

## 10 Things You Won't Find in Church that Attracts Millennials

Many people are pessimistic about [Millennials](#), but I believe the next generation is poised to transform the culture (and the world) for the good in life and in church. For many churches and leaders, however, Millennials are (to borrow from [Winston Churchill](#)) “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”

I would agree with Churchill's statement on some levels, but the riddle can be solved. Once you find out what makes Millennials tick, they are not that puzzling. They simply have a unique set of passions, interests, and viewpoints on the culture and the world.

But the church has largely failed to take stock in this generation because they are different. This is a problem. A lack of knowledge breeds fear, and this is true of the church in relation to Millennials. Many churches do not take the time to know the next generation, so they are stuck with attaching stigmas (many untrue) to them.

There are churches, however, that are thriving with Millennials, and if you did some investigation I believe you would find similar results, regardless of the church locale.

### What do millennials want from church?

So, what differentiates a church culture that attracts Millennials from one that repels them? There are many factors, but I want to highlight ten really important ones. If your church wonders why reaching the next generation is difficult, the following points might shed some light on your struggle.

**1.) There is a strong resistance to change.**

The next generation doesn't understand why churches refuse to change a program, activity, or even an entire culture if they aren't effective. Millennials don't hold traditions close to their heart. In fact, for many (myself included) traditions are often the enemy because many churches allow traditions to hinder them from moving forward.

Is this right? Maybe. Maybe not. But it is a reality nonetheless. One that must be understood.

Millennials are tired of hearing the phrase "this is how we have always done it." That answer is no longer acceptable. Millennials want to change the world. Many times traditions hold them back from this. Change is necessary to remain focused on the vision and being externally focused, among many other things. The next generation understands this.

## **2.) A compelling vision is lacking or non-existent.**

If creating an environment totally void of the next generation is your goal, especially those with any initiative and talent, refuse to cast vision in your church. That will drive Millennials away faster than the time I saw a rattlesnake in the woods and screamed like a girl. Don't judge me. I hate snakes...and cats.

It baffles me when a church doesn't value vision and planning. In no other arena of life do we refuse to vision and plan, but for some reason the church is different.

***"If your vision doesn't compel, move or stir people, your vision is too small."***  
***~Craig Groeschel***

Millennials will not invest in a church that refuses to dream big because they see example after example of an infinitely powerful God doing amazing things through normal people. You might think they are naive, but most Millennials don't believe they have to wait until they receive a certain degree or reach a certain age to start non-profits, plant churches, or lead businesses.

So, go ahead and believe “the Spirit is supposed to guide us, not a man-made vision” or just allow sheer laziness to lead the way, but your church will continue to be void of the next generation.

### **3.) Mediocrity is the expectation.**

Quite simply...the next generation is not content with mediocrity. They believe they can (and will) change the world. Good or bad, they have a strong desire for the extraordinary. Failure is not going to drive the train. This also seems like a foreign concept to many in previous generations, but Millennials aren't scared to fail. And they believe churches should operate with a similar mindset.

Failing and being a failure are mutually exclusive. They dream often and dream big because they understand they serve a God who works beyond their abilities.

Millennials have a collective concern for making the world a better place, and mediocrity fits nowhere in those plans.

### **4.) There is a paternalistic approach to leading Millennials.**

If you want to push the [next generation](#) from your church, refuse to release them to lead.

This is one I have experienced personally. If you want to push the next generation away from your church, don't release them to lead. Simply giving them a title means nothing. Titles are largely irrelevant to the next generation. They want to be trusted to fulfill the task given to them. If you micro-manage them, treat them like a child, or refuse to believe they are capable of being leaders because of their age and lack of experience, wisdom, etc., they will be at your church for a short season.

Millennials will not allow age to keep them from leading...and leading well. If you refuse to release them to lead, the next generation will quickly find another

church or context where they can use their talents and gifts to their full capacity.

### **5.) There is a pervasive insider-focused mentality.**

Traditional or contemporary worship? High church or low church? A plurality of elders, board of directors, or staff-led church? While past generations invested a lot of time in these discussions, most Millennials see these conversations as sideways energy. There might be a time and place for talking about acapella versus instrumental or high church versus low church, but the time is very rarely and the place is not from a pulpit or in a small group.

Millennials won't attend churches that answer questions nobody is asking.

***“When the faithful saturate their schedules with Christian events at Christian venues with Christian people, the world has a hard time believing we hold the rest of the world in high esteem.” ~Gabe Lyons***

What is important to Millennials? How a church responds to the lost in the world, both locally and globally. How a church responds to the poor, homeless, needy, and widowed. If you want to ensure your church has very few Millennials, answer the questions nobody is asking, spend most of your resources on your building, and have programs that do little to impact anybody outside the church walls.

The next generation is pessimistic towards institutions...the church included. Millennials are not going to give their time and resources to a church that spends massive amounts of money on inefficient and ineffective programs.

Church leaders can get mad or frustrated about this, or they can consider changing things. Churches who value reaching the next generation emphasize the latter.

### **6.) Transparency and authenticity are not high values.**

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<https://faithit.com/10-things-wont-find-church-attract-millennials/>

Despite what I often hear, most Millennials value transparency and authenticity. If your church portrays a “holier than thou” mentality and most of the sermons leave everyone feeling like terrible people, your church will be largely devoid of the next generation.

Why? Because the next generation knows something the church has largely denied for a long time...church leaders are not in their position because they are absent of sin, temptations, or failures. Millennials have seen too many scandals in the church (i.e. Catholic church scandal) and witnessed too many instances of moral failures among prominent Christian leaders.

Millennials are not looking for perfect people...Jesus already handled that. Millennials are looking for people to be real and honest about struggles and temptations.

### **7.) Mentoring is not important.**

This is a common misconception about Millennials. While they do not like paternalistic leadership, they place a high value on learning from past generations. I have a good friend who lives in Jackson, TN and he occasionally drives to Nashville (two hours away) to sit at the feet of a man who has mentored him for years. He does this because his mentor has knowledge my good friend highly values.

He is not an exception. I have driven as far as Dallas to spend a weekend with a family I love and respect. I had no other reason for going than to watch how they parent and let this man give me nuggets of wisdom on following Jesus and loving others. Many might think this is ridiculous, but this is what makes Millennials unique.

They value wisdom and insight. It is a valuable treasure, and they will travel long distances to acquire it.

Millennials aren't standoffish towards those who have gone before us. They place a high value on learning. But they want to learn from sages, not dads. If your church is generationally divided and refuses to pour into the next generation, you can be sure your church will not attract Millennials.

### **8.) Culture is viewed as the enemy.**

Millennials are tired of the church viewing the culture as the enemy. Separationist churches that create "safe places" for their members, moving away from all the evil in the city, are unlikely to attract the next generation. The next generation is trying to find ways to engage the culture for the glory of God.

Millennials are increasingly optimistic about the surrounding culture because this is the model of Jesus. He loves all types of people, does ministry in the city, and engages the culture. They also know the church does not stand at the cultural center anymore.

In past generations, preachers could stand in pulpits and lecture about the evils of the culture because the church shaped the culture. Today, this is not true.

The goal of Christian living isn't to escape the evils of the culture and finish life unharmed. To reach people today, the church must be immersed in the community for the glory of God.

### **9.) Community is not valued.**

This might be the greatest value of Millennials. Community is a non-negotiable part of their lives. And they aren't looking for another group of people to watch the Cowboys play football on Sunday...the next generation desires a Christ-centered community. They value a community that moves beyond the surface and asks the hard questions.

Community keeps Millennials grounded and focused. Community challenges them to reach heights never imagined alone. Jesus lived in community with twelve men for most of His earthly ministry. Jesus spent a lot of His time pouring into people. Community isn't an optional part of a Millennial's life...it is essential.

Personally, I have seen the value of community on so many levels. Without authentic Christian community, I wouldn't be in full-time ministry today. I wouldn't have overcome serious sins and struggles. I wouldn't have been challenged to live fully for God.

In a culture becoming increasingly independent and disconnected, Millennials model something important for the church. There is power in numbers. As an African proverb states, *"If you want to go fast, go ALONE. If you want to go far, go TOGETHER."*

Millennials want to go far and want their life to have meaning. In their minds this is not possible without deep, authentic, Christ-centered community. I agree.

### **10.) The church is a source of division and not unity.**

Nothing frustrates Millennials more than a church that doesn't value unity. Jesus's final recorded prayer on earth in [John 17](#) has been preached for years. What many churches miss is one of the central themes in that prayer...unity.

On four separate occasions, Jesus explicitly prays for unity. It was important to him. He brought together tax collectors and Zealots (just do some research if you want to know how difficult it would have been to bring these groups together). He brought people together. This is why places like coffee shops are grounds (like my pun?) for a lot of Millennials. They want to be in environments where everyone feels welcomed and accepted.

Churches that value racial, generational, and socio-economic unity will attract Millennials. Why? The gospel is most fully reflected when all of these groups are

brought together, and most of them are just crazy enough to believe the power of the Spirit is sufficient to make it happen.

Some churches and leaders don't see the value of changing to reach this generation, but once they realize this mentality is wrong it will be too late. The Millennials are a huge part of the population today (about 80 million strong), and if your church is serious about the Great Commission, your church also needs to be serious about understanding this generation.

**Are there other qualities or values you think are important to Millennials? Leave a comment below! Let's continue the conversation.**

I love you all! To God be the glory forever. Amen!

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