

Young People And The Church

Introduction. A couple of years ago, Jarrid Wilson wrote an article titled “10 Reasons Millennials Are Sick of Church,” and I found it very enlightening to study. Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are distinguished by the early 1980s as starting birth years and the mid-1990s to early 2000s as ending birth years.

There are literally thousands of articles online about why the millennial generation is disillusioned with attending a church. The major reason, as we will see, is that they reject the institutionalized Church. They don’t want a lot of frills in a church service, but what is really sad is that they do not get the chance to experience it as it was planned and revealed in the New Testament.

We’ve all heard everything under the sun when it comes to one’s reasoning for leaving, and I believe many of them carry a lot of heavy truth. As we study these, you will see that we have areas where we can improve, but you will also see that the social gospel over the last several decades is coming home to roost.

I. “It’s not authentic.”

- A. Authentic means “made or done in the original or traditional way.” People dislike an altered gospel.
- B. Christ commanded us to worship in “spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), and the New Testament church did this (Acts 2:42-46). This is as authentic as it comes.

II. “It’s too corporate.”

- A. This is the idea of the institutionalized Church that people dislike. They have a sense that the church is not about hierarchy, politics, branding an image, bookstores, and coffee shops.
- B. The church is a spiritual institution and it fosters a spiritual relationship (John 18:36; Romans 14:17). It is a household or family of Christians who band together to serve God (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15). Is “old-fashioned” so bad? It seems to be what younger people are wanting to turn back to.

III. “I feel like I can’t be open about my struggles.”

- A. Part of the reason why people come to churches is to find answers to difficult problems they face: divorce, depression, loneliness, finances, pornography, drugs, and alcohol.
- B. Christians can help the hurting heart by showing a genuine willingness to help bear burdens (Galatians 6:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).

IV. “It’s too judgmental.”

- A. While this, in and of itself, is a judgmental statement, the truth demands that we judge and evaluate truth (John 7:24; 1 Corinthians 5:7).
- B. Jesus did come to call sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:9-12), and there is a need for us to deal with people compassionately in their sins.

V. *“Their attempt at being relevant comes off as cheesy.”*

- A. The gospel is a serious, dignified plan for man’s redemption. It does not need our feeble or disingenuous attempts to fashion the church around what they think the younger generation wants: music, lights, recreation, and sermonettes.
- B. The gospel simply needs to be preached and not flourished with market-driven antics (Romans 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:2). A baby wants nothing more than his mother’s milk because he needs nothing more than his mother’s milk. A Christian wants nothing more than God’s word because there is nothing he needs more than God’s word.

VI. *“They aren't really welcoming of people who are different from them.”*

- A. Every congregation should be welcoming and demonstrate the love of Christ (John 13:34-35; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Members of a congregation should not be cliquish. The gospel is for all (Acts 10:34; Galatians 3:28).
- B. However, “welcoming” cannot mean “tolerating,” for if we tolerate people in sin, then we are wrong and therefore no one can be saved in our number.

VII. *“They focus too much on what they know instead of whom they are showing love to.”*

- A. Learning and abiding in doctrine is a major measurement of whether one abides in the Father (John 8:31; 2 John 9).
- B. As a matter of fact, we would not know to express love to sinners unless the Bible told us — so we need doctrine. Jesus effectively did both in John 4:7-26.

Conclusion. Millennials aren’t looking for brighter lights. Millennials aren’t looking for more free coffee. If churches want to see more millennials stay and learn about Christ, they need to stop trying to entice them with free stuff. They want a place to share burdens, real answers to real questions, and a group that is ready to act. The Jerusalem church was a perfect example of this.

What is heartening about this is that if we stay the course with the old Jerusalem gospel, this group of people will respond and seek a true representation of God.