

A ROLE OF THE PASTOR IS TO ENCOURAGE MILLENNIAL-AGE INDIVIDUALS TO
VOLUNTEER IN THEIR CONGREGATIONS

BY

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Abstract

God in His Word promised His love to all generations through the Savior Jesus. As pastors seek to bring that saving Word to all generations, they find unique challenges in each age grouping. At this time, the millennial generation, those born roughly between 1980 and 1995, are a challenge for congregations. Pastors struggle to figure out new ways to engage millennials. Pastors strongly desire their participation in congregational life, but do not always understand how to communicate with them. A frustrated pastor could err by throwing up his hands in disgust and lack of hope for this generation of individuals. This would be missing all the wonderful talents they have to offer God's Church. Where does a pastor turn to learn about this group of misunderstood Christians? He can turn to sociological data for help. However, the stereotypes abound in sociological sources. The only way to learn about these individuals is to let them speak from their hearts. As they speak to their pastors, the truth becomes evident: millennials desire to be equipped for service. For that reason, this thesis first investigates the current sociological data available on millennials. It continues by reviewing the responses of one hundred millennials to a survey that was taken. Finally, after analysis of the responses, the essayist provides a biblical response to trends that are visible. The facts presented will point to one possible conclusion: An important role of the pastor is to encourage millennials to volunteer in their congregations

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Introduction

Who works at your church? If someone takes time to consider this question, he will come up with many different individuals who work at the congregation. Members would first think of the pastor. Perhaps they would consider the teachers, the janitors, the organists, choir directors, or secretaries. What a blessing all of these individual positions are to God's churches! However, these are paid positions.

If a surveyor asked a church member to consider who volunteers in their congregation, the answer will be enlightening. This question would cause the responder to consider individual names of volunteers. The reader can imagine answers to this question such as, "I recall Mr. Williams, Mrs. Jones, and Ms. Rodgers." So, what are the characteristics of these volunteers? Are they God's people? Do they work hard? The answer to all of these is yes. Often though, these sanctified people share one common trait in the experience of this essayist: they are retirement age or older.

The essayist would like to make particular note of one fact. It is a blessing that the older generations are volunteering in congregations. They accomplish great work for God's people and they often are the driving force when a church needs something accomplished. God's Church is indebted to those older members who built the churches, who painted the walls, and who taught in the Sunday Schools.

This paper does not seek to eliminate their opportunities. It does not seek to make other generations more important. Instead, this paper will acknowledge that these older generations lament that young people are not active in their congregations.

This essayist does not wish to say that one generation of individuals is more vital to God's Church than another. A pastor may enjoy working with a particular age group. However, God's Word is for all generations. The writer could have chosen to discuss encouraging elderly volunteers or middle-aged individuals; however, this paper will not have that focus.¹

¹ These paragraphs are written in order to deal with a bit of negative response that was received by individuals taking the survey on millennials. Some members voiced concerns about pastors focusing on one age group at the expense of others. Other individual members voiced concern that older volunteers would feel as though they were not valued or respected.

If a pastor were to list all the volunteers in his congregation, the list will include many retired members and a glaring lack of millennials. Some will maintain that is because millennials are not interested in attending church. Authors have written about the issue of getting millennials to church. While this essayist acknowledges this problem for God's Church, this paper will not focus upon the millennials that are not present. Instead, it will focus upon millennials that attend church.

On a personal note, the writer of this paper is part of the millennial generation, so the topic hits home. As a millennial, I feel as though research about my generation has generalized many of "us". It is important to note that over-generalization misapplied to individuals is not productive.

A pastor cannot simply wring his hands and say, "This is simply how this generation is and lives." Some millennials are active and others are not. The lack of millennial volunteer involvement is an issue that pastors can address. At times, this paper will demonstrate that the reasons for lack of volunteering are legitimate. At other times, the paper will not condone the reasons for being absent from life at church outside of the Sunday service.

Due to the lack of specific information on this topic and the necessity of these volunteers from this age group, the topic is relevant. Pastors need to know how to relate to their people and how to equip them for service. There are specific challenges and benefits when working with any group of people. This is no different for millennials. A pastor who is working to have all age groups represented in the volunteer activity of his congregation will want pertinent information on how to encourage millennials to volunteer.

For the pastor, who needs this generation to be more active, the best place to start is with the millennials themselves. Only they know why they volunteer. The purpose of this essay, then, is to give millennials a voice so they can equip a pastor to empower millennial volunteers.

For that reason, this researcher took a survey of one hundred millennials who profess to have had membership in a congregation. This survey strives to answer a pastor's questions on what millennials are looking for in his leadership. It also intends to discover trends in volunteer attitudes so that a pastor can see how these individuals feel about church work.

The discussion first begins with a general overview of sociological data regarding the millennial generation. The writer will follow that with an extensive analysis with graphed conclusions of data collected from a survey. After the analysis and suggestions regarding that

data, the paper will consult Scripture to give counsel for both the pastor and for the millennial individual. The main point will be clear: an important role of the pastor is to encourage millennials to volunteer.

Literature Review

There are many sociological sources written about millennials. Simply type “millennials” into Google and thousands of hits will appear. Readers don’t have to search hard to find journal articles regarding this generation.

Since this is a topic of discussion for many, this author used journal articles for most of the sociological research. It is easy to see in journals how people generalize the millennial generation. An author named Michael Price wrote an article entitled *Where Millennials Went Wrong and How They Are Paying The Price*. That title says it all. Much of the information regarding the generation is negative. Courtney Martin wrote *A Civic Lesson for 20 Somethings*. In that article, she goes on to talk about the civic involvement failures of the millennial generation. Other articles speak about the difficulty of managing millennials. These journals are full of negative material. Another article from USA Today illustrates this point. The title of the article is *Millennials Might Not Be so Special After All*.

Dr. Rick and Kathy Hicks in their book, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers*, take a much more balanced approach. The title implies that they look at all generations and each has positive and negatives. Another useful article is *Four Ways Millennials Are Changing Politics*. If an individual is trying to find a well-balanced source a good article is by Armand J. Boehme. It is entitled *The Church and The Culture of Millennials – The Best or Worst of Times*. For an example of balance, Boehme states that millennials have “a desire to put their beliefs into action.”² Yet he also notes that “there is religious decline in this generation.”³

During the sociological research, this essayist discovered that there are some large contradictions in the articles available. From the start, no one has a definitive age line for the millennial generation. The USA Today article referenced lists the age range for millennials as

² Armand J. Boehme, “THE CHURCH AND THE CULTURE OF THE MILLENNIALS—THE BEST OR WORST OF TIMES?,” *MISSIO APOSTOLICA* (2013): 22.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

those born between 1982 and 2000.⁴ Yet, Steve Bornfeldlas in his journal article *Millennials Favor Doing Good Over Divinity* estimates the range to be those born in the late 1970s to early 1980s. He acknowledges that there are over twenty age ranges for this generational grouping.⁵ Why the confusion in age ranges? Perhaps since the millennial generation has not advanced its history, no person can pinpoint its exact place. In the future, the age range should become easier to distinguish as other generations come to the scene.

So how can any research be trusted when the sociologists cannot come up with accurate dating? In reality, there are large differences between individuals born in the late 1970s and those born in the 1990s. How can one know if generalizations are accurate with this broad a gap?

What also makes researching the literature on this topic difficult is that this generation is still changing. Those born in the 1800s are gone. It is easier to make sweeping statements about them. However, many born in the 1990s are still making their first marks on society.

Sociologists have still more contradictions regarding millennials. For example, Steve Bornfeldlas specifically lists volunteering as strength of the generation, while the USA Today article states that Millennials volunteer less than any other generation.⁶

Some of the best sources about millennials and their volunteer habits use the voices of the generation itself. One such resource is by Wu Luping, *Motivations for Youth Volunteer Participation: Types and Structure—An Analysis of Interviews with Twenty-Four Young Volunteers*. This source gives ideas to a leader for why millennials volunteer and how to deal with why they do not. Luping uses surveys of millennials to determine their volunteer motivations. It was also interesting that Luping did not list an age range for millennials and did not list the age of the individuals surveyed. However, he described them by their position in life. Some were college students and others were one year out of college. He only identifies them as young.

Despite different gaps and characteristics, people do have commonalities. For a pastor researching how to get millennial volunteers, it is vital for him to understand the volunteering

⁴ "Millennials Might Not Be so Special after All, Study Finds," *USATODAY.COM*, accessed October 27, 2014, <http://yourlife.usatoday.com/parenting-family/story/2012-03-15/Millennials-might-not-be-so-special-after-all-study-finds/53552744/1>.

⁵ Bornfeldlas, Steve. Steve Bornfeldlas Vegas Review-Journal, "Millennials Favor Doing Good over Divinity," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, accessed October 27, 2014, <http://www.reviewjournal.com/life/religion/millennials-favor-doing-good-over-divinity>. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.* 1.

process in general as well. *The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing The Power of Everybody* by Bill Hybels is one example of a source that accomplishes this. All people appreciate good leadership qualities. They appreciate good communication. They desire some form of structure and well-defined goals.

However, the problem does arise that there are no specific resources for a pastor seeking to inspire his millennial generation volunteer workers. There are books for volunteers. There are books for millennials. There are sources for millennials volunteering in society in general. However, there is a lack of information on how to lead and inspire millennials to volunteer in the congregation.

An important issue that arose from the survey of millennials was the issue of feeling fulfillment in life. Does fulfillment come from a job? Does it come from God? The research naturally leads to a discussion about the Christian vocation. Why are we here? What should we do?

Other than using Scripture itself, Luther's work on vocation is valuable for a pastor seeking to direct his people in these areas. Gustaf Wingren wrote *The Christian's Calling*. It is a useful source because he attempts to gather together Luther's thoughts on the subject, instead of having to sift through all of Luther's Works. One point which authors on the topic of the Christian calling are trying to make is that individuals can and do find fulfillment outside of the workplace. They can also find it volunteering at church.

In the end, because of the lack of specific information, this topic necessitated a large survey. Any of the literature above needs to be tempered by the individual needs of a person. In a given congregation, a pastor may be dealing with specific individuals or specific circumstances that throw all research out the window. These sources provide generalities to help or hinder those that spend time studying. The survey conducted for this paper provided the most useful information to the topic.

Sociological Data Concerning The Millennial Generation

If an individual asked you to describe the millennial generation, what would you say? Are millennials selfish? Are they hard working? What are their general likes and dislikes?

Any type of sociological information has generalities. The surveys that millennials take do not illustrate each personality. However, through a cross section of society, sociologists can attempt to obtain some idea of commonalities between individuals.

A pastor must deal with the qualities of millennials for better or for worse. If he wants to empower millennials to volunteer, he must know the characteristics of the people that he is asking to be involved in the church. This section of the thesis will look into some positive and negative characteristics of millennials that pastors will likely encounter as they work with them.

The most documented characteristic can be a positive or negative. One of the most often noted characteristics concerning the millennial generation is about technology. No generation in the past has grown up with the technology that millennials have had. Sociologists note that millennials are “technologically sophisticated and capable of multitasking.”⁷ Another sociologist states this: “If you want to connect with a Millennial, go the virtual route over one-on-one communication. You will constantly find them multi-tasking with their various technology media.”⁸

The fact that millennials love technology is no secret. All one has to do is to walk through the malls to see young people messaging, checking their Facebook accounts, and updating Twitter feeds. This can be positive. The millennial generation has information at its fingertips. Young people are able to do their jobs, speak with friends and family, study, and enjoy leisure all at the same time. They can assist with media, technology, and in general getting the word out through social media about events that are taking place in a congregation. This can be a great blessing.

That type of convenience comes at a price. One-on-one communication suffers because conversations happen in the blink of an eye without context. In any organization, communication is important. How much more important is communication between brothers and sisters in Christ? This type of emotionally connected communication suffers because of technology. Hartman and McCambridge note that millennials are “seriously deficient in oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills.”⁹

Sociologists also note the great amount of stress that this multitasking places upon the mind of these individuals. One study notes, “This is one of the first generations who, as children, had to carry around their own Day-Timers to keep track of all their activities. Their busy

⁷ J. L. Hartman and J. McCambridge, “Optimizing Millennials’ Communication Styles,” *Business Communication Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 22–44.: 15.

⁸ Sarah Guldalian, “The Millennials: Reflections on Reaching a Lost Generation for Christ,” *MISSIO APOSTOLICA* (2013): 41.

⁹ Hartman and McCambridge, “Optimizing Millennials’ Communication Styles,” 15.

schedules, plus the issues they are forced to face in this world, take a toll on them.”¹⁰ This type of influence can have a direct effect upon participation in congregational life. Perhaps they will think that they are busier than reality. Perhaps, they will not give proper priority to volunteer service.

Sociologists list many positive characteristics about this generation that will be beneficial for volunteering tasks. Rick and Kathy Hicks state that millennials put a higher emphasis on helping others, rather than being concerned with self - gratification.¹¹ This desire to help others is a positive for church volunteering, since the Church seeks to help individuals with their greatest issue of all, lack of faith in Jesus Christ.

Courtney Martin notes that millennials have grand expectations for life. They desire to change the world and create an amazing society.¹² While it may be the common thought that these individuals do not volunteer and that they are unmotivated, some sociologists have stated that the reality is much different than the perception. “In reality, this generation volunteers at a higher rate than any other before it, and quite a bit of that social media time is spent on activism.”¹³ This essayist rationalizes these contradictions by seeing the lack of consistent age range for millennials. Also, there could even be a blatant ignoring of the true statistics. Perhaps the sociologists have different motives for their writing. The contradiction exists.

Some other positive characteristics of the millennial generation include that they are full of hope for the future.¹⁴ These are individuals with high expectations for life. They are socially responsible, and they desire to have work and personal life in balance.¹⁵ If a researcher were to ask a pastor the characteristics of a good volunteer, many of the aforementioned generational characteristics would be desired.

¹⁰ Rick Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers: Understanding the Generational Differences That Divide Us* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House, 1999), 285.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹² Courtney E. Martin, “A Civics Lesson for 20-Somethings,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 19, 2013, 1, accessed October 27, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2013/0219/A-civics-lesson-for-20-somethings>.

¹³ Hollie Gilman, “Four Ways Millennials Are Changing Politics,” *Vox*, accessed October 27, 2014, <http://www.vox.com/2014/10/27/7072683/millennials-civic-engagement>.

¹⁴ Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers*, 272.

¹⁵ Hartman and McCambridge, “Optimizing Millennials’ Communication Styles,” 3.

However, many still describe millennials negatively. Millennials have great desires, yet this quote from Boehme: “The American Freshman Survey given to American college freshman indicates that many believe they are above average, have a sense of entitlement, and have unrealistic ambitions in relationship to their actual abilities. They tend towards a celebrity culture, exhibiting a desire for accolades based on little actual achievement.”¹⁶ This essayist doesn’t know how an author can back up such a statement statistically. However, speaking as a millennial, I know that many individuals my age that are close friends do tend towards celebrity culture. Millennials must know what is going on with the Kardashians, and which star is wearing what clothing. We have great ambitions to go to school and change the world and yet some of us don’t want to put the actual work in to that change.

The pastor studying millennials could look at it this way: a millennial will often be the idea person. They know in their minds what the church is doing wrong. They know what is wrong in society, yet they will sometimes avoid accomplishing the change. They can see themselves as something important, and yet there are no facts to back up what they are saying. They talk the talk, but they do not walk the walk. Some millennials may exhibit these characteristics. Yet there are many examples of millennials who do accomplish what they set out to do. A pastor will want to take in much information and consider the individual rather than generalizing.

Another fact to consider is that many millennials have not had enough years to accomplish the desires that they have put forth. Perhaps these ideals will come to fruition in the future. History will look back. This, however, is the current perception that a pastor lives with and perhaps believes about the majority of the millennials in the congregation.

As a researcher studies the sociological data surrounding the millennial generation, he finds many contradictions. How can a generation care about others and yet be selfish? How can they be great at volunteering and yet volunteer less than any generation in the past? How can sociologists do an accurate study without actually knowing the age ranges for the given group? These are the problems surrounding this study. How does one trust sociologists when they generalize statistical data and have their own personal biases? The answer is that the researcher can use the data they provide and combine it with his own thoughts and his own statistical data.

¹⁶ Boehme, “THE CHURCH AND THE CULTURE OF THE MILLENNIALS—THE BEST OR WORST OF TIMES?,” 7.

The Survey Method

One great way of measuring statistical data regarding individual people is personal survey. This type of survey leaves no room for generalizations.

This essayist wanted to hear directly from millennials their views on volunteering. This gave millennials an opportunity that they perhaps never had before to voice their approval, concerns, motives, and beliefs regarding volunteering in the church. More importantly, the data they provided allows a pastor to analyze their answers.

This survey not only looked at agreements and disagreements with sociology, but also sought to provide data that sociologists did not handle. The survey this paper used handled issues about volunteering such as motive, relationship with volunteer leader (i.e. the pastor), and appreciation felt by the volunteer. These types of data were harder to come by in sociological journals.

This survey did not ask every single applicable question, nor did it ask every single millennial. Answers could vary in different parts of the country. Answers could vary depending on gender and financial status. This survey attempted to gain a general overview of the ideals of millennials and their relationship with their pastor as volunteer leader.

An important fact to consider for a survey is survey parameters. A survey cannot be accurate unless you define specific age ranges. One of the largest faults in sociological data was its lack of decided age range for millennials. After sifting through many different journals, this essayist made the decision to go with the birth year range of 1980 through 1996. This essayist did not desire anyone under the age of 18 to respond because these individuals, though they are part of the millennial generation, largely do not determine their own life schedule because they are considered to be minors. Thus, the age range for this survey was 18-35 years old.

This essayist sent the survey to five hundred individuals and received responses from one hundred. The individuals in question were required to take the survey one time. They took the survey anonymously. No information about gender, finances, or places of origin was taken. Individuals could answer all the questions or choose to skip individual questions. The only other mandatory qualification was that individuals had to be members of a Christian congregation. Denominations were varied. The type of member was also varied. Some were called workers like teachers. Others had not been to church in over a year. However, each knew a pastor personally and had some sort of contact with him.

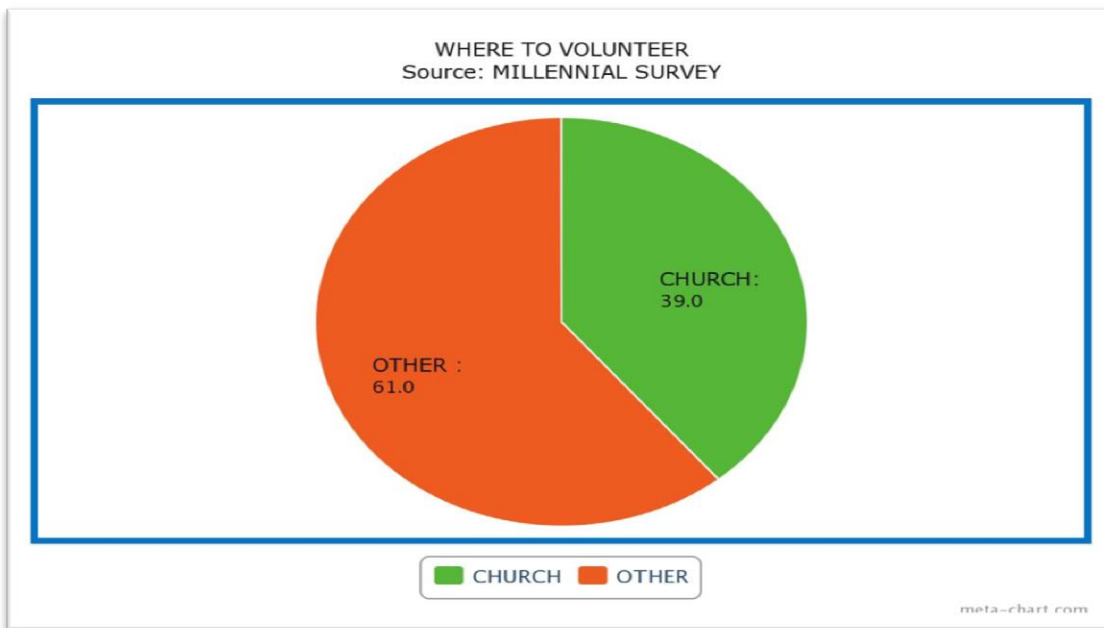
The Survey Response and Analysis

One item to note in sociological data was the aversion that millennials had to institutions such as the church. At the same time, the journals and books noted that millennials had strong desires to accomplish great things for society and to live influential lives.¹⁷ The first question in the survey strove to discover if it actually is true that millennials do not trust institutions. It also served to show that they do have grand plans for helping society.

What organization or place would you go to if you wanted to volunteer your time?

After compiling one hundred answers to this question, the data agreed with the sociologists. Millennials do have an aversion to institutions. Only a small percentage listed their home congregation as the first place they would go to volunteer. However, the varied volunteer locations demonstrate a desire to accomplish great things for society.

The graph below illustrates the responses. Sixty-one percent stated that they would volunteer outside of their congregation first.



The survey followed up this question asking the responder to provide a reason why they would choose a place to volunteer. These responses demonstrated that millennials are aware of their individual gifts. They are also aware of needs in their communities. This quote encapsulates what the majority of the sixty-one percent stated: "I usually choose to volunteer places where the population they serve or the issue they are trying to eliminate is something close to my

¹⁷ Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers*, 285.

heart.” For many responders, a place that was close to their heart, values, or experiences was an animal shelter, a D.A.R.E program, an elderly living facility, or a government program.

So what does this data speak to a pastor of a congregation? These millennials surveyed are members of churches and yet sixty-one percent of them are choosing to volunteer elsewhere first. Perhaps there is nothing sinister behind this. However, why do individuals look outside the church first? If these sixty-one percent volunteered in their congregations, staffing issues would be resolved. If the sociologists are to be believed, it is because millennials do not trust or value institutions like the church. They are selfish and only volunteer for the things that personally benefit them. One responder agreed with that sentiment when he said, “Simple economics. I would volunteer there, because helping others who like what I like gives me a profit.”

The opinion of this essayist is that there is some distrust of the institution. However, the biggest reason is that some of the other organizations market their need for volunteers more actively. Humane societies, D.A.R.E, and other agencies are quite up-front with individuals about their staffing needs. Also, the millennials surveyed indicated that the place they volunteer relates directly to things about which they are passionate.

Perhaps the pastor seeking volunteers from this generation does not match talent to position. Lee and Brudney echo this sentiment. “With the expansion of the nonprofit sector and the services it provides, more organizations recruit volunteers with specific skills and backgrounds, rather than simply issuing general calls for “help.”¹⁸ Millennials are seeking to volunteer and make an impact in the world outside the church.

Since the millennials are willing and available for some sort of volunteer activity, the pastor bears some of the burden for recruitment. A pastor needs to become a better recruiter and a better leader to help millennials see volunteer opportunities.

What do you do with your free time?

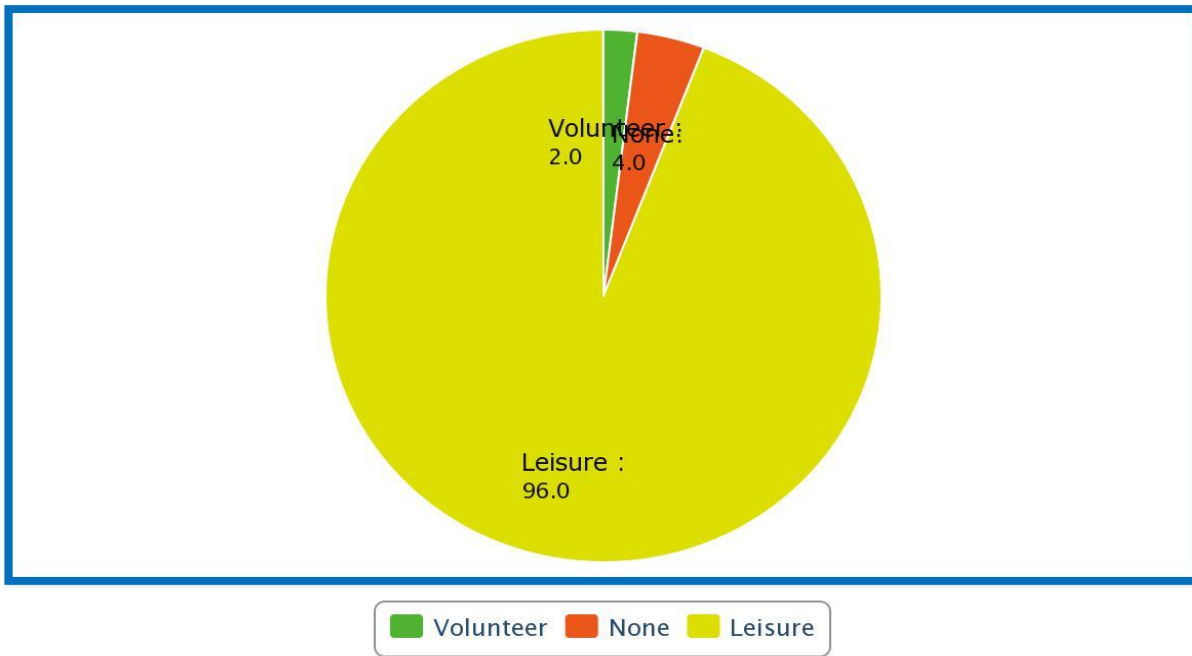
An important component to volunteering is free time. If an individual is working all day, it does not leave time for free volunteer activity. As noted before, millennials are a busy generation. The motive behind this question was to inform a pastor if millennials are actually too busy to volunteer. Garfield states, “It is increasingly difficult to find willing congregants who have the time and commitment. We live in a busy society—longer work hours, little discre-

¹⁸ Young-joo Lee and Jeffrey L. Brudney, “Participation in Formal and Informal Volunteering: Implications for Volunteer Recruitment,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 23, no. 2 (December 2012): 165.

tionary time. Many adults seeking spiritual solace and guidance say, ‘I’m searching. What can you do for me?’”¹⁹

Out of one hundred responders to this question, only four answered that they did not have any free time. Two responded that they use free time to volunteer. Ninety-four individuals responded that they enjoyed some type of leisure activity. It is important to note that the question did not ask how much time these millennials spent on those activities. However, one millennial’s response stood out when he said that he spends time with “mindless browsing of social media – I’m addicted to Facebook - video games – studying.” Yet another stated, “I know that I need to do something more productive.”

What do you do with your free time?
Source: Volunteering survey



meta-chart.com

Millennials state that they have places that they volunteer. They want to make changes in society. Yet, when questioned what they do with their free time, only two percent of those surveyed listed volunteering as a priority. This is an apparent contradiction.

Should the pastor feel guilty about asking millennials to volunteer because of how busy they are? The answer is certainly no. Perhaps he needs to take each person on a case by case basis. For example, the four percent who actively said they had no time to volunteer may not be

¹⁹ Jerry Garfield, “A New Approach to Recruiting Volunteers.pdf” (Congregations magazine, 2003).

individuals that one would desire to ask. However, perhaps those individuals need encouragement to be better stewards of their time. In general, there is free time that the pastor can encourage millennials to use for their congregations.

After answering what they did with their free time, the responders were also asked what their neighbors do with their free time. Thirty-four out of sixty individuals that responded to the question stated that they did not know what their neighbors did with their free time. This is important information for a pastor. Lee and Brudney suggest, “Involvement in social networks increases the likelihood that individuals will volunteer.”²⁰ Individuals are more likely to volunteer when people like them do the same activity.

Do you find fulfillment in your place of work?

Another issue that goes hand in hand with volunteering and millennials is how they feel about their occupations. Three major factors contribute to the amount of fulfillment millennials receive from work. The first is that the millennial generation is the most educated generation in the history of the United States, and yet they have the highest unemployment rate in the last forty years. The second is that millennials together carry roughly one trillion dollars in student loan debt. The third is that forty-eight percent of college graduates have jobs that do not require a college degree, so they are working in positions that they were not studying to hold.²¹

Why are many millennials working outside of the job they went to college to obtain? Perhaps this is simply a function of the economy. Perhaps the job for which they were studying does not provide them with enough income to pay off student loans. Others may stay in a position in the service industry because they see more income bartending and serving than they would from a salaried position.

When an individual carries a large quantity of debt and works in a position that requires difficult working hours such as third shift factories or restaurant work, it is difficult to find time to volunteer. Perhaps a pastor can offer opportunities for these millennials to find fulfillment in volunteering when it is not found in their profession.

As the reader thinks back to some of the characteristics of the millennial generation, he will recall that millennials have desire to make changes. They want to accomplish great things.

²⁰ Lee and Brudney, “Participation in Formal and Informal Volunteering,” 1.

²¹ Michael Price, “Where Millennials Went Wrong and How They’re Paying the Price,” *Huffington Post*, last modified October 14, 2014, accessed October 27, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michaelprice/where-millennials-went-wr_b_5969670.html?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000592.

The effect of having all those expectations and not meeting them right after college can depress an individual and cause them not to be involved in volunteer activity.

Courtney Martin writes, “Learned helplessness can develop. When one has grand expectations and finds them repeatedly unfulfilled, the next step is despair. Young people, already experiencing disequilibrium, find that their efforts to be civically engaged don’t feel as if they add up to much. They stop showing up at the marches. They stop making an effort to go to the meetings. What, after all, does it really amount to?”²²

This quote from a millennial responder serves to demonstrate that this generation has a need to feel fulfilled in life: “I want to get something by working. I’m not as utilitarian as those who have what they’ve done and what positions they’ve held written into their resumes. I want to train myself for the work I do, not for writing future resumes.”²³

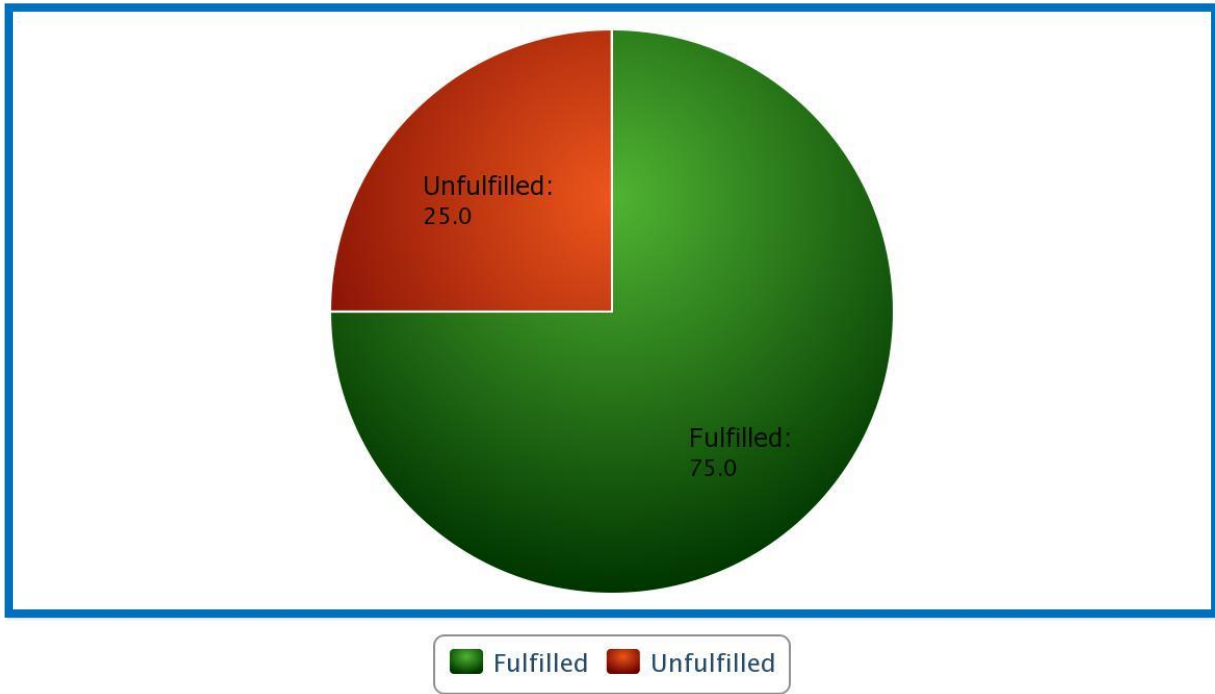
Out of one hundred millennials, only eighty answered the question above. Perhaps this is because individuals were afraid to tell the truth regarding their positions. Perhaps some did not have an opinion or were simply acknowledging that they find fulfillment elsewhere.

Whatever the motive was, twenty millennials stated that they did not find fulfillment in their positions compared to sixty that did. That means that twenty-five percent of those who responded need to find fulfillment outside of work.

²² Martin, “A Civics Lesson for 20-Somethings.”

²³ Wu Luping, “Motivations for Youth Volunteer Participation: Types and Structure—An Analysis of Interviews with Twenty-Four Young Volunteers,” *Chinese Education & Society* 44, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 184.

Do you find fulfillment at work?
Source: Volunteering survey



meta-chart.com

When the researcher relates this data to the survey responses, he sees that there are some discrepancies. The sociologists say that the majority of millennials are unfulfilled for the reasons listed before. However, this survey reported seventy-five percent fulfillment. The opinion of this essayist is that the number of unfulfilled would have been higher had more individuals taken the survey than one hundred. Also, since these were Christians taking the survey, one could assume that many are actually discovering fulfillment and enjoyment in their jobs despite not doing exactly what they desire for their profession.

Individuals working directly within the church as a profession noted considerable fulfillment. The most profitable answer was the millennial who said, "I'm an organist and I love playing for the Divine Service." Also, "I work for a small faith-based company, that cares for its employees. I really enjoy my line of work." This is not to say that working for the church is the only way to find fulfillment. The premise seems to be that faith and fulfillment go hand in hand. Contentment is something that God provides to His people who put their faith into action.

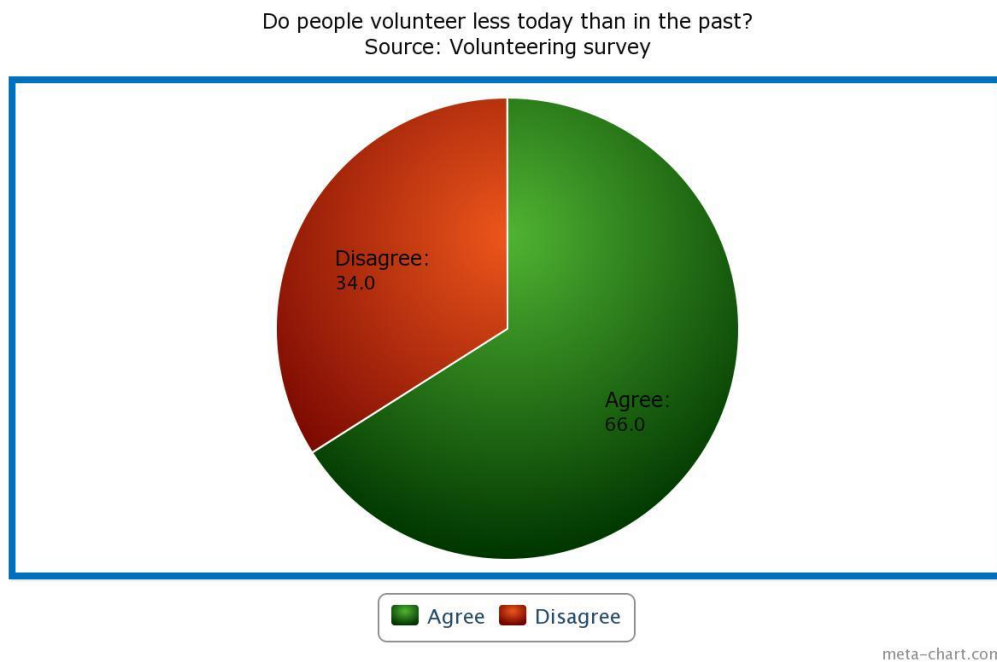
For a pastor seeking millennial volunteers, this is an opportunity. Boehme writes, “Millennials desire to put their beliefs into action and the Church should help and enable them to do so.”²⁴

Churches are equipped with Scripture to offer fulfillment and contentment in a context where these things are missing. Besides being content that we are Christian and God’s children, the pastor can assure the individual of God’s call for their life. Volunteering can fill a void that millennials are seeking to fill.

Agree or Disagree: People today volunteer less than they did in the past

Perception is everything. At times, the way an individual feels regarding a topic becomes the reality of what it is. This can be the case with millennial volunteering. Since there is a contradiction in the sociological data over whether or not millennials volunteer more or less than other generations, this is a very necessary question. Millennials themselves see the amount of volunteering that is going on around them, and they are overwhelmingly agreeing that people today volunteer much less than in the past.

Of the one hundred individuals who responded to this question, sixty-six percent of them agreed with this statement while thirty-four stated that they disagreed.



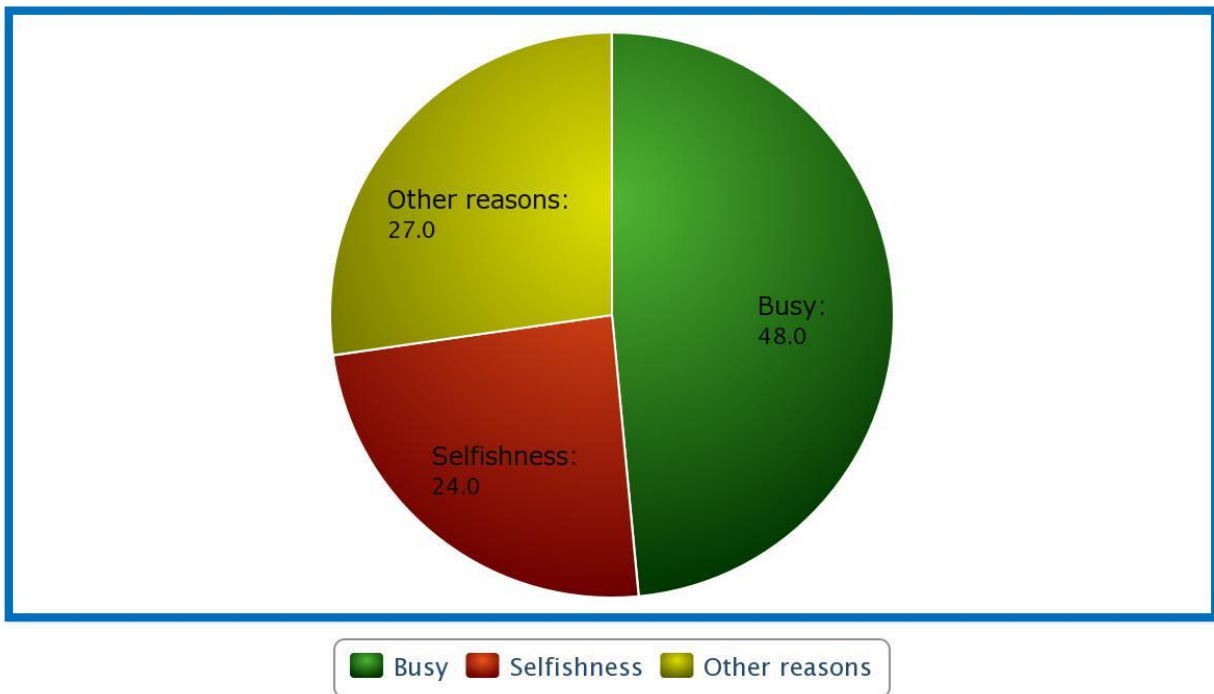
²⁴ Boehme, “THE CHURCH AND THE CULTURE OF THE MILLENNIALS—THE BEST OR WORST OF TIMES?,” 22.

So what is the truth? Are the sociologists who say that this generation volunteers less than any other correct? Or are others correct when they say that millennials volunteer in droves? The answer is that it doesn't matter. Millennials perceive that there are fewer volunteers.

What does this mean for a pastor? There is a generation of people within the church that sees a lack of volunteers. The pastor agrees with what they are seeing and addresses the issue. If a pastor heard an individual say, "We could be doing more for the church," why would this not be an encouraging sign? A pastor could ask, "If you see less volunteering, why do you think this is, and what do you think we can do about this?"

The most interesting facts came from the follow up question, "Why do people volunteer less today than in the past?" When compiling the results, the majority stated that individuals do not have enough time to volunteer. There were also a percentage of individuals who listed selfish attitudes as a cause for lack of volunteering. In the graph below "other reasons" stands for those individuals who agreed, yet stated that they either did not know why or had their own personal reason that did not fit with any other category.

Why did you agree that people today volunteer less than in the past
Source: Volunteering survey



meta-chart.com

The answers to this question agree with sociological data. Millennials know where volunteer needs are. The responders to this survey admit that there are less volunteers, yet they state that they are too busy to do anything about it. A pastor needs to balance these thoughts. If an individual is actually too busy to volunteer, he can encourage them to live their vocation at work and the home. However, there is cause for concern for those who use a falsely packed schedule to avoid congregational life.

There were two responses that stood out for this author. One responder stated that “moral decay was a reason for the lack of volunteering.” This agrees with all of history. The second notable response was, “I wonder if the lack of volunteers is more so a lack of sheer numbers. A congregation of 400 will have more volunteers than a congregation of 100.”

Is the lack of volunteers because of a lack of people in general? Since some congregations have less of a pool of millennials to draw from, the busy volunteer schedule simply rests upon a few select individuals. Thus, they volunteer less because they know they are tied down to large time commitments.

One of the issues that comes up in volunteering is that pastors underestimate the time it takes for the job. Peers notes “what a big problem it is that we misrepresent time required and we don’t treat people correctly when trying to find volunteers.”²⁵

How often do you volunteer anywhere?

The reason for this survey was to determine what a pastor could do to help millennials volunteer. The confusing issue was that millennials have the desire to volunteer. They see the needs. But the same individuals who noted where they would go to volunteer are the same individuals who responded that they themselves do not volunteer.

Gilman stated that, “in reality, this generation volunteers at a higher rate than any generation before it.”²⁶ Yet, the stats of this particular survey would seem to indicate a different trend. Seventy- three individuals responded to this question. The majority of individuals answered that they volunteer less than once a month. If the researcher puts all the individuals together that volunteer less than once a month, the number is forty-six percent. This stat tells the pastor about a great number of millennials who need encouragement.

²⁵ LARRY PEERS, “In Focus” (n.d.): 1, accessed October 21, 2014, <http://www.mydarknight.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Volunteer-Service-in-the-Congregation.pdf>.

²⁶ Gilman, “Four Ways Millennials Are Changing Politics.”

However, this question also shed some positive light on what can be a negative topic. Twenty-nine percent of those surveyed volunteer two to four times per month. Fourteen percent state that they cannot count the amount of times per month they volunteer.

There are many millennials volunteering at rates beyond that of their peers. There are also many millennials not volunteering at all. The middle ground seems to be absent. This data gives a pastor room to grow in the future with the younger members of his congregation. A pastor could make a goal to move individuals from one group to another. For example, if those who don't volunteer at all moved to the once a month category, many staffing issues would be solved. Perhaps this would take some burden off of those who could not count the amount of times they volunteer each month.

It is important to see that these categories do not account for how much time a millennial volunteers. This means that the individuals who volunteer one time a month could be giving more time than those in the two to four times category. This stat was attempting to show the large amount of millennials who were not active in general.

At least forty-six percent of millennials surveyed need improvement in their volunteer habits. Getting an individual to change a habit is difficult. Perhaps moving an individual from no volunteering to four plus times a month would be too great of a jump to expect. However, when God's Word is used, pastors should expect positive results. A pastor can be content with incremental growth. For example, if a pastor works with an individual who hasn't volunteered and gets him to show up just once, this would be a victory and hopefully an impetus for more volunteering in the future.



What causes people to volunteer their time?

Which is more important, that a millennial volunteers in his congregation, or the motive for why the millennial volunteers? Volunteering in order to gain a better standing with God is certainly not what a pastor is seeking. Ephesians 2:8,9 would directly speak against such an action.

Sociological surveys have endeavored to discover why millennials volunteer. The motives, overall, are scattered across the spectrum of possibilities. Wu Luping lists three motivations for volunteering. “It is found that the motivations for volunteer participation may consist of three categories: the traditional motivation (focused on responsibility), the modern motivation (focused on development), and the postmodern motivation (focused on pleasure).”²⁷

Lee and Brudney state that individuals volunteer because “volunteering creates a feeling of being linked to those who will benefit from one’s labor.”²⁸ In this essay’s survey, a few individuals agreed with the idea that their friends motivated them to volunteer.

Wu Luping’s survey has young individuals making interesting statements, including this one concerning motives: “I have a sense of guilt when I see on television the distressed expressions of people who need help.”²⁹

Some individuals also entered into a volunteer activity with a particular motive and, over time, their motive changed. “The feeling of interviewee no. 21 was that his initial motivation for participation in volunteer activities had been “interest” or a sense of superiority and contentment at helping other people (initial participation motives). However, as time passed, this sense of contentment morphed into a sense of social responsibility.”³⁰

This is where the pastor and the sociologists will always differ. The only proper motivation for volunteering within the church is out of thanks for Christ’s sacrifice. The fact that “even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for

²⁷ Luping, “Motivations for Youth Volunteer Participation,” 176.

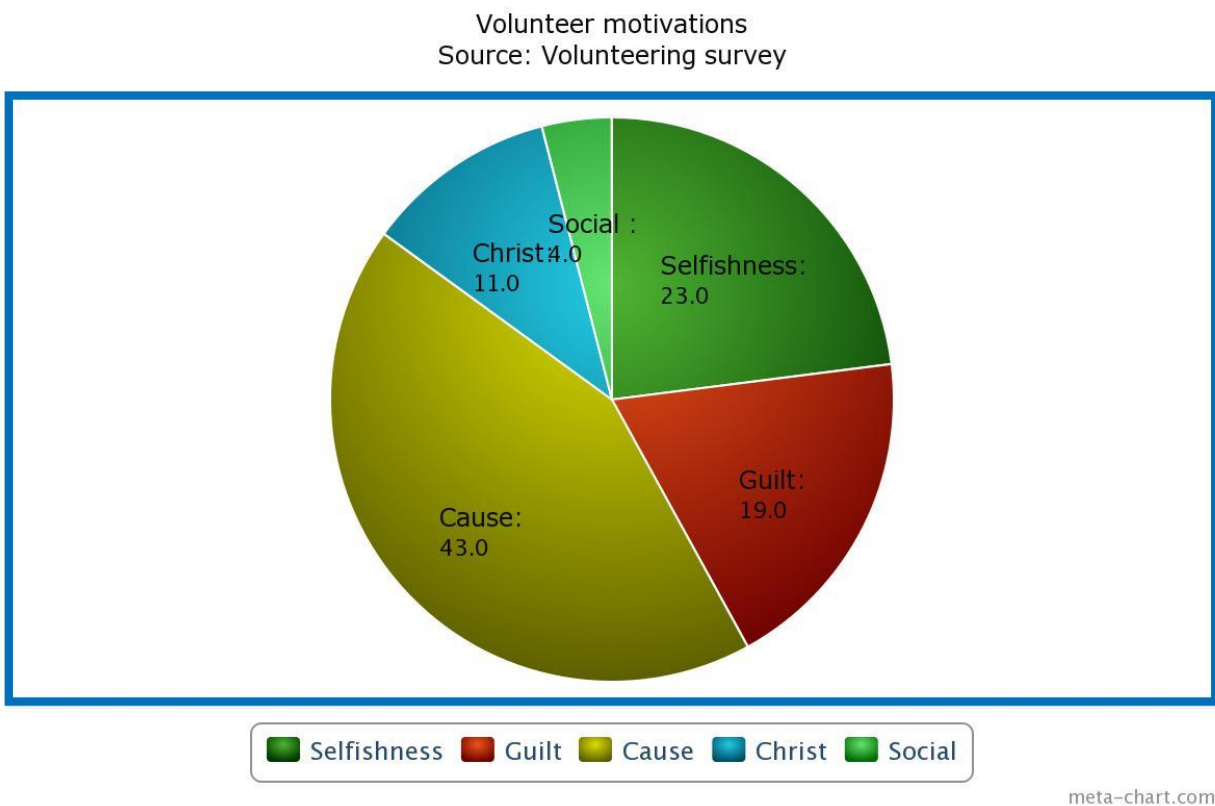
²⁸ Lee and Brudney, “Participation in Formal and Informal Volunteering,” 4.

²⁹ Luping, “Motivations for Youth Volunteer Participation,” 182.

³⁰ Ibid, 182.

many”³¹ is what prompts an individual to give anything. Larry Peers speaks about improper motivations used by congregations to get individuals to volunteer when he speaks about the “Church of Twisted Arms.”³² How often have those exact words been quoted in some of our congregations, “I guess I’ll have to go twist some arms to get this done?”

So did the survey in this essay agree with the sociologists that selfish motives are most often behind volunteerism? Or did these surveyed millennials believe in a specific cause? The majority of responders said they volunteer because they believe in the cause. A good amount listed selfishness or guilt as motivations also. Only a small percentage listed social concerns such as wanting to do work with a friend. Showing thanks to Jesus out of faith was listed also. The graph below illustrates the percentages.



³¹ Mark 10:45

³² PEERS, “In Focus,” 1.

The pastor who sees these responses sees a large amount of work to be done. Yes, there are individuals that recognize faith behind their volunteering. However, nineteen out of one hundred individuals stated that they have been coerced into volunteering in the past.

The pastor will want to work to heal those who have been coerced into volunteering in the past. He will want to use the Law to address those individuals who are volunteering out of selfishness. It is encouraging that eleven out of one hundred responded with the correct motivation and perhaps their example will aid the pastor in the task of equipping others.

Ultimately, this is a matter of the heart that a pastor cannot know unless it is made plain to him by the comments of an individual. The pastor must make the motivation for volunteering clear.

Give three qualities you look for in a volunteer leader

Even as a pastor might not be directly involved in every activity going on in a congregation, he is the point man for the church. Millennials will seek his advice, involvement, leadership, and approval for their volunteer activities. The survey asked this question to see the qualities that millennials admire in their God given pastor, their volunteer leader.

As stated before, sociologists agree that millennials often have personal communication deficiencies because of their dependence on technology. They state that millennials need to have constant praise and that they are high maintenance.³³ In spite of their needs of structure, they desire freedom.³⁴

Perhaps a pastor with a full schedule of obligations cannot spend as much time as he would like helping millennials through volunteer activities. Perhaps new communication styles are a bit difficult for him to implement. Perhaps he has difficulty relating to a younger generation despite his best efforts. Leading millennials to volunteer will take work.

Speaking from a business background concerning millennials in the workplace, one sociologist states, "Firms that communicate effectively are 4.5 times more likely to report high levels of employee engagement versus firms that communicate less effectively."³⁵ Quotes like this show that communication abilities are an important trait for this type of leader.

³³ Hartman and McCambridge, "Optimizing Millennials' Communication Styles," 3.

³⁴ Hicks, *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers*, 270.

³⁵ Hartman and McCambridge, "Optimizing Millennials' Communication Styles," 25.

The survey demonstrates that millennials are looking for leaders who communicate exactly what is needed to be done and how much time is required. They desire feedback. This survey quotation describes the type of leaders millennials want: “A good leader is one that tells you exactly what you have to do.” This individual wants guidance and communication. Another responder also states his view on what a leader’s role is for volunteering: “If you're a pastor, how are you trying to create opportunities to serve?” Leaders communicate. They state what needs to be done. But they don’t just hand out the same jobs year after year. They work to communicate new opportunities as well.

The survey responses noted many good characteristics. The biggest issue was that there were too many characteristics to sort them all into an organized chart. All the responders had their own three qualifications. Many repeated, but there were also some unique statements.

These responses are vital for a pastor to understand how millennials view his leadership style. One response stood out most of all as a reason why an individual stopped volunteering.

Some--not all--called workers seem to have a very entitled attitude towards the congregation: "not my job," "we need volunteers to do that," "no one wanted to do it for free so I guess it's not happening" etc. etc.--even on things that directly impact the ministry of the congregation. This is an extreme turnoff and makes me quite unwilling to volunteer my own time. Do they teach this attitude at MLC? I think quite a few called workers have forgotten that the laypeople wish to serve them and do every bit of the unglamorous work ALSO have day jobs at which they must work faithfully to continue to pump in the offerings that pay their salaries. Being paid fulltime by the congregation does not for some reason excuse you from using your time and talents on a volunteer basis, too, the same as any other Christian ought to do.

This quote is an indicator that millennials pay attention to the actions of their leaders. They set them up to a high standard. Another responder stated this when commenting on a pastor’s leadership qualities: “I do NOT like to have a meeting called with no agenda, no plan of action, or worse, have it called off at the last minute because the leader had a better offer for a social engagement. ‘You can still have the meeting, but I just got Packer tickets.’” Pastors lead by example.

The pastor is a leader of volunteers and that is a difficult task. It is exceedingly difficult to meet all the characteristics that people have listed. Some stated their desire for a leader who was “1.) not afraid to get dirty. 2.) Someone willing to give up their time to help others.”

We see these sort of qualities listed here: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”³⁶

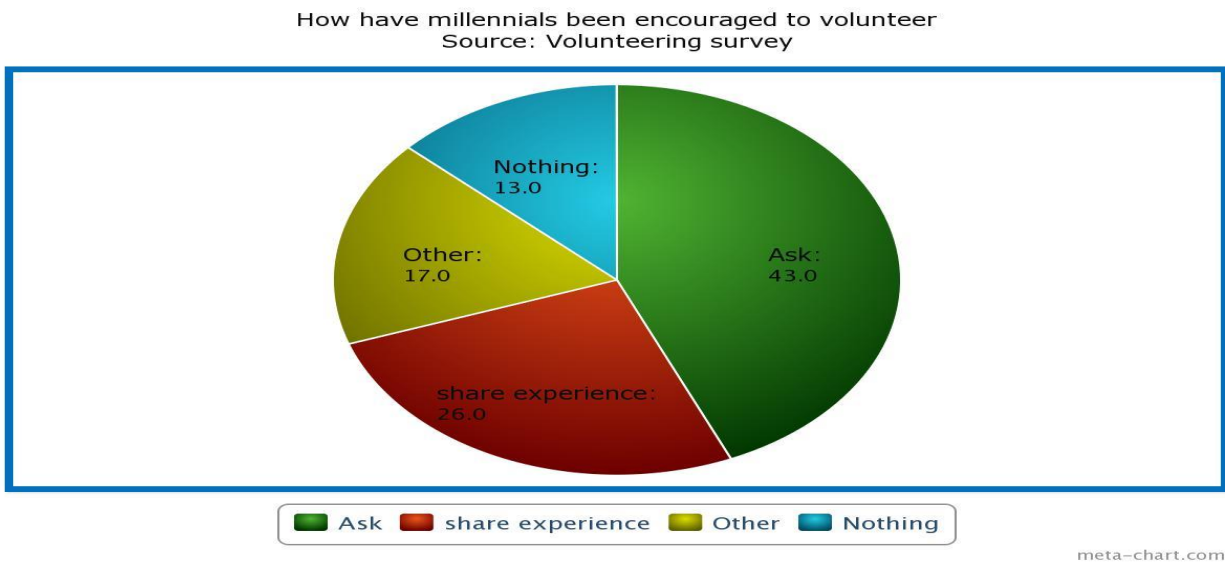
Responders commented on a leader’s preparation. We see this in Titus 1:7: “Since an overseer manages God’s household...”³⁷ Management of God’s house requires work, and millennials see this even if they don’t know the specific Bible passages.

Finally, responders noted that a good leader ought to have knowledge. They need to be able to share that knowledge about what needs to be done with those they are asking to volunteer. This is a major qualification in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 24.

What has an individual done to encourage you to volunteer?

How do millennials want to be encouraged to volunteer? There are those individuals who are prompted by God’s Word and need no outside encouragement. However, there are also those who would not even consider volunteering if not for those giving them gentle pushes along the way.

Out of one hundred millennials, the majority stated that simply asking would be enough to encourage them. Others listed that sharing the experience through a testimonial would be helpful. Some said no one had ever encouraged them to volunteer in the past. The graph will also show a space for other ways that did not fit into a neat category.



³⁶ 1 Peter 5:2-3

³⁷ Titus 1:7

These responses not only make sense but they agree with the sociologists on some points. Garfield agrees with the idea of sharing experiences encourages people to volunteer when he states that the church wants people to see that “we are all in this together.”³⁸ Guldalian suggests that asking can be a simple and effective approach. “Ask your Millennials to assist in choosing relevant outreach and in leading the cause.”³⁹ In that same article, Guldalian also offers this bit of advice: “Get on their turf. Show you value your relationship by showing up to their events.”⁴⁰

It is obvious that the pastor plays a role in these encouragements. Yes, other people can ask for volunteers. Yes, it is even more valuable if church members offer testimonials about how fun it can be to teach Sunday school. But the pastor is a leader. When asked what encouraged the individual to volunteer, one millennial responded, “Contact from pastor made me.” Another stated, “Pastor (name withheld for essay) asked me a few years back to teach Sunday School. Then, the vicar asked if I would be teaching again in the next year and told me that I did a great job so I wanted to continue.”

One response to the survey stood out as an example of how simple some millennials view this question. “By just asking! In the past I've had free time, and I think volunteering is great. You miss 100% of the shots you never take, and just going out and asking in an encouraging way is a good way to get those around you to participate.”

How many millennials are sitting in our congregations just waiting to be asked to volunteer? Perhaps they are too shy? Perhaps they don't know how their talents can benefit the church? There is room for growth here. When the pastor makes these personal requests it is important to make them just that: personal. These should not just be general calls for help. Volunteering should not simply be putting a warm body into a position. The skills asked for should be specific as well as the demands of the job.⁴¹

Thirteen out of one hundred individuals responded that they did not receive encouragement to volunteer. Perhaps this is not true in every case. However, no leader would desire to leave his volunteers without encouragement.

³⁸ Garfield, “A New Approach to Recruiting Volunteers.pdf.”

³⁹ Guldalian, “The Millennials,” 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁴¹ Lee and Brudney, “Participation in Formal and Informal Volunteering,” 166.

Do you feel appreciated when you have volunteered?

Many of the millennials responding to the survey seemed to have a negative feeling towards the amount of appreciation they received for volunteering. Since millennials, according to sociologists, “crave feedback and praise,”⁴² it may not be a good thing to leave them without that feedback. Millennials are searching for significance. “A pastor directly provides such value when he demonstrates appreciation for the tasks completed.”⁴³

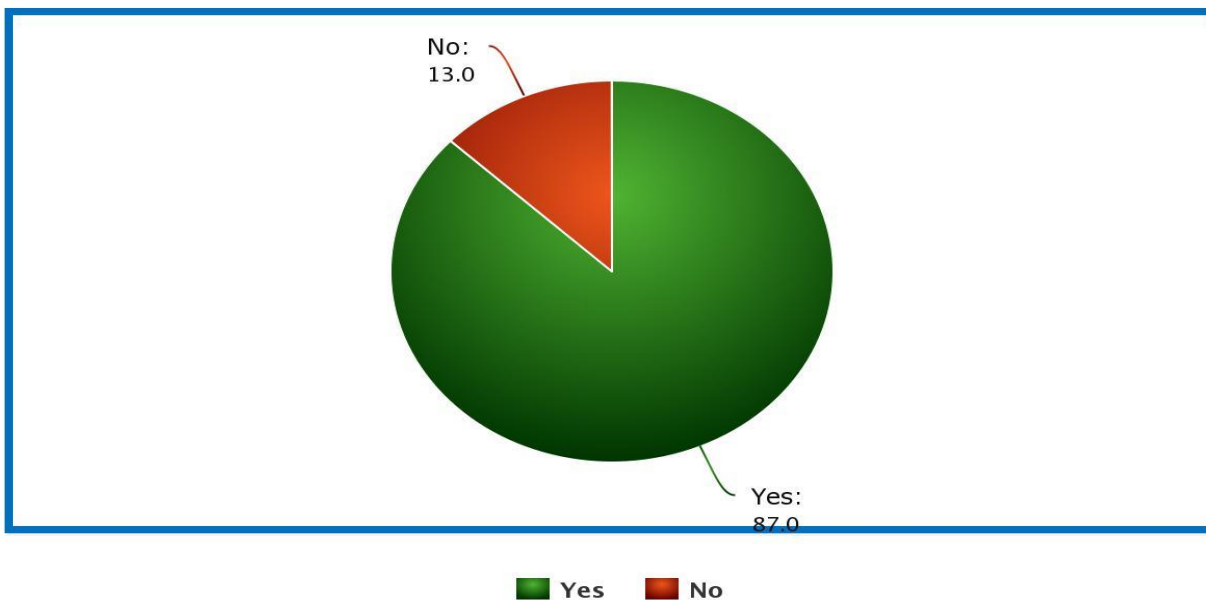
The results of this survey seem to indicate that pastors are doing well in this category. Eighty-seven percent of individuals answered that they feel appreciated when they volunteer. Thirteen percent indicated that they did not feel appreciated. The graph below illustrates the responses. Now, perhaps the appreciation is coming from other church members. Once again, though, a pastor fosters this idea of appreciation in the congregation by leading by example.

One can imagine an individual asking their friend who volunteers, “What is that pastor like? Does he help you out with your work?” Every pastor would hope that his members could give a positive report when these questions come up. That type of response can happen by showing appreciation.

⁴² Hartman and McCambridge, “Optimizing Millennials’ Communication Styles,” 24.

⁴³ J. B. Rodell, “Finding Meaning through Volunteering: Why Do Employees Volunteer and What Does It Mean for Their Jobs?,” *Academy of Management Journal* 56, no. 5 (October 1, 2013): 1275.

Do you feel appreciated when you volunteer?
Source: Volunteering survey



meta-chart.com

While this chart seems to demonstrate that this is an area of success for congregations, thirteen out of one hundred is still a high amount of individuals feeling unappreciated.

Yet, there is another side to this question. Do millennials need constant praise for volunteering? Here is an opportunity for a pastor to teach that millennials serve because they love the Lord and not because they are expecting praise from human beings. "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."⁴⁴

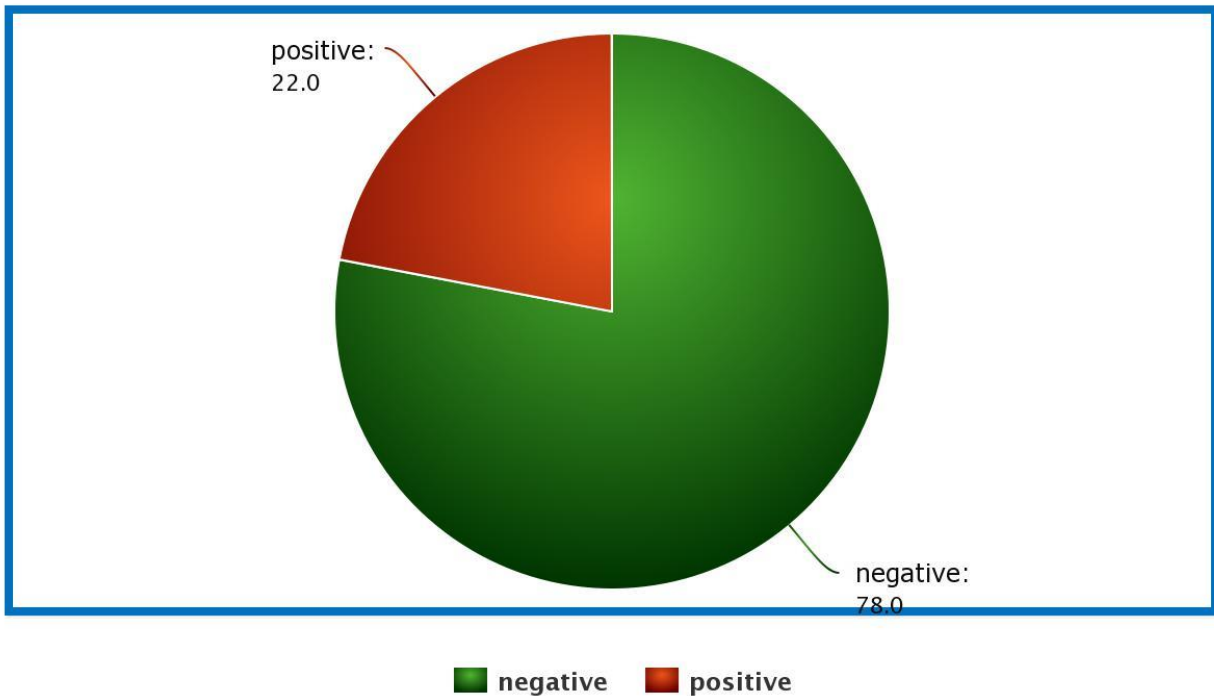
How do you feel about the amount of people your age volunteering at your church?

It isn't enough to have sociologists state that millennials are not volunteering. Millennials themselves have the best view on this question because their friends, siblings, and relatives are generally millennials as well. They know what people their age are doing. Millennials responded to this question by stating that they are not pleased with the amount of participation in their congregations. The graph below illustrates the responses.

⁴⁴ Matthew 6:3,4

Attitudes towards amount of millennials volunteering at your church

Source: Volunteering survey



meta-chart.com

The survey has noted that millennials want to accomplish great things and desire to volunteer. Yet sociologists state that volunteer rates reach their peak after middle age.⁴⁵ Why do millennials say that they want to volunteer and then answer the survey that they are not happy with the amount of millennials volunteering in their congregations? There could be a few answers. Some responders to the survey noted, “There aren't too many. But there also aren't too many people my age that even attend church, or many my age have families/young kids, so that makes it much harder for them (I'm single/no kids).” Perhaps there are just not enough millennials in the congregations to make a dent? Another millennial responded, “It's always the same ones. Sometimes I think they get burnt out. And I think the ones that don't volunteer feel like they would like to help but because the other people always do it, they don't feel qualified or not needed.” Yet another millennial offered this explanation, “It seems there is the thought that ‘Oh, well the older people will take care of that’ or ‘I'm too busy to do that’.”

Whatever the reason is for these feelings, the survey responders felt displeasure. This quote says it best how badly some millennials feel: “I feel helpless. I am saddened by the number

⁴⁵ Lee and Brudney, “Participation in Formal and Informal Volunteering,” 169.

of people with talents who cannot find a place, or no place is made for them.” One more quote from a responder to the survey proves the necessity of the topic, “I feel like more encouragement to involve them in volunteering is needed.” Think of all the individuals that this is affecting. The millennials surveyed are open to volunteering and want the church to involve their age group. Those that are volunteering are asking for more individuals their age to help. Can you imagine how it feels to be that one millennial serving on a board where everyone else is thirty or forty years older than him? This individual would certainly feel awkward and alone.

Other Responses

Due to the fact that individuals seemed to be energized by this topic, the author wanted to give them an opportunity to state anything else that would pertain to the topic. Some of the responses did not fit in any other category, yet, they were valuable.

One responder stated, “I became VERY burned out at several of our congregations.” This fact goes along with the negativity towards the amount of millennials volunteering. If you are one of the millennials that is actually participating, the lack of others your age helping out can be very discouraging.

Another responder provided this point of insight: “If it's merely something organized around the latest synod stewardship program, you won't really get people of any age interested.” This clearly tells pastors that they need to reconsider how they are encouraging millennials because the premade stewardship programs are no longer functioning the way they were intended.

The responders made their points quite clear. There are millennials who volunteer. There are millennials who need encouragement. The pastor is an individual who can encourage this type of behavior. The responders to the survey agree with this when they say that their pastor encouraged them to get involved in Sunday School. They agree with this fact when they state that the reason for their lack of volunteering is because of lack of communication on the part of the pastor. Another pastor did this according to a responder: “my pastor asked me if I would be willing to stand for election to the church council.” Another millennial wrote that his volunteer canvassing experience was better because, “Pastor went along with my team.” Millennials want their pastor's encouragement to volunteer.

Practical Pastoral Encouragements

A pastor who reads the information gathered above about millennials can easily get discouraged. Where does one start? It is easy to see these issues in black and white when millennials write about them in a survey. However, they may not always voice their concerns in the church. So how does a pastor know what millennials need to hear and how does a pastor effectively encourage millennials to volunteer?

It is important for a pastor to start with an analysis of his own position before he goes into this deeper. Yes, his position is to preach the Word. Yes, his position is to administer the sacraments. However, it is good for a pastor to see that he has a role to equip all the saints to do the work of the ministry. In this case, this is a pastor equipping millennials. This is lacking as evident by the survey. When speaking about what a pastor did to encourage a millennial volunteer, an individual responded, “Nothing.”

A good place to start for this equipping is 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Why do millennials need to be equipped for service? They have gifts for service. “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”⁴⁶

God’s Word makes it clear that pastors are some of individuals responsible for this equipping. “Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”⁴⁷

How does a pastor do this work of equipping? He uses the Word. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”⁴⁸ For that reason, the final portion of this paper concerns the pastor’s use of the Word concerned with individual millennial volunteer habits. It will explore how a pastor can help millennials to be aware of their vocation from God. Finally, it will provide examples from Scripture to give millennials real individuals as examples of service.

Pastoral Response To Millennial Volunteer Habits

As this researcher ponders the results of the survey, it becomes clear that a pastoral response is necessary for the millennials who responded. Law and Gospel can be applied to the different attitudes that were exhibited.

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:11

⁴⁷ Ephesians 4:12

⁴⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16,17

Faith in Christ naturally leads the millennial to serve his congregation. Paul speaks about this when he says, “Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”⁴⁹ Again Paul says, “Serve one another humbly in love.”⁵⁰

The idea of a selfish Christian ought to be oxymoronic. While examining the survey, some millennials exhibited selfish traits. This coincided with sociological characteristics. It is sad, but the old man inside of each human being leads all to be selfish at times. The Christian wants to drown out that old man with the Word, and the pastor is in an excellent position to accomplish that.

For the individual that needs selfishness and lack of volunteering confronted, the pastor could call their attention to Matthew chapter 25.

Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’⁵¹

Jesus speaks about obeying Him also in John chapter 14. “Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”⁵² What was Jesus’ teaching? Among other things, it was to serve. The whole reason for Christ coming into the world was to serve. Christians expect to live a life that reflects Him. This means service will be their first inclination. Christians are co-priests for God’s Church sharing the serving work of Jesus with others.

For the student of Scripture, these verses are familiar. How does one gain the opportunity to bring such truths to the heart of individual millennials who are struggling with this issue? Perhaps this simply comes out in a sermon at some point. Perhaps it arrives in a Bible study. Stevens suggests that some of this instruction can take place at retreats for equipping held by the

⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:14

⁵⁰ Galatians 5:13

⁵¹ Matthew 25:41-43

⁵² John 14:24

pastor. This could be a once-a-year retreat focused on work and vocation or a relationship building retreat.⁵³

No matter where the instruction takes place, a pastor must be approachable and be willing to spend time with millennials. A practical example is the millennial who comes to church and does not do anything with the church outside of the one hour a week worship service. The pastor has invited him repeatedly, but he still continues to stay away. After asking some questions about the individual, the pastor finds out that he, in the words of the survey, “likes to sit around and play on my computer or watch tv until something needing my attention comes up.”

As a pastor speaks with an individual millennial about volunteering, there are those trigger points in the conversation that seem to cause conflict. Picture the pastor asking the individual to volunteer and each time he responds, “I have this or that going on.” This is that elephant in the room that everyone feels but doesn’t readily desire to talk about. A pastor cannot ignore this conflict. “He cannot ignore the feelings that are felt and not said.”⁵⁴ Rather, ask the why an individual doesn’t volunteer. This is speaking the truth in love and getting at the underlying issue of poor stewardship of time and talents.

However, because the sociologists indicated that millennials are craving encouragement, perhaps this indicates that the larger trend is leaning towards individuals that actually do desire to volunteer. They want to be part of things; however, they just need a nudge or a spot for them.

This type of equipping needs to start with the Gospel. One verse that is used for financial stewardship can be profitably applied to millennial volunteering. The only thing that changes hearts and selfishness is Christ and faith in Him. For this, the pastor can present his millennials with, “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work, we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”⁵⁵

These verses combat the lack of biblical knowledge that millennials seem to have.⁵⁶ These verses deal with the fact that millennials don’t trust institutions because “they may not

⁵³ R. Paul Stevens, *Liberating the Laity: Equipping All the Saints for Ministry* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 58.

⁵⁴ Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001), 57.

⁵⁵ Acts 20:35

⁵⁶ Boehme, “THE CHURCH AND THE CULTURE OF THE MILLENNIALS—THE BEST OR WORST OF TIMES?,” 10.

be opposed to hearing about Jesus. And so as Christians, “we should focus on introducing them to Jesus Christ first.”⁵⁷ These verses help them know exactly who their Savior is and how he lived. They change attitudes and heal the guilt that they perhaps had in the past over their poor volunteering attitudes.

Since the survey indicated the same as the sociological data, “that one in four are narcissistic, exhibiting improper self-love, vanity and self-centeredness,”⁵⁸ a pastor needs to address these attitudes and offer Scripture to powerfully change them. Once again, the setting where this will be displayed can be in a Bible study. One church, St. Paul’s in North Mankato, MN, uses a verse-of-the-month format, where the ministers preach once a month on a service orientated passage.

But, more than in the public setting, this can come out best when the pastor does what millennials asked for in the survey: ask them privately to volunteer. Bill Hybels speaks to this private and intimate application of Gospel motivation when he states that he looks for individuals that he has known for a long time. There is an established relationship before the asking takes place. He advocates having lunch or a private discussion to motivate and ask.⁵⁹ Here would be an opportunity to share these passages at a time when a millennial would listen.

One of the other issues that arose in the survey was lack of proper motivation. Millennials felt guilty or twisted into volunteering. Using many Gospel passages allows the Spirit to work proper motivation. The new man doesn’t need to have his arms twisted.

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.⁶⁰

The Gospel teaches us to say no to selfishness. It teaches us to be eager to do what is good, not to do it grudgingly or simply to appease other individuals, but to do it because of our salvation in Jesus.

⁵⁷ Guldalian, “The Millennials,” 4.

⁵⁸ Boehme, “THE CHURCH AND THE CULTURE OF THE MILLENNIALS—THE BEST OR WORST OF TIMES?,” 7.

⁵⁹ Bill Hybels, *The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing the Power of Everybody* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2004), 106.

⁶⁰ Titus 2:11-14

One quotation stood out as describing the pastor's role towards millennials. The pastor is "the physician reducing the fracture, the fisherman mending the net, the stonemason rebuilding the wall, the potter shaping the clay, the model parent and the one who fits all the pieces together without forcing them."⁶¹ As the pastor examines the analysis of the survey of millennials, he cannot help but see that there are fractures in spirit that need to be tended. There are walls that need to be broken down and clay that needs to be molded. Scripture is the starting point for each of those needs. God has provided leaders with that as the tool to give Law and Gospel, when appropriate, to millennials that need to hear it.

The Christian Millennial's Vocation

One of the largest opportunities to respond to millennials based on the survey centers around the idea that all Christians have vocations from God. They are co-priests. Millennials are included in this.

Many millennials responded that they would volunteer everywhere but the church. Others stated that they do not find fulfillment in their daily work positions. Some stated that their free time was usually not productive.

The congregation provides a place for Christians to function as priests in volunteer work. The work of the congregation certainly can be fulfilling. Free time can be relaxing and still useful within the congregation. The essay now continues by examining how the pastor, as leader, can equip millennials to see how their vocation in the congregation can be fulfilling.

Imagine for a moment a millennial speaking to a pastor saying, "Pastor, I already volunteer at D.A.R.E, I work at the hospital, and I volunteer at the homeless shelter, I don't have time to do anything else." It is certain that the pastor will likely respond how great it is that this young individual is serving his community. It is wonderful that Christians do these things outside of their church as these services give them an opportunity to witness about Christ. However, the pastor will want to show them the uniqueness of church work because an individual like this has talents that can be used in the congregation and they and others would benefit from this type of participation.

While the primary purpose for volunteering at the animal shelter may be to take care of the dogs, the primary purpose for church work is to teach the Gospel to members and non-members. Heiges notes, "The vast majority of statements in the New Testament concerning work

⁶¹ Stevens, *Liberating the Laity*, 169.

unmistakably refer to work in the church or of the church ministering to the household of believers and bringing others into that household.”⁶²

God gives many reasons for service in the congregation. God tells His people “to serve one another in love.”⁶³ God states also to “teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.”⁶⁴ God gives the most basic reason as to why he extends this calling and privilege to his people: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”⁶⁵

Christians want to do these things in every part of their lives. However, it is a good reminder for those needing encouragement in volunteering that all life includes the life that they have in the congregation.

Volunteering at church is different than volunteering elsewhere, not worse, not better, just different in a good way. Christians have God’s promised blessing upon their work, they gain love and fellowship with other Christians, and they get to fulfill their vocation as priests of God. Yes, they can accomplish this elsewhere. But the congregation offers this in direct contact with God’s Word and an organization that matches God’s purpose for life as well.

How does a pastor relate that type of information to his millennials? Perhaps this happens at a leadership training seminar, during a sermon, Bible class, or individual conversation. But the information needs to be disseminated to encourage millennials to volunteer. Mallory writes about the difficulty of sharing this information in a productive way. The congregation “needed more than a biblical ‘brain dump’ of facts about and descriptions of spiritual gifts. I wanted them to see and feel the impact of the gifts in people’s lives.”⁶⁶ In the survey, millennials responded that hearing a testimonial would be a good way to motivate them to volunteer. Perhaps a pastor can speak openly about all the fulfillment he has found working with the church.

For those individuals who are not finding fulfillment in their occupations, the pastor plays a role as well. Millennials stated that the reason they often did not find fulfillment in their daily work was because they could not use their particular gifts. They simply didn’t like their jobs.

⁶² Donald R. Heiges, *The Christian’s Calling*, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 39. Heiges, *The Christian’s Calling*, 74.

⁶³ Galatians 5:13

⁶⁴ Colossians 3:16

⁶⁵ 1 Peter 2:9

⁶⁶ Mallory, *The Equipping Church*, 87.

One response of a pastor could very correctly be to tell that millennial to be thankful to have a job and “rejoice in the Lord always.”⁶⁷

A more positive approach could be to help them find their vocation in volunteering with the church. This can be done by matching specific talents to specific tasks in the congregation. Guldalian states that since millennials are great leaders and idea individuals, it is good to “allow young people to lead and to assist in choosing relative outreach leading the cause.”⁶⁸ Perhaps this takes place when a millennial comes up with his own way to start a study group. Or a pastor could know that a millennial has a talent for meeting new people so he encourages him to be on the outreach board. Imagine the fulfillment that God provides to a millennial who may feel lost waiting on tables or working a job that they never intended to do after college. They can be leaders in the congregation, changing lives by God’s grace.

Since some millennials struggle with time management, as did the responder to the survey who was spending all free time with video games and Facebook, the pastor can play a role in equipping them to volunteer using time productively. The responders to the survey were attempting to strike a balance between business at work, home, and church. The pastor discovers here an opportunity to equip and mentor. “God works through faithful mentoring, producing unexpected and even glorious results.”⁶⁹ The pastor can exhibit these things in his very own life so that millennials see them and emulate them.

Millennials have many different vocations. They have a vocation to family, work, nation, and church. The pastor is in a unique position to equip millennials to succeed in volunteering as they work their vocation in the congregation.

Examples From Scripture To Follow

As much as the pastor can find sociological data regarding millennials to help him relate to this generation, the best place to go to equip millennials is the Bible itself. God’s Word provides many examples of individuals who served God’s people. The final part of this paper investigates examples because it is a well-known fact that millennials respond to stories.

⁶⁷ Phillipians 4:4

⁶⁸ Guldalian, “The Millennials,” 7.

⁶⁹ Quentin J. Schultze, *Here I Am: Now What on Earth Should I Be Doing?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 78.

“Millennials do not have great Biblical knowledge,”⁷⁰ so teaching them these examples can motivate and increase head and heart knowledge at the same time. What follows is the essayist’s idea for a Bible study covering six weeks. A pastor could use many different accounts to accomplish the task, however, this list seemed to fit: Joseph, Joshua directs the tribes, Ruth, Judah’s remnant returns, Jesus calls the disciples, and Paul encourages the Corinthians.

As one investigates the Old Testament for examples of service, Joseph comes to the forefront as an example of a young individual whom God equipped to serve His people.

How does the account of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-50 relate to millennials? The first point of comparison is his age. The account of his life in these chapters spans all of his young years, tending flocks at the age of 17 and serving Pharaoh through his 30s. This is a direct comparison with the millennials specified in the survey.

Another point of comparison is Joseph’s relationship with his father. Boehme stated that, “Relationships between older adults and Millennial teens/emerging adults are extremely important for faith formation and retention.”⁷¹ As much sin as was involved in the relationship between Joseph and Jacob, the fact remains that Jacob would have taught his sons about the Promise and brought them up in the faith. How important is this for millennials to have such a relationship with their elders as well?

As one explores the relationship between Jacob and Joseph further, it draws more comparisons to the millennials of today. Millennials need constant feedback. They are narcissistic. “They tend towards a celebrity culture, exhibiting a desire for accolades based on little actual achievement.”⁷² Did youthful Joseph exhibit these qualities? He most certainly did. Jacob gave Joseph his special coat. Joseph arrogantly told his brothers that he would be in charge without humbleness. Joseph bragged about his blessed position even though he had yet to accomplish anything besides being his father’s favorite.

God uses all types of individuals to serve his church. In spite of all the negative characteristics and sin involved with Joseph, God would use him. For the millennial who doesn’t feel fulfilled in their life, imagine for a moment how fulfilled Joseph felt in his position in jail. He was the head of Potiphar’s household and yet Potiphar’s wife had him arrested. Yet, in jail,

⁷⁰ Boehme, “THE CHURCH AND THE CULTURE OF THE MILLENNIALS—THE BEST OR WORST OF TIMES?,” 4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

⁷² Ibid., 7.

“the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.”⁷³ God provided fulfillment for Joseph even in a difficult situation. Speaking of fulfillment for Joseph, he saved all of Egypt and God’s people during a terrible famine. A whole nation of individuals was thankful for his service.

Millennials that responded to the survey noted that they were often too busy to volunteer for service in the congregation. Joseph knew a bit about being busy. “So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.”⁷⁴ Yet, he still took time to care for small Israel because he loved his family and believed in the promise.

Think of all the ways that this one account applies to the volunteer life of a millennial. It answers the issue of time management and it answers the issue of selfishness. It motivates the pastor to see that God uses young people to accomplish great things. It demonstrates to the millennial that even when their daily life doesn’t seem so fulfilling, they have a calling and role to play for God in this world.

The account of Joshua directing the tribes in Joshua chapter 1 shows an excellent example of leadership and can apply to millennials. Joshua’s first order without Moses in charge is quite the example of leadership. Millennials in the survey indicated that they desired a pastoral leader who is able to teach, let them know what needed to be done, and is a good communicator.

Joshua hears the Word of God and he immediately responds with clear instruction. “So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: ‘Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready.’ Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.”⁷⁵ Joshua’s instruction followed God’s commands. He let his people know exactly what he needed.

Millennials responded to the survey stating that they wanted a leader who wasn’t afraid to work with them. Joshua fought alongside Israel’s men. He himself was sent into Canaan as a spy. The study of this section of Scripture will be beneficial for the pastor leader as well as millennials because of Joshua’s leadership skills.

⁷³ Genesis 39:22

⁷⁴ Genesis 41:41

⁷⁵ Joshua 1:10-11

Also, Joshua used the correct motivation when he instructed the Trans-Jordan tribes: “The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.”⁷⁶ God blessing them first and giving these individuals faith was the motivation. That motivation is the same that a pastor can use and the same motivation in the hearts of millennial Christians.

For the millennial who is struggling with time management or selfishness, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh can be an application point. They could have stayed on the other side of the Jordan. They could have enjoyed their lives without issue. However, they followed the command of God and responded, “Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.”⁷⁷

Another example to look at is Ruth. Once again, the reader finds a connection in age. Ruth was a young woman at the beginning of her book in the Bible. Her husband had passed away and she was left alone with her deceased husband’s mother. Naomi, the mother, was also a widow. It was a terrible situation for a young woman. Her life had been turned upside down. Naomi urged Ruth to return to her own people, to nonbelievers. Yet Ruth decided to remain with her mother-in-law and uttered this amazing phrase, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.”⁷⁸

Ruth could have given in to selfish motivation, yet she stayed on with her mother-in-law because she loved her and wanted to be of service to her. The life of Ruth ended up being a great triumph for God’s plan of Salvation because she became the mother of Obed, David’s grandfather. God used a young woman from outside the nation of Israel to accomplish his purposes. If Ruth did not serve Naomi in this way, she would have missed out on being part of God’s salvation story.

What encouragement can a pastor give to millennials from this account? Even when a millennial does not feel fulfilled or does not feel as though he is part of the church because he is different, God still has a plan and desires to use him. Encourage the millennial to see God’s plan for his life and not just his own plan. Service can also be a productive way to handle stress and grief in this sinful world, something Ruth certainly understood after losing her husband.

⁷⁶ Joshua 1:13

⁷⁷ Joshua 1:16

⁷⁸ Ruth 1:16-17

A fourth account in the Bible is one that spread over many years. The process of Judah being carried off into exile to Babylon followed by the return of the remnant had an impact upon the mindset of the Jewish people. The process of the return covers different books in the Bible so a study would have to be made of selected verses. For this study, the pastor could center his millennials around portions of Nehemiah.

Why would the remnant returning be applicable to millennials? Consider for a moment the attitude of God's people carried off into Babylon. They were broken. They were discouraged. The city of Jerusalem was their heritage. Even as they were allowed to return, they were hearing words like this from their neighbors who said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices...?"⁷⁹ Millennials today live in a discouraging climate. Some feel as though they don't accomplish much in their daily jobs. They have grand desires, but, as mentioned earlier in the essay, they get an attitude of helplessness when they don't accomplish what they set out to do. These feelings go hand in hand with those of the Jews in exile.

Yet what happened for the remnant? They prayed to God and "rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart."⁸⁰ As for busy schedules of the millennial generation, look at the remnant. They came back and the first major project they undertook was rebuilding the wall. This was more important than even their activities at home. They put their hearts into that work. Millennials can learn from that.

Also, Nehemiah shows the proper motivation to millennials who in the survey responded that they were motivated to volunteer by guilt. When the Israelites confessed their sins to God, they acknowledged God's grace to them at every step. They said to God, "You have kept your promise because you are righteous."⁸¹ God was gracious to them in Egypt, wandering through the desert, during the days of their great kings, in exile and now in their return. God has provided that same grace through His Son Jesus to all people, even millennials. That grace is a powerful motivator.

Yet another example from the Word is Jesus calling his disciples. In Luke chapter 5, the reader finds Jesus teaching to a large crowd. Jesus wants assistance from an unlikely source. He

⁷⁹ Nehemiah 4:2

⁸⁰ Nehemiah 4:6

⁸¹ Nehemiah 9:8

goes to men that were not among the group of individuals listening to Him. Jesus borrows Peter's boat, demonstrates His power, and calls Peter to service.

How does this account apply to millennials and their volunteer service? Consider these words, "He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets."⁸² Peter and the others were busy. They had schedules. Fishing was their livelihood. Millennials in congregations may have to work on Sundays after church. According to the survey their schedules are packed with activity. Yet Jesus prompted to leave that busy work to carve out time for Jesus.

Why were the disciples so willing to leave their work behind? "They caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break."⁸³ Jesus demonstrated his power to them. Jesus does that same thing for us in His Word every time we read it. The Holy Spirit convinces millennials that Christ is the powerful God who served them first and thus they can respond with acts of love. Perhaps this is also an opportunity for a pastor to speak about the amazing works that God has done in his life with the church to encourage millennials further. The pastor can also use this account to demonstrate that all individuals have a place in service at God's church. A millennial may feel, as indicated in the survey, that their job in life isn't all that important. Yet in God's church, fisherman were important. Tax collectors were important. All have their role.

Finally, Paul's words in 2nd Corinthians chapter 9 can be useful for millennials also. While Paul is speaking about money in this section, his words can be applied to generous service in general also. Paul commends the Corinthians for their service to the church at large. Since the survey indicated that there is a lack of encouragement and appreciation for millennial volunteers, there is first an encouragement for the pastor here.

Millennials in the survey also indicated that they had to work many hours just to pay their bills so that there was no time for volunteering. Student loan debt and lack of a high paying job added to these frustrations in sociological studies earlier mentioned. The pastor can respond to these with this: "God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."⁸⁴ God will provide the good works that He desires of us. He will provide for millennials so that they can accomplish their vocations in the manner He desires.

⁸² Luke 5:2

⁸³ Luke 5:6

⁸⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:8

Once again, as learned helplessness and a negative attitude seemed to permeate the survey, Paul's words can be encouragement: "You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."⁸⁵ God is not going to leave millennials without fulfillment and without important vocation in the church. If a millennial cannot find fulfillment in the work place, perhaps he can see fulfillment in encouraging others to be thankful to God as this verse demonstrates.

The survey demonstrates that volunteering is difficult because of money, time, selfishness, and lack of fulfillment. There is an answer to these issues in these verses. "This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."⁸⁶ Some millennials noted that they simply needed to be asked to help out more in the survey. Perhaps a pastor can share this account to tell them there is important work for you in the church. This work overflows and causes others to give thanks to God. That provides motive, fulfillment, and encouragement.

There are many other examples from Scripture that a pastor could use to equip and encourage millennials. It is important, however, to give them a voice. Sit down with them. Let them speak to the survey. Are the issues portrayed in the survey some of the issues that millennials in your congregation are encountering? If they are, a proposed Bible study follows according to the accounts mentioned above. It can be used in small groups over a few weeks or in a day-long retreat. These accounts are valuable for the pastor's leadership as well as the millennial's service. Encourage their thoughts and discussion. Perhaps a first step can be millennials giving voice to their thoughts on volunteering to the pastor. Ask some of the questions in the survey to your own people. Then use God's Word to address their specific concerns. Day by day, God's Word will work on the situation and encourage millennials to change or strengthen volunteer habits.

⁸⁵ 2 Corinthians 9:11

⁸⁶ 2 Corinthians 9:12

A New Generation Of Servants



A Study of Six Bible Accounts to Equip Millennials for Works of Service

Heavenly Father, we are about to open Your Book and consider how we can best serve You in this world. Bless us and equip us as we seek to live our lives for You and Your Church. Keep our hearts focused on Jesus and His life of humble service and His innocent death as the only way for us to be in a right relationship serving You. In Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN

A Young Man Serves His People

Read Genesis 37:1-11

- What personality traits does Joseph exhibit here?
- How do these traits compare to what sociologists say about the millennial generation?

“They tend towards a celebrity culture, exhibiting a desire for accolades based on little actual achievement.” (Boehme – “The Church and the Culture of the Millennials”)
- Do you agree with this statement? If so, how does this impact our volunteering?

Read Genesis 41

- How do you think Joseph felt as he is sitting in jail after having dreams with high aspirations?
- In spite of these sinful traits of Joseph, for what amazing purpose did God use Joseph?
- Do you feel fulfilled in your life? What are some ways that God provides fulfillment for you? Do you think that fulfillment could come from work in your congregation?
- Read again 41:57. Do you think that Joseph was a busy man? What can his service under those conditions teach us about our service also?

Read Genesis 45:8 – Why did Joseph seek to serve? Why do we?

A New Leader For Israel

Read Joshua 1:10-18

- The Trans-Jordan tribes could have stayed on their side of the Jordan river and not participated in the attack on Canaan. Would it have been selfish of them to want to stay with their families and take care of their own business?
- In this section we see a great leader in Joshua. What characteristics of great leadership do you see in him?
- If you were to volunteer for a project at church, what characteristics would you want to see in the leader of that activity?
- When we volunteer for service in the church what are some reasons (right or wrong) that we do this?
- Read again V.13 – What was the reason or motivation for these men to want to fight?
- What does that say about the proper motivation for us to serve others through our churches?

A Young Woman Serves Her Family

Read Ruth Chapter 1

- Can you list some of the terrible things that happened to Ruth in this section?
- What was Ruth's response after all of this?
- Read again Ruth 1:16-17. What was the main reason Ruth wanted to go with Naomi?
- How could have Ruth responded in a negative way to the events that happened?
- Take a look at Ruth 4:22. How did God use Ruth for service in his kingdom?
- When terrible things happen to us in our lives, what do we tend to do?
- Are there any encouragements that we can take from this account for our lives as servants?
- As we see how God used Ruth for service, is there assurance there for us as well?

The Remnant Returns

(Pastor provides background to the remnant returning)

Read Nehemiah 4:2

- **You can easily see how helpless the returning Jews could have felt. The nations around them laughed at their inability to rebuild Jerusalem.**
- **Do you see a connection between the feeling of these returning Jews and the feeling of millennials today? What is that?**

Read Nehemiah 4:6

- **What was the response of these Jews after all the heartbreak and all the ridicule?**
- **How does this example resonate with your volunteer attitudes as people continue to note how “inactive” millennials are in their churches?**

Read Nehemiah 9:8b

- **What motivated these Jews to do the work they were doing with Jerusalem? Was it their own strength? Was it for notoriety?**
- **Connect that to your building up of your own Jerusalem (your congregation) with your service.**
- **Are there specific ways that a pastor could encourage the hearts of millennials in this congregation to serve “with all their heart” like these remaining Jews did?**

Jesus Calls His Disciples

Read Luke 5:1-11

- **At the beginning of this account, what were the fisherman doing while Jesus was teaching?**
- **Does this say something about their priorities? What?**
- **Jesus comes to the busy men and says, “Put out into deep water.” He expected them to follow his command and they do. What does this say about our busy schedules in relationship to our service to God?**
- **Read again verse 8 – What was it that made Peter see that Jesus was the Lord and that they should serve Him?**
- **Is there a connection with us in this also? What has Jesus done that makes us want to serve Him?**
- **What kind of men did Jesus call to serve Him in this section? Does this comfort you in your unique vocation in this congregation? Why?**
- **Read again verse 11 – While Jesus wants us to balance all our vocations properly, is there something to be said about our service to God in the words “left everything” in this verse?**
- **How can we help our friends here at this congregation to see that while they have their own fishing boats in life, they still have a vocation (service) to do in this church?**

Corinthian Generosity

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

- **Focus on verse 8 – What does this verse teach us about our good works?**
- **Can you think of some ways that God has provided for your service in this congregation?**
- **Read again verses 10 and 11. We often can feel as though we have so much on our plates that we don't have any time to give of ourselves. What do these verses have to say about that?**
- **Paul, in these verses, tells the Corinthians that their service and generosity is causing many around the world to praise God. What do you see as benefits of your service in this congregation?**
- **Read again Verse 15 – Why did the Corinthians give the way that they were giving?**
- **Does that verse shed light on why we want to give of our service in this congregation?**
- **One can imagine that the Corinthians felt fulfilled as they gave of themselves and their finances for others. Where do you find your fulfillment? How can we share with our friends the same fulfillment that we receive in our vocations in this congregation?**

Conclusion

The millennial generation is a group of individuals that causes much discussion in today's churches. Usually, the discussion centers around how to get them to come to church. However, those millennials that are in the congregation have specific needs as well.

This group of individuals possesses talents that God has given for use in His Church. While only God can convince an individual and cause them to desire to use their time for Him, pastors certainly can present God's Word and give an opportunity for the Spirit to work. There is a great need for pastors to work at equipping millennials to volunteer.

The sociological data insists that these individuals have spiritual needs for which the pastor can care. The survey that was taken demonstrates the need for Law and Gospel in their lives. Why does a pastor want to address these needs? Of course, he wants all to be saved. But also, in millennials, a pastor has many individuals who have great ideas and who are motivated to make changes. The pastor needs to harness that energy and direct it to the right places within the congregation.

But how does a pastor accomplish this? As stated in the literature review, there is much information regarding the millennial generation. However, there is a lack of material focusing on how to get these millennials to volunteer. This essayist chose to let millennials speak for themselves. While one hundred individuals is not the largest number, the millennials surveyed did provide many insights into the volunteer mindset of the millennial age individual.

One hundred active church going millennials reached out to fill out a survey asking why they do or don't volunteer. That in itself demonstrates that they care about this topic. They responded to the survey. They wanted to let their pastors know what makes them want to volunteer. They wanted to tell their story of why they might not be as active in the church as a pastor would like. Were there cases in the survey where millennials needed to hear the Law because an attitude of selfishness or mismanaging of time prevailed? Yes. However, there was a general attitude of concern and a desire to serve in many of the responses that this essayist encountered. Perhaps the biggest take away is simply that pastors need to communicate with their millennials. Talk to them and see where they are at in their lives. Encourage them to serve. Ask them to serve. Bring the needs of the congregation clearly to them and they will want to serve in thanksgiving for what God has done for them.

How exactly does the pastor do all of this? Each situation will be different. This essayist prays that the enclosed Bible study will be of some assistance. Hopefully this is an opportunity to give voice to a topic that has yet to be fully researched. A pastor's role is to help equip millennials to volunteer. However you choose to go about doing that, be sure to see it as part of your work because millennials are part of God's Church and He has given them to His Church as a gift. Equip them for service and watch God bring abundant blessings from the work that they provide.

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Appendix A – The Survey

What organization or place would you go to if you wanted to volunteer your time?

Why would you choose there to volunteer?

What do you prefer to do with your free time?

What do your neighbors do with their free time?

Do you find fulfillment at your place of work?

Why did you answer the way you did?

People today seem to volunteer less than they have in the past.

Why did you answer the way that you did?

How often do you volunteer anywhere?

What causes people to volunteer their time?

Please give 3 qualities you would look for in a volunteer leader.

Have you had positive volunteer experiences have you had in the past?

What made these experiences positive?

What makes you motivated to volunteer at your church?

What has an individual done for you to encourage you to volunteer?

Where have you volunteered in the past?

Do you feel appreciated when you have volunteered?

How do you feel about the amount of people your age volunteering in your church?