Already Gone

August 29, 2011

Most parents believe that their children's Christian faith really won't come under attack until they leave home for college. They have seen other kid's faith falter in college and naturally assume that the university environment is toxic to a Christian's faith. While the last part of that assumption may be true, the rest of these assumptions are false.

First, Christian young people begin to have doubts about their Christian faith long before they head off to college. That is the researched conclusion from the book *Already Gone* by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer. On my radio program they explained the results of their research. American Research Group made 20,000 phone calls and conducted detailed surveys of 1,000 twenty-somethings who used to attend evangelical churches on a regular basis. When asked when they first had doubts, 40 percent said in Middle School and 44 percent said in High School.

The study found that we are losing our Christian kids in middle school and high school rather than college. The title of the book says it all. They are "already gone" even though they are sitting in the pews and going to church. Ham and Beemer concluded that the youth in our churches are not being taught apologetics and therefore do not know how to answer the skeptical questions of our age.

A second issue is whether the university is toxic to Christian faith. Of course it is, but the latest studies by sociologist Christian Smith shows that youth that do not go to college show the same (even slightly greater) drop off in religious commitment. In other words, the culture is just as toxic to Christian faith as the university.

Parents (as well as pastors, teachers, and youth leaders) need

to understand the crucial need to prepare our youth for a culture that is hostile to their faith. They may be in our churches and youth groups, but there is growing evidence that many of them are "already gone." I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

What Bible?

May 29, 2013

Sometimes the only way you can respond to a statement is to ask, What Bible are they reading? That happened recently on my radio program when Penna Dexter and I were interviewing Joseph Farah of WorldNetDaily. He said that he allows commentators of various political persuasions to write and post their columns.

One of those columnists is Bill Press who recently wrote: "Nowhere in the Bible does God condemn homosexuality." The predictable response from us was, What Bible is he reading? He goes on to argue that "nowhere in the Bible does God say marriage must only be between one man and one woman. After all, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines."

Actually, the argument goes the other way. If you legalize same-sex marriage, then sooner or later you will probably legalize polygamy. Every argument for redefining marriage to allow same-sex unions also is an argument for other marital arrangements.

But the more important question is whether the Bible ever condemns homosexuality. Two passages in Leviticus call it an abomination. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Rome and the church in Corinth condemns homosexuality. Those are four verses for starters.

But of course, we can also understand the negative prohibitions by looking at the positive principles. Genesis 2 sets forth the biblical principle of a man and woman leaving father and mother to become one flesh. Jesus refers back to this foundational principle in Matthew 19 (which we also can find again in Mark 10).

And the Bible also teaches that this sexual sin has consequences not only for the individual but for the nation. Joseph Farah said: “This is about as serious as the Bible gets in condemnation. This is not only sin that affects the individuals involved, it’s the kind of sin that has ramifications for the entire nation.”

While it may be easy for Bible-believing Christians to shake their heads and ask, What Bible is he reading? But in this culture of biblical illiteracy, many people are likely to take the word of Bill Press rather than look it up in the Word of God. That’s why we must firmly, but lovingly, teach God’s Word. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

American Cultural Captivity

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of ways in which American Christians are culturally captive: individualism, consumerism, racism, church growth values and globalization.

Cultural Captivity

Probe Ministries has dedicated itself to helping Christians be freed from cultural captivity. Therefore, I want to focus on how we as Americans are often captive to an American form of Christianity and thus are culturally captive.



Before we address the issue of cultural captivity, it might be worth mentioning how small American Christianity is compared to the rest of the world. Philip Jenkins reports that "the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward to Africa, Asia, and Latin America."{1}

We can put this in perspective by looking at what happened last century. In 1900, about eighty percent of the Christians in the world lived in Europe or North America. Now more than seventy percent live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

A century ago, if you were to describe a typical Christian in the world, you would probably describe a Christian living in the middle of the United States. Today a typical Christian would be a mother in Zambia or a college student in South Korea.

Christianity has also become diverse. "More people pray and worship in more languages and with more differences in styles of worship in Christianity than any other religion."{2} Put simply, American Christianity is no longer the norm in the world. Yet we as Americans often make the mistake of assuming that our Western values and assumptions should be the standard for the rest of the world.

Many of my observations come from insights in the book, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*.{3} Soong-Chan Rah provides numerous examples of how the American church is captive to a white, Western view of the world and thus is culturally captive. Obviously, the church has been captive to materialism, but I will focus on some of his other descriptions of captivity, namely, individualism, consumerism, and racism.

It is worth noting that the phrase "captivity of the church"

has been used in different contexts with varied meanings throughout church history. Martin Luther, for example, wrote the tract *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in which he compared the Catholic Church's teaching on the sacraments to the captivity of the Israelites by the Babylonians.{4} R.C. Sproul has written about how many Christians are captive to the Pelagian view of the basic goodness of humanity instead of holding to the biblical view on original sin.{5} And Nancy Pearcey's book *Total Truth* was written as an attempt at "liberating Christianity from its cultural captivity."{6}

American Christians don't like to think of themselves as being culturally captive. But the truth is that they have to a significant extent been assimilated into American culture. While they rightly criticize many of the sins and failings of American society, they are more conformed to the culture than they would like to believe.

Individualism

One example of American cultural captivity that Rah uses in his book is American individualism. He is hardly the first person to talk about this. Many social commentators over the last century have discussed and documented American's obsession with individualism which has created an individual-focused worldview.

On the positive side, the rugged individualism of Americans is responsible for the willingness to explore, build, and being willing to "go it alone" when circumstances required it. An individual willing to take a bold stand in the midst of theological heresy or cultural captivity is a good thing.

American individualism also has many negative sides. Christians should be aware of the impact of individualism on their theology. Rah says "the church is more likely to reflect the individualism of Western philosophy than the value of

community found in Scripture. The individualistic philosophy that has shaped Western society, and consequently shaped the American church, reduces faith to a personal, private and individual faith."{7}

To put this in perspective, consider that most of the books of the New Testament were written to churches and communities of believers. Only a handful of books (such as Titus and Philemon) were written to individuals. Yet when most Americans read the New Testament, they focus on the individual aspects of the biblical truth rather than consider the larger corporate aspect being presented in Scripture.

Often our Bible study focuses on the individual and personal understanding of God's Word when so much of it applies to our relationship to the entire body of Christ. Often worship is self-focused and self-absorbed.

Ask a typical Christian about sin, and he or she is likely to describe it in personal terms. Sin certainly is personal, but it can also be corporate. But if you only have a personal, privatized faith, then you are also likely to see sin as merely a personal matter. Rah concludes: "Evangelical theology becomes exclusively an individual-driven theology instead of a community-driven theology."{8}

Consumerism

Another example of American cultural captivity that Rah gives is consumerism. This is a topic that I have addressed before not only on radio but in my book *Making the Most of Your Money in Tough Times*.{10} Even secular commentators have noticed that American culture is infected with "affluenza."{11}

Rah says, "Materialism and consumerism reduce people to a commodity. An individual's worth in society is based upon what assets they bring and what possessions they own."{12}

How has consumerism affected the American church? First, it means that we have been willing to include materialistic values into our worldview and lifestyle. Often it is difficult to distinguish Christian values from the materialistic values of American society. Some commentators point out that many of our churches look more like shopping malls than like churches.

Second, consumerism affects our mindset and perspective about spiritual things. A consumer mindset sees the spiritual life as a consumable product only if it benefits the individual. Believers with a consumer mindset usually aren't living for eternity but for the here and now. Essentially they are so earthly minded, they are no heavenly good.

Third, consumerism affects the way we choose to fellowship with other believers. "American evangelicalism has created the unique phenomenon of church shopping—viewing church as yet another commodity and product to be evaluated and purchased. When a Christian family moves to a new city, how much of the standards by which they choose a church is based upon a shopping list of their personal tastes and wants rather than their commitment to a particular community or their desire to serve a particular neighborhood?"{13}

Finally, consumerism even affects the way we measure success. We should be measuring success by the standards of Scripture. Often, we measure it by the American consumer value system. Consider what many refer to as the ABCs of church growth. These are: attendance, building, and cash. Often the success of a church is measured in the same way a secular business would measure its success. The bottom line is often the number of attendees or the size of the church budget.

Jesus asked in Mark 8:36, "What good is it for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul?" A consumer mentality often chooses short-term solutions instead of eternal values despite the possibility of long-term negative consequences.

Racism

Another example of American cultural captivity that Rah gives is racism. Not only was this a chapter in this book, but he actually wrote another book on the subject of racial and ethnic issues.{14}

Let's begin by stating that the idea of race is actually artificial. As I pointed out in a previous radio program on Race and Racial Issues, both the Bible and modern science reject the idea of what today we call race. For example, the Bible teaches that God has made "from one blood every nation of men" (Acts 17:26). Here Paul is teaching the Athenians that they came from the same source in the creation as everyone else. We are all from one blood. In other words, there are no superior or inferior races. The Bible refers to people groups and nations, but does not label based upon skin color.

Race is also an imprecise scientific term. For example, people of every race can interbreed and produce fertile offspring. It turns out that the so-called differences in the races are not very great. A recent study of human genetic material of different races concluded that the DNA of any two people in the world would differ by just 2/10ths of one percent.{15} And of this variation, only six percent can be linked to racial categories. The remaining ninety-four percent is "within race" variation. That is why "many scientists are now declaring that the concept of race has no basis in the biological sciences, more and more are concurring that race should be seen as a social invention."{16}

How have racial ideas and prejudice affected the church? It is tempting to say that this was merely a problem in the past and should be no concern for a country moving towards a post-racial society. Soong-Chan Rah disagrees: "We are quick to deal with the symptoms of sin in America, but oftentimes are unwilling to deal with the original sin of America: namely, the kidnapping of Africans to use as slave labor, and usurping

of lands belonging to Native Americans and subsequent genocide of indigenous peoples."{17}

Race is an important issue not only in our past, but our future. Many church growth methods are based upon the idea of racial homogeneity. If it is true that the most segregated place in American culture is an American church at 11 AM on Sunday morning, perhaps we should pay more attention to race and racial issues.

Church Growth and Globalization

We can even see cultural captivity in the way we build our churches and the way we interact with the world. We can see the impact some of these ideas about race and racial issues have on church growth.

The popular church growth movement places a high priority on what is called the "homogeneous unit principle" in order to have substantial numerical growth within a congregation. Homogeneous churches tend to grow faster because church attendees are more comfortable with people with similar racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Racially and ethnically segregated churches are the natural result of such teaching. And not only are segregated churches unbiblical, they are impractical. America in the twenty-first century will be more diverse than any previous century. It will no longer be dominated by white, Eurocentric people.

Church growth principles also prioritize "an individualized, personal evangelism and salvation over the understanding of the power of the gospel to transform neighborhoods and communities. They also emphasize a modern, social science approach to ministry, focusing on a pragmatic planning process that leads to measurable success goals."{18}

Globalization is another challenge in the twenty-first century

and can also illustrate how we spread our cultural captivity to the corners of the world. Globalization often means that one nation's values and mindset predominate. In this case, American Christian values (which often are not biblical) are spread and dominate other cultures.

Thomas Friedman says, "Culturally speaking, globalization is largely, though not entirely, the spread of Americanization—from Big Macs to iMacs to Mickey Mouse—on a global scale."{19} Globalization not only allows us to spread the influence of Coca-Cola, Starbucks, and McDonalds, but it also is the means by which American cultural captivity is spread to believers around the globe. Once these values are transmitted to the rest of the world, we will have a global Christianity that is just as culturally captive to American values as American Christians have been.

This is our challenge in the twenty-first century. American Christians cannot merely look at Christians in other countries and shake their heads about their captivity to their particular cultural values. We too must be aware of culture captivity in our midst and "see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception" (Colossians 2:8). We have been assimilated into the American culture and should "not be conformed to this world" but instead should be "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

Notes

1. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.
2. Ibid.
3. Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009).
4. Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* trans. A.T.W. Steinhaeuser, Three Treaties (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947).
5. R.C. Sproul, "The Pelagian Captivity of the Church," *Modern*

Reformation, May/June 2001.
6. Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).
7. Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 30.
8. Ibid., 40.
9. Ibid., 43.
10. Kerby Anderson, *Making the Most of Your Money in Tough Times* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009).
11. John DeGraaf, David Wann, and Thomas Naylor, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005).
12. Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 48.
13. Ibid., 55.
14. Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2010).
15. J. C. Gutin, "End of the Rainbow," *Discover*, November 1994, 71-75.
16. Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2007), xi.
17. Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 69.
18. Ibid., 95.
19. Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 199), 8.

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Maximum Faith

May 31, 2011

How does God transform the lives of Christians? If you think the answer to that question is easy, perhaps you should talk with George Barna. Six years after beginning what he assumed

would be a relatively typical research process that sought to better understand how God transforms people's lives, he discovered he had tackled a deeply challenging and amazingly revealing journey. The end product was his new book, *Maximum Faith*.

After lots of research and exhausting surveys, he was able to describe what he calls ten stop points on the journey to wholeness. Stop 1 is ignorance of the concept or existence of sin. Millions of people grow up oblivious to the fact that God exists and that we have a sin nature. Stop 2 is an awareness and indifference to sin. As life goes on, people gain exposure to the idea of sin, but many do not accept it as valid or significant. Stop 3 is concerned about the implications of personal sin. And stop 4 is a decision to confess sin and ask Jesus Christ to be savior. It is worth noting that about 2/3rd of Americans are stuck in one of these four stops.

Stop 5 is a commitment to faith activities. A believer gets involved in church activities (church service, Sunday School classes, etc.). Another quarter of Americans are at this stop. This means that nearly 90 percent of Americans are stuck at one of the first five stops and are not therefore not experiencing the other five stops that George Barna has identified.

Stop 6 is a prolonged period of spiritual discontent. Stop 7 is an experience of personal brokenness. Stop 8 is a decision to surrender and submit fully to God. Stop 9 is enjoying a profound intimacy with the love for God. And stop 10 is experiencing a profound compassion and love for humanity.

It is worth noting that only a fraction of a percent find themselves in these last two stops. In general, Christians in America are not experiencing what God intends for them. Put another way, most Christians are captive to the culture and therefore unwilling to seek godliness. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Ominous Ruling from the UK

March 14, 2011

A landmark ruling in the U.K. will have a major impact on the future of foster care and adoption in that country. The High Court suggested that Christians with traditional beliefs on sexual ethics are unsuitable as foster care parents. And they went on to argue that gay rights trump religious beliefs and freedom of conscience.

A key lawyer in the case was Paul Diamond, a prominent Christian barrister in England. I have had him on my radio program on two occasions to talk about how ideas in the U.K. often make it to the U.S. He has noticed that our legal system is going down the same path as England and has wanted to warn us about this trend. What happens in the U.K. doesn't stay in the U.K. It crosses the Atlantic to our nation. Many justices are interested in trends in international law and work to implement those ideas in our opinions. And when the Supreme Court takes a break over the summer, many of the justices go over to Europe to study and lecture.

This current case has ominous implications for Christians in England and could eventually have an impact in this country. A married couple (Eunice and Owen Johns) applied to be foster care parents in 2007. The Derby City Council blocked their application because the Johns were not willing to promote the practice of homosexuality to a young child. Both parties asked the High Court to rule on whether they could be foster parents.

The High Court Judges upheld an Equalities and Human Rights submission that children that might be in the care of the couple risk being "infected" (their word) by Christian moral

beliefs. That stated that Christian beliefs on sexual ethics may be “inimical” to children. In other words, these Christian beliefs are harmful to children.

While it is true that this ruling merely applies to this particular couple, it signals that other Christians who hold to orthodox Christian views on sex, marriage, and family are likely to face difficulties in the future. This ruling will likely be applied to any Christian wanting to be a foster parent or adopt a child. And it is possible that some day in the future we may see a similar ruling in America. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

Psalm 8

April 22, 2011

If you study astronomy for very long, you can feel very small. We are a small planet in one solar system in one of many galaxies. Just consider some of the comments by scientists about our place in the universe.

Werner von Braun said: “We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people.”

Astronaut Neil Armstrong said he felt very small when he was in space. “It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn’t feel like a giant. I felt very small.”

Stephen Hawking said: “We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can

understand the universe. That makes us something very special." I don't know about you, but I don't feel very special just because I can understand the universe.

David asks the same question in Psalm 8. Are human beings special? Speaking to God he says: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

David then gives God's answer to this important question. "Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas."

Our significance doesn't come from being on planet Earth or even from understanding the nature of the universe. Our significance comes from the fact that an all-powerful, loving God created us in His image and gave us dominion over His creation.

Astronomy interpreted from a naturalistic worldview doesn't give us significance. Only a Christian worldview which teaches that we are God's special creation can give us true significance. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Shadow Scholar

April 28, 2011

A few months ago, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published an expose written by a man who makes his living writing papers

for a custom-essay company. His article is getting even more attention now that *Readers Digest* has printed an edited version. He has written roughly 5,000 pages of scholarly literature for students in college and graduate school. You won't find his name on a single paper.

The article follows his experience with one student who wants him to write a 75-page paper on business ethics. It later became part of a 170-page graduate school thesis. Her e-mail reads as follows: "You did me business ethics propsal [sic] for me I need propsal got approved pls can you will write me paper?" Yes, her English and grammar are that poor. I will spare you all the other e-mails she writes to him.

He has found there are three demographic groups that seek out his services: the English-as-second-language student, the hopelessly deficient student, and the lazy rich kid. He admits that he lives rather well "on the desperation, misery, and incompetence" that our educational system has created. He remarks that "my company's staff of roughly 50 is not large enough to satisfy the demands of students."

Perhaps the greatest irony in his work is that he does lots of work for seminary students. He says: "I like seminary students. They seem so blissfully unaware of the inherent contradiction in paying someone to help them cheat in courses that are largely about walking in the light of God and providing an ethical model for others to follow. I have been commissioned to write many a passionate condemnation of America's moral decay as exemplified by abortion, gay marriage, or the teaching of evolution. All in all, we may presume that clerical authorities see these as a greater threat than the plagiarism committed by the future frocked."

Anyone looking for evidence of moral decline in America need look no further than the willingness of students (including seminary students) to hire ghostwriters to do their work and then claim it as their own. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my

point of view.

The Millennial Generation – The Future of Christianity in America

Millennials are the largest generation in American history and also the least religious generation. Kerby Anderson examines what they believe, how media and technology has affected them, and how pastors and Christian leaders can reach this generation.

The Millennial generation is a group of young people whose birth years range from 1980 to 2000. This generation is actually just slightly larger than the Baby Boom generation (born from 1946 to 1964). Nearly 78 million Millennials were born between 1980 and 2000.

Millennials are already having an impact on business, the workplace, churches, and other organizations. They certainly are having an impact on politics. The 18- to 29-year-old Millennials voted for Barack Obama in 2008 by an significant margin. Because of their impact in business, politics, and the church, they are simply too large and too influential to ignore.

For this article I will be using much of the data from an excellent book by Thom and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation.*{1} Their survey of 1,200 older Millennials (born between 1980 and 1991) provides a detailed look at this generation.

We should begin by noting that not only are Millennials the largest generation, they are also one of the most diverse. That means that for every trend we identify in this generation, there are also lots of exceptions. But that doesn't mean we can't learn some key facets of the Millennials. Here are just a few characteristics.

First, they are on track to become America's most educated generation. "In 2007, the first year the twenty-five- to twenty-nine-year-old age group was entirely comprised of Millennials, 30 percent had attained a college degree. That is the highest rate ever recorded for that age group."{2}

Second, Millennials view marriage differently than previous generations. They are marrying later, if at all. The average age for first marriage has increased approximately five years since 1970 for both men and women. "About 65 percent of young adults cohabit at least once prior to marriage, compared to just 10 percent in the 1960s."{3}

Finally, Millennials are the least religious generation in American history. They may say that they are spiritual, but only a small fraction of them say that is important in their lives. The sad reality is that most Millennials don't think about religion at all.

Perhaps the most amazing response from the survey of Millennials was that they are hopeful. Consider their response to the simple statement: "I believe I can do something great." About 60 percent agreed strongly with this statement, and another 36 percent agreed somewhat. That was almost every respondent, 96 percent in total.{4}

Marriage and Family

How does the Millennial generation view marriage and family? One way to answer that question is to look at the characteristics of their parents.

Baby Boomers wanted the best for themselves. They had a level of self-centeredness that eventually shifted toward meeting the needs of their children. They wanted everything to be perfect for the Millennial children.

There was a high level of parental involvement. Hence, the parents of Millennials are often called “helicopter parents.” When Millennials were asked about parental involvement, 89 percent responded that they received guidance and advice from their parents.{5} It turns out that the Boomers are helping Millennials make decisions about work and life. Sometimes the parents sit in on job interviews and even try to negotiate salaries. While previous generations might have rejected such advice, 87 percent of Millennials view their parents as a positive source of influence.{6}

This positive view Millennials have of parents extends to the older generation as a whole. While Baby Boomers tended to be antiauthoritarian, Millennials have a very positive attitude towards those who are older. Of the Millennials interviewed, 94 percent said they have great respect for older generations.{7}

When it comes to marriage, Millennials are still optimistic about it even though they grew up in a world where divorce was common. They were asked to respond to the following statement: “It is likely that I will marry more than one time in my life.” For those who responded, 86 percent disagreed that they will marry more than once.{8} Apparently most Millennials plan to marry once or not at all. It is also worth noting that Millennials are marrying much later than any generation that had preceded them.

Millennials also view marriage differently in part because of the political battles concerning same-sex marriage and the definition of marriage. In the survey of Millennials, they were asked to respond to this statement: “I see nothing wrong with two people of the same gender getting married.” Six in

ten agree with the statement (40 percent strongly agreed, 21 percent agreed somewhat).{9} Put simply, a significant majority of Millennials see nothing wrong with same-sex marriage.

The impact of technology on marriage and family is significant. The Millennial generation has grown up with the Internet, cell phones, and social media. It is easier than ever to call on a cell phone or send a text to other members of one's extended family. Posting pictures on Facebook allows family members to immediately see what is happening to their children and grandchildren. Millennials are introducing their families to a variety of ways to stay connected.

Motivating the Millennials

How can we motivate the Millennial generation? The answer to that question is easy: build relationships. Thom and Jess Rainer put it this way. "The best motivators in the workplace for this generation are relationships. The best connectors in religious institutions are relationships. The best way to get a Millennial involved in a service, activity, or ministry is through relationships."{10}

Relationships are important because of their connection to their family. Millennials also see the world as a much smaller place since they can visit anywhere in the world (either in person or on the Internet). And they are connected to people through the new media in ways that no other generation was able to do.

Education is a high priority for Millennials. This generation is on pace to have significantly more college degrees than the rest of the nation as a whole. About a quarter of the current U.S. population over 25 years old has a college degree, but nearly four in ten of Millennials will probably receive a degree.{11}

Millennials do want to make money, but they are not driven by money. Their motivation for education and career are motivated more by family and friends. One word that often surfaces is the word "flexibility." They see money as a means to do what they want to do. At the same time, they reject the "keeping up with the Jones' mentality" that often drives their parents.

Religion is not much of a motivating factor for Millennials. Spiritual matters are not important to them. Only 13 percent of them viewed religion and spirituality as important. And even among those who described themselves as Christian, only 18 percent said their religion was important to them.{12}

Only one group in the study said their faith was important to them. This was the subgroup identified as "Evangelicals" because of their orthodox biblical beliefs. Nearly two thirds (65 percent) said their faith was important to them.{13}

The political orientation of Millennials will no doubt influence elections. Millennials voted for Barack Obama over John McCain in the 2008 election by a two-to-one margin (66 percent to 32 percent). It is also worth noting that only half of the Millennials were eligible to vote that year. A greater percentage of that generation will become eligible to vote in each new election cycle.

Various polls, including exit polls, showed that this generation wanted more centralized power in government. And by more than a two-to-one margin (71 percent to 29 percent) they thought the federal government should guarantee health-care coverage for all Americans. More than six out of ten felt that government should be responsible for providing for their retirement.{14}

Millennials and Media

The Millennial generation has been influenced by media and technology like no other generation. Social commentators made

much of the influence of television on the Baby Boomers but the proliferation of Internet, smart phones, and social media has had an even greater impact on Millennials.

When technology first comes on the scene, there are early adopters, then a significant majority, and finally laggards. Millennials fit into the category of early adopters. In the survey they were asked if they agree with the following statement: "I am usually among the first people to acquire products featuring new technology." About half agreed with the statement, and half disagreed with the statement.{15} And even for those who disagreed, it is safe to say they did not fit into the category of laggards. Millennials are quick to embrace new technology.

There is one technology that Millennials always have in their hands: video games. "Video-game consoles are part of the industry that pulled in more than twenty billion dollars in revenue in 2008."{16} If there was one form of technology that is easily identifiable with Millennials it is video games.

When asked how they most frequently communicate when not actually with the other person, they rated phone first (39 percent), then texting (37 percent), and then e-mail (16 percent). At the bottom was by letter (1 percent). The survey also noticed a difference between older and younger Millennials. Put simply, the younger you are, the more likely you are to communicate by texting.

Social media is also a significant part of the lifestyle of a Millennial. Not surprisingly, the most popular social media site was Facebook (73 percent), followed by MySpace (49 percent) as a distant second. They also like to read blogs (30 percent) and write blogs (13 percent). But since blogs require more time and energy than other social media, they do not draw in the large numbers like Facebook and MySpace.

Although social media can be accessed in many ways, still the

most pervasive is through the computer. Millennials use computers both for work and for personal use. Most Millennials (83 percent) use a computer for work and spend about 17 hours on it each week. One out of five Millennials use their computer for work for 40 or more hours per week.{17} And Millennials spend time on computers for personal use. The responses ranged from 5 hours per week to 30 hours per week. The average was 17 hours per week.

If you put these numbers together, you find something shocking. The average Millennial spends 17 hours per week on a computer for work, and spends the same amount of time on a computer for personal use. That totals 34 hours per week on a computer. "That means that roughly one-third of Millennials' waking lives are spent on a computer."{18}

Millennials and Religion

The Millennial generation is the least religious generation in American history. The survey found that they are likely to have a syncretistic belief system. In other words, he or she will take portions of belief from various faiths and non-faiths and blend them together in to a unique spiritual system.

Thom and Jess Rainer found that this generation is less likely to care about religion or spiritual matters than previous generations. When they were asked in an open-ended question what was important to them, spiritual matters were sixth on the list. Preceding them in importance were family, friends, education, career, and spouse/partner.

When asked to describe themselves, two-thirds (65 percent) used the term Christian. Interestingly, nearly three in ten (28 percent) picked either atheism, agnosticism, or no preference. In other words, they have moved completely away from certain belief in God.

When asked if they were "born-again Christians", using a precise definition provided by the interviewers, only 20 percent affirmed this definition of belief and experience. And when presented with seven statements about orthodox Christian belief, the researchers found that only 6 percent of Millennials could affirm them and thus could be properly defined as Evangelical.{19}

A third (34 percent) of Millennials said that no one can know what will happen when they die. But more than one-fourth (26 percent) said they believe they will go to heaven when they die because they have accepted Christ as their Savior.{20}

Church attendance has been decreasing with each generation. The Millennial generation illustrates that trend. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) rarely or never attend religious services.{21} About one-fourth (24 percent) are active in church (meaning they attend at least once a week). This might suggest that a number of Millennials who attend church do so as seekers. In other words, they are at least spiritually interested enough to visit a church even though they may not be saved.

The Millennial generation presents a significant challenge for us as Christians. The largest and least religious generation in American history is here and making an impact. If the church and Christian organizations are to be vibrant and effective in the twenty-first century, pastors and Christian leaders need to know how to connect to the Millennials. The first step is understanding them and their beliefs. That is why I recommend the book by Thom and Jess Rainer and encourage you to visit our Web site (www.probe.org) for other information on this generation.

Notes

1. Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, B&H Publishing Group,

2011).
2. Ibid., 3.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 16.
5. Ibid., 55.
6. Ibid., 56.
7. Ibid., 59.
8. Ibid., 63.
9. Ibid., 66.
10. Ibid., 105.
11. Ibid., 108.
12. Ibid., 111.
13. Ibid., 112.
14. Ibid., 115.
15. Ibid., 188.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 197.
18. Ibid., 198.
19. Ibid., 232.
20. Ibid., 233.
21. Ibid., 236.

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unChristian

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If you have ever wondered why non-Christians reject the gospel and turn down your invitation to attend your church, then I have a book for you. Barna Research has produced a book entitled, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity*. This book helps us understand why non-Christians seem so cold to the claims of Christianity.

The researchers found that a minority of young people who believe that labels like “respect, love, hope, and trust” describe Christianity. But the rest have lost respect for Christianity. David Kennaman, President of the Barna Research Group and one of the authors of the book, says we need to resolve this perception problem if we are to connect with the youngest generation.

He lists six common perceptions that non-Christians have about Christians and Christianity.

1. Hypocritical – outsiders to Christianity believe that Christians say one thing and do another. They found that 84 percent knew a Christian, but only 15 percent believed that the Christian they knew acted consistently with his or her beliefs.

Hypocrisy is not just a 21st century phenomenon. Lately I have preached on the subject of hypocrisy and have been reminded how Jesus spoke so strongly against hypocrisy in the 1st century. But this survey shows that Christians must be authentic and acting consistently with Christian beliefs.

2. Focused on converts – outsiders often feel more like targets. Christians want to get them saved, but they don’t listen to them and these outsiders don’t feel truly loved.

3. Anti-homosexual – the younger generation is less likely to see homosexuality as sin so they equate Christians with being anti-homosexual. There is a real need for us to show biblical compassion as we also address this issue with our biblical convictions.

4. Sheltered – outsiders feel that Christians often offer simplistic answers to the complex and troubling aspects of modern life. They perceive us an old-fashioned, boring, and generally out of touch with reality.

5. Political – often outsiders perceive Christianity as merely

an extension of right-wing politics. They feel Christians are too political or are motivated by political interests. That doesn't mean Christians shouldn't be salt and light, but they should be aware that this is a connection that non-Christians often make.

6. Judgmental – nearly 90 percent of outsiders say the term "judgmental" accurately describes Christians today. Only 20 percent of outsiders view the church as a place where people are accepted and loved unconditionally. Christians sadly are known more for their criticism than for their love. And we may be so fixated with sin that we cannot really love broken people.

As we look at the six perceptions, we should admit that some of these criticisms would surface no matter how well Christians try to be loving and gracious. After all, many of these same people would probably call Jesus judgmental. So some of these perceptions will be with us no matter what we say or do.

But I think it is important for us to be real and authentic rather than hypocritical. And we should be relevant rather than sheltered. So there is some work for us to do if we are to effectively reach the next generation. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Millennials and Media

How has the Millennial generation been influenced by media and technology? Thom and Jess Rainer attempt to answer that question in their book, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*. Their survey of 1,200 older Millennials provides a detailed look at this generation.

When technology first comes on the scene, there are early adopters then a significant majority and finally laggards. Millennials fit into the category of early adopters. In the survey they were asked if they agree with the following statement: “I am usually among the first people to acquire products featuring new technology.” About half agreed with the statement, and half disagreed with the statement. And even for those who disagreed, it is safe to say they did not fit into the category of laggards. Millennials are quick to embrace new technology.

When asked how they most frequently communicate when not actually with the other person, they rated phone first (39 percent), then texting (37 percent), and then e-mail (16 percent). At the bottom was by letter (1 percent). The survey also noticed a difference between older and younger Millennials. Put simply, the younger you are, the more likely you are to communicate by texting.

Social media is also a significant part of the lifestyle of a Millennial. Not surprisingly, the most popular social media site was Facebook (73 percent), followed by MySpace (49 percent).

Although social media can be accessed in many ways, still the most pervasive is through the computer. Millennials use computers both for work and for personal use. Most Millennials (83 percent) use a computer for work and spend about 17 hours on it each week. And Millennials spend 17 hours per week on computers for personal use.

If you put these numbers together, you find something shocking. The average Millennial spends 17 hours per week on a computer for work, and spends the same amount of time on a computer for personal use. That totals 34 hours per week on a computer. “That means that roughly one-third of Millennials’ waking lives are spent on a computer.”

If Christians are to reach the Millennial generation, it is important to know how they use media and technology. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

January 25, 2011