

Is the Church Relevant? This is about its truth, relevance, meaning, and inclusion. The answer for different generations is ...

YES...

NO...

MAYBE...

But first we must begin with biblical definition of church.

- “The community of faithful believers, of whom Jesus Christ is the head, called out from the world to serve God down the ages. Scripture emphasizes that the church is the body of Christ whose members are intended to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Scriptural understanding of the church is corporate, rather than solitary or individual.” (Topical Reference Bible)

- This is grounded in today’s focal passage about the church:

Ephesians 1:20-23 (The Message) All this energy issues from Christ: God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything.

At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ’s body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.

Secondly, what is the nature and foundations of the church?

The church is composed of people called by God, who are united by their faith in Christ and by their common life in him.

- Here are a few New Testament images or metaphors of the people of God:
 - God’s family or household (Ephesians 2:19)
 - God’s temple (I Cor. 3:16-17)
 - The body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5)
 - The bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2)
 - Jesus Christ’s flock (John 10:14)

The church as God’s people is described in scripture as ...

- A people chosen by God (I Peter 2:9)
- A people called by God (Romans 1 :6 & Acts 2:39)

- A people loved by God (I Peter 2:10 and Ephesians 2: 1-5)
- God's covenant people (Hebrews 8:8-10)
- Set apart for God/made holy (Rom. 1:7)

What is the purpose and mission of the church?

The church is called to praise and glorify God, to establish Jesus Christ kingdom, and to proclaim the gospel throughout the world. This involves ...

- Worship
- Fellowship of mutual love of ordinary people
- Preach and teach the Gospel/Good News
- Grow in our faith life/discipleship/spiritual maturity in Christ
- Salt and Light in the world/world changer
- Witness and Reach Out/Do good to all/Social Justice

Where does the church find it's life?

- The church lives its life or essence of being in union with Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is called to mutual love, holy living and to worship.
- As the church lives out the life and story of Jesus Christ, it shares itself with the community and world. The kingdom of God is spread to all people and grows in its life and impact.

Are we passing the torch of faith to the next generation?

Is church relevant to ...

- The Great Generation (born before 1945) - yes??
- The Boomer Generation (1945 – 1965) - yes...maybe??
- Generation Xers (1965 – 1983) - maybe...no??
- Millennial (Mosaic) Generation (1983 – 2002) -no??

Rick Warren has recently revised his popular *The Purpose Driven Life* for younger generations. He asks about ...

- God's message of purpose and hope for the next generation
- What is life's meaning?
- How do I make a difference in the world?

Linson Daniel - Area Director for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for Oklahoma and North Texas writes about reaching younger generations. He suggests ...

1. Create room for safe, stimulating conversation.

Millennials are leaving a robust, rigorous, academic environment

and re-entering into a church culture that is typically the opposite.

- Create room for like-minded, post-college students to interact about tough questions, popular culture, and personal life ambitions.
- I suggest not retooling your cliché “young adult” or “singles” small group, but consider making a next-generation “think tank”. Invite Millennials together and address questions that the church is facing.
- Have these post-college students wrestle through the ideas and make real-life application for the church and for their personal lives. In a way, they are your new guiding coalition as you invoke change at your church.

2. Create low-risk, high-impact leadership opportunities.

The ideas generated from the “think tank” discussions may become the new leadership opportunities that you can offer back to the group!

- Provide the needed springboard for their new ideas! Open up leadership opportunities all over the church for them. For example, ask Millennials to do some of the following:
 - *invent new methods to greet/connect people at church via social media and technology*
 - *create cutting edge media teasers for the next sermon series*
 - *perform spoken word, dance, or musical numbers to add value to weekly services*
 - *develop strategies for reaching de-churched Millennials living near the church*
 - *foster in-roads with the unreached LGBT community in the city*
 - *brainstorm and present topics to the teaching pastors that will cater to this generation*
 - *provide valuable connections to pop-culture that could breathe life into your boring church*
 - *initiate partnerships with social justice advocates around the city*
- Even if the outcome is not perfect, the church will not suffer because of the engineered low-risk. If the end result is stellar, then the church will experience new-found momentum! Either way, you get Millennials involved in church, and they get to make an impact!

3. Create development plans for millennial gifts and talents.

Unlike Generation X-ers, Millennials love to be mentored by older people around them.

- It is exciting for Millennials to know that someone has a development plan that is customized for their personal growth! In fact, you should not be afraid to map out the next 2-4 years for Millennials. Consider the following:

- *Pair up your best Millennials with your leadership team.*
- *Challenge them to meet bi-weekly for coaching sessions.*
- *Cast BIG vision for Millennials as they take on their new roles.*
- *List detailed next steps and outcomes for the Millennials.*
- *Offer lots of praise as they discover and develop their gifts.*
- *Point out areas of growth and encourage them to maximize their strengths!*
- *Have FUN while you are developing them!*
- You will be surprised how many Millennials will stick around for the long-haul simply because they have a road map for their development. If they are developing skills, adding value, and/or feeling acknowledged, then you will see them thrive, stay, and invite their friends.

4. Create strong partnership with parachurch ministries on campus.

I bet that your most gifted Millennial leaders are coming from a local para-church campus ministry like InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

- You should do what the aforementioned local pastor did with me! Get CONNECTED to what is happening on your local university campus.
- You could literally set up a pipeline from the college campus right into your church and it will be filled with young, intelligent, enthusiastic leaders that are on mission for Jesus. Though many of these young adults will have powerful corporate jobs lined up, they will find true meaning in what they do at your church. I cannot think of a more strategic partnership for your church!
- *Find out the name of the campus minister near you and invite them to lunch. Who knows what could happen next!? I believe that you and I will see lasting renewal in our cities if we attract more Millennials to the church! Let's continue to invite, incorporate, and empower Millennials to become world changers. Try creating these four opportunities and let me know how it goes!*