

4 Things Millennials Need From Their Church

It's no secret that millennials aren't exactly flocking to churches these days. There are theories and statistics, but the fact remains the same: Our churches aren't a place millennials tend to call home.

Instead of tackling the problem on a grand scale—instead of diving into theories and ideas as to the cause and the solution—I want to move in closer, to what millennials need from us in our churches today. While I'm not a millennial, and while this is not a comprehensive list, these thoughts are derived from some of the conversations I've had with millennials about this very topic.

Here are four things millennials need from their church:

1. A realism about the state of the world. I once heard someone say that churches have a tendency to put band-aids over bullet wounds, treating serious problems, hurts and issues like they can be solved with a parable and a pat on the back.

Millennials aren't so easily pacified.

Millennials, as a rule, tend to be activists—aware of the hurt in the world and passionate about solving it. One of the chief complaints I hear millennials give about churches is that they're out of touch with the realities of the world and that they're not finding realistic solutions.

Millennials want honesty about the problem so they can help find honest, helpful solutions.

2. A safe place to work through issues. Millennials don't get a social badge for going to church anymore. Even in the Bible

Belt, you don't get a gold star from anyone but your mom for being a good church kid.

Millennials need more than this from their church.

They need a place to honestly work out the questions in their lives, a place to be open and honest about the issues they face, and a place to find out what God actually has to say about them. They're unlikely to invest deeply or get a lot out of a church that stays on the surface about the hard issues, and they're likely to be frustrated by people who are putting on a front of perfection.

Millennials don't need a gold star for being a good person. They need a safe place to work out their stuff.

3. The Truth. A lot of churches tiptoe around the hard truths of the Bible for fear of offending people. Millennials especially have the reputation for being church-averse, which makes seeker-friendly churches steer toward topics that are less likely to offend their fence-riding visitors.

But contrary to popular belief, this is not what millennials are looking for.

As a whole, millennials are not afraid of being passionately sold out for something. While they may be offended by some of Jesus' teachings, they wouldn't be the first ones, and they prefer a church that is passionate and authentic about what they believe.

Millennials are more likely to be zealous for something that they believe matters than drawn in by something that feels lukewarm and non-threatening.

4. Social activism. A point of contention for many millennials is the amount of good they see happening *outside* of the church in contrast to the bad things they see happening within the church.

Often, millennials see more good coming out of secular philanthropic organizations than they do churches.

Millennials are a passionate, socially active generation, and they want to be a part of a solution to the needs and hurts of the world. A great way to get millennials involved is to work on solving those problems. They'll be able to see the heart of God through your actions and then will want to join in.

All in all, millennials want to be part of a church. They just want to be a part of a church that helps them rather than hinders them. They want to feel that their church understands the value they bring, allows them to live out their gifts, and doesn't stop them from stepping into the empowered life in the Spirit.

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