

6 Things Millennials Are Teaching Churches About Theology

Over the past few decades, the seeker-sensitive movement—and before that the church growth movement—taught us much about the importance of contextualization in the church.

The strengths of these movements included a relentless evangelistic focus and a willingness to question status quo methodology and some extra-biblical traditions. On the other hand, their weaknesses were exposed as well. There was a tendency by some to downplay the importance of biblical truths and theological education. The practical sometimes overshadowed the theological.

In recent years, however, I have noticed a remarkable—and welcomed—return by younger leaders to the fundamentals of the faith, basic theological education, and the deepening of doctrinal roots.

Recently I sat down and studied these trends and identified six ways millennial leaders in the church are increasing the importance and effectiveness of theological education in the local church:

1. Emphasizing the big story of the Bible. Millennial leaders understand the need for Christians to be grounded in the grand narrative of Scripture, and the resources they use range from chronological Bible reading plans to theologically robust kids' Bibles. The overwhelming success of The Gospel Project (video below), a curriculum that uses the storyline of Scripture to teach essential doctrines, shows that church leaders today see the need for theological education and are acting accordingly.

2. Utilizing a catechism-like resource with their kids. In the previous point I mentioned theologically rich children's Bibles, but it doesn't just stop there. Millennial parents are using other resources and even smartphone apps to teach theological concepts and lessons to their children at home. While they aren't typically formal catechisms, they emphasize building a foundation of correct answers to Biblical questions. The Big Picture question and answer section in The Gospel Project for Kids curriculum is just one example of a resource for this practice.

3. Study groups working through systematic theology. I know of several churches that have weekly study groups who cover basic systematic theology. This is not just doughnuts and devotions. These groups intensely study Scripture and theology and in many cases have seen an increase in theological education and evangelistic fervor.

4. A return to theological hymnody and songs. We've had Keith Getty on the podcast to discuss hymnody and trends in the worship services, but again, it doesn't stop there. Many millennial parents are using time in the car with their children to reinforce biblical truth through song. Several musicians have responded to this trend with albums full of songs with lyrics made entirely of Scripture.

5. Recommended reading on church websites. Many churches no longer have an official library on their campus, but church leaders are still recommending books. Many church websites now include a "recommended reading" section that features a mix of devotional classics, theological books and the resources that have been most helpful to the pastor and staff.

6. Church membership classes. This should not be a surprise to regular readers of this blog. As I've stated several times on the blog and in the podcast, the two main things you should communicate in church membership classes are information and expectations. And both of those must be firmly built on a

biblical foundation of good theology.

There are surely other ways that churches are educating members with theological truths. I'd love to hear from you about ways in which you are doing this at your church. Please share them in the comment section below.

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