

BRIDGING THE G.A.P.S. 1

G.enerations A.ppreciating P.erspectives and S.imilarities

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” Hebrews 13: 8

*“Oh my people, listen to my teaching. Open your ears to what I am saying, for I will speak to you in a parable. I will teach you hidden lessons from our past – stories we have heard and know, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children but will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord. We will tell of his power and mighty miracles he did. For he issued his decree to Jacob; he gave his law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them – even the children not yet born – that they in turn might teach their children. **So each generation can set its hope anew on God**, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands. Then they will not be like their ancestors – stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God.”* Psalm 78: 1-8

**“EVERY GENERATION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
_____ THE NEXT GENERATION TO _____.”**

And there is a thread that ties them together, a bridge that spans the generations and allows safe passage from this world to the next; and that bridge is: _____

1. THE _____ GENERATION BORN: -1927

A metaphor for this generation might be a _____.

2. THE _____ GENERATION BORN: 1927 –1946

The metaphor for this generation should be a _____.

3. THE _____ GENERATION BORN: 1946 –1965

The metaphor for this generation is undoubtedly a _____.

4. THE GENERATION _____ BORN: 1965 –1983

Their metaphor might be _____ or a _____

5. THE _____ GENERATION BORN: 1983 –

The metaphor for this group would probably be an _____

BRIDGING THE G.A.P.S. 1

G.enerations A.ppreciating P.erspectives and S.imilarities

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” Hebrews 13: 8

*“Oh my people, listen to my teaching. Open your ears to what I am saying, for I will speak to you in a parable. I will teach you hidden lessons from our past – stories we have heard and know, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children but will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord. We will tell of his power and mighty miracles he did. For he issued his decree to Jacob; he gave his law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them – even the children not yet born – that they in turn might teach their children. **So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands. Then they will not be like their ancestors – stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God.**”* Psalm 78: 1-8

This series has been brewing and stewing in my mind since last January. I by no means claim to be a sociologist, nor a demographer, but I can pay attention. Over the past 6 years I have been paying attention to some of the most interesting dynamics I have observed in this church. We are a unique church in many ways, but we are also quite like so many others in our country and community. We are made up of different age groups of people, and we evidence a variety of likes and dislikes.

Over the course of the summer I want to share with you some insights and observations concerning those differences and similarities.

Today’s texts will actually serve for the entire series, you might get tired of them, you might come to really understand them, and I hope you come to appreciate them for what they really mean. Whereas the Bible is relatively silent when it comes to the subject of Generation GAPS, it speaks loudly of the priority God placed on passing the truth, history, and salvation down from one generation to the next. The working foundation for this series is essentially a summation of Psalm 78, and I will remind us of it each week:

“EVERY GENERATION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WINNING THE NEXT GENERATION TO CHRIST.”

The Bible is chuck full of examples of generations committing a common sin, that continues today: “When once we have it figured out, we put it in the bank, we begin to focus on our own needs, desires, wants, and even hopes.” Each succeeding generation is to receive from the previous the means and a method to find God, and more often than not, each generation is prone to forget just that.

Let me give you an example. If our High School and college students are still singing the same songs twenty years from now they are singing today, they will have missed the next yet unnamed generation. If we are still dancing and puppeting, instead of using holograms, and interactive computer screens for education and even in worship, we will probably have missed the boat. It is each generation’s responsibility to win the next generation to Christ, and frankly my friends, the challenge is not just knowing that, but remembering that what was necessary to reach your parents, probably didn’t work to reach you! Each generation is different, and each is the same. The message never changes, but the methods always do! And there is a thread that ties them together, a bridge that spans the generations and allows safe passage from this world to the next; and that bridge is: **JESUS!** He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

This morning I want to introduce you to the various generations we will be discussing throughout the summer; look at a few of their distinguishing marks, then consider a theme that hopefully will help us as a church reach the next generation, no matter what our age is!

A word or two of caution must be included. There are a variety of theories about these generations, and different names applied to them. There are even different opinions used to describe the same groups, and they sometimes don’t even agree. Reading these definitions can sometimes sound like reading the morning horoscope, so generic they apply to everyone.

If you have read some numbers, years, or figures that are different than the ones I'll share, that's ok. I will speak in generalities most of the time. If you hear a definition that you disagree with, that's ok too, we are all different people. But for our purposes this summer we will look at the following generational breakdown:

1. THE **SENIOR** GENERATION BORN: -1927

A very small percentage of the living populations are those born prior to 1925. These seniors (we often call saints) are living longer than they ever dreamed, and have witnessed an incredible amount of change in their lifetime. It has been my privilege over the years to memorialize many of these seniors at their funerals. This Generation is sometimes called the builder generation as well. They were the ones who created industrial factories, invented the automobile, as well as a couple other modern conveniences, electricity and long distance communication systems.

As important as these folks are, they are largely ignored in generational studies because of their size. It is difficult to find much information especially pertinent to them, and they are often lumped in with the next generation we will consider. A metaphor for this generation might be a **light bulb**.

2. THE **VETERAN** GENERATION BORN: 1927 –1946

Sometimes this generation is called the Builder Generation, sometimes the "Traditional" Generation, sometimes the Silent generation, and Tom Brokaw has affectionately dubbed them in his recent best seller; "The Greatest Generation". They too, have endured many changes, the most profound, the changes on the world landscape. This generation has survived and been defined by 2 Major World Wars, and also endured a portion of the Korean War.

The Great Depression has also radically influenced this group, and their era often bears that name.

These people are defined by words such as: loyal, patriotic, practical, and these people understand, more than any other generation, the concept of sacrifice. All of us alive today, and in fact, all who will ever be born owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for this generations commitment to preserving world peace, and our way of life. The metaphor for this generation should be a **globe**.

3. THE **BABY BOOMER** GENERATION

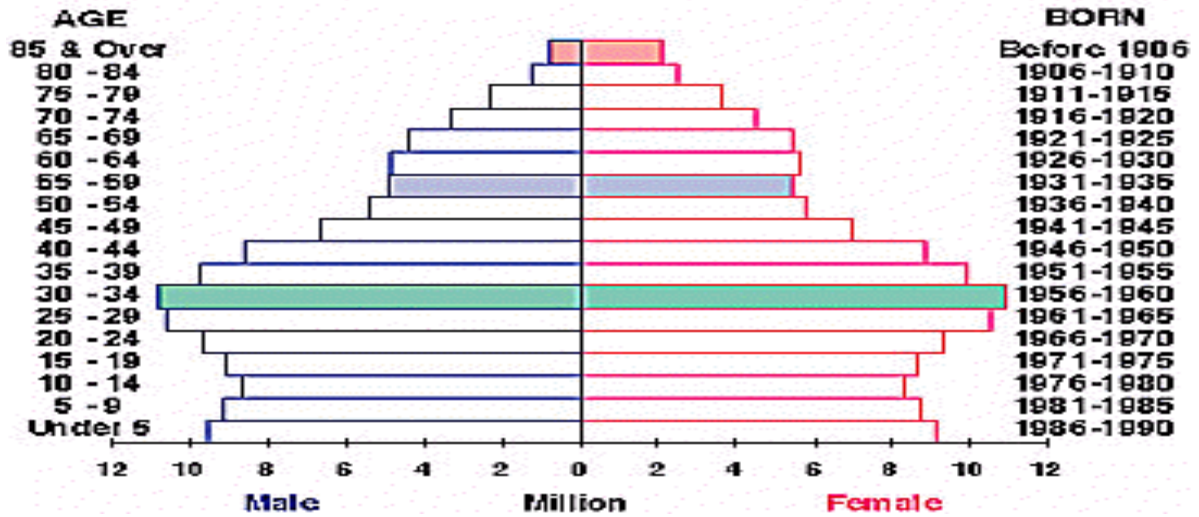
BORN: 1946 –1965

This is the most famous generation, largely, though not exclusively, because of their size. These children born following the return of the veterans from many wars, are now in their middle years, and smack in the middle of influencing the entire world. This generation is marked by one concept more than any other; **self**, and is even sometimes called the “Spoiled Generation”. They are marked by materialism, consumerism, and the promise from our parents that our lives would be easier, and better than theirs. The metaphor for this generation is undoubtedly a **calculator**.

This generation has been influenced largely by 3 major events; the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the beginning of space exploration, and the Vietnam War. Isn't it interesting the significance wars play in measuring our history, even back into Biblical time?

Look at this graph to gain a cursory glimpse of the magnitude of this generation.

1990



The two lines above the green one, and the line below are the members of this generation. For the past 20 years now, leaders in business, politics, and even in the church have become fully aware of the impact of this bump in the otherwise rather standard pyramid. As we approach retirement, the challenge will become even greater on factors such as Social Security.

This generation is not just noted for its narcissism and its size, but those two criteria factor into almost every other one. This group as a whole tends to look at most everything in life based on how it influences or enhances our lives. This group is somewhat distrustful of the government, and institutions in general because of Vietnam, and Watergate I suppose. It will be interesting to note these characteristics and how they play out in this group's religious experiences.

4. THE GENERATION "X"

BORN: 1965 –1983

Some sociologists suggest that each succeeding generation represents a smaller age span, and that may be true. This Group has been hard to define and harder to label. They refuse to be pigeonholed, and have rebuffed their given name, which was the "Buster" Generation.

The boomer name came from the old west 'boom town' idea of rapid success, advancement, and riches because of gold discovery. 'Bust' towns were what happened when the gold ran out, and many people (Boomers of course) dubbed this generation with this name, assuming that they would soon bust after the end of the Boomer generation.

Generation X is marked by some significant events as well. They got in on much of the fall out left over from the Vietnam War. The 'unwelcome' home reception, and the fallout from the free love 60's has left an awful taste in their mouths especially toward their wasteful parents, those selfish boomers. The two biggest events in their lives though have been the Challenger explosion, and the explosion of personal computing!

This generation is rather conservative and cautious of anything that smacks of looking like their boomer parents. They have been reluctant to commit to relationships after watching so many of their parents divorce. They are much more balanced in their work lives after watching their parents trade their souls at the company store. They are called the wired generation and never knew a time without TV, they don't remember 8 tracks, and may have as their metaphor a cell phone or a pager.

5. THE **MILLENNIAL** GENERATION

BORN: 1983 –

The last generation we will consider briefly is the millennial generation. They have been given a host of names, and none of them have stuck completely. Partly because of their age, few conclusions are being drawn about this group of young people. Observations are being made, but beyond that is mere speculation. This Generation is also known as the Digital Generation, Generation Y, because Y comes after X, Generation Y2, and the most interesting, the Mosaic.

This generation is being touted as most like the Veterans of any that we have seen. They are more conservative than GenX and more global than any others.

They are into tolerance and diversity like their great grandparents were into loyalty and sacrifice. They are dedicated workers, with 85% of Hi School Seniors holding down at least one job. They are hopeful for the most part. They have been influenced by 2 major events, the Oklahoma Bombing and the Columbine Shooting. And though it's too recent to include in the books, I suspect that what happened at the end of their generation's spectrum, these folks will forever be influenced by Sept. 11, 2001.

The metaphor for this group would probably be just an **MP3**, but might also be a CD or a DVD, do you know what that is? I don't either!

Let me just share with you that for the purposes of this series and in the interest of time, we will focus primarily on just the 3 middle generations, and each week consider how each generation looks at some dynamic which influences how and why they do what they do. Let me give you an example.

Let's consider how each generation does church. Remember the Veterans? They build things, and like pageantry and parades, and elevate their heroes to pedestals. They worship God through the beauty of what their hands have created. The beautiful Cathedrals that dot our county landscapes are a living testimony to their sacrifice, hard work and love of God. The Veterans understand sacred space in ways other generations don't. It is an affront that food and drink are served in a space reserved for worship. It is offensive that their 'esteemed' preacher appears each week out of uniform. Their loyalty to the institution of church is fierce. The Veterans sing the national anthem, and their music is to focus on God, and to be done corporately. They grew up listening to big bands, and big choirs being accompanied by big organs. They rehearse the liturgy, and respond collectively, so that they won't forget!

The Boomers tend to look at religion from their basic world-view: ME. Religion is important for improving my life, and increasing my happiness, and fulfilling my dreams, and ultimately, getting me to heaven.

But, the Boomers distrust of institutions, and their consumerist mentalities allows them to shop around for a church, until one is found that can meet their needs. Corporate worship is important, and like with most of their lives, bigger is better! Boomers tend to commit to what they believe in, and work in the church not because of a sense of loyalty or duty, but because they get something out of it, get to make a difference in the world, and get to work together with others. When it comes to music, this generation will never outgrow the influence of Rock and Roll! From Elvis, to the Beatles, to the hippies and the inception of the Jesus Movement, music is to this generation what computers are to Gen X. Music has always been important in every generation, but with the Boomers it is KING! In church Boomers like it a bit louder, and a bit faster, and a bit newer, and a bit more personal, and practical. They build and utilize space for its functionality. Coffee and goodies are a natural part of their social fabric and ought not be excluded even from their worship.

Now, the Gen Xers. They like their music a bit louder yet, quite a bit! They like it faster, and newer, and frankly would prefer to write it and perform it themselves! They like to use their whole bodies in worship, sometimes standing (way to long) sometimes sitting, sometimes kneeling, sometimes lying face down before a holy God. Space is space for them, and is only useful to keep the elements at bay. They enjoy beauty and dance, and humor and drama; being the largest group completely saturated in the popular culture.

They have no trouble receiving the ancient word, but would prefer to see it rather than just hear it. High Tech, high touch would be their preference. Small groups are cool with Gen Xers. The pulpit and robe so sacred to the Veterans are reminders of Judges and Courtrooms for this generation. Honesty and reality carry the day for them.

I'm out of time, but want you to see where I'm heading with this series. Please don't forget the bottom line:

**“EVERY GENERATION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
WINNING THE NEXT GENERATION TO CHRIST.”**

No generation is perfect, none flawed beyond repair. No person whenever they were born, has any right to disregard another, and as our text so poignantly reminds us:

*He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them – even the children not yet born – that they in turn might teach their children. **So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands. Then they will not be like their ancestors – stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God.*** Psalm 78: 1-8

My hope is firmly set on God today. And my hope is set on us, that we will increase our understanding of each other, so we might increase our effectiveness in winning that next generation. This is my hope.

SUBJECTS:

AUTHORITY
WORLD VIEW
WORSHIP/CHURCH
MUSIC/LITERATURE/
MONEY/JOB/WORK/LEISURE
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS
PERSONALITY
FAMILY/FRIENDS/RELATIONSHIP/COMMUNITY
TECHNOLOGY/MEDIA/

VETERANS (Builders, Traditionals, sometimes called the silent generation)

Tom Brokaw called them the "Greatest Generation"

Practical outlook on life, pragmatic, cautious, conservative, patriotic

Leadership by hierarchy

They are called builders because they built big industries and marched with big armies

 Their music was performed by big bands (Duke Ellington and Glen Miller) and

 Sung by big choirs accompanied by big organs.

Dedicated work ethic

Respectful of authority

Personal sacrifice in relationship

Like things on a grand scale, parades, pageantry, commencement

Turned off by vulgarity and rudeness

Defining events: WW I & II, The Depression, Korean War

Loyalty to institutions, look to government to 'rescue' care for, solve problems

Money Philosophy: Save it for a rainy day. Debt is bad

Read: R. Digest, Time, USA Today

Past oriented, and History absorbed

Believe in logic, not magic

Like consistency, uniforms, robes

Metaphor: Globe

Comic: Beetle Bailey, Dagwood

Media: Radio

Religion: denominational loyalty, serve/volunteer out of sense of loyalty, duty, responsibility. Love old hymns, traditional forms, liturgy, corporate ness is important.

worship God through beauty in building, cleanliness, orderliness, specific purpose

assigned to place/space/objects (pulpits, altar)

BOOMERS (SPOILED GENERATION)

Optimistic outlook on life

Enjoying the benefits of parents sacrifice

Raised as idealists by parents who introduced them to the consumer society and the

 Expectation of an ever-increasing standard of living.

Following Vietnam idealism gave way to full blown materialism and self-indulgence.

Driven work ethic

Love/hate view of authority "love it if they are in charge, hate it if not."

Leadership by consensus, team

Personal gratification in relationships

Selfish

Turned off by political correctness

Defining moments: Kennedy Assassination, Space Exploration, Vietnam War

Distrust of institutions

Heros: Ghandi, MLK, John Glenn

Read: People, Business Weekly

Humor: Doonsbury Comic: Peanuts

Believe in growth and expansion

Always think of themselves as 'stars of the show'

Baby Boomers are always cool, just ask them!

Money Philosophy: Make lots, spend lots, debt OK

Metaphor: Calculator

Media: TV

Religion: have carried musical tastes to church, distrust denominations, want inter-or non-denominations. People under 40 volunteer using following criteria:

Short-term, hands on, purpose driven. Drifted toward New Age, and Mega-churches. Worship has to be accessible, flexible, multi-use. Their music reflects

Their emphasis on 'self'. It's not necessarily selfish, just has to meet my needs.

GEN Xers (originally called 'busters' but didn't stick. Frankly they hate every name they Are given)

Morphed from the boomers

Skeptical outlook on life, doesn't mean negative

More balanced work ethic

Unimpressed by authority

Leadership by competence

Reluctance to commit to relationships because they watched many ugly divorces of former generations

Turned off by clichés and hype

Self reliant

Like informality and casualness

Technologically savvy, high-tech, media saturated generation, more widely Impacted by pop-culture than any previous era.

Defining events: Vietnam fallout, Watergate, Computers, Space Shuttle explosion

Read: SPIN Wired, Chatroom talk, E-books/news

Money Philosophy: cautious, conservative

Humor: Dilbert the Simpsons

Metaphor: Networked Computer

Media: Cell Phone, Pager Walkmans

MILLENNIALS (Internet Gen. Echo Boomers, Gen Y, Generation NeXt, Digital Gen, Gen. Y2, Mosaics)

Hard to define, because they are so young

Hopeful outlook on life

Determined work ethic, large percentage work 80-85% of Sr. Hi's have jobs

Polite to authority

Leadership by teamwork, pulling together

Inclusive relationships with other cultures, races etc, tolerance Relationships are everything to this generation, as they focus on cooperation, working toward a common goal and tackling universal problems.

Turned off by promiscuity and unfaithfulness

This generation is most turned off/angry

Defining moments: Oklahoma Bombing, Columbine Shooting

Heros: Michael Jordan, Princess Di, McGuire and Sosa (impressed by how they treated each other) Tiger, all celebrities

Money Philosophy: spend parents \$ as fast as you can

Read: Harry Potter, Goosebumps, Baby sitters club.

Humor: Calvin and Hobbes, Beavis and Butthead

Metaphor: A kid

Media: All the above plus, pager, CD, DVDs, MP3s, no clue about 'tapes, and records.'

To early to tell for sure, but may turn out to be most like veterans than any other generation.

Sept. 11th may be connected to next generation, but the fallout and the war will certainly define part of the millennial generation.

In worship they resonate with biblical truth presented in High tech fashion. Millennials are visual. They are interested in the renaissance of the arts, in the communication of truth through beauty and the atmosphere and sounds of prayer. They want to encounter God with all of their senses: to see, to feel, to hear, to touch, to taste, to experience.

They want the whole person to be engaged in worship – standing, sitting, kneeling, and lying prostrate on the floor. Millennials love color, pageantry, drama and symbolism

1920's

Aftermath of WWI Close family Radio Development Prohibition

1930's

Wall Street Crash The Great Depression The New Deal

1940's

WWII The War Effect Working Women The Good Life

1950's

Korean War Indulged Kids Television Rock-n-Roll

1960's

Vietnam War Civil Rights Space Program Generation Gap

1970's

Vietnam Impact Watergate "Me" Generation ERA

1980's

Diminished World Respect/Hostages Hi-Tech Society AIDS Personal Computers

1990's

Desert Storm Desert Fox Domestic Terrorism Internet Tolerance

To be sure, complaints about the Younger Generation are as unoriginal as the self-righteous sniveling of the Younger Generation itself. A piece last October in the Washington Post should have killed off this particular genre. It was a rant by a 20-year-old college junior bemoaning the decadent values of kids today in their early and midteens. "Beavis and Butthead" was his text. He noted what a huge fall this represents from the "The Simpsons" cult of his day, two to three years ago. Hee's right, of course. Complaints about the Younger Generation are always right.

Veterans are those born from 1922-1943. The Great Depression, World War II and Patriotism are the defining events in their life. They value hard work, law and order and respect for authority.

The Baby Boomers are those born between 1943-1960. Defining events include Television, the Civil Rights Movement, and prosperity. they value health and wellness, personal growth, and involvement.

Generation Xers are those born between 1960-1980. Watergate, MTV, and the Fall of the Berlin Wall are defining events for this generation. They value diversity, global thinking, and pragmatism.

Generation Nexters are those born after 1980. Defining events include school violence, multiculturalism, and TV talk shows. They value civic duty, achievement and diversity.

What is the Sandwich Generation? It is a demanding time when a couple is still dealing with parenting issues, thinking about their own retirement, and yet facing the issues of coping with aging parents. Deciding which has the highest priority can tear a marriage apart.

An estimated 22 percent of the American population can be classified as the Sandwich Generation meaning they are parenting their own children and taking care of their parents at the same time. Some estimates show that nearly two-thirds of the baby boom generation will be taking care of an elderly parent in the next ten years. In 1990, Newsweek reported that the average woman spends 17 years raising children and 18 years helping aging parents.

Many of these couples face major stress in their finances, emotions, and relationships. What happens to a couple's dreams for a secure retirement, travel, and slowing down? However, coresidency apparently does not cause major problems for the majority of couples who are have intergenerational households. With good communication, having three or four generations under one roof can enhance a family's sense of well-being, provide a sense of belonging for younger children, assist teenagers in moving on to adulthood, and eases the burden of chores due to the extra helping hands.

Five markers describe the Millennials and their times:

1. Children in the Spotlight

Not since the post-World War II era has there been such a sense of public responsibility for the nation's children. Las Vegas has gone "family" and Club Med reports that over half their sales last year were in their "family villages."

2. Wired

For the first time in history, there are things adults want to know where kids are the authorities. One of the largest school systems in Ohio contracted with an 11-year-old to do their Y2K compliance.

3. Scheduled

Never have kids been so busy. They're in karate club and baseball camp and violin lessons - and moms and dads are busy as one-armed paperhangers driving them to and fro. Lots of high school students carry daytimers.

4. United Against Violence

Deeply concerned about their own safety in what seems to them a dangerous world, young people are pulling together - in person and via the Internet - to act collectively against a culture of violence.

5. Like Their Grandparents

- or their World War II great-grandparents. When surveyed about the older generations,

the Millennials say they feel little affinity with Generation Xers. They like their parents, many of whom are Baby Boomers, and they think they're up-to-date on music and trends. But the generation they identify with most is the World War II Generation - considerate, civic-minded, moderate, and more than a little heroic. If society, like nature, abhors a vacuum, this newest generation will step into the role being vacated by their elders.

● THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING THE MILLENNIALS ARE...

- ✓ busy
- ✓ influential
- ✓ optimistic
- ✓ environmentally conscious
- ✓ digitally connected
- ✓ civic
- ✓ sociable
- ✓ achievement-oriented
- ✓ multicultural
- ✓ streetwise
- ✓ knowledgeable about social issues
- ✓ collaborative
- ✓ open-minded
- ✓ inclusive
- ✓ innovative
- ✓ assertive

Xers & Boomers are different in the way they tend to...

- ✓ 1. View the world of work: Xers think "job"; Boomers "career."
- ✓ 2. Communicate: Xers are blunt; Boomers diplomatic.
- ✓ 3. Relate to authority: Xers are unfazed; Boomers impressed.
- ✓ 4. Feel about approval: Xers feel indifferent; Boomers seek validation.
- ✓ 5. Think about resources: Xers see scarcity; Boomers see abundance.
- ✓ 6. Regard policies and procedures: Xers mistrust business practices; Boomers defend them.
- ✓ 7. Depend on others: Xers are self-reliant; Boomers are team-oriented.
- ✓ 8. Define "work ethic": Xers seek balance; Boomers remain driven.
- ✓ 9. Focus at work: Xers are task- and results-oriented; Boomers are relationship- and results-oriented.
- ✓ 10. Interact with technology: Xers assimilate it; Boomers accommodate it.

Generational Perspectives...

BOOMERS:

- Outlook: optimistic
- Work Ethic: driven
- View of Authority: love/hate
- Relationships: personal

● Gratification

● Perspective: team

BUSTERS:

● Outlook: skeptical

● Work Ethic: balanced

● View of Authority: unimpressed

● Relationships: reluctant to commit

● Perspective: individual

GENERATIONAL PERSONALITIES

● TRADITIONALIST

Outlook: practical

Work Ethic: dedicated

View of Authority: respectful

Leadership by: hierarchy

Relationships: personal sacrifice

Perspective: civic

● BABY BOOM

Outlook: optimistic

Work Ethic: driven

View of Authority: love/hate

Leadership by: consensus

Relationships: personal gratification

Perspective: team

● GENERATION X

Outlook: skeptical

Work Ethic: balanced

View of Authority: unimpressed

Leadership by: competence

Relationships: reluctant to commit

Perspective: self

Generational Anchor Points That Which Helps Define or Shape a Generation

Elderhood (GI) 1905-25	Older Adulthood (Silent) 1926-45	Middle Adulthood (Baby Boomers) 1946-64	Young Adulthood (Gen X) 1965-82
World War II (The Big War)	Korean War (The Forgotten War)	Vietnam War (The Protested War)	Desert Storm (The CNN War)
Builders/ Problem Solvers	Openly Uncertain/ Facilitators	"Me" Generation/ Revolutionizers	Reactors/ Pragmatists
Conformity	Conciliatory	Individuality	Diversity

Depression	Rising Affluence	Economic Prosperity	Rising National Debt
Save Money	Save & Spend Money	Spend Money	What Money?
Large Extended Family	Extended Family	Nuclear Family	Single-Parent Family
Radio	B&W TV	Color TV	PC Monitors
LP Record	Reel-to-Reel Tape	Cassette/8 Track	CD/DVD
Operator-Assisted Phone	Rotary Phone	Touchtone Phone	Cell Phone
Roosevelt	Truman/Eisenhower	JFK/Nixon/Carter	Reagan/Clinton
Big Band	Swing	Rock 'n' Roll	Alternative
Prohibition	Alcohol	Marijuana/LSD	Crack Cocaine
Sex Taboo	The Pill	Sexual Revolution	HIV/AIDS/STDs
Farm	City/Town	Suburbia	Homeless
Coffee	Instant Coffee	Cola	Bottled Water/Designer Coffee
Mainline Protestant	Rising Catholic	New Age	Spiritually Diverse

Generations	Birth Dates	Characteristics
GIs	1910-1927	Also known as Builders. The Depression and WWII shaped their values.
Pioneers	1928-1945	Also known as Silents. They have led social change in music and culture. The Korean War and the Civil Rights Movement influenced their young adult years.
Baby Boomers	1946-1963	Led by the high school class of 1964, they were shaped by the events in the 1960's and 1970's.
Postmoderns	1964-1981	Also known as Gen X and Busters. They were born right after the assassination of President Kennedy and are the first generation to live out of a Postmodern perspective.
Millennials	1982-1999	Led by the high school class of 2000, they will set the trends in the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

Look at religious life in the U.S. in the 1950's . . . most people joined a denomination because they agreed with a specific set of beliefs and practices. People became Methodists or Baptists or Catholics because their identity was linked to a particular denomination and all it represented.

Today people become active in a church because of the experiences it offers. To believe something, they must experience it first. As a result, what happens in worship, Sunday school, and small groups is formational to their understanding and experience of God. *After the experience*, they are interested in the underlying beliefs.

Where does this happen? Walk to Emmaus, a weekend experience, has changed many lives. By encountering God in a new way, people see the world and their lives differently. *Disciple Bible Study* has also changed people's understanding of themselves and their relationship to God. Why are these so successful? Because they invite people into a life-changing experience.

Adult Age-Level Characteristics

	Young Adults	Middle Adults	Older Adults
Physical	Measure time since birth; learning preferences and abilities established by age 20, reach physical peak	Begin to measure time as "time till death"; coming to terms with mortality; mid-life physical changes	Losses, fear of loss; ability may be affected by hearing and sight losses; increasing healthcare needs and chronic illnesses
Social	"Intimacy vs. Isolation" (Erik Erikson); needing others vs. being emotionally distant; finding place in society and in community; struggle with independence, identity, and intimacy; early stages of occupation and relationship building	"Generativity vs. Stagnation" (Erik Erikson); serving others vs. being self-absorbed; range of interests include career planning, personal growth, relationship development, problem solving, and values clarification	"Integrity vs. Despair" (Erik Erikson); life has meaning vs. a life full of regrets; adjustment to retirement; close relationships dwindling through death; increasing dependence upon others; volunteerism and caregiving are important
Emotional	Entering adult world; intimacy; settling down; need to be accepted	Managing mid-life crises and transitions (e.g., death of parents, empty nest, etc.); shedding burdens of early childhood; parenting issues	Need to be valued, accepted, and respected by persons and institutions

Intellectual	Learn best when not under stress; time is valuable; prefer problem-centered learning over subject-centered; want to apply insights to daily living	Self-directed learning; want to be involved in decisions about learning; want input from knowledgeable persons, resources, and groups	Build on life experiences; use visual images and mental pictures to enhance learning; encourage self-paced and problem-centered learning activities
Spiritual	Many seek spiritual experiences; may be returning to church; want answers; others want chance to raise questions and search	Want to understand the meaning of life, values, and priorities, and one's place in the world; taking responsibility for one's own spiritual needs	Want arena to grow in faith and to accept life story; need purpose in life; need to feel life worth living; may want to share one's life and faith story and mentor others
Special Needs	Want to be treated and respected as adults and peers; want arenas for fellowship, service, and ministry to others	Context of learning is important; climate for learning and thinking; traumatic events or life crises often cause involvement in learning activities	Opportunities for continued growth; service vs. busy work; daytime activities and accessible surroundings; good lighting and acoustics
Gifts to Share	Expanding knowledge, creativity, and intimacy; willingness to take risks	Dependability; steadiness; concern for the future; financial resources	Wisdom; time; endurance; objectivity; life experiences; hope; and acceptance of death
Vocation	Seeking fulfilling work; on-the-job training	Questioning; reaping; career changes, mentoring	Retirement from primary career; may re-enter or reinvent work
Expectations of the Church	Often want answers	Want to live out answers discovered	Stable; place for friendships; sacramental nature of church

Generational Differences

You have opened the research archive relating to the latest findings on generational differences. The statistics and analysis in this archive come from national surveys conducted by Barna Research. Click the subcategories on the side menu to automatically scroll to specific sections in this archive.

For more information about generational differences, be sure to check out the related resources and news releases featured on this page. Also, watch for new information to be added to this archive in the months to come.

Definition [top](#)

- Buster - those born between 1965 and 1983

- Boomer - those born between 1946 and 1964
- Builders - those born between 1927 and 1945
- Senior - those born in 1926 and earlier

[Activities](#) [top](#)

- Busters are less likely than any other generation to volunteer time to their church (12% of Busters report volunteering). Conversely, 25% of Boomers, 25% of Builders, and 23% of Seniors have volunteered at a church in the past week. (2001)
- Small group participation appears to be positively correlated with age, with 23% of Seniors, 18% of Builders, 17% of Boomers and only 14% of Busters reporting that they participated in a small group in the past week. (2001)
- Compared to 71% of Seniors who have a "quiet time" during the week, 63% of Builders, 52% of Boomers and 36% of Busters do the same. (2001)
- 35% of Busters, 42% of Boomers, 50% of Builders, and 47% of Seniors attend church on a given Sunday. (2001)
- In a typical week, 29% of Busters, 39% of Boomers, 43% of Builders, and 59% of Seniors read the Bible. (2001)
- Busters are the age group least likely than any other age group to pray to God. In a given week, we found that 76% of Busters, 84% of Boomers, 87% of Builders and 85% of Seniors report praying. (2001)

[Faith](#) [top](#)

- Boomers emerge as more likely and Busters as less likely than any other generation to be born again (49% of Boomers are born again, compared to 44% of Builders, 36% of Seniors and 33% of Busters). (2001)
- Age appears to be positively correlated with the importance individuals place on their faith. While only 56% of Busters say their faith is very important in their life, 70% of Boomers, 80% of Builders and 79% of Seniors indicate that their faith is a very important part of their life. (2001)
- 69% of Busters, 73% of Boomers, 77% of Builders, and 70% of Seniors believe that God is the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator that rules the world today. (2001)

[Self-Descriptions](#) [top](#)

- Busters are more likely than the other generations to be searching for meaning in life: 44% of Busters compared to 32% of all others are searching for their purpose in life. (2001)
- Busters are the generation most likely to feel "too busy." Compared to 53% of Busters who maintain that they are too busy, 49% of Boomers, 32% of Builders and 27% of Seniors feel the same. (2001)

- Older individuals are also more likely than younger individuals to describe themselves as a "born again Christian." 49% Seniors and 47% of Builders call themselves born again, compared to 42% of Boomers and 31% of Busters. (2001)
- Financial comfort appears to come with age. We found that 38% of Busters say they are personally struggling with finances, compared to the 32% of Boomers, 23% of Builders, and 20% of Seniors. (2001)
- Busters are almost twice as likely as are Seniors to indicate that they are stressed out (41% to 22%, respectively). Likewise, 32% of Boomers and 27% of Builders said that "stressed out" is an accurate description of them. (2001)

GRAPHS[1980](#) 