

What Millennials Want From Their Church Leaders

I'm the poster girl for young charismatics. Born and raised in the Vineyard movement and later enrolling at a Church of God university, I think I could speak in tongues before I could speak in English.

But all that did was teach me the ins and outs of "Christian" beliefs and how men and women want to stick to their old-school guns and traditions rather than taking that step of faith out into the water.

Too often, particularly in the Southern church, we confuse tradition with Scripture. We claim holiness on Sunday but never admit our other weekend activities. Church becomes about pursuing biblical knowledge and everyone considering themselves a theologian worthy of doling out answers.

And I believe that's why millennials are leaving the truth. Sure, you may have heard it's about (lack of) coffee bars, light shows, or even (GASP!) same-sex marriage, but, quite frankly, those are the symptoms and not the sickness.

What millennials have seen of the church—myself included—is a bunch of people who claim to have perfect lives, who never struggle with questions or doubts or disbelief or confusion on what is good and true when culture tells you one thing and your parents another.

What millennials want from their church leaders boils down to one word: transparency.

We want real. We want raw. We want to know that you are not perfect and you, too, have moments where you wonder if living a life for Christ is worth it when the labels Christians receive sound accurate because of how they've hurt others.

In a culture where headlines are made of same-sex marriage, religious freedom, terrorist attacks, earthquakes, sexual abuse and transgenders, we don't want to see our church leaders stick their head in the sand.

Worse, we don't want to see our church leaders attacking other human beings because they are different.

We get that they don't fit into your cookie-cutter mold. We also get that evil is present in this world and the mainstreaming of immorality is numbing our conscience.

But we want you to show us that you're aware and that you care. We want you to show us the Scriptures and how to fill our hearts with the love of Christ and fight our spiritual battles from a place of purity, not hatred.

Lead by example. Show us how culture affects you and how you choose to let your faith be the light. Let us sit by you as you cling to the Word while the world goes to hell in a hand basket.

Pray with us and guide us. Cry with us as we deal with the ups and downs. Don't give us pat answers, but tell us your story and how God got you through.

If we're one body of Christ, we need to see that the hand is reaching out to the broken, not slapping him in the face.

Jessilyn Justice is the assistant news editor for Charisma. Born and raised in a pastor's family in Alabama, she went to Lee University and the Washington Journalism Center. Tell her what you think of this story on Twitter @jessilynjustice.