

Why Millennials Shouldn't Leave Church

I recently turned 35. I was raised on Saturday morning cartoons (*DuckTales*, *Shirt Tales*, lots of stuff with tales), cordless phones with extendable four-foot antennae, and Pop Rocks and Coke (they don't kill you!). While I undoubtedly have a place in **Generation X**, I often share similar views with the millennials, particularly when it comes to all the church stuff. And it grieves me that so many of us have walked away from **church**.

Everybody has a different response and reason why our generation and those after us are leaving. They typically point to what's wrong with the church. It's not enough Jesus. It's too much Jesus. It's not enough holiness. It's too much holiness. It's not enough justice. It's too much justice.

I get the concerns with church in general. But I'd like to offer the flip side of this coin: If the church isn't what we want it to be, it's not all the church's fault. At least part of it is our fault. We can't talk about the church as if it's some abstract entity disconnected from us. We *are* the church.

And here's the truth: The church isn't perfect. It's never been perfect. It never will be perfect. So imperfections within the church simply aren't a good excuse for anyone to leave.

But we leave with our complaints as if we aren't part of the problem. We're just a tad bit spoiled. We tend to want everything handed to us. We want change, but it seems many of us don't want the work that comes with implementing **change**. So we bounce around, hoping to eventually land in some magical realm where the Pew Fairy has already done all the work to make church exactly what we think it should be.

I hate to pop your balloon, but the Pew Fairy doesn't exist.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: If you want to bring about change in the church, you can't do it from the outside looking in. Those who are walking away aren't helping to fix anything. I'd like to see a few of us suck it up, stop whining about everything that's wrong, and begin working to implement the change we're calling for.

We're so quick to walk, but when will we get plugged in and become leaders and active volunteers? Instead of leaving, why don't we actually become a part of it so we can help make it better?

Perhaps we're just content to keep complaining about it. Perhaps we don't really want it to be better—because then we wouldn't be able to **take a stand** against it and we'd have to actually start attending. We'd be forced to commit.

I know church isn't perfect. I get the arguments. I understand the frustrations. I have the exact same ones! But I'm convinced that getting out is not the best option. I'm so convinced of this that I work at a denomination's international headquarters.

I believe in the church. I see her with a bright future. I see her speaking into the culture. I see her reaching all generations and age levels. I see her **making a difference**, reaching the lost, helping Christians mature, and connecting believers to God and one another. She's not all she could be just yet, but if the next generation simply bails, she'll never get there.

I am the church. You are the church. If there's a problem with the church, there's a problem with us. As long as we continue to act like outsiders looking in, change will never come.

So, are you in or are you out? Revolutions have never been started by people on the sidelines.

Darren Schalk promotes discipleship around the globe and serves on several interdenominational boards that are focused on discipleship. His latest book, *Dear God, We Need to Talk*, releases March 4. Follow Darren on Twitter or read his blog for more insight on discipleship.