

MANAGING MILLENNIALS

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Millennials

The word “*Millennials*” is a generational word referring to those born between 1981-2001. Currently they range between the ages of 15 to 35. Preceding them was “*Generation-X*” (1965-1980) and the “*Baby Boomers*” (1946-1964). Generally, (there are exceptions) Millennials were a “wanted” generation with a lot of devoted moms and dads. As a result, they have a mutual affection and admiration with their parents. 77% seek parental advice regularly. They are self-confident. Their self esteem resulted from parents dialoging with their kids rather than commanding them. They are the first generation to grow up digital with a smart-phone companion. Though often construed as phone addicts, materialists without a work ethic, impatient and naive about the realities of life, Millennials do have qualities which surpass their predecessors, the Boomers and Generation-Xers. Jonnelle Marte of the Washington Post writes they have less debt and are pretty good at saving for big purchases, such as buying a house and starting a family. They have a yearning for meaningfulness. In a dangerous world with the length of life unpredictable, they want to make a worth while difference “*Now*”.

Millennials & Morality

With parents who were generally infrequent church attenders and non-Bible readers, Millennials for the most part grew up Biblically illiterate. And yet despite the materialistic, secular world in which they grew up, their inner inherited natural knowledge of God shaped them to think spiritually. Having grown up in a climate of cheating TV evangelists, child abusing clergy, Britney Spears and Miley Cyrus shedding their faith, CEO’s, judges and politicians going to jail - Millennials hesitate to trust people in general as well as the church. With the absolute authority of the Scriptures challenged by evolution and the “Form Criticism” theology of liberal churches, the Bible lost its significance as a source of truth and morality for Millennials. They shaped a self-styled ethic which determines what is right or wrong for themselves as long as they don’t hurt anyone else. Life’s goal for a Millennial is to be yourself, feel good about your choices. do what

works for you and don’t judge others regarding what they do. Everyone should have the freedom to decide for himself or herself what is moral.

Millennials & the Church

A nice feature regarding Millennials is their open mindedness. They’re ready to listen. They certainly are not anti-Church or anti-Bible. In fact, most think church is essentially a good thing despite its inadequacies and faults here and there. It’s just that they think it’s not very important for them now. Church is something they might do once they settle down. 89% said they would listen to someone tell them about their personal Christian beliefs. 46% said they would join a small group to learn about the Bible. What an opportunity to practice personal evangelism! Let the Holy Spirit use your lips to share Christ’s Gospel. It has the power to transform self-made Millennial morality, sinking in secular sand, into a life-style built on the rock solid foundation of Christ’s word. (Mt. 7:24-27).

Outreach to Millennials

Rom. 1:16 declares the Gospel as the “power of God for salvation”. The methods for Gospel outreach can vary. Various buckets can be used to carry the word of God, providing there are no bucket holes to leak out truth. A Bach chorale or a contemporary hymn can do the job. Forms of worship can vary. Church activities can be adjusted in form and function. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Lake Mary, FL, is reaching out multi-culturally with a “coffee house mission” in Orlando. Peer based approaches work best.

Volunteerism

Millennials are service oriented. They love to volunteer. Congregations should provide opportunities to serve that reflect the assets and talents of Millennials. Unique, they tend to ...

- > **Support** issues rather than organizations.
- > **Prefer** smaller actions before fully committing.
- > **Engage** causes which directly help people.

Providing worthwhile service activities attractive to Millennials provides an excellent contact point opportunity to share the Gospel.

RELATED RESOURCE

www.selc.lcms.org - Personal Stewardship Outreach - “*Personal Evangelism*”