

The Real Reason Millennials Avoid Church Has Nothing to Do With Jesus

Millennials are leaving church at record numbers and they are described as America's least religious generation. But while they may be highly skeptical of religion, they are still thirsty to find meaning in life.

Studies show it isn't Jesus they're rejecting, they're rejecting churches that aren't making themselves relevant to millennial culture. Researcher and president of LifeWay Christian Resources Thom Rainer says three things matter the most to millennials: content, authenticity and quality.

They Want Rich Content

While many churches think they need flashing lights and a worship concert to attract the younger generation, Rainer says that is simply not true. Millennials want a worship service that is contemplative and theologically rich.

"They desire to sing those songs that reflect deep biblical and theological truths," Rainer says. "Millennials speak less and less about worship style. Their focus is on theologically rich music."

Millennials also want their churches to clearly communicate these theological truths through strategic signage and other means.

"More philosophically, millennials want to be able to answer the questions 'Where am I?' and 'What's expected of me?' by looking for cues in their surroundings," says Barna Group President David Kinnaman.

They Don't Want to Be Lied To

Another thing that will bring millennials into church is basic authenticity.

“Our generation has been advertised at our whole life, and even now on social media,” says Taylor Snodgress of Church of the 20somethings. “If the church isn’t giving you the whole story, if it’s sugar-coated and they’re trying to put on an act on stage, people in their 20s will see through this. This causes us to leave. We’re good at seeing when people are lying to us.”

Millennials can sense when the worship leaders and congregants are just going through the motions and they will quickly leave.

They Want a Good Quality Worship Service

Millennials want to attend a church service that shows the leaders put time and effort into making it run smoothly. They aren’t looking for a show, they’re looking for dedication and excellence.

“That quality is a reflection of the authenticity,” Rainer says. He says this is something any church can learn how to do.

All of these tips can help bring millennials to church, but essentially, they just want to have a relationship with a Jesus they understand.

Older generations have not seen Jesus incorrectly; they have just seen Him through a lens of their culture.

“Millennials are not rejecting Jesus, they are rejecting a coloration, a cultural adaptation, of Jesus that does not fit them,” says Billy Graham Library’s Dr. Tom Philips. “The answer is Jesus. Millennials must see through culture, community, church and family, to the person who will never ignore them—Jesus.” {eoa}

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