

SOMA: Notes on Loving the Generations from "Loving One Another" Message

3/1/20

Enclosed are my notes on the various generations. I did not cover the Builders (1901 – 1925) or the Silent Generation (1925-1942) because the focus of the message was reaching the younger generations. I started with the Boomers because they are about to retire and will need to pass on the faith to the next generations. It's important for them to understand the younger generations in order to reach them.

The information is not exhaustive. I focused on information that was applicable to the dissemination of the Christian faith to future generations. As is true of all people, they do not necessarily mirror their age-group. However, what is stated is true of the majority of those in those age brackets.

For a more exhaustive treatment of generations and how they differ read: "*Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*" by William Strauss & Neil Howe, pp. 295-346. They have some interesting predictions concerning the generation yet to be born that is based on the cycles of history. Futurists and economists read this book and use it for marketing, planning, product development, and other applications.

A. Boomers (1943-1960)

- Characteristics of
 - They lived in a day where there was such a thing as objective truth
 - They believed in objective truth and oriented their lives around it
 - They are an optimistic generation
 - Truth was discovered through science, psychology, and reasoning.
 - People believed that if we would only set our minds to it we could accomplish anything. We could solve all or most of our problems
- Spiritual Question: "What is true?"

A slew of books generated by Christian writers sought to reach this generation by providing proofs for the Christian faith or arguments in defense of truth. Examples: CS Lewis, Josh McDowell (Evidence that demands a verdict), Lee Strobel – Case for Christ

This was the era of the debate between evolution and creation. A lot of energy was spent on both sides proving and disproving each other.

Apologetics were big – books, seminars, college symposiums were set up to provide rational arguments for the biblical perspective

People believed the key to winning people to Christ was by getting the information out. If you get the truth out people will hear it and respond to it by faith.

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This generation discovered ever-increasing ways to efficiently spread the gospel. They produced large stadium events (Billy Graham, Crusades, Christian concerts, huge music festivals, Promise Keepers), college forums, and more recently DVDs. Now you can have the best and most dynamic teachers, preachers, and apologists right in your living room.

- Cultural Critique (Challenges they faced by the culture)

Christianity was a myth

Jesus never lived (Quest for the historic Jesus)

The Jesus of faith vs. the Jesus of life. People claimed the Jesus of faith was a creation by the church over a long period of time. The real Jesus was just a man, an inspiring figure, but not God. That was legendary material added later on by the church or the disciples.

What was real. The only things that are real are things you can taste, touch and see. If it could not be proven using the scientific method, then it wasn't real.

God was not necessary for creation. A lot of energy went into proving or showing a natural path to creation – creation by blind chance. At first the scientific community won the argument. The data seemed to be leaning in their direction.

(Updated Information) More recently the discovery of a natural path to creation has been abandoned. Contemporary data leans in the favor of design. Even if a natural path had been discovered, people realized that it did not prove that it actually happened that way. Creation could have happened a number of ways and what a person believed was a matter of faith. There are no airtight proofs for either side. As a result the warring parties have declared a cease fire which is why you don't hear much about this topic in the news or on college campuses.

B. GenX (1961-1981)

- Characteristics of
Arguments, proofs, large group events (crusades, Promise keepers) and books on apologetics do not work for this generation.

The question: What is true? Does not resonate.

They are the first post-modern generation

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The objective truth their parents saw, they don't see.

There is no such thing as objective truth because everyone approaches truth with personal biases/prejudices. As a result, there is no objective reporting of news. It's all spin, slanted, opinion.

There is no authoritative history. All history books are an interpretation of events. The authors choose what events to report, what weight they had, and what events to ignore or give lesser weight to.

Truth is much more personal, relative. Truth is what is true for me. "Your have your truth and I have my truth"

They are the best BS detectors on the planet. They know when someone is trying to persuade them, sell them. They can smell "propaganda" a mile away. They can tell when people aren't being honest with them.

There is a lot of mistrust in this group. The majority of them grew up as latch key kids. Mom did not great them with milk and cookies. They let themselves in. Their parents were not around. Most were working, chasing the American dream.

They did not grow up in multigenerational homes

Whereas Boomers grew up on TV shows like "Leave it to Beaver" and "The Andy Griffith Show" and "My Three Sons." They grew up on "Cheers and Friends"

What was important was to belong to a tribe, a new family of like-minded people

They do not trust big institutions, family, corporations, work, institutional church because these institutions they failed them

Unlike the Boomer generation who lived to work they work to live. They saw their parents sacrifice the family for the almighty dollar and rejected the belief that there were things worth sacrificing for. No one should have a singular focus that they give their lives to. They are more chill. They would rather choose a slower paced profession, work a slower paced job, and live in a slower paced area if it meant they could enjoy life more. They are willing to work a lower paying job if it meant more family time and more time being able to actually LIVE!

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They value authenticity, honesty,

If you want to share your faith with this generation you need to first be real with them. You need to share your mess with them – your pain, struggles, doubt, and questions. Just be real with them first. Be a normal person, a friend and then who knows....

- Spiritual Question: "What is real?"

If you want to reach an Xer share your personal story. As I said, truth is personal to them. People can debate whether there is objective truth but they cannot debate the legitimacy of your story. It's your story. You know, better than anyone else, what you experienced. It cannot be debated.

Televangelists are a turn off. So many have had moral failings.

- Cultural Critique

Objective truth – Is there such a thing

The exclusive claims of Jesus – "I am the way, truth and life" sounds arrogant, intolerant, and dismissive of all other religions. How can anyone say they have THE truth.

Christians are hypocrites. They don't walk the talk

It's interesting to watch how Boomers try to reach Xers. They tend to think that if they can just provide enough information that "proved" to the Xers the truthfulness of Jesus' claims that that will win them. So they give them books written by Lee Strobel, C.S. Lewis, Josh McDowell. They invite them to apologetics courses etc. None of these things works on an Xer. It all sounds like propaganda.

C. Millennials (1982-2002)

- Characteristics of

They look at Xers – "bunch of navel gazers" who are "in tune with themselves"

They are the second post-modern generation.

There are 80-100 million of them. Compare that to 60-80 million Boomers and 40-60 million Xers. They are a huge market which is why the market is driven by this generation. Their spending potential is huge! (And if they voted at the same level as the Builders, they would be a huge power block politically)

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The pendulum swung on this generation. Xers had parents that were largely absent. This generation had overly involved parents. They lived in child-centered homes with helicopter moms, soccer moms, tiger moms

Their lives were all about productivity - Lots of extracurricular activity after school and on weekends.

Unlike Xers who want to hang out, they need a purpose to hang out. It couldn't be just to hang out. You have to produce something, achieve something. There has to be a goal.

They are a very optimistic generation and pragmatic They want to make a difference in the world

They are civic minded and tie spending to a mission. They are willing to spend twice the amount on a pair of Thomas McCann shoes than the same pair of shoes for less if it means a kid in a Third World country or living in the inner city would receive a decent pair of shoes. They have a heart for the poor and less fortunate.

They are also a bit narcissistic. They birthed the selfie and selfie stick, Instagram, Facebook, twitter

- Spiritual Question: "What is good"

They grew up in an era of conflict, hostility, polarization, global warming, pandemics, and crises

They want to know what difference your faith makes in the real world. If it doesn't, then get out of the way.

They have big dreams but tend to lack the "how tos" to achieve them. They will turn 25 and wonder why they aren't the CEO of the company yet or the Senior Pastor of a church. They don't know the path or practices that are necessary to achieve the various levels of success.

They want answers to life's problems but tend to lack survival skills, whci is why you tube videos are so popular.

- Cultural Critique

Pain & Suffering – if there was a loving God then why does he allow so much suffering to go on? Since there is a lot of pain and suffering in the world it

must mean God is not good or God is not great. Or it means God is neither good nor great.

The new atheist has emerged within this generation. No one knows how popular this movement will become but it's something worth keeping an eye on. The new atheist sees religion as the problem. Religion polarizes, produces conflict (look at all the church conflicts), and divides people. Christians are bigoted, homophobic, and regressive. The world would be a better place without religion (Reminds me of the song by the Beatles, "Imagine")

A gospel that speaks of salvation as a ticket to heaven is unattractive. They aren't focused on the future. That's too far off. They want help now to face current problems and life challenges

They look at how Xers do church and it doesn't work for them. They believe there should be more to church than simply handing out together. There has to be more to fellowship than being a being a spiritual "breakfast club." They want to do something that makes a difference.

Being a Rev 7:9 church that brings people together in unity connects. If Jesus brings diverse people together and breaks down everyone's prejudices, that resonates.

They need to see how Christ help them flourish in life, how the faith answers life's problem. They want to be involved in a church that is actively involved in the community making a practical difference in the lives of people.

They are not "heavenly minded." They focused being "earthly good."

D. IGen (2002-present) The Internet generation

- Characteristics of – yet to be discovered. It's too early to say. They are still taking shape as a generation. We do know their spiritual question.
- Spiritual Question: "What is beautiful/just?"

They love beauty, culture, the arts. If a church's website or any website does not pop it doesn't matter how much good information is on it, they won't read it. It won't catch their attention. Image matters.

They want to experience "glory" which is inner fulfillment.

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Show how the Gospel is glorious, and bring out the beauty out of people will go a long way in reaching this generation.