

First Baptist Church
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A Strategic Process for Keeping Millennials Engaged in Ministry – Pastor Pierre Cannings

Millennials are leaving the church.

Statistics:

According to the Barna Study (and many others like it) church attendance and impressions of the church are the lowest in recent history and most drastic among millennials described as 22-35 year olds.

- Only 2 in 10 Americans under 30 believe attending a church is important or worthwhile (an all-time low).
- 59% percent of millennials raised in a church have dropped out.
- 35% of millennials have an *anti-church* stance, believing the church does more harm than good.
- Millennials are the least likely age group of anyone to attend church (by far).

What do you Think?

1. **Nobody is listening to us... We want to feel Valued.**

We desperately need the church to tell us we are enough, exactly the way we are. No conditions or expectations.

We need a church that sees us and believes in us, that cheers us on and encourages us to chase our *big crazy dreams*.

What do you think?

- Do you feel like the church values your young adults?

Solutions:

- Return to point #1: listening.
- Go out of your way to thank the people who are giving so much of their life to the church. Millennials value voice and receptivity above all else. When a church forges ahead without ever asking for our input we get the message loud and clear: **nobody cares what we think**. Why then, should we blindly serve an institution that we cannot change or shape?

What do you think about this?

Solution:

- Create regular outlets (forums, surveys, meetings) to discover the needs of young adults both inside AND outside the church.
- Invite millennials to serve on leadership teams or advisory boards where they can make a difference.

- Hire a young adults pastor who has the desire and skill-set to connect with millennials.
2. **We are tired of Value, vision and mission statements without Helping the oppressed is not a priority (the church is existing for the church) The want meaningful worship**

Let's clock the number of hours the average church attender spends in "church-type" activities. Bible studies, meetings, groups, social functions, book clubs, planning meetings, talking about building community, discussing a new mission statement...

Now lets clock the number of hours spent serving the least of these.

What do you think about this?

Solutions:

- Stop creating more bible studies and Christian activity. Community happens best in service with a shared purpose.
- Survey your members asking them what injustice or cause God has placed on their hearts. Then connect people who share similar passions. Create space for them to meet and brainstorm and then sit back and watch what God brings to life.
- Create group serve dates once a month where anyone can show up and make a difference (and, oh yeah, they'll also meet new people).

3. Stop blaming the culture (Categorizing People)

From Elvis' hips to rap music, from Footloose to "twerking", every older generation comes to the same conclusion: **the world is going to pot faster than the state of Colorado.** We're aware of the down-falls of the culture—believe it or not we are actually living in it too.

Perhaps it's easier to focus on how terrible the world is out there than actually address the mess within.

Solution:

- Put the end times rhetoric to rest and focus on real solutions and real impact in our immediate community.
- Explicitly teach us how our lives should differ from the culture based on the current cultural context.

4. The "you can't sit with us" affect COMMUNITY

The Church can be clicky and lacking expression of compassion. Until the church finds a way to be **radically kinder and more compassionate** than the world at large, we tell outsiders they're better off on their own. And the truth is, many times they are.

What do you think about this?

Solutions:

- Create authentic communities with a shared purpose centered around service.
- Create and train a team of CONNECT people whose purpose is to seek out the outliers on Sunday mornings or during other events. Explicitly teach people these skills as they do not come naturally to most of the population.

- Stop placing blame on individuals who struggle to get connected. For some people, especially those that are shy or struggle with anxiety, putting yourself out there even just once might be an overwhelming task. We have to find ways to bridge that gap.

5. Distrust of resources (tithes) SUPPORT YOUR STATEMENTS

Over and over we've been told to "tithe" and give 10% of our incomes to the church but where does that money actually go? Millennials, more than any other generation, **don't trust institutions** for we have witnessed over and over how corrupt and self-serving they can be.

Solution:

Go out of your way to make all financial records readily accessible. Earn our trust so we can give with confidence.

6. We want to be mentored not preached at!

Preaching just doesn't reach our generation like our parents and grandparents. We have millions of podcasts and YouTube videos of pastors, the world of preaching at our fingertips.

For that reason, the currency of good preaching is at its lowest value in history.

Millennials crave relationship, to have someone walking beside them through the muck. We are the generation with the highest ever percentage of fatherless homes.

We're looking for mentors who are authentically invested in our lives and our future. If we don't have real people who actually care about us, why not just listen to a sermon from the couch? What do you think about this?

Solutions:

- Create a database of adult mentors and young adults looking for someone to walk with them.
- Ask the older generation to be intentional with the millennials in your church.

7. We want you to talk to us about controversial issues!

People in their 20's and 30's are making the biggest decisions of their entire lives: career, education, relationships, marriage, sex, finances, children, purpose, chemicals, body image. (Social justice, LGBTQ and sex, pro-life)

We need someone consistently speaking truth into every single one of those areas.

No, I don't think a sermon-series on sex is appropriate for a sanctuary full of families, but we have to create a place where someone older is showing us a better way **because these topics are the teaching millennials are starving for.** We don't like how the world is telling us to live, but we never hear from our church either.

What do you think?

Solutions:

- Create real and relevant space for young adults to learn, grow and be vulnerable.
- Create an opportunity for young adults to find and connect with mentors.

- Create a young adults program that transitions high school youth through late adulthood rather than abandoning them in their time of greatest need.
- Intentionally train young adults in how to live a Godly life instead of leaving them to fend for themselves.

8. The public perception Be around Millennials

It's time to focus on changing the public perception of the Church within the community. The neighbors, the city, and the people around our church buildings should be audibly thankful the congregation is part of their neighborhood. We should be serving the crap out of them.

We desperately need to be calling the schools and the city, knocking on doors, asking everyone around us how we can be make their world better. When the public opinion shows 1/3 millennials are ANTI-CHURCH, we are outright failing at being the aroma of Christ. (Most places of work allow volunteering and community service— we work in fields that could be an asset to the body)

Solution:

- Call the local government and schools to ask what their needs are. (See: Service Day from #3).
- Find ways to connect with neighbors within the community.
- Make your presence known and felt at city events.

9. Failure to adapt

The price of doing the same old thing is far higher than the price of change.”

New wine doesnt work in old wine skins (Matthew 9:17)

Solution:

- Look at the data and take a risk for goodness sake. We can't keep trying the same things and just wish that millennials magically wander through the door.
- Admit that you're out of your element with this generation and talk to the millennials you already have **before** they ask themselves, *what I am still doing here.*
- **YOU MUST TRUST THE LEADERS IN THE NEXT GENERATION THAT GOD PUTS IN YOUR MINISTRY.**

This Years Follow Up...

Required - Do you really want Millennials

Do you want young people in the church

Timothy, David etc

After you done comparing

Retention- Discipleship Titus 2

Relevance – Assimilation of ideas

Know their Ideas Acts 17:22 Mars Hill

Change the Grey areas structure style titles media

Challenge the

Meeting Needs- Social as well

Reinforce- Distrust (Not easily accepting of idea, Bible, authority)