

MINISTRY TO MILLENNIALS

UNDERSTANDING & REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION (BORN 1982-2002)

BIBLICAL INSIGHT...

*O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old--what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; **we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.** He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, **so the next generation would know them**, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. **Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.** Ps 78:1-7 (NIV)*

UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS

WHO THEY ARE

Millennials are less vulgar, less sexually active, less violent than the youth culture adults have created for them. This is the only teen generation in recent memory for whom this is true!

- Howe and Strauss in *Generations*

- Also known as: *Gen Y, Mosaics, Echo Boom*
- **Large:** Over 70 million strong (compared to Gen X - 41 million).
 - Including immigrants, Millennials may ultimately exceed 100 million members — nearly a third more than Boomers.
 - Birth rate surprised demographers — it didn't drift down after Boomers passed "fertility" ages, it rose!
 - **CHEW ON THIS** — Boomers chose to become "older" parents in the 80's and Gen-X moms chose to embrace historic birth-age norm.

- **Wanted by parents:**

- The lowest child-to-parent ratio in American history — only 2% of all kids under the age of 18 live in families with five or more kids.
- During Gen Xers' childhood, planned parenting meant contraceptives . . . during Millennials' childhood, planned parenting means visits to fertility clinics. Infertility treatment and premature infant care have become two of the fastest growing fields in medicine (i.e. in 1970 a 2 lbs. baby had a 5% chance of survival while in 1990, 90% survive at an average cost of over \$100,000 per child).
- Abortion has steadily decreased in recent years.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Unlike Gen Xers, Millennials have not been abandoned or neglected by parents.

- **Wanted by society:**

- Quality education has been a major political issue during the past 20 years.
- Poverty rate for children peaked in 1983 (24.6).
- Massive increase in Medicaid assistance for children in 1983.
- Divorce rate peaked in 1981.
- Homicide rate against children (ages 1-4) peaked in 1982.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Unlike Gen Xers, Millennials have not been abandoned or neglected by schools, politicians, or society.

- **Affluent:**

- Child income from allowance has risen steadily.
- Millennials are big spenders (although they are just 7% of population, they account for 21% of all spending).
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Millennials have grown up during years of unprecedented wealth, prosperity, and opportunity.

- **Technologically wired:**

- Technology is in the DNA of Millennials . . . technology is no longer learned (Boomers) or valued (Gen Xers), but assumed.
- The internet is not just an information source, it is a community connector.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — "Plugged in" generation. Technology is a tool of life with no boundaries.

- **Stressed out & exhausted:**

- Millennials often feel stress from boomer parents trying to raise trophy kids with perfect grades, complete experiences, drop-dead resume, etc.
- Millennials are seen as high achievers, in contrasted to the Gen X reputation of "slackers."
- Lots of competition from other highly motivated, hyper-educated kids.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Change is constant. For Boomers, change was a mandate. For Xers, change was instability. Millennials thrive on change (even though it is stressful and exhausting).

RANDOM SNAPSHOT

Generation "Flow" in USA	Size	Recent Generations
Civic	Large	GI
Adaptive	Small	Silent
Idealist	Large	Boomer
Reactive	Small	Xer
Civic	Large	Millennial

WHAT THEY THINK, BELIEVE, AND DO

There is a new generation upon us, the oldest barely out of high school, the youngest not yet born . . . they are fundamentally different in outlook & ambition from any group of kids in the past 50 to 60 years.
- Brian O'Reilly in "Today's Kids" (*Fortune* magazine)

Where the Boomer upheaval focused on issues of self, culture, and morals, the Millennials upheaval will focus on issues of community, politics, and deeds. They will rebel against the culture by cleaning it up, rebel against political cynicism by touting trust, rebel against individualism by stressing teamwork, rebel against adult pessimism by going positive, and rebel against societal ennui by actually getting a few things done.

- Howe and Strauss in *Generations*

- **Family:**

- Family is paramount for Millennials.
- When they marry, they plan to have one parent stay at home with children. Most insist that family will always be more important than money or career.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Heroes are mom and dad (if parents have been deeply involved in their lives).

- **Friends:**

- Friends come second only to family.
- Millennials view Xers as loners.
- Hollywood: Emphasis on friendship in shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and movies like *X-Men*.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — "Ads aimed at Gen Xers show them living solitary, miserable-but-interesting lives. That approach doesn't work with the next generation. Belonging to a group is so important that I caution anyone advertising to this generation against putting a lone individual in an ad." - Jane Buckingham, head of Youth Intelligence

- **Career plans:**

- In spite of all the worries about education and careers, Millennials do not want to live and work the way adults do (esp. their Boomer parents).
- Millennials are turned off by obsessiveness and hideous hours.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Like Gen Xers, Millennials will decide what kind of lifestyle they want first, then look for careers that will accommodate that lifestyle.

- **Political & Social Issues:**

- Conservative & activists.
- Racism is almost a non-issue . . . they value diversity. Millennials are growing up in a multicultural America in which ethnic youth are seen as equals.
- Females are also seen as equals and will have increasing opportunities in leadership, business, and academics.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Class and money will potentially become the new "dividing line." For instance, dating across racial and ethnic lines will probably be more common and acceptable, while dating across class lines will probably become less so.

- **Religion & Thought:**

- Very spiritual, but lack of focus.
- Postmodern and relativistic — but desperately looking for absolute truth.
- Often, pragmatism is confused for truth.
- Non-linear thinkers.
- Embrace spiritual experiences.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Millennials are returning to orthodox Christianity (Apostles Creed, ancient Christian patterns). They will following the spiritual lead of "successful" Gen Xers.

- **Attitudes:**

- Team-oriented, generous, citizenship, poised, pragmatic.
- Bright, confident, upbeat, optimistic.
- New emphasis on manners, modesty, and old-fashioned gender courtesies.
- Respect authority and follow rules.
- **CHEW ON THIS** — In many ways, Millennials were more poised and positive during Columbine and Sept. 11 than many adults.

- **Behavior:**

- Teens are backing away from early and unprotective sex (rate of sexually active teens in high school down 20% since the early 1990's).
- Teen abortion is down (teen pregnancy and abortion down 30% since the early 1990's)
- Teen drinking, smoking, and drugs use are down (consumptions among high school students has reached all-time lows).
- Teen violent crime rate is down (down 70% since the early 1990's).
- Teen suicide rate is down (for the first time in decades).
- **CHEW ON THIS** — Millennials are rebelling by being good.

- **Skills:**
 - Millennials are expert cultural editors who take in a lot of information and quickly sift through it for what they want or need.
 - **CHEW ON THIS** — Millennials multi-task fast.
- **The Future:**
 - "I think our generation will do something amazing."
 - "It's up to us."
 - **CHEW ON THIS** — Millennials believe in the future & what they will accomplish.

RANDOM SNAPSHOT

Boomers	Xers	Millennials
Diversity as a cause	Diversity accepted	Diversity celebrated
Idealistic	Cynical/Pragmatic	Optimistic/Realistic
Killer job	Killer life	Killer lifestyle
Free love	HIV/Safe Sex	Selective Sex
Has technology (TV)	Uses technology (PC)	Consumes technology (Internet)
Task-focused	Multitasks	Multitasks fast
Ozzie & Harriet	Latch-key kids	Nurtured

BRAIN WAVE: TOP TEN CHARACTERISTICS & DISTINCTIVES

Boil it down and here are 10 big things to remember about the Millennial Generation . . .

- **Large** — Numerically, this is a HUGE generation.
- **Wanted** — Most wanted generation in decades (wanted by parents, society . . . everyone)
- **Technologically Wired** — The "plugged-in" generation. Technology is in their DNA.
- **Relationally Oriented** — Family & friends are paramount.
- **Spiritual** — Experiential, non-linear, and searching for truth.
- **Optimistic** — Bright, confident, upbeat, and believe in themselves & the future.
- **Rebellious** — Embrace a new rebellion: they rebel by being good.
- **Diverse** — Celebrate ethnic & gender diversity (not "class" diversity)
- **Change Oriented** — Thrive on change, although it is stressful & exhausting.
- **Team Oriented** — Generous, civic, pragmatic, and conservative.

REACHING MILLENNIALS

WHEN TO REACH THEM

- **NOW!**

WHY NOW

- **We cannot afford to wait!** Statistics say:
 - 85% rule.
 - Under 14 statistic (Barna).
 - 10/20 Window
 - Even if students drift away, they often come back (in their 20's & 30's) to what they knew to be true in their childhood.
- **Millennials will fully possess the youth culture** (between now & 2007)
 - Sometime between 2007 and 2012, Millennials will break out as a major national phenomenon.
 - Conventional wisdom states that Millennials ARE and WILL BE the most influential generation in the past 50 to 60 years . . . they WILL impact our culture.

HOW TO REACH THEM = CONTEXTUALIZATION

- **Recognize Differences**
 - Millennials are not little Boomers or a continuation of Xers. While there are some similarities, there are more differences.
 - They are **breaking** with the attitude of Xers . . . in most areas, Xers are not setting trends that Millennials are following.
 - They want to **correct** the excesses they see in Boomers . . . narcissism, iconoclasm, and constant focus on talk over action.
 - They desire to **fill** the void being left by the GIs . . . they believe they will be the next "greatest generation."
 - Remember . . . Millennials are not:
 - Pessimists . . . they're optimists.
 - Rule-breakers . . . they're rule-followers.
 - Self-absorbed . . . they're gravitate towards group activity and service.
 - Distrustful . . . they accept authority.
 - Neglected . . . they're the most watched-over generation in memory.
 - Stupid . . . aptitude test scores have continually risen in recent years (esp. in elementary schools).
 - Another "lost" generation . . . they are "found."

- **Realize Constructive Cultural Trends**
 - Embrace multiculturalism . . . by 2050 minorities will be the majority.
 - Embrace intergenerationalism . . . this means intergenerational leadership & partnership.
 - Embrace technology . . . as an enhancer of relationships.

- **Reject Destructive Cultural Trends**
 - Relativism, pluralism, "tolerance," etc.
 - Provide "raw" truth teaching & experiences

- **Relationships, Relationships, Relationships**
 - Programs and events must be used as tools for developing & deepening relationships.
 - Modeling is central to communicating truth.

- **Return to Ancient Practice**
 - Return to ancient (mystic) practices — focus on transformation as much as information.
 - Experience, expression, and involvement is the lifeblood of faith development . . . remember the journey of getting there is as important as the destination.
 - Create EPIC Environments: *Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, Community-oriented.*

- **Reinvent Leadership Metaphor**
 - Old Metaphors: War General, Coach, Chaplain, CEO, Shepherd
 - New Metaphor: Environmentalist (Organic Garden)
 - Soil is most important
 - Bugs and worms are good
 - Growth cycles
 - Beauty matters
 - Pruning is crucial
 - Environmental basics (water, sun, air) are key

- **Read**
 - See book & article list below

- **Ramp Up**
 - Start today!
 - Pump resources (people and finances) into youth ministry NOW!
 - Call students to radical commitments

Data for this paper gathered and sometimes quoted directly from the following sources:

<i>Generations</i> (1991) by Howe and Strauss	"Generation 2000: America's New Conformists" (<i>Axess Mag.</i>)
<i>Millennials Rising</i> (2000) by Howe and Strauss	"Youth Ministry Minute" (<i>Group Mag.</i> , Nov/Dec 2002)
<i>The New Faithful</i> (2002) by Colleen Carroll	"Seven Trends to Watch in the Next Decade" (<i>Youthworker Journal</i> , Jan/Feb 2000)
"Today's Kids" (<i>Fortune Mag.</i> , July 24, 2000) by O'Reilly	"Trendwatch" (<i>Group Mag.</i> ., March/April 2003)