

“Connecting The Generations”

In order to connect the various generations in your church there must be a [culture of honor](#) that is esteemed and highly valued by everyone. It begins with those in leadership. Respect is earned but honor is given. **How are you doing at fostering a spirit of honor at all levels of your organization?**

This is the first time in American history that we have had **five** different generations working side-by-side in the church. People are living 30 years longer than they have in previous generations.

There are enormous implications to the fact that people are living longer. Churches don't have to change and adapt as quickly to the new and upcoming generations because those who are leading are living longer. This means that potentially huge numbers of people won't hear the gospel if the church of Jesus doesn't adapt to the new culture.

1. **Builders** (Traditionalists) (born before 1945)

Were actually the most rebellious – deconstructionism, first sexual revolution.

2. **Baby Boomers** (born 1945-1964)

Carried on the values they were taught; faith in psychology; can't trust the establishment; willingness to talk about problems that the previous generations had avoided; promiscuous generation; shift from sacrifice to self; hyper-individualism; birth of the “me” generation.

3. **Gen X** (born 1965-1980)

Community has been huge; want to collaborate; heavily influenced by societal instability; impacted by divorce and blended families; increase of women in the workplace; cynical; withdraw from institutions and organizations; look past hype.

4. **Millennials** (born 1981-2001)

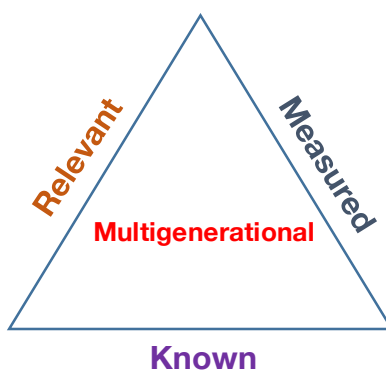
Post-modernism; true for you and not for me – relativism; nearly 70% will have sex before marriage; syncretistic; don't judge; free from prejudice.

5. **TBD** (born 2002-Present)

- What generations are currently most interested in your ministry, based on your music, clothing, preaching topics, and programs?
- What things can you tweak so that more generations will be interested?
- How will you give the people who don't attend now a voice in the decisions regarding how you do things?

What drives generations away?

1. **Anonymity** – no one wants to feel anonymous. People want to be noticed, known and genuinely valued. When you treat people like a commodity (to be consumed, used and then disposed of) they will leave. Good people usually don't leave churches when they are deeply known. *Do you genuinely care about reaching and serving people in the various generations?*
2. **Irrelevance** – if those in your church don't think they matter to someone at some level of the organization they will leave. We have to help people discover and celebrate their relevance. *Are you treating the various generations with dignity?*
3. **Immeasurement** – everyone has the need to be able to assess whether or not they are adding value (doing a good job) to the church. Measurement and relevance are directly connected. This will help people feel like they're valuable in an intrinsic way. When we don't help people to sense this we keep control but it frustrates others and they feel powerless. We will lose power when we empower others to measure for themselves if they are contributing but that is ultimately the healthiest approach to leading we can take.



Christ-like leaders know the people, help them to feel valuable and give them the opportunity to understand their contribution.

Each of these generations have differing attitudes toward managing time, texting, social media, organizational structure, and of course, clothing preferences. If we don't learn to work together we'll be wasting a lot of time fighting each other instead of enjoying a friendly and productive team.

How can we learn to speak one another's language and get better results together?

One way to build bridges between the various generations is to encourage them to **serve** together. In "Lasting Impact – Seven Powerful Conversations That Will Help Your Church Grow", Carey Nieuwhof mentions this important strategy in helping to form intergenerational relationships ...

Surprisingly, one of the key factors in developing a faith that sticks is intergenerational ministry and relationships. As Kara Powell, PhD, (a mom, a youth ministry veteran, and the executive director of the Fuller Youth Institute) explained, “[For years], we put our children in one part of the building, we put our youth across the parking lot or in another wing of the building, and the adults are someplace else. As a result, high school students graduate and they know youth group, but they don’t know the church.” If age-specific environments are the only experiences churches offer, students grow up spiritually and relationally **impoverished**. The solution isn’t to revert automatically to intergenerational worship that attempts to span all age brackets and, in the process, ends up speaking to no one well (it’s exceedingly difficult to communicate to eight-year-olds, twelve-year-olds, and forty-three-year-olds at the same time). **So how do you provide multigenerational experiences?** Different ages need to develop relationships with one another. The older need to mentor the younger. Churches can offer this through multigenerational groups, with teens in community with older group leaders, or even by mixing up college-aged students with empty-nester adults as leaders or group members. Many millennials are looking for spiritual parents, and these groups and mentor relationships can provide that. **Perhaps the most effective way to partner the generations is through serving.** Pairing a teen or child who’s volunteering with an adult can be a fantastic way to grow and learn together, provided the adult realizes there’s a mentoring opportunity and responsibility that comes with it. If the adult simply sees the younger volunteer as an extra set of hands or “help,” the opportunity will be lost. But **the environment of doing ministry together** with a younger adult, child, or teen can be exceptionally formative for both the adult and the younger person. Carey Nieuwhof. *Lasting Impact* (Kindle Locations 1226-1240).

- What is your change management plan to help the older generations adjust to the adjustments you will have to make to reach the younger generations?
- What aspects can you keep that will feel like home to the older generations?
- How will you engage the older generations in meaningful ways for the next 20 years so that they don’t feel like they have been “put out to pasture”?

Click on the links below for short videos to get your church staff or board talking about Millennials and ministry to multiple generations from Hayden Shaw.

[If You Want to Reach Millennials, Start Here](#)

[You Won’t Reach Millennials Unless You Understand the Thinking behind Their Thinking](#)

[How to Make Your Church a Place Where Millennials Stay](#)

[Every Church Has 5 Options for Ministering to the 5 Generations](#)

[How Do We Keep from Hurting the Older Generations If We Change Things to Reach the Younger Generations?](#)

[How Can Your Church Do Multigenerational Well?](#)

[The Boomers May Be a Greater Challenge When They Retire than the Millennials Are Now](#)

How to embrace change and make transitions without ignoring the needs of other generations who still want to be heard ...

Ask some new questions.

To get the answers you want, you may have to ask the question differently. If you present the question as, "Why don't they come to my church?" The answer is simple: they don't like your church. Go with a different approach, and develop your strategy from there. **What does your church have to do differently so that you can reach younger generations?** By default, that warrants a follow-up question: **What do you do with the people who are older, whose church it has been, if you're going to take it away from them by making it younger and for another generation? What do we give them in its place?** That's the question that never gets asked. You can't take something away without putting something else in its place.

Change your definition of adulthood.

Generations agree that fully developed adulthood starts at 28. And because millennials are in limbo between adolescence and adulthood, they've been an easy target for misplaced blame. One of the factors that determined whether or not millennials gave up on Christianity was determining if the church was a safe place. When you create a healthy environment for younger generations to explore their feelings and ask intellectual questions, you help them see the church as a place where they want to be.

Put Millennials in leadership positions.

Churches need to look at the skills people have developed outside of the church and see how they can share their gifts within the ministry. We tend to recruit people and hire people who don't make us feel insecure, but loving our insecurities will transform the church into a new era. Learn to lead and mentor from the side. Invite the younger generations, from 20s to 40s, back to the table. You can still get stuff done when you're not leading from the front.

The way you attract young leaders is by doing something **significant**. Instead of asking *"How can I get young leaders into the stream of what we're doing?"*, ask *"Is what we're doing worthy of a young leader stepping into the stream?"*

Is what we're doing authentic, contagious, captivating and compelling?

That's what people (of all ages) want to be a part of!

"If you want to attract young leaders, do something attractive!"
Louie Giglio

We Are Looking For ...

People who are teachable. Individuals who ask good questions, who take seriously the Christ-following life, who go out of their way to grow spiritually.

People with essential social skills. People who show respect and regard for others, not so argumentative or abrasive or touchy that they don't fit well with others.

People who will not simply sit for an entire evening saying nothing. We want “players” who are unafraid to mix it up, experiment with ideas, move the conversation along, and venture opinions.

Mentors Should Have These Traits

1. **Loyal** – Demonstrate a consistent loyalty to Jesus and speak of Him as their redeemer and Lord.
2. **Growable** – Have a hunger to keep on growing in every aspect of their lives, regardless of age.
3. **Conduct** – Have a clear sense of how a Christ follower conducts him/herself in the larger world.
4. **Relational** – Maintain personal relationships that appear to be healthy and life-giving.
5. **Wise & Honest** – Are respected because of their wisdom and integrity.
6. **Gifted & Called** – Are aware of how the Holy Spirit has gifted them & possess a sense of personal mission or call.
7. **Inspirational** – Love to inspire and lead others toward personal Christian growth.
8. **Flexibly Grounded** – Have firm convictions about faith, yet are not rigid, pushy, or judgmental.
9. **Generous & Service** – Are generous with what they have and always seem to know just how to serve others.
10. **Compassionate** – Are compassionate, the first ones to spot people who need counsel or encouragement.
11. **Relatable** – Are people you love to be with because they love life and seem to know the best ways to live it.
12. **Influential** – Are influential wherever they go.

Resources: Honor Leadership App; [“Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart”](#) by Hayden Shaw; [“Generational IQ: Christianity Isn't Dying, Millennials Aren't the Problem, and the Future is Bright”](#) by Hayden Shaw; [Hayden Shaw's interview on Carey Nieuwhof's leadership podcast](#); [“Going Deep: Becoming a Person of Influence”](#) by Gordon McDonald