

Psalm 71:18, "So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come."

The Bible speaks about "generations" of people 198 times! (Read Psalm 78:1-8.) In order to relate properly to all five generations in the church today, we need to learn how they think differently, what they value, and how we can all be "better together" once we appreciate the unique qualities that each generation brings.

Why do we need multi-generational ministry?

1. **Older adults, who should be teaching the younger generation, need opportunities.** Paul was clear that older believers are to invest in younger believers (2 Tim. 2:2, Titus 2:1-8). That's difficult to do if the entire church is made up of older adults.
2. **Our _____ is multi-generational.** Few communities consist of only one generation. If you want your church to reach your community, you must reflect it.
3. **Generations need to _____ from each other.** We have much to teach each other, from the older folks teaching lessons about long marriages to the younger folks helping the rest of us think about a rapidly changing culture.
4. **Some members need Christian "parents" and "_____."** Especially younger members who don't have a Christian heritage, or whose family lives far away.
5. **A strong church learns from the past while preparing for the _____.** A church with only a young generation sometimes pushes unwisely in wrong directions. A church with only older folks, on the other hand, will ultimately die. We must connect both generations.

Why is multi-generational ministry so difficult to do?

1. **Generational differences are honest and real.** The differences in worship style, for example, aren't superficial. They're real, and generations hold them deeply. Making any change, even for the sake of others, isn't easy.
2. **Congregations gravitate toward people most like them.** That's just natural. We tend to hang out with, and reach out to, people who are at the same stage of life as we are. Moving beyond our own generation requires work.
3. **Intentionality requires action that can make everybody uncomfortable.** Becoming multi-generational sometimes means that we joyfully worship through music we don't like, listen to stories that seem irrelevant, and welcome input from people who just don't seem to "get it." Everybody chooses to give up a little to gain much.
4. **Many older believers want their church to be multi-generational, but without changing anything.** Seldom does the process work that way, though. It's genuinely hard for some older believers to accept changes needed to reach the next generations, even when they try. This is especially hard when the older folks have themselves never been truly disciplined.

The date you were born colors your _____ on life and affects the _____ you hold dear.

1. What are the generations?

- _____ (born before 1945) – Also called the "Builders." They were shaped by the aftermath of the Great Depression and WWII, the move from farm to city, mass marketing, and confidence in experts.
- _____ (born 1946-1964) – What shaped them? The "baby boom," affluence, television, and the cultural shift from sacrifice to self.
- _____ (born 1965-1980) – What shaped them? Being "squished" between two large generations, divorce, focus on friends, downward mobility, and the Internet.
- _____ (born 1981-2001) – What shaped them? Heavy parental involvement, fear of low self-esteem, the consumer age, technology everywhere, and latent adulthood.
- **Generation ??? (born after 2001)**

2. What are the characteristics of each generation?

TRADITIONALISTS

Their Strengths:

- **They** _____. Traditionalists are also more trusting in organizations.
- **They serve with lower** _____.
- **They give** _____. They are famous savers, and they are also givers.

Their Vulnerabilities:

- **They struggle with purposeless** _____.
- **They cling to the** _____. They remember the past as better than it was and see the future as scarier than it is. (See Ecclesiastes 7:10.)
- **They tend to** _____ **younger generations.**

BABY BOOMERS

Strengths and Vulnerabilities:

- **Focus on** _____ - Boomers put a greater emphasis on experiencing God rather than simply learning doctrine.
- **Church** _____ - The Traditionalists were loyal to the churches they grew up in. Boomers began to evaluate their churches from a more self-focused perspective.
- _____ - They place an emphasis on psychology, and Boomers are nine times more likely to seek psychological help than their parents.

GENERATION X

Strengths:

- **They reclaim the priority of** _____. Finding nontraditional sources of “family” or community became a high value.
- **They reclaim the** _____ **in all of life.** They don’t divide sacred from secular.
- **They reclaim the value of life and** _____ **over work.**

Temptations:

- **They build their own** _____. “Something can be true for you but not for me.”
- **They are** _____.

MILLENNIALS

Strengths:

- **They want** _____. Millennials want to be involved, expressing themselves and making a noticeable impact. They want what they do to matter.
- **They want** _____. They don’t expect perfection. They look for emotional openness as they search for authenticity.
- **They want to be** _____ **to a tribe.** Loyalty to friends is one of Millennials’ highest values. They long for deeper connections that social media cannot provide.

Temptations:

- **They miss the contradictions in their** _____.
- **They miss the power and importance of the** _____.

3. How does our legacy influence other generations?

Read Joshua 24:14-18. The three chairs represent three different positions toward Christ.

- **Chair #1:** Jesus is Lord and Savior – represents **total commitment**. Their relationship with Jesus Christ is the highest priority in their life.
- **Chair #2:** Jesus is Savior – represents **compromise**. These folks hear about what God is doing, but they don’t know about it personally.
- **Chair #3:** Jesus is a historical figure – represents **conflict and ignorance**. Those who sit in the third chair are not Christians, and they do not know anything of God and His greatness.

The book of Judges tells us that the Israelites followed God as long as Joshua and the elders were alive. Joshua and the elders experienced God directly, but these folks who only knew about God, but did not know first hand the great works of God.

“The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua (CHAIR 1) and of the elders (CHAIR 2) who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel. After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up (CHAIR 3), who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:7, 10).

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