

MEET THE MILLENNIALS

by Walt Mueller

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"I'm glad I'm not raising kids in this day and age." I'm sure my dad isn't the only grandparent who's uttered those words in recent years. "It seems like it's so much harder for kids these days," he's told me on several occasions. "So many pressures and choices on your kids. I don't envy you at all Walt."

He's right - this is a different world that our kids are growing up in. The choices, challenges, pressures and expectations they face are leaving a deep and lasting mark on who they are and who they will become. And to help them sort it all out, they need parents who understand them and their world better than they understand it themselves. Today's children and teens are part of a truly unique generation.

What Parent's Need to Know About The Millennial Generation

- As children of the Baby-Boomers, the Millennial kids includes those born after 1980. They will become the largest generation ever.
- The Millennial kids are also known as "Remote Control Kids" (they face unprecedented and constant change), the "Salad Bowl Generation" (marked by racial, experiential, and attitudinal diversity), "The 14th Generation (the 14th generation born after the American Revolution), and "Bridgers" (bridging the millennia).
- They seem confident and comfortable because they've been born into a time of peace and economic prosperity. Consequently, they have been lulled into a false sense of security.
- They are the first generation raised in the new "postmodern" world with the accompanying postmodern world view. For them, feelings take precedence over reason, truth is relative, and everyone believes what's "right" for them. Consequently, they are feeling-driven, pluralistic, spontaneous, and without a transcendent moral compass.
- Family stability, support, and guidance are fading away as the majority of millennials grow up in families marked by divorce, fatherlessness, and/or brokenness. Fully 1/4 to 1/3 of the kids born between 1989 and 1994 were born to unmarried women. They have been left hungering for relationships.
- Without the support of loving and involved parents, many are being raised and nurtured on an expansive and growing media diet where options abound. Recent research indicates they are so media-savvy that they are able to process multiple streams of information concurrently!
- The pervasiveness of MTV and the Internet has shrunken their world. They are growing up in a global society and global youth culture where kids around the world increasingly look, act, and think the same.
- Unprecedented economic opportunity and wealth leaves them vulnerable to marketers who are aggressively targeting them with advertising. As with previous generations, they are materialistic.
- They are deeply interested in spiritual things. While they are keenly aware of the spiritual void in their lives, they tend to avoid Christianity as an option while pursuing spiritual answers down a variety of strange and unusual avenues. Their "faith" is personal and syncretistic.

What Can You Do To Help Parents?

- Schedule a parent/teen meeting where an "expert" panel of Millennial kids answers questions

from parents to offer insight into the experience of today's teenagers and how that experience differs from that of their parents.

- Spend time reading to gain an understanding of Postmodernism and the postmodern world view. Hold a parents meeting where you explain postmodernism in simple and practical terms. Hand out a printed fact sheet on postmodernism. Show them examples of postmodernism from film, television, music, and music video. (Check out the CPYU website for more information on postmodernism - www.cpyu.org).
- Make an intentional effort to schedule regular intergenerational events where parents and teens have the opportunity to come together in settings for play, communication, and Bible study.
- Challenge parents to understand that their example is still the most powerful molding and shaping force in their teenager's lives.

Topics for Roundtable Discussion

- Discuss ways parents can strengthen their families in this day and age where family stability is on the decline. Start with a list developed by the teenagers of what qualities they long for in parents and family.
- Discuss ways that parents can lower the influence of media by offering alternative activities and options to their kids.
- Brainstorm on ideas for combating the powerful force of materialism in the home. In addition, discuss the strategies marketers use to tap into the materialism of the Millennial kids *and* preceding generations.
- Discuss ways to tap into the spiritual interest of Millennial kids. How can Christian faith be made more attractive and relevant without compromising the truth?

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