

I Am a Millennial, and I Am Not Leaving the Church

I am a millennial, and I am not leaving the church ... or starting my own.

I get weary of looking at all the predictions about me. And if I read all the statistics about myself, I would believe some interesting things.

Surely, as a 23-year-old guy raised in church, I am:

- Disgruntled with the church's views on premarital sex.
- Mad that homosexual rights are not celebrated as the new civil rights movement
- Shaking off my parents' oppressive standards, morals and rules
- Developing a more "modern" interpretation of Scripture
- Running to the bars with my Christian friends
- Feeling liberated by a revised understanding of what a *real* Christian is
- Disentangling myself from the label "evangelical"
- Awakening to the fact that Jesus was always gentle and figuring I must be gentle (i.e., tolerant) too
- Forming my own personalized theology
- Adopting Christian cussing habits so I can be seen as relevant
- Keeping my convictions private so as not to offend anyone
- Letting others decide what is truth for them, and then celebrating it
- Embracing science as a lens to read the Bible

But none of that is true about me. And, quite frankly, I am glad!

I am writing today to make my own declaration and am hoping

someone will take note. I am a millennial, traditional, evangelical Christian. There. I said it. And I am not even going to apologize or flinch while I do. Because I am not sorry.

I believe the Bible is the absolute, inerrant, inspired Word of God. I believe it says what it means and means what it says. I do not feel compelled to reinvent it, reinterpret it or give it a rebranding makeover.

It is the same Bible that caused Martin Luther to nail his 95 theses to the door and John Huss to go up in flames. The same Bible where Jesus said, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34, NIV).

I am a blood-bought, devil-fighting Jesus follower. And I couldn't be happier.

Now, perhaps you will read this and try to dismiss me as some sort of naive, untested, sheltered boy who hasn't heard that traditional evangelicalism is out of touch with my generation and that we must throw off the shackles of oppression from the church. So let me set the record straight.

For four years I lived my Christian life in the middle of a state university athletic culture. I know what it's like to have professors try to convince me it would be great if I had a sex-change operation (complete with two years of hormone therapy) and then try out for the women's track team. I know what it's like to reach higher education status and have friends question how I could be so "antiquated."

I know what it's like having friends who grew up in church with you deciding they are queer. I was at my friends' apartments when they came in puking after their drunken one-night stands. I had the pornography temptations right in front of me. I watched my peers indulge in Saturday night revelry and then dust off their Bibles and head to church on Sunday

morning.

Hey, my university is known for its transsexual showers at its rec center. I sat through seminars on how to have safe sex—and take a group along with me, so they could all stay “safe” too. I guess you could say I have seen, with my own eyes, what most only hear about or watch on the news.

Now, don’t get me wrong. These were some of the best years of my life. I built incredible friendships that will last a lifetime. I do not regret my college years, as if they were some sort of bad deal I want to forget. On the contrary, my experiences solidified who I am today, and helped me understand that my only option—if I am to remain true to my Lord—is to learn to do life cross-culturally.

My friends and I—my entire generation, really—are in the middle of an invisible spiritual culture war, even though most of us would never acknowledge it. An unseen force is trying to destroy us from the inside out, even as our God is yearning to draw us near.

Oh, the people at school tried hard to figure me out, because I clearly did not fit the new cultural mold. For while they took every opportunity to revise their beliefs, I did not. Most in my generation have embraced an open-to-anything brand of Christianity. I choose something different. I am not open.

In fact, there are many things that I am not.

I am not a progressive Christian. I am not a revisionist. I am not a postmodernist. I am not a universalist. I am not a relativist. But I am also not a closed-minded hater.

I am simply more like my great-granddad, my grandfather and my dad—and I think that is just fine. Because each one of them did something I want to do: They loved people with a true love. They understood the radical nature of our God as both compassionate and just. They stood up and stood out. They

never compromised when others wanted to sway. They built their foundation on an unchanging, unapologetic view of an inerrant, infallible Word and simply rejected each modern fad as it came their way.

Why? Because they knew the One who breathed those words, and His confidence filled their veins.

They—and I—are in this together ... even though one of us is cheering me on from above now.

I will not move off course, even when everyone predicts that is what I will do. You see, I care enough about my friends to share the truth with them. I love them enough to not let a watered-down gospel deceive them. I love Christ enough to not try to give Him a marketing makeover in order to get people to like Him—and me—more. I think the way He represented Himself in the Bible is just fine, and I am even realizing that just because something is not popular, it is not necessarily wrong.

But I am also finding out that when I dare to share who I am, I am not alone.

We are still here. We millennial, traditional, evangelical young ones still exist ... and we're ready to stand up!

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