

6 October 2019

GREENLANE CHRISTIAN CENTRE

Ps Margaret Spicer

ExtraOrdinary Generation

Bottomline: Everyone needs someone to see them like Jesus does

Big idea: When we try to understand each generation and choose to see people like Jesus sees them - we will become a church where people belong

Scripture: Luke 5:36-39

Why are people older than you so annoying and young people that you so irresponsible?

Tried to ring you kids several times no answer

Send a txt and don't get a message back? Frustrating but not unusual

Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.
George Orwell

We are shaped by our generation in ways we don't realise. We don't understand other generations behaviour if we don't see what shaped them.

- Every generation is shaped by various factors

- Parenting is the number one influence

- attitudes, choices how we make decisions
 - How we do things - who does what roles in the home
 - What is an acceptable risk what isn't
 - Our learned behaviours

- Technology - Every generation has a relationship with technology

- phones - a child these days looks at a phone - facetime
 - my mum facetime but put the phone to the ear
 - long cords on phones, hold down the black button and hear what is being said on the other phone

- World events - wars, disasters etc

As much as every generation is shaped by external factors, every generation also has its own unique spiritual strength God wants to use.

Which generation is right?

- When we see things differently - how do we choose?
- One generation want to these songs, others want these ones
- Something we should use paper Bibles other ask what's wrong with YouVersion our phones? (It's free)

The tension between generations will not go away, we have to manage it, even use this tension to help us move forward together.

We look through the lens of our own experience, forming our expectations.

We look for God to move in the same way now as He did before. What worked for us then becomes what we think works for the next generation. e.g. Kids Ministry, the songs I used to sing as a child - method changes message doesn't

God is doing a new thing, in each and every generation.

He's not doing away with the old, but meeting people where they are now.

36 Then Jesus gave them this illustration: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and uses it to patch an old garment. For then the new garment would be ruined, and the new patch wouldn’t even match the old garment.

37 “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. 38 New wine must be stored in new wineskins. 39 But no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the new wine. ‘The old is just fine,’ they say.”

- Jesus is hanging out with Matthew at his house. Matthew, a Tax collector - negative impact vocation! (Not a great career move for Jesus)
- Jesus wasn’t there by accident, he knew exactly what he was doing and why he was doing it.
- Jesus never let public opinion drive him - the religious leaders’ accusations will not

Everybody needs somebody to see them like Jesus does

Jesus communicated that Matthew’s friends mattered; Matthew mattered

What they thought and did was of interest to Jesus - if we want to understand we need to know where to stand

Jesus entered into his world - understanding brings perspective, removes criticism and ignites connection
Something remarkable happens when we see people like Jesus

We miss opportunities to connect with others because our assumptions are based on our experience and our culture.

Imagine the scene, The Pharisees turning up at the party not challenge Jesus - we fast, John the Baptist disciples fast, but your disciples party! That’s not right!

They were comparing themselves, their values with the values of Jesus and were pointing out how wrong Jesus is.

Jesus wasn’t engaging with the existing religious leaders, in this situation, rather the new and not yet disciples. People who were on the cusp of discovering the Kingdom of God.

This Parable can help us understand our generational comparison challenge

- Put the new fabric on the old garment
- New wine into old wineskins - everyone knew that wine was stored in animal skins (not in bottles or barrels)
- As wine aged various gases were released and the skins become stretched and became inflexible and brittle
- New wine in old wine skins wouldn’t cope with these gases and split and spill the wine so its wasted

We have 5 Generations in our churches (a sixth emerging)

Sometimes we try to force the new thing that God is going into the old ways of doing it wonder why our church is not engaging people like it used to do.

Understanding each generations (cones)

These categories are clues not boxes -

trends tare powerful indicators that can help us connect with and influence each other

Not based on age - events and a world view that shapes them

Used to be grandparents to parents to children - 3 generations now it’s closer

Due to the rapid nature of change, generations are being formed

Caution given to us in Ephesians 7:10 “don’t long for the good old days, this is not wise”

The past was never as good as we remember

The present is never as bad as we think!

Builders: born before 1945

- Radio Generation
- Grew up being told information and trusting experts
- Loyal to brands
- Great Depression
- waste not want not
- Thrifty but sacrificing - still the biggest givers in a church
- WW2
- Don't complain, stick together, do what you are told
- What you want personally to matter less
- Purposeful retirement
- They had money, better health and therefore a longer retirement
- Discovered that a hobby done every day Is a job! E.g. golf
- How do you discover purpose in this phase of life?
- My father in-law has been retired for 24 years!
- Not just young people who need to dream big - these years are a gift not to be selfish

Boomers: born 1946-64

- TV generation
- Pictures given to us, so we don't have to imagine anymore
- Content still dependent on someone else to decide - limited channels
- Selling /marketing - approach to media
- Music - Beach boys - fun and freedom on a beach, developing our own styles
- Long hair,
- Most optimistic generation - more wealth, longer life expectancy
- Moved from sacrifice to self-focus
- Learned for the first time about a relationship with God, rather than believing and doing the right things
- An individual focus - reflected in our church songs
- Faith that works for me, not just because I've been told to do it
- Do I like the church I go to, if not I'll leave, actually does any church matter - probably not
- Focus on quality - not ok with an out of tune worship leader or a pianist who gets every second note
- Increase in psychology - people turned to Oprah and others to hear their thoughts

Gen X: born 1965-79

- Misunderstood and invisible
 - Disengaged and pessimistic
- Depicted by Bart Simpson - cynical
- Questioning - refuses to believe what I've been told, need to find out for myself
 - Unprecedented fracture of the family
 - Not so competitive with each other - more about community
 - Criticised for being on their phones, that's where they determine real community to be
 - Stable community, don't ask me to add more people into my small group at church when I like the people I am currently with
 - Moved trust to friendship groups - Friends TV series
 - First generation to gain information beyond the news
 - Discover things for myself - I decide if its news.
 - Volunteer less in churches - I have other options to invest my time especially family and friends
 - Care more about injustice and poor or disadvantaged
 - Demand flexibility in the work place, driven by my boundaries and choices - what works for me
 - Child centred parenting - look at what you "need" in the nursery - cost of prams etc
 - Products of parents who didn't sacrifice anything, Gen X have learned they have to look out for themselves and themselves only.
 - Other religions out there, if it works for you then its ok
 - Don't care if the bible is accurate, does it work is the bigger question
 - Bart Simpson ask Homer - What religion are we? Homer replies "you know the one with all the well-meaning rules that don't work in real life". - like so many people who don't understand that what Jesus taught doesn't work unless you believe

what Jesus thought. Knowing the what by not the why!

- Taking care of their kids and their parents

Gen Y (Millennials 1980-994)

- Most photographed generation - invention of digital camera/video (not yet phone)
- Give the most attention
- Yet the most cynical generation
- A wanted generation - have better relationship with their parents
- Want interaction with you, not just to be told what to do
- Willing to express their feelings
- Confident - everyone gets an award/trophy
- Consumers - I'll find things for myself, find a deal
- Brands come to them - expect social media engagement
- Want involvement
- Don't need perfection - want authenticity
- Largest representation in the workforce
- Delayed adulthood
 - Online at night - depression, suicide self-harm dark stuff
 - Where is the church presence?
 - not selling something but inviting into a conversation
- Want meaning, authentic and teamwork
- If it doesn't hurt anyone else its ok - wouldn't steal from a friend but ok to download illegally
- Inclusivity - if I disagree, I'll put my ear buds in and retreat to my world
- Tribe matters - group messaging

Gen Z (1995-2010)

- Independent, self-confident and autonomous
- Global connectivity - the world is smaller
- They do not rely on their parents - the internet and technologies allow gen Zers to start earning money at much earlier age than their parents.

Alpha Gen (2011 - present)

Generations are not right or wrong just different.

There is one important element that is easily overlooked.

We've talked about the NEW wine - what about the OLD wine?

Did you notice the plot twist in Luke 5 v39?

- the old wine is the best!

Does that mean the old way of doing things win?

Not at all - the old refers to spiritual maturity

Once new wine is matured, it is better wine, you don't want to go back to the new wine stage, yet without new wine, in our church won't get old wine - it will dry up.

Remember the past but look to the new thing that God is doing in **EVERY** generation.

John Wimber once said the leaders of one move of the spirit are the biggest barriers to the next move. I think he's right!

How do we work together to bring maturity?

- by refusing to ignore and criticise
- by refusing give up on the younger generation,
- fight for their hearts,
- empower and encourage them, stand with them
- What if we and the older generations helped create a church where we didn't feel like we belong and made a place for the next generation.

- Don't hear this as an age thing - rather a new people coming into a relationship with Jesus who is real and relevant to them

New and freshness not relying on the things of past but looking to the gift of the future.

Let's set aside our complaints, our own self centredness - widen our appreciation for others and recognise its not all about me, and never has been.

Every generation needs others to see them like Jesus does!

