

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Our time to shine

By Dawn Early

I have been asking myself why we seem to be losing Millennials and Gen Z in our churches. For reference, I am of the Generation X era. As for me growing up, church was hit or miss depending on where my mother was playing the piano or if I went with the grandparents. So, church was not a priority.

When my children were growing up, my husband and I got very involved in church, and our children became very involved. They were both saved and they loved going. We had friends who had children the same age as ours, and we raised our children together in the church. Along the way, however, I watched as some fell away, a few stayed, and some have come back to church. But the majority are staying away.

It has really bothered me. So a couple of months back, I decided to ask a question on Facebook: "What is keeping our twenty-to-thirty-year-old believers from attending church?" The responses were overwhelming from all generations. Some posted directly to the post, and others sent private messages.

The answers were very detailed and explained well. Some had been hurt by the church. One had a preacher directly call her out in front of the whole congregation. Some are new parents trying to balance home life and work. One said people act different in church than they do in public. Some suggested church was not a priority anymore. One said the older generation did not like modern changes. The answers just kept coming, and my heart was broken by a lot of the responses.

The question is, "How do we fix this problem?"

We had an open discussion in our Wednesday night service, where I presented all the answers I was given. We had a really deep conversation on how to show Jesus in an instant gratification world.

I think we all can agree that Jesus is always the same, but the world changes daily. We know that looks, money, and power are pushed constantly on social media and reality TV. So how do we draw people into the church?

First, we have to examine ourselves thoroughly and ask God to help us not to be prideful and not to be prejudiced toward those that are different than us. We have to be kind, compassionate, and Christlike, all without becoming worldly. Striving to be more Christlike without becoming "holier than thou" is a difficult balance at times. We have to humble ourselves and allow the Spirit to guide us. Once we get ourselves right, then we can start breaking down those walls dividing us from other generations.

Our Wednesday night group put a lot of thought into how we should approach all generations. There were all types of opinions and suggestions to draw people into the church. We know we cannot compromise ourselves, so what were our solutions to draw people in?

We all agreed on several things: We should stay prayed up, have a good two-to-three-minute testimony, be inviting, be kind and compassionate, stay true to the Word by reading and studying it, and let the Spirit lead us. The way to Jesus is so simple, yet we can make it so complicated. We, the church, are losing ground every day. The church as a whole is declining.

When you study the New Testament and church history, there are many people along the way that stood up knowing their life could end. I ask you to examine yourself to see if you are doing everything in the above paragraph. Most importantly, are

you seeking God's will? We can study the Bible, the apostles, the martyrs, and apologetics all day long, but what good is knowledge if you do not use it? God is infinite. He will always have a way for His Word to be known with or without us. But we should hunger for being an active part of His kingdom on earth.

This is our time to shine for Him. It is literally our responsibility to act when the Holy Spirit leads us to witness. The consequence of inaction is the difference between someone entering heaven or entering hell. Let's shine!

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