))

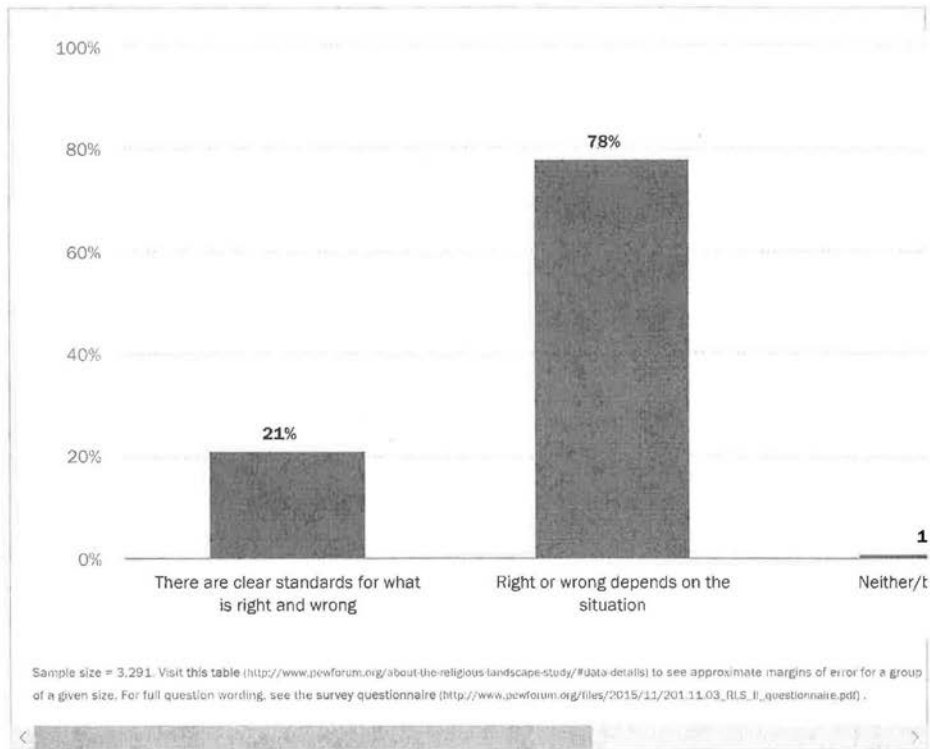
**LEARN MORE:** SOURCES OF GUIDANCE ON RIGHT AND WRONG ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/SOURCES-OF-GUIDANCE-ON-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/sources-of-guidance-on-right-and-wrong/)), RELIGION ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/SOURCES-OF-GUIDANCE-ON-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/RELIGION/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/sources-of-guidance-on-right-and-wrong/religion/)), PHILOSOPHY/REASON ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/SOURCES-OF-GUIDANCE-ON-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/PHILOSOPHY-REASON/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/sources-of-guidance-on-right-and-wrong/philosophy-reason/)), COMMON SENSE ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/SOURCES-OF-GUIDANCE-ON-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/COMMON-SENSE/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/sources-of-guidance-on-right-and-wrong/common-sense/)), SCIENCE ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/SOURCES-OF-GUIDANCE-ON-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/SCIENCE/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/sources-of-guidance-on-right-and-wrong/science/))

### Belief in absolute standards for right and wrong among younger Millennials

% of younger Millennials who say...

Chart Table

Show Save Image



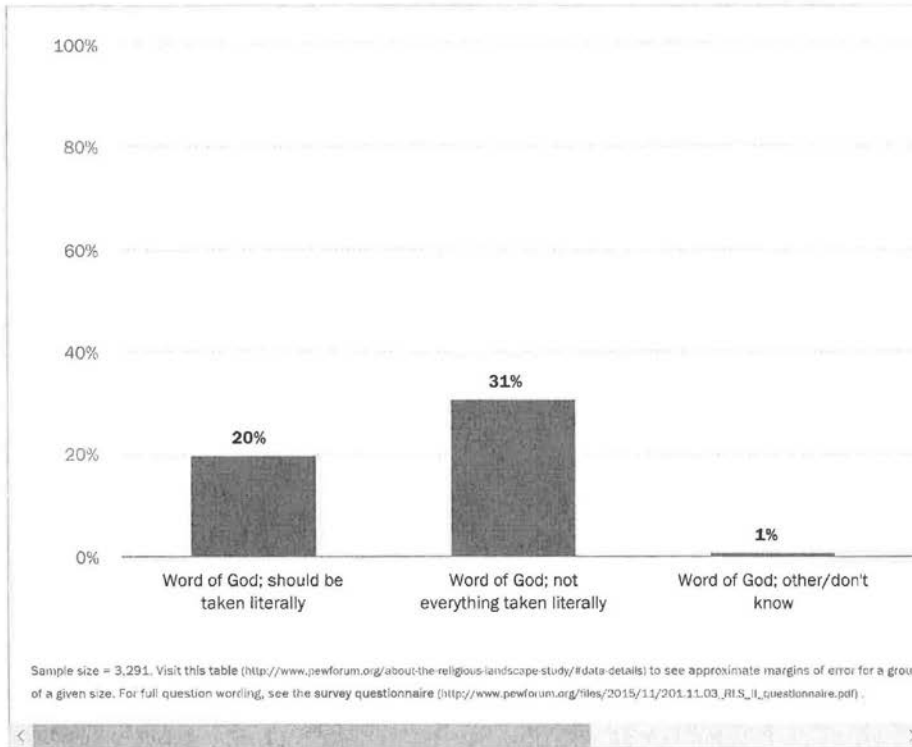
**COMPARE:** BELIEF IN EXISTENCE OF STANDARDS FOR RIGHT AND WRONG BY GENERATIONAL GROUP

[[HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/BELIEF-IN-ABSOLUTE-STANDARDS-FOR-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/BY-GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/belief-in-absolute-standards-for-right-and-wrong/by-generational-cohort/)]

**LEARN MORE:** BELIEF IN ABSOLUTE STANDARDS FOR RIGHT AND WRONG ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-ABSOLUTE-STANDARDS-FOR-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-absolute-standards-for-right-and-wrong/)), THERE ARE CLEAR STANDARDS FOR WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-ABSOLUTE-STANDARDS-FOR-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/THERE-ARE-CLEAR-STANDARDS-FOR-WHAT-IS-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-absolute-standards-for-right-and-wrong/there-are-clear-standards-for-what-is-right-and-wrong/)), RIGHT OR WRONG DEPENDS ON THE SITUATION ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/BELIEF-IN-ABSOLUTE-STANDARDS-FOR-RIGHT-AND-WRONG/RIGHT-OR-WRONG-DEPENDS-ON-THE-SITUATION/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-absolute-standards-for-right-and-wrong/right-or-wrong-depends-on-the-situation/))

**Frequency of reading scripture among younger Millennials**

% of younger Millennials who read scripture...



**COMPARE:** INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE BY GENERATIONAL GROUP ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/COMPARE/INTERPRETING-SCRIPTURE/BY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/interpreting-scripture/by-generational-cohort/))

**LEARN MORE:** INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/INTERPRETING-SCRIPTURE/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/interpreting-scripture/)), WORD OF GOD; SHOULD BE TAKEN LITERALLY ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/INTERPRETING-SCRIPTURE/WORD-OF-GOD-SHOULD-BE-TAKEN-LITERALLY/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/interpreting-scripture/word-of-god-should-be-taken-literally/)), WORD OF GOD; NOT EVERYTHING TAKEN LITERALLY ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/INTERPRETING-SCRIPTURE/WORD-OF-GOD-NOT-EVERYTHING-TAKEN-LITERALLY/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/interpreting-scripture/word-of-god-not-everything-taken-literally/)), NOT THE WORD OF GOD ([HTTP://WWW.PEWFORUM.ORG/RELIGIOUS-LANDSCAPE-STUDY/GENERATIONAL-COHORT/YOUNGER-MILLENNIAL/INTERPRETING-SCRIPTURE/NOT-THE-WORD-OF-GOD/](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/interpreting-scripture/not-the-word-of-god/))

### Belief in Heaven among younger Millennials

% of younger Millennials who ...in heaven

Chart

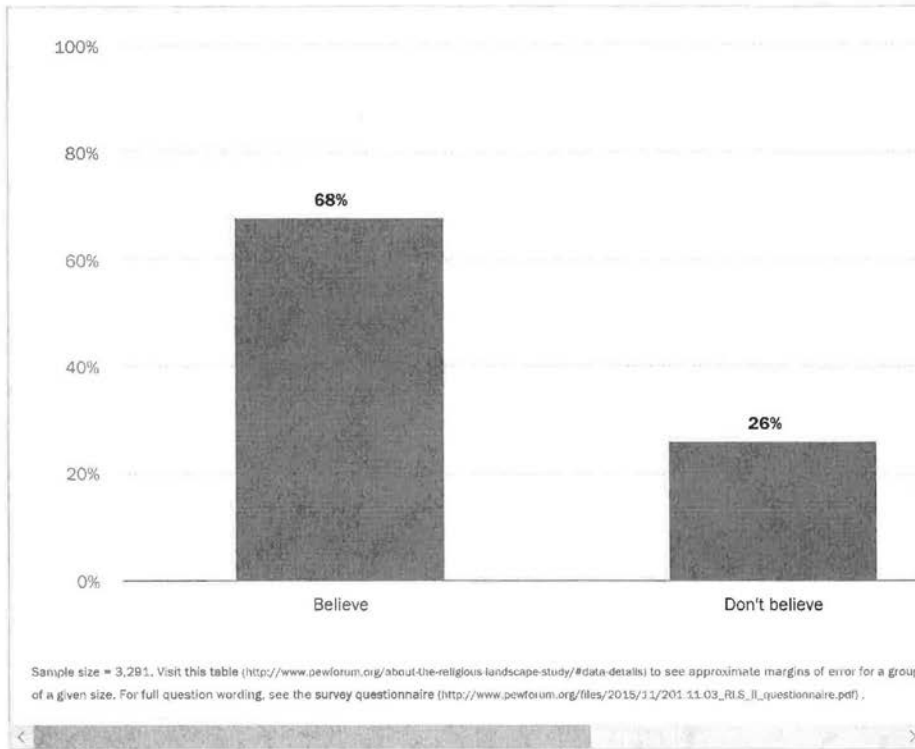
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**COMPARE: BELIEF IN HEAVEN BY GENERATIONAL GROUP** (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/belief-in-heaven/by/generational-cohort/>)

**LEARN MORE: BELIEF IN HEAVEN** (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-heaven/>), **BELIEVE** (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-heaven/believe/>), **DON'T BELIEVE** (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/belief-in-heaven/dont-believe/>)

### Belief in Hell among younger Millennials

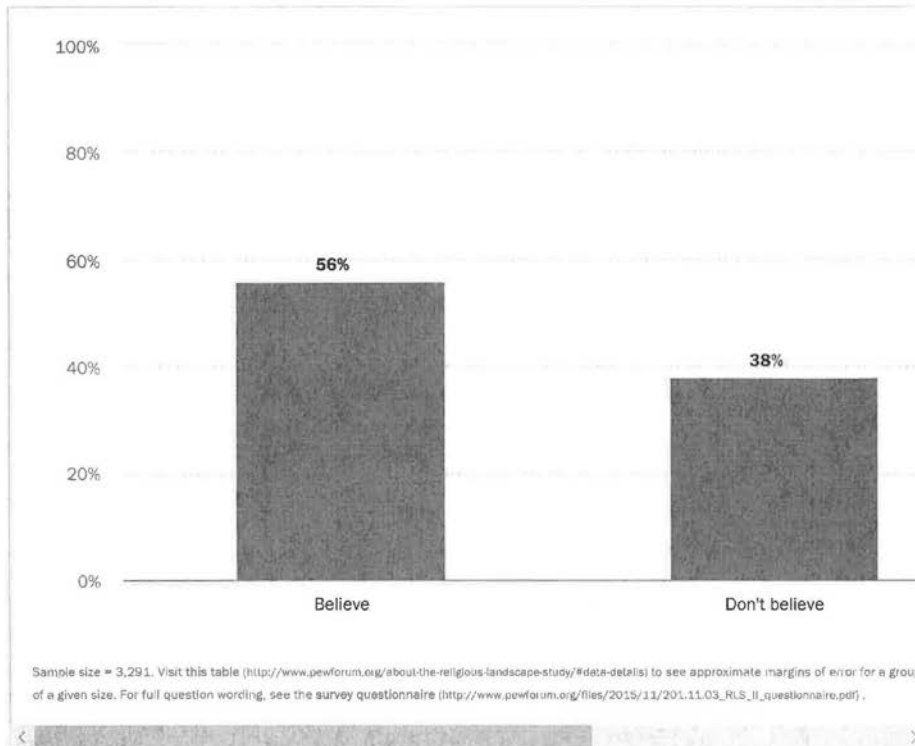
% of younger Millennials who ...in hell

Chart

Table

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**COMPARE: BELIEF IN HELL BY GENERATIONAL GROUP** (<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/belief-in-hell/by/generational-cohort/>)

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## *What Millennials Want When They Visit Church*

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Articles in *Millennials & Generations* • March 4, 2015

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**L**ike it or not—and there are plenty of reasons not to—consumer culture shapes what people expect of church and how some churches approach ministry.

It's tempting to think of church as one part of the "religious services industry"—the sector of the economy that provides spiritual goods and experiences to consumers. When leaders conceive of their faith community this way, even unconsciously, they see their difficulty appealing to Millennials as a failure to create brand loyalty—a failure whose solution is a better product and/or better marketing. To be successful in the industry, churches have to compete in a marketplace undergoing massive disruption as a generation of young consumers becomes ever more knowledgeable and selective about what they do and don't want.

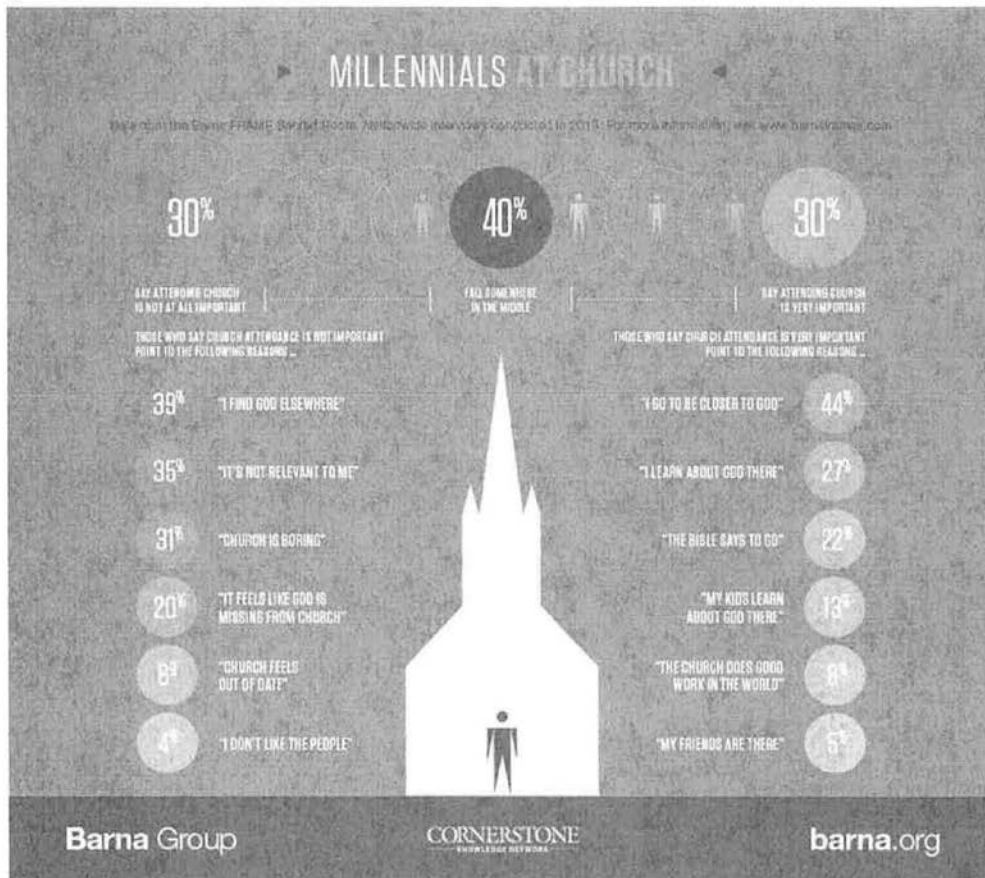
If the church were just another business seeking market share, this frame of mind would be harmless or even beneficial. But the church is not. And many of the very people churches are trying to reach—Millennials—are hyperaware and deeply suspicious of the intersection of church and consumer culture. This doesn't mean they're not avid consumers, for most certainly are. But many also have a sense that church should be different somehow, above or beyond the dirty business of *sell, sell, sell*.

So what do Millennials think of church? What pushes them away and what draws them in? And when they do visit a church, how are they hoping to be approached?

### **Closed Doors**

Why have so many Millennials closed the door on church involvement? Why, even among those who grew up in church, have nearly six in ten dropped out at some point? Why have more than half been absent from church for the past six months? Why do three in ten Millennials say church is not at all important while an additional four in ten feel ambivalent, saying church is either somewhat important or somewhat not important?

During the research for *Sacred Roots*, a book in the Barna FRAMES series, Barna asked Millennials why they do or don't think church is important. Their answers reveal a general feeling that church is simply not necessary—and, for some, that it is harmful.



Among those who say church is not important, most are split between two reasons: two in five say church is not important because they can find God elsewhere (39%), and one-third say it's because church is not personally relevant to them (35%). One in three simply find church boring (31%) and one in five say it feels like God is missing from church (20%). Only 8% say they don't attend because church is "out of date," undercutting the notion that all churches need to do for Millennials is to make worship "cooler."

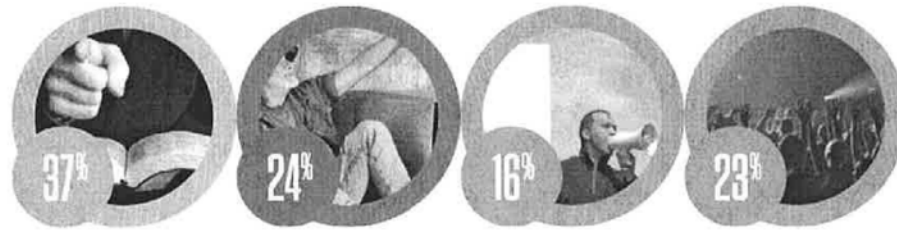
A significant number of young adults have deeper complaints about church. More than one-third say their negative perceptions are a result of moral failures in church leadership (35%). And substantial majorities of Millennials who don't go to church say they see Christians as judgmental (87%), hypocritical (85%), anti-homosexual (91%) and insensitive to others (70%).



During a national, multi-phase research program among Millennials, conducted in partnership with Cornerstone Knowledge Network, participants were asked to rate how well each statement in a series describes the Christian community in America. Fewer than half of Millennials agree that the statement “The people at church are tolerant of those with different beliefs” describes the church (a lot + somewhat = 46%). About the same proportion say “The church seems too much like an exclusive club” is an accurate description (44%). Taken together, a significant number of young adults perceive a lack of relational generosity within the U.S. Christian community. Perhaps more concerning are the two-thirds of Millennials who believe that American churchgoers are a lot or somewhat hypocritical (66%). To a generation that prides itself on the ability to smell a fake at ten paces, hypocrisy is a worrisome indictment.

These negative perceptions are not limited to word descriptions. One phase of the Barna/CKN research program included visual polling, and when asked to select the image that best represents “present-day Christianity,” Millennials show the same basic pattern.

► SELECT THE IMAGE THAT FEELS MOST LIKE PRESENT-DAY CHRISTIANITY ◀



All Millennials	37%	All Millennials	24%	All Millennials	16%	All Millennials	23%
Churched	28%	Churched	35%	Churched	8%	Churched	30%
Marginally Churched	42%	Marginally Churched	22%	Marginally Churched	9%	Marginally Churched	27%
Unchurched	41%	Unchurched	19%	Unchurched	22%	Unchurched	18%

Barna/CKN, October 2013, N=843 U.S. adults ages 18 to 29 years old. The segmentation percentages above are among Millennials who participated in the study.

Barna Group

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A majority—from all faith backgrounds, including Christianity—chose one of the two negative images. More than one-third chose the pointing finger (37%), and another one in six chose the bullhorn-wielding protestor (16%). In total, 52% of respondents view present-day Christianity as aggressive and critical.

But the perceptions are not all negative. About one in four chose the crowd of worshippers (23%). Some may have chosen the worshippers because they see Christianity as vibrant and communal (among practicing Christians, 31% chose this picture), and others because they view Christianity as emotional and consumer-oriented. Either way, this illustration does not have the same negative resonance with Millennials as do the more hostile, judgmental images.

One in four chose the overtly positive image, the helping hand reaching out to a person in need (24%). It's encouraging that a significant proportion of Millennials view Christianity this way. The percentage is even higher among practicing Christian young adults (34%), indicating that those who *are* engaged in a local church want to live out a faith that is actively reaching into the community.

Related Content

*Learn more about this innovative research and find the full results in Making Space for Millennials >*

### **Open Windows**

If those are the closed doors of negative views on the church, positive perceptions are windows that show Millennials' openness to connecting with the Jesus community. What do they find valuable in church? Their answers can provide insight for what to prioritize in ministry to and with Millennials.

A plurality say they attend church to be closer to God (44%) and more than one-third say they go to learn more about God (37%). Getting outside the humdrum of their everyday lives to experience transcendence—in worship, in prayer, in teaching—is a key desire for many Millennials when it comes to church.

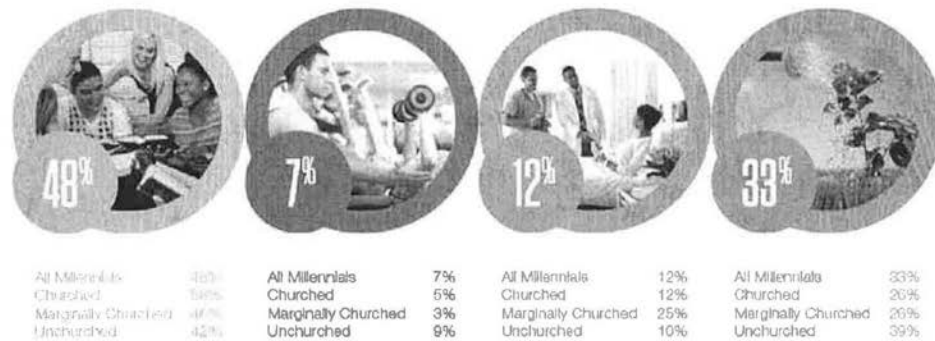
Two-thirds of survey participants say a good description of church is “a place to find answers to live a meaningful life” (a lot + somewhat = 65%). Over half say “church is relevant for my life” (54%), and about half “feel I can ‘be myself’ at church” (49%). Three out of five survey respondents *don't* agree that “the faith and teaching I encounter at church seem rather shallow” (not too much + not at all = 62%), and about the same number *don't* believe “the church is not a safe place to express doubts” (60%).

That's a lot of open windows.

We asked Millennials to select an aspirational image for what church *should* be in the world and found that, by and large, young adults respect the potential of organized religion. Almost half chose the image of a small-group Bible study (48%), which combines the social and intellectual aspects of Christianity. Most of the rest chose the image of a growing flower (33%), which implies a possibility for personal growth and for cultivating beauty (and . . . nature again!). The other two images—the hospital and the health club—were much less popular (12% and 7%, respectively).



▶ SELECT THE IMAGE THAT FEELS MOST LIKE WHAT CHURCH SHOULD BE IN THE WORLD ◀



Barna/CKN, October 2013, N=1043 U.S. adults ages 18 to 29 years old. The segmentation percentages above are among Millennials who participated in the study.

Barna Group

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— KNOWLEDGE THAT MATTERS —

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Millennials are skeptical about the role churches play in society. This is the closed door. But their hope for the role churches *could* play? That's an open window.

So what happens when a Millennial does come in through an open window? How should churches respond to their Millennial guests?

### The Visiting Millennial

In the Barna/CKN national survey, Millennials were asked what information they would be willing to give a church when they visit. (Remember, with fewer than half of Millennials having attended church in the past six months, it's fair to say that if and when they go to church, it's often as an outsider. Even those who are not strangers to church may feel like outsiders if it has been awhile since they attended.)

The *only* piece of information a sizeable majority of Millennials is comfortable sharing with a church is their first name (82%). Only half are willing to give their last names (53%). Just one-third are comfortable sharing their email address (33%). That means two out of three young-adult visitors do not want churches to have that information.

Only one in five Millennials are comfortable handing over their physical address (19%), and even fewer their phone number (12%). A mere 6% are willing to grant

access on social media, such as friending on Facebook or following on Twitter or Instagram.

About one in six Millennials would rather not share *anything* (15%). Among non-Christian young adults, it's more than one in four (28%).



Millennials are generally not restrictive of their personal information and privacy, but they tend to distrust churches. In fact, according to research Barna conducted for the FRAMES series, Millennials are the least likely generation to say the church has their best interests at heart (30%, compared to 34% of Gen-Xers and 41% of Boomers and Elders). This is one reason they prefer to stay off the radar until they are comfortable at church.

**What the Research Means**

“Ignoring visitors is not the solution, but consider how your church could defer

social status to your guests,” says Clint Jenkin, VP of Research at Barna Group and the lead developer and analyst on the study. “When Millennials visit your faith community, are they welcomed and respected, or harassed and put on the spot? Think about how you can respect and respond, rather than assert and demand. Perhaps a smile and a nod or wave from a greeter, rather than a handshake. Maybe a clearly marked welcome kiosk instead of someone intercepting them the minute they set foot in the door. The leader who welcomes everyone to the worship service could communicate where, how and from whom to get more information, putting your guest in the driver’s seat, socially speaking.

“If, at the end of the day, teens and adults can say they met with God in your faith community, getting them to come back won’t be much of an issue,” Jenkin continues. “The fact remains that eight out of 10 young adults say growing closer to or learning about God are the two most important reasons to attend church. And with all the other options open to Millennials, it’s safe to conclude that, when they show up at church for a worship or learning opportunity, they do so hoping there is Someone present to worship or learn about.”

Comment on this research and follow our work:

Twitter: @davidkinnaman | @roxyleestone | @barnagroup

Facebook: Barna Group

### **About the Research**

The Barna/CKN Millennials and Architecture survey included 843 online surveys conducted among adult residents of the United States ages 18 to 29. The survey was conducted from October 10 through October 15, 2013. The margin of error for a sample of this size is plus or minus 5.2 percentage points, at the 95% confidence level.

This study used an online research panel called KnowledgePanel® based on probability sampling that covers both the online and offline populations in the U.S. The panel members are randomly recruited by telephone and by self-administered mail and web surveys. Households are provided with access to the Internet and hardware if needed. Unlike other Internet research that covers only individuals with Internet access who volunteer for research, this process uses a dual sampling frame that includes both listed and unlisted phone numbers, telephone and non-telephone households and cell-phone-only households. The panel is not limited to current Web users or computer owners. All potential panelists are

randomly selected to join the KnowledgePanel; unselected volunteers are not able to join.

The response rate for this study was 38%. Email reminders were sent out to non-responders on day three of the fielding period. In every survey there are a variety of ways in which the accuracy of the data may be affected. The response rate is one such potential cause of error in measurement; the lower the response, the less representative the respondents surveyed may be of the population from which they were drawn, thereby reducing the accuracy of the results. Other sources of error include question-design bias, question-order bias, sampling error and respondent deception. Many of these types of errors cannot be accurately estimated. However, having a high cooperation rate does enhance the reliability of the information procured.

Minimal statistical weighting was used to calibrate the sample to known population percentages in relation to demographic variables.

The research was jointly commissioned by Cornerstone Knowledge Network and Barna Group.

#### **About Barna Group**

Barna Group (which includes its research division, Barna Research Group) is a private, non-partisan, for-profit organization under the umbrella of the Issachar Companies. Located in Ventura, California, Barna Group has been conducting and analyzing primary research to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984.

If you would like to receive free e-mail notification of the release of each update on the latest research findings from Barna Group, you may subscribe to this free service at the Barna website ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)).

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## Workshop Evaluation Form

**Expanding The Evangelistic Boundaries  
of  
The Greater Faith Baptist Church,  
Bronx, New York  
Reverend Helen Wingate, Pastor  
Doctoral Candidate  
Survey/Questionnaire**

Name/Age:

Date: November 2017

Overall, how would you rate this project?

1. How would you rate the usefulness of the content?

1    2    3    4    5

2. How would you rate the materials provided?

1    2    3    4    5

3. How would you rate the presenters' knowledge in the subject?

1    2    3    4    5

4. How would you rate the presenters' style of teaching?

1    2    3    4    5

5. How would you rate the pace of the presentation?

Too fast    Too slow    Just right

6. Was this project above or below your current spiritual knowledge?

Above    Below    Just right

7. What did you like best or find most useful about this Project?

8. What did you learn that may help prepare you in the future?

9. What does evangelism look like for you?

10. Any other comments, questions or concerns?

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach  
the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

**Focus Group #1**

**Sunday, June 8, 2018**

**2:00pm**

**Song: This is the day that the Lord has made**

**Scripture: Emanuel Garland**

**Prayer: Christian Garland**

**Introduction: Rev. Helen Wingate**

**Facilitator: Min. Joshua Wingate**

Attendees

Min. Joshua Wingate

Min. Jessica Batson

Emanuel Garland

Christian Garland

Shimeah Williams

Questions:

1. How can the Church engage and evangelize to the unchurched millennials?
2. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church

**Pre-Test**

Name YATONIA CHESTNUT

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Age 32

Gender FEMALE

1. Millennials are the fastest growing group in our country?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Millennials are ages 18-35
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Millennials are the most educated people in our country?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. Millennials are computer savvy?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Millennials care about social justice issues?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Millennials are looking for a social network of support?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

7. Millennials want to be celebrated?

a. Yes

b. No

8. Millennials want a safe place where they can talk about their fears, dreams and their future?

a. Yes

b. No

9. Millennials are leaving the Church in droves?

a. Yes

b. No

10. Are you a member of a local Church?

a. Yes

b. No



**Post-Test**

Name Judah

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender Female

1. Millennials are the fastest growing group in our country?

a. Yes

b. No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Millennials are ages 18-35

a. Yes

b. No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Millennials are the most educated people in our country?

a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_

b. No

4. Millennials are computer savvy?

a. Yes

b. No \_\_\_\_\_

5. Millennials care about social justice issues?

a. Yes

b. No \_\_\_\_\_

6. Millennials are looking for a social network of support?

a. Yes

b. No \_\_\_\_\_

7. Millennials want to be celebrated?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Millennials want a safe place where they can talk about their fears, dreams and their future?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9. Millennials are leaving the Church in droves?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. Are you a member of a local Church?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Unchurched Millennials Survey

Name Aubri Stoute

Date 7/18

Age 21

Gender Male

1. Are you a member of a local Church? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. If no, why not?
  - a. Too judgmental
  - b. Lack of authenticity
  - c. Out of touch
3. What kind of action do you want the Church to take in our communities?
  - a. Missional
  - b. Social justice
  - c. Educational
  - d. All of the above
4. What are the issues in our communities that concern you the most?
  - a. Poverty
  - b. Mental health
  - c. Crime/violence
  - d. Lack of affordable housing
5. What do you think is the primary role of the Church?
  - a. Social justice and education
  - b. Make disciples and evangelism
  - c. Crime and violence
  - d. Unemployment and poverty
6. What do millennials want the Church to do for them?
  - a. Listen to them
  - b. Appreciate them
  - c. Include them
  - d. All of the above
7. How often do you visit a Church?
  - a. 1-3 months

- b. Weddings
- c. Funerals
- d. Special occasions
- e. Once a year
- f. Once every six months

8. What does it takes to make you an active member of the Church?

9. What do you want from the Church?

- a. The Word
- b. Relationship
- c. Justice

10. What are the current issues of the Church that you disagree with?

- a. Too much hypocrisy
- b. Too much finances
- c. Too much time
- d. Too little missional projects

11. If you were to become a member of the Church, will you commit yourself totally?

Yes  No

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach  
the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

**Focus Group #2**

**Saturday, June 23, 2018**

**1:00pm**

**Song: Lord I Just Want to Thank You**

**Scripture: Madison Holmes**

**Prayer: Min. Joshua Wingate**

**Introduction: Rev. Helen Wingate**

**Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Kimberly Holmes**

Attendees

Min. Joshua Wingate

Min. Jessica Batson

Madison Holmes

Christian Garland

Nadja Linen

James Melvin

Questions:

1. How can the Church engage and evangelize to the unchurched millennials?
2. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church
3. What is your perception of the Church and its ways of operation?
4. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

Name: Genese Waithe

Date: 6/25/18

Race: African American

Gender: Female

Church Affiliation: Christ Community Church of Harlem

Role in Ministry: Praise and Worship Leader and Event Planner.

1. As a millennial with a leadership position in the Church, do you agree with the directives given by senior leadership? Explain if yes or no.

Yes I do because it also assists with fulfilling the vision for the church.

2. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church?

I believe if the church is more transparent and open to questions that Millennials are afraid of and to show them that it's alright, but at the same time let them know what is right and wrong. Not to sugar coat, but to be open on the realities of this world and to give the best advice while we are teaching the word along with the scripture. Some Churches need to be more loving and be mindful of their behavior around babes in Christ along with visitors because they see and are affected and it makes them don't want to come to church or be a part of church.

3. What are your concerns about the way ministry is conducted in the Church?

One thing that I've noticed in a lot of churches is that in some ministries, when there is an issue, they don't take it to the corner or into an office. Sometimes, it is a brawl out in the open where everybody can see and this shows that there is no unity in the church or among certain people. Arguments do not need to escalate to the point where visitors and the congregation know all about it. The Bible says when you have a quarrel with your brother or sister you need to go and make it right so why is it being spilled out in the open instead of spoken and closed doors? We have to be careful and mindful of our surroundings.

5. Do you often find yourself frustrated with traditional boundaries in the Church? How would you implement change?

Yes and no. Yes because there is no really need for a change but we can implement new ways and Visions to help and assist others to Christ. But the foundation of tradition should still stand. It should not be used sometimes or when it feel like it should stay the same way. At the same time if there is certain Traditions that can be of leniency it can assist others in ways to come to Christ so that they can learn the traditional way and as they grow adapter to themselves.

As I have stated before I would not really change much of tradition but would consider helping to come to a balance that can assist people to Christ and would want to come to church. So they will learn the old way, but at the same time adding some new ways or ways to make tradition in a new way.

6. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?

The primary role of the churches today is to be the hospital where the doctors and the nurses are there to help lead others to Christ and to assist them into getting the healing and their breakthrough through deliverance by Jesus Christ and the Holy

Spirit. We are here to heal the wounded and teach the brokenhearted to come back to their first love. Each of us have a duty to help an assist each other especially when a brother or sister has fallen and have lost their way we must come together and uplift and uphold and bring them to the altar so that they can repent and received their blessings, their break through, their calling, and everything that God has for them. We are here to assist and uplift each other.



**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

**Name:** Tanyelle Farrison

**Date:** June 25<sup>th</sup> 2018

**Race:** Black/African American

**Gender:** Female

**Church Affiliation:** Thessalonía Worship Center

**Role in Ministry:** Young Adult Coordinator, Youth Choir Director/Coordinator, Praise and Worship Leader, Young Adult Bible Study Coordinator.

**1. As a millennial with a leadership position in the Church, do you agree with the directives given by senior leadership? Explain if yes or no.**

For the most part yes I agree with the directives given. I haven't been encouraged, or instructed to do anything that was unreasonable or crazy.

**2. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church?**

I am currently asking myself the same question. It seems that having consistent activity, events, or including them in areas that their hands can be helpful is the way. But even with implementing those things, some millennials tend to be in and out or just simply not stay. I don't think this is an issue that is just millennials but the unchurched/unsaved in general.

**3. What are your concerns about the way ministry is conducted in the Church?**

Ministry as a whole in Thessalonica are changing, tradition and routine is breaking, we can sing in jeans to lead worship. That is groundbreaking!! And Pastor Sampson nurtures and takes people under his wing. From my stand point I'm not that concerned.

**4. Do you often find yourself frustrated with traditional boundaries in the Church? How would you implement change?**

Not anymore.

**5. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?**

To be a safe haven, a beacon of light, a place where you will be told the truth and be loved to pieces. It is a place of healing and not only deliverance, but a place where you can be walked with and nurtured right into your purpose.

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

Name: Shakeda Davis

Date: 6/25/18

Race: African American

Gender: Female

Church Affiliation: Bronx Community Baptist Church

1. What is your perception of the Church and its ways of operation?

I feel that some churches are run like business and every week they try to get new members who will pay tithes to keep the business afloat. Whereas other churches really want you to find God and change your life. Those are hard to find.

2. What do you want the Church to know in regards to millennials?

I don't consider myself a millennial so to speak. But I do feel that in order to reach them and grab their attention there has to be someone of their age that they can relate to in the church.

3. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church?

Maybe have meet and greet events that allows them to see what the church is about

4. What is your greatest concern about the Church?

That there is a misconception about what its it's all about. That people with judge off what was told to them and not what's real.

5. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?

To uplift and open up the eyes of non believers to what God can really do.

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

Name:  Darius Hutchings

Date:  June 26, 2018

Race:  Black

Gender:  Male

Church Affiliation:  None

1. What is your perception of the Church and its ways of operation?

My perception of the church is that it's not taken seriously by people on the outside or the inside of the church. People are using the church for other reasons other than a place of worship.

2. What do you want the Church to know in regards to millennials?

We don't want to come to church and feel judged. We want to feel judged and not looked down on.

3. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church?

You can attract us by staying connected to the community and community events.

4. What is your greatest concern about the Church?

My greatest concern that it is being made mockery by the ones inside of the church.

5. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?

The Church should be the center of the community like it use to be.

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach  
the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

**Focus Group #3**

**Wednesday, June 27, 2018**

**7:00pm**

**Song: Lord I Lift Your Name on High**

**Scripture: Shatisha Gurley**

**Prayer: Cory Gray**

**Introduction: Rev. Helen Wingate**

**Facilitator: Rev. Helen Wingate**

Attendees

Min. Joshua Wingate

Stacey Morgan

Isaiah Johnson

Shatisha Gurley

Aliyah Johnson

Cory Gray

Yatonia Chestnut

Min. Jessica Batson

Suzzette Bailey

Questions:

1. How can the Church engage and evangelize to the unchurched millennials?
2. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church
3. What is your perception of the Church and its ways of operation?

4. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?
5. What is your greatest concern about the Church?
6. What are your concerns about the way ministry is conducted in the Church?
7. Do you often find yourself frustrated with traditional boundaries in the Church? How would you implement change?
8. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?



**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach  
the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

Name: Jewell Curry

Date: 06/26/2018

Race: African-American

Gender: Female

Church Affiliation: None

1. What is your perception of the Church and its ways of operation?

Unfortunately, many churches/religions are unaccepting of and are quick to condemn those that choose to practice other religions or those that do not share similar beliefs, ideals and life styles.

2. What do you want the Church to know in regards to millennials?

Many millennials are not as closed-minded as those of previous generations. Millennials tend to be open-minded; they are open to new ideas and have a new ways of thinking. Millennials tend to be free thinking and therefore will question previous held beliefs and ideas, therefore the Church should be open this new way of thinking and not condemn those that question their belief.

3. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church?

Be open-minded. Do not judge or dismiss millennials that may question beliefs/ideas held by the church and do not force those ideals and beliefs on those that question it. Be open to discussion and be a support for those in the community no matter their beliefs.

4. What is your greatest concern about the Church?

My greatest concern is the lack of involvement in the community. There are some many issues plaguing the Black Community- violence (especially the killing of Black Men and Women by the police and gang violence), homelessness, lack of jobs, education, drugs... and you rarely hear about the Church's involvement in addressing and/or fighting these issues.

5. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?

The backbone of the community; the place you can turn to if you need help or if you're in distress no matter what your beliefs are.

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

Name: Suzzette Bailey

Date: 6-27-2018

Race: Black Jamaican

Gender: Female

Church Affiliation: None

1. What is your perception of the Church and its ways of operation?

I see the church as a safe haven. It's a place where I can seek understanding and clarity. Knowing that Church's presence is always constant it gives me a sense of relieve and calmness.

2. What do you want the Church to know in regards to millennials?

Speaking as a millennial, I can for certain say we can be stubborn and strong willed. We like to be spoken to, and not spoken at. Even though, we millennials were always taught to seek the Church for guidance, we tend to seek the answers within ourselves first and seek the Church for confirmation.

3. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church?

The Church can use the media to engage the children of the millennials and in turn attract and engage the millennials. However, the media wouldn't be the primary source. The Church could do outreach at more social event.

4. What is your greatest concern about the Church?

My greatest concern for the Church is the media. The media can be a double edged sword. The media brings awareness as far as getting the positive word out. However, too many people have fallen victim feeding into too much of the media and its commercialization of everything.

5. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community? The primary role of the Church to be a safe haven for the community. And any individual seeking guidance.

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

Name: Jeremy Johnson

Date: 6/29/2018

Race: Black

Gender: Male

Church Affiliation: Bright Star Church of God in Christ

Role in Ministry: As the Youth Pastor, my primary focus is to ensure that each member of the church between the ages of 3-21, receive biblically based teaching aligned with the principles and doctrine of our faith. To foster relationships with each child/teen to help them grow and develop into the knowledge of Jesus Christ, while developing a personal relationship, all while being active members of the community by contributing to service projects and social justice opportunities.

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1. What is the role of an associate minister within your ministry context?

The primary role of an associate minister is to support the senior leadership of the church by performing all duties as assigned. Duties can include, but are not limited to, preaching, facilitating Christian education classes, tending to business affairs, and seeing to the overall needs of the congregation. These duties can be performed alongside the pastor, or in his/her absence.

2. How might your view of ministry collide with the senior pastor in terms of reaching millennials?

Fortunately, I am privileged to attend a church where the pastor is in full support of reaching and engaging millennials, and provides tools and materials needed to do so.

Other churches may struggle if the senior leadership does not see this as a need or focus. Many pastors aren't fully knowledgeable of the various social platforms or media outlets by which teens communicate each day, therefore creating frustration and sometimes friction due to simple ignorance.

Churches must understand that the generation coming behind them is the future leadership of the church. If the church is to grow, there must be an active youth ministry.

3. What are some of the future plans that you have for ministry with millennials?

We have recently started Teen Talk, which is a weekly "bible study" for teens age 12-18.

Youth Choir to participate in service monthly

Youth and teens involved in various support ministries throughout the church, such as ushers/greeters, media and social site support, children's church volunteers

4. How might the Pastor/Associate Minister dynamic impact communication with millennials?

It is important that the pastor/associate minister align their agenda and stay in constant communication to deliver a cohesive message to the millennials. In any instance where they do not agree, they must be able to come to an agreement that can be mutually supported.

5. What are your concerns about the way ministry is conducted in the Church?

My biggest concern is that there are so many members, as well as leadership, that do not feel a need to go beyond the four walls. Ministry is not something to be done solely inside a building, but must be taken to your own block. We must empower, equip, and encourage leadership and lay members to get up and go out!

6. Do you often find yourself frustrated with traditional boundaries in the Church? How would you implement change?

N/A This is not an issue that applies to me.

7. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?

The church is to be a beacon of light, a symbol of hope, and house of faith for not just its members, but for all those within the community it's established.

The church should serve as a resource, by providing support to those in need, as the church sees fit. It is also important that the church stay abreast on current issues that affect the surrounding community in order to support social justice efforts and community projects.

**Expanding the Evangelistic Boundaries of Christian Education to Reach  
the Millennials in The Greater Faith Baptist Church in the Bronx, N.Y.**

**Focus Group #4**

**Wednesday, July 11, 2018**

**7:00pm**

**Song: Lord I Lift Your Name on High**

**Scripture: Elder Earline DeVaughn**

**Prayer: Cory Gray**

**Introduction: Rev. Helen Wingate**

**Facilitator: Rev. J. <sup>Loren</sup> Russell**

Attendees


Stacey Morgan  
Shatisha Gurley  
Aliyah Johnson  
Cory Gray  
Min. Jessica Batson  
Dairus Hutchings

Questions:

1. How can the Church engage and evangelize to the unchurched millennials?
2. What can the Church do to attract, engage and keep millennials present in the Church
3. What is your perception of the Church and its ways of operation?
4. What do you consider the primary role of the Church to be in the community?



5. What do you want the Church to know in regards to millennials?



**THE JLR COMPANY**

**Rev. Dr. J. Loren Russell**  
President & Founder  
*Church Strategist*

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**EVANGELISM FOR  
THE 21<sup>ST</sup>  
CENTURY**

Engaging  
Millennials in the  
Post-Modern Era

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**COMING OUT OF  
THE CHURCH  
WALLS**

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**MAKING THE FIRST 30 SECONDS COUNT**

- Reaching Millennials is about "being," not "doing!"
  - This course is not about an evangelism event, but about evangelistic living. We are to have the mind of Christ at all times, therefore we are charged to always be open for opportunities to share Christ that someone might be saved. If that scares you, prepare yourself for transformation!
- "You get one chance to make a first impression!"
- It is becoming increasingly evident that the church must go where the people are with its message, rather than wait behind its seceded doors for people to seek its Gospel. ([Soul-Winning Course](#), McBeth Corporation, Chambersburg, PA)
- "Learn a new language and get a new soul." Czech Proverb

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**LUKE 5:1-4**

1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, 2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. 3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. 4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

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**HE SAT DOWN AND TAUGHT THE MULTITUDES**

- The only way to reach them is to get among them!
- Don't be afraid of your audience!
- Fear is the absence of faith and the evidence of false proof appearing real (F.E.A.R. – False Evidence Appearing Real)
- Take the time to talk to them
  - *People* want to hear the gospel!
  - *Millennials* want to know Jesus!

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**ENLISTING & ENGAGING PARTNERS**

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**LUKE 5:17-20**

<sup>17</sup> Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. <sup>18</sup> Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. <sup>19</sup> And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. <sup>20</sup> When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

*We do not do things alone. This man was cured because of the faith of his friends.*

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**FRIENDS TOUCH FRIENDS**

- This story tells the account of friends who brought their friend to Jesus
- When the crowd was too numerous for them to get through, they climbed onto the roof with their friend in tow and broke through the ceiling and lowered him before Jesus.
- The faith of the friends was enough for Jesus to heal the man
- Millennials want to be engaged!

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**LAYING ASIDE  
TRADITIONS  
AND  
ASSUMPTIONS**

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**MATTHEW 28:19-20**

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

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**FIND THE LOST AT ALL COST**

- **G.I Generation** (1904-1924) 59.6 million (live births)
  - Most are dead
  - Expanding economy, first generation to get social security
- **Silent Generation** (1925-1945) 55.4 Million
  - No president for this generation
  - Last generation to enjoy affluence in their retirement
- **Baby Boomers** (1946-1964) 75.9 Million
  - Largest in American History
  - Self-centered, independent spirit, materialistic, self-help movement
- **Gen X** (1965-1979) 51.5 Million
  - Poor work ethic, pessimistic about their long term financial prospects

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**FIND THE LOST AT ALL COST**

- **Millennial Generation** (1980-2000) 77.9 Million
  - Generation technology, Generation.com, Generation 2000, Y2K
  - Hopeful, they want to make a difference
  - Upbeat, positive and happy! Realists,
  - Relational
  - Learners
  - Parentally overbearing
  - Looking less to religion – When asked if Jesus is the only way to get to heaven, only 31% strongly agreed, the rest were tepid in their belief of the doctrine, or they disagree with it totally (The Millennials: Thom Rainer, Lifeway Publications: 2011)

*Tom Rainer*

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**FIND THE LOST AT ALL COST**

*I say...*

- **Millennials** want to know Jesus!
- **Millennials** want to be engaged!

Research says...

- **Millennials** are looking less to religion – When asked if Jesus is the only way to get to heaven, only 31% strongly agreed, the rest were tepid in their belief of the doctrine, or they disagree with it totally

**MILLENNIALS WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

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Unchurched Millennials Survey

Name ABDOUR DIALLO

Date 7/15/18

Age 19

Gender M

1. Are you a member of a local Church? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. If no, why not?
  - a. Too judgmental
  - b. Lack of authenticity
  - c. Out of touch
3. What kind of action do you want the Church to take in our communities?
  - a. Missional
  - b. Social justice
  - c. Educational
  - d. All of the above
4. What are the issues in our communities that concern you the most?
  - a. Poverty
  - b. Mental health
  - c. Crime/violence
  - d. Lack of affordable housing
5. What do you think is the primary role of the Church?
  - a. Social justice and education
  - b. Make disciples and evangelism
  - c. Crime and violence
  - d. Unemployment and poverty
6. What do millennials want the Church to do for them?
  - a. Listen to them
  - b. Appreciate them
  - c. Include them
  - d. All of the above
7. How often do you visit a Church?
  - a. 1-3 months

- b. Weddings
- c. Funerals
- d. Special occasions
- e. Once a year
- f. Once every six months

8. What does it takes to make you an active member of the Church?

SEEING PEOPLE TREAT EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT AND LOVE.

9. What do you want from the Church?

- a. The Word
- b. Relationship
- c. Justice

10. What are the current issues of the Church that you disagree with?

- a. Too much hypocrisy
- b. Too much finances
- c. Too much time
- d. Too little missional projects

11. If you were to become a member of the Church, will you commit yourself totally?

Yes  No



Unchurched Millennials Survey

Name Monique Mueller

Date 7/15/18

Age 26

Gender F

1. Are you a member of a local Church? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. If no, why not?
  - a. Too judgmental
  - b. Lack of authenticity
  - c. Out of touch
3. What kind of action do you want the Church to take in our communities?
  - a. Missional
  - b. Social justice
  - c. Educational
  - d. All of the above
4. What are the issues in our communities that concern you the most?
  - a. Poverty
  - b. Mental health
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7. How often do you visit a Church?
  - a. 1-3 months

- b. Weddings
- c. Funerals
- d. Special occasions
- e. Once a year
- f. Once every six months

8. What does it takes to make you an active member of the Church?

*I would like to be part of a ministry that meets you where you are and not judge you right off the bat and help you to*

9. What do you want from the Church?

*grow to the place you need to be*

- a. The Word
- b. Relationship
- c. Justice

10. What are the current issues of the Church that you disagree with?

- a. Too much hypocrisy
- b. Too much finances
- c. Too much time
- d. Too little missional projects

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Yes  No