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CHRIST-CENTERED LEADERSHIP: THE FORMATION OF MILLENNIALS

A THESIS PROJECT REPORT
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
IN MISSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

BY
SEAN WOOD
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
MAY 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My heart is full towards all those who supported this project: the senior leadership of Tenth Church for their generous and practical support; Ken Shigematsu for his relentless focus on Christ, personal encouragement and willingness to participate in this project; and Betty MacLeod for her support towards my ongoing development and learning as a pastor and church leader. I am indebted to our Tenth Church millennial leaders who participated in this project.

I am grateful for my friend and mentor, Bruxy Cavey, who models Christ-centered leadership in authentic and practical ways. I am thankful for Keturah Duncan, Executive Assistant to the Teaching Pastor, and all The Meeting House millennial leaders who participated in this project.

Thank you to Jason Esposito who guided me through this project with encouragement, patience and wisdom. I am also grateful to Eric Bryant who cast a vision and provided support, leadership, teaching and friendship.

Thanks to the millennial specialists who made an invaluable contribution to this project: Joel Thiessen, John McAuley and Karyn Gordon.

I want to thank my wife Carla. Our time together is cherished, and you have gifted me with what we so deeply value. I am thankful for your unconditional love and support.

Finally, I'm grateful for our two adventurous and beautiful boys, Julian and Declan, who were so supportive and understanding towards Dad.

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ABSTRACT

The problem this project addressed is the perceived lack of Christocentric leadership development among millennials of Canadian churches with over one thousand people in attendance. In response to this problem the researcher explored Christ-centered leadership formation and discipleship in the New Testament and early church. The literature reviewed related to the uniqueness of millennials as it connects to leadership development.

The researcher interviewed two Senior Pastors who are considered highly influential with the millennial cohort. These two leaders have both led effective church congregations in Canada during their respective twenty-plus year tenure serving the same churches. Millennial leaders who are actively serving in roles of influence within these two churches also participated in this project. Fourteen were personally interviewed from the thirty-seven who completed an online survey. Three millennial cohort specialists were also interviewed. One is a respected Canadian sociologist, one is a counselor, author, corporate coach and Canadian media personality, and the third leads Canada's premier sports camp and retreat center.

Canada is an increasingly secularized country in which emerging generations are struggling to be rooted in Christ and effective in discipling and serving those within their sphere of influence. Through the analysis of the results of this project, and leaning on the research discovered, the researcher developed and presents seven principles in Christ-centered leadership for millennials living in Canada.

Dedicated and Grateful

For Carla

INTRODUCTION

Today Canada has a population of 37.59 million people. Over five million are Canadian millennials. A 2018 Pew research study¹ found that only 55% of Canadians identify as Christians with 29% of Canadians being religiously unaffiliated. Of all Canadians, across all religions, 29% say their religion is very important to them. However, 67% of Canadians say it is not necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values. Fewer residents self-identify as Christians in the province of British Columbia when compared to any other major Canadian metropolitan area. Only 41 percent of metro residents are Christian compared to a national average of 67 percent. The forecast is to see a rise in the amount of people who report having no religion. ‘Nones’ (those who have no religion affiliation) could represent between 28.2 percent and 34.6 percent in 2036 (compared with 24.0 percent in 2011).²

The focus for the research was among Canadian evangelical churches with over one thousand people in attendance within large Canadian cities. The immediate ministry setting was Tenth Church in Vancouver, British Columbia. Tenth Church is a growing Christian and Missionary Alliance multi-site church in the Pacific District of British Columbia, Canada, with over fifteen hundred people in attendance. The congregation

¹ Pew Research Center, “5 facts about religion in Canada.” July 1, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/01/5-facts-about-religion-in-canada>.

² “Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions, 2011 to 2036,” Statistics Canada, last modified January 25, 2017, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.htm>.

identifies as five distinct communities meeting in four different venues. The location of the main congregation and about two-thirds of the weekly attendees at the church is in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood of Vancouver, B.C. The vast majority of the residents living in the Mount Pleasant community self-identify as atheists or religious nones (those who do not identify with any religious faith). The number of millennials continuing to leave the church in Canada is rising. The Pew Research Forum analysis on Canada found that in 2013, 29 percent of Canadian millennials were religiously unaffiliated or religious nones. The 2011 Canadian census shows that 23.9 percent of the population was religiously unaffiliated, meaning they identified as either an atheist or agnostic. That is a 16.5 percent increase from the 2001 census.³

Canada is diverse in religious beliefs, ethnicities, and cultural practices. As such, Canada is distinct in the cultural reality that Canadian laws and customs recognize each person as both unique and distinct. In response to diversity, the uprising of the philosophical perspective of pluralism has taken root and flourished. Pluralism is the societal commitment to see different viewpoints and faith orientations coexist while each maintaining diverse identities.

As an example of diversity, in Toronto and Vancouver more than 50 percent of youth between the ages of 15 and 34 identify as belonging to a visible minority.⁴ Also,

³ National Post, "The Canadian millennials choosing God in a secular world." March 1, 2019, Last updated March 4, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/life/the-canadian-millennials-choosing-god-in-a-secular-world>.

⁴ Reginald W. Bibby, Joel Thiessen, and Monetta Bailey, *The Millennial Mosaic: How Pluralism and Choice Are Shaping Canadian Youth and the Future of Canada* (Toronto, Ontario: Dundurn, 2019), chap. 2, Kindle.

eight percent of Canadian youth in the same age category identify as LGBTQ.⁵ Canada is becoming more diverse and pluralism is shaping the nation.

There are multiple reasons provided by youth for leaving faith behind and becoming a person who does not relate to any particular religion. Some of those reasons include greater social acceptance of having no religion, believing religion is not relevant, and more parents giving millennial children the freedom of choice to disagree with church teachings (especially LGBTQ issues).⁶

Christians in Vancouver are now the minority. Our Canadian culture elevates nature, reason and science and resists the divine with skepticism and, at times, hostility. As millennials leave the church in rising numbers with a resolve to not identify with any religious beliefs, it has become apparent that there is a faith formation crisis in Canada. The church has failed to disciple people effectively in what it means to follow the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Many millennials are leaving religion not because God disappointed them but because their set of religious beliefs did not stand up against the rising tides of secular resistance, personal temptation, and lack of faith.

The researcher works alongside a staff who are mostly millennials serving a diverse congregation. In this role there has been a direct correlation of increased fruitfulness in Christ and service for others when there is a focus on spiritual formation. There is a perceived faltering in the area of formation and disciple-making among millennials in Canada by the researcher. In this, there is an opportunity for millennials to advance and choose Christ during their days of youth by encountering the loving

⁵ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 2, Kindle.

⁶ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 6, Kindle.

presence of Christ in a way that will shape their lives and cultivate spiritual resilience. A Christ-centered life will flourish and resist the Canadian cultural current.

Jacques Ellul was a French philosopher, sociologist, and lay theologian. Ellul was also a Christian disrupter who knew what it meant to be counter cultural and push against the societal currents of his day. In today's Canadian context the church needs disrupters who are intentional to keep Christ in the center. Ellul knew what it meant to keep Christ in the very center of his life as he addressed issues such as the relationship of technology on faith and society. He understood the unique opportunity young adults could have by deepening their commitment to Christ with a spiritual resolve early in their lives. He believed the ideal time to represent God's goodness in the world was during their time of youthfulness. Here he admonishes those who are young to make a resolve to serve God early in their journey and to make a difference in their world:

Remember your Creator during your youth: when all possibilities lie open before you and you can offer all your strength intact for his service. The time to remember is not after you become senile and paralyzed! Then it is not too late for your salvation, but too late for you to serve as the presence of God in the midst of the world and the creation. You must take sides earlier – when you can actually make choices, when you have many paths opening at your feet, before the weight of necessity overwhelms you.⁷

In the context of a faith formation crisis there is an opportunity for those who are young to rise up. The area of formation and disciple-making among millennials in Canada has never been so critical and so urgent. It is not too late to engage a counter cultural movement that places Christ at the very center.

⁷ Jacques Ellul, *Reason for Being: A Meditation on Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 282-83.

CHAPTER ONE: LEADERSHIP FORMATION AND THE MILLENNIAL

The Problem and Its Context

This project addressed the perceived lack of Christocentric leadership development among millennials of Canadian churches with over one thousand people in attendance. Millennials, for the purpose of this project, belong to the generation born from 1981 to 2001, during an era when the culture was focused on the millennium. Millennials are popularly known as Gen Y.

In response to this problem, the researcher explored Christ-centered leadership formation in ecclesiastical environments, the New Testament, and early church; reviewed the relevant literature related to the uniqueness of the millennial cohort as it relates to leadership development; and interviewed three church leaders identified as influential in developing millennial leaders and surveyed two Canadian churches to determine reoccurring patterns among millennial development. The research was limited to focus on Christocentric discipleship within Canadian congregations serving large urban areas. Based upon the findings, this report proposes leadership principles churches can adopt to increase effectiveness in Christocentric development among the millennial cohort.

The research explored literature of global, North American, and Canadian contexts but the literature was limited to the millennial cohort, involving only millennials 18 years old or older for interviews and research surveys.

In this research, there were eight core assumptions made by the researcher in the creation of the surveys and interview questions, as well as in the type of literature

explored. The first assumption was that Christian Scripture has authority because it is a witness to Christ inspired by the Spirit himself. The second assumption was that leaders need to cultivate their inner life in order to be effective and fruitful in their influence. This was followed by the third assumption, that Christian leaders experience unique pressure, stress, and temptation when serving within the local church context. Fourthly, the local church is central to God's mission of renewal and redemption. The fifth assumption was that focusing on cities is strategic in reaching the world with the redemptive message of the gospel. Sixth, the researcher's assumptions included that the Canadian cultural context is unique when considering spiritual formation and leadership development. The seventh assumption was that churches with congregations over one thousand people provide unique opportunities and challenges in the formation of the millennial cohort. The eighth and final core assumption was that millennials are a generational cohort that has been uniquely shaped by factors such as computers, technology, social media, and parental influence on child rearing.

Once the problem and assumptions were clear, the subproblems were identified. There were six subproblems that became priorities in the research. The first subproblem was to identify approaches and patterns of Christ-centered leadership formation in ecclesiastical environments, the New Testament, and early church. The second subproblem was to review the relevant literature related to the uniqueness of the millennial cohort as it relates to leadership development. Thirdly, the subproblem identified was to interview specialists identified as influential in developing millennial leaders. The fourth subproblem was to interview church leaders overseeing the development of millennial leaders in the local church context. The fifth subproblem was

to survey and interview millennials from two Canadian churches over one thousand to determine reoccurring patterns among millennial development. The sixth and final subproblem prioritized was to propose leadership principles churches can adopt to increase effectiveness with Christocentric development based on what has been learned.

Setting of the Project

The setting of the project, Tenth Church in Vancouver, B.C., currently has a growing community of millennials and has launched a new site with a distinct community on the campus of the University of British Columbia. It is a critically strategic time for the church to re-envision how it approaches leadership development and empower millennials to reach their own generation.

The church offers a signature spiritual development course that focuses on the inner life of the emerging leader. It continues to draw key influencers from other churches in the city to the cohort learning experience. The interest from other congregations in Vancouver has revealed a growing appetite among millennials to develop their leadership and engage meaningful learning experiences in their faith journey.

This project is deeply important to the researcher because he has developed a passion for Christ-centered leadership that flows out of spiritual depth and formation. He believes when authentic personal transformation in Christ intersects with ability and effective influence, there is a soulful energy that can be both catalytic and life giving for others. As such, following Jesus as an evangelical in Canada has always been about engaging in multiple ways. The researcher has more recently found that developing space, spiritual discipline, and attentiveness to God has been revitalizing and transformative. Similarly, it has become evident to the researcher that there is a growing

appetite among young adults in Canada to encounter the love and life Christ offers by paying attention to His loving presence which surrounds them. It has also been observed through life experience that leaders who are deeply rooted in their walk with Christ have greater depth and effectiveness in their faithfulness and influence with others.

This project is important to the immediate ministry context because Tenth Church is currently growing a distinct community with a new site on the campus of the University of British Columbia. Many of the millennials within the congregation are on the fringe of faith. As someone who is following Christ, who is changed by Christ and who is committed to the mission of Christ,⁸ when the researcher looks through the lens of discipleship, it becomes evident that the stakes are high for the church and the millennial generation when it comes to the spiritual development of young adults. It is essential that millennials are developed in a way that forms their inner life to be shaped like Jesus and then effectively equips them to influence others with the love of Christ.

The importance of this project goes beyond the immediate ministry context and applies to the church at large. The church in Canada is in decline. Millennials and young adults continue to exit the church en masse. Although this reality of the church in Canada can be discouraging, there is also a spiritual craving and openness to the historical Jesus within the postmodern and pluralistic culture in Vancouver, Canada.

The millennials within the local church need to personally encounter the life that Jesus offers and then be effectively equipped to share that love with their generational cohort. Sadly, church life in Canada has often come to represent a religion of rules, rituals

⁸ Jim Putnam, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), chap. 2, sec 1, Kindle.

and regulations.⁹ It is often revealed to be more superficial than transformational.

Discovering new approaches and innovative methodologies that echo the early church and New Testament practices will be revolutionary for Canada and the church at large.

The church would benefit from new wineskins and millennials who are experiencing God in fresh ways.

⁹ Bruxy Cavey, *The End of Religion: Encountering the Subversive Spirituality of Jesus* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2007), 22, Kindle.

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

Introduction

It all begins with Jesus. Starting with Christ as a focal point in Christian understanding and spiritual practice has a different outcome than starting with a focus on God the Father or with the Holy Spirit. Different movements within the historical Christian tradition have entered into their understanding of the experience and study of God through different persons of the Holy Trinity. Charismatics have often elevated the Holy Spirit's moving while Reformers have focused on God the Father and His sovereign control. The Reformers understand the world through God's majesty, power, and authority. The way in which God is understood impacts a person's thinking, spiritual convictions and their Christian practice.¹⁰

A.W. Tozer, the Christian author and pastor, spent the final years of his life pastoring Avenue Road Church in Toronto, Ontario. He said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."¹¹ The way in which individuals think about God is impacted by their starting point. As Alan the has said, "it all began with Jesus, it will all end with him, and to Jesus we must constantly return if we are to re-find ourselves again."¹²

¹⁰ Bruxy Cavey, "Jesus-centered Theology" (lecture, Jesus Collective Leaders Gathering, Washington DC, March 27, 2019).

¹¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1978), 1.

¹² Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), chap. 3, Kindle.

In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter reminded his readers, “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you, who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet.1:20-21).¹³ It can be understood in this verse that “faith is directed to God through Jesus.”¹⁴ Francis Wright Beare has articulated that when Peter wrote these words he was saying that Christ revealed Himself and as a result, followers of Christ set their faith and hope upon God.¹⁵ Peter reminded his readers that the result of the life and death of Jesus Christ was that they were able to place their trust in God. Beare further emphasizes this truth when he writes, “Christ was manifested for the sake of believers, that they might be brought through Him to the faith in God which they could never have known apart from Him.”¹⁶ It was because of Christ that humans were brought into a relationship with God. Christians are not only brought to have faith in God through Christ, “but are enabled to show ourselves faithful to Him in all our life.”¹⁷ It all starts and continues with Christ.¹⁸

¹³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1984).

¹⁴ Greg Forbes, *1 Peter, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough, (Nashville, TN: Broadman& Holman Publishing Group, 2014), 45.

¹⁵ Francis Wright Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes* (Oxford, England: Blackwell and Mott, Ltd., 1958), 45.

¹⁶ Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 81.

¹⁷ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, Grand (Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 121.

¹⁸ Bruxy Cavey, "Jesus-centered Theology."

Scripture should be primarily understood from the perspective of what Jesus both taught and modeled. Michael Williams wrote, “The Jesus lens ensures that our exegetical bowling balls stay within the lane and don’t go crashing over into areas where they can cause a lot of damage.”¹⁹ The way one begins matters. When Jesus is placed in the center with a Christocentric framework, it makes all the difference to life, practice and leadership. William G. MacDonald in *The Grace of God, The Will of Man* made it clear that the doctrine of the incarnation demonstrates God’s character so fully revealed in Jesus such that “no interpretation of any passage that undercuts the revelations of the divine mind inculcated by Jesus can be accepted as valid. What he says and does is what God says and does.”²⁰ It is essential that Christ is the One looked upon for faith, life and leadership. Jesus said, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40).

Today’s culture takes Jesus out of focus and de-centers Him in the lives of individuals. The witness of the New Testament tells followers to start with Jesus. The Holy Spirit directs followers toward Jesus and to get to know who the Father is through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, if Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, then it can be known that God is love. As King Jesus, He demonstrates what the Father is like. The life of Christ provides historical evidence that can lead to the conclusion that God is love. Jesus was the King; He was the Messiah. He not only came to heal and deliver but to demonstrate

¹⁹ Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ focused Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 9.

²⁰ William G. MacDonald, “The Biblical Doctrine of Election,” *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed by Clark Pinnock, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 213.

the kind of love that would die for another. He had an overwhelming influence and impact of those who encountered Him. The early movement of Christ-followers only consisted of a small handful of people but because love was in the center, it flourished. It is a love story that just will not let you go once you've experienced it. Scot McKnight says, "Whether we look to the words of Jesus in the Jesus Creed of loving God and loving others, or to the words of Jesus in calling us to follow him, or in the words of the apostle Paul to let the Spirit of God loose in our lives to produce the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, the gospel story will not leave us alone."²¹

Jesus Shaped Spirituality

Jesus was a spiritual leader who became widely known as a controversial symbol of rebellion for His efforts to overthrow a system. On a much smaller scale, Che Guevara is a globally recognized leader. He was known for being counter cultural and taking a stand for a significant cause. Guevara's credentials were impressive as an Argentine Marxist revolutionary, physician, author, guerrilla leader, diplomat, and military theorist. Guevara had profound cultural and social influence which fueled his efforts to fight against poverty, hunger, and the disease he witnessed in South America and then more directly within his own country of Cuba. He was a person who mobilized Cubans towards a common purpose of cultural change. Guevara has become a ubiquitous counter cultural symbol of rebellion. He "converted the very idea of revolution into a romantic vision for

²¹ Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), chap. 10, Kindle.

millions.”²² Guevara has become a global symbol of mobilization and action in popular culture and continues to inspire the masses.

Jesus worked for revolution but in a radically different way than Che Guevara. He figuratively turned the world upside down. Jesus lost His life as a direct result of His cause. He offered a whole different way of loving and living. Jesus the Revolutionary offers a way to see God’s heart and to get His perspective. He turned Judaism upside down with a divine revolt. In His uprising, He introduced humankind to a relational paradigm in contrast to a religious life. He invites people into a heart-transforming experience that circles around a trust relationship with Him. Jesus’s revolution was one of grace and “putting into practice the ‘great reversal’ we see heralded in the Beatitudes.”²³ The Beatitudes are revolutionary. They are antithetical to common practice in present-day culture. “The Sermon on the Mount crystallizes what Jesus gave to his disciples as the new way of life.”²⁴

Rereading the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12) is a way to refocus on Jesus’s relational way versus the religious way that came before Him. The Sermon on the Mount is a passage known to many people of faith but often not put into practice. Jesus’s teaching on the Mount is not simply a sermon but rather a way of life which transforms those who live this way, from the inside out. As Eugene Peterson has exhorted, “Live into this —

²² Michael Cast, *Che's Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image* (Vintage Books, New York, NY, 2009), 51, Kindle.

²³ Philip Yancey, *The Jesus You Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 155, Kindle.

²⁴ Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount: The Story of God Bible Commentary*, ed. Scot McKnight and Tremper Longman III, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 814, Kindle.

this is what it looks like to be human in the God-made and God-ruled world; this is what is involved in becoming and maturing as a human being.”²⁵

When looking to hear from a counter cultural revolutionary who changed the world, the Sermon on the Mount is an ideal place to start. This is the first introduction to the transformative teachings of Jesus. When wondering how to walk with God, followers should listen closely to the subversive Sermon on the Mount. As Jonathan Pennington comments, the sermon spoken by Jesus is one that He embodied and modelled perfectly. “Jesus is humble and poor in spirit (11:28–29; 21:5), mourns and grieves (23:37), hungers and thirsts with longing for God’s kingdom to be manifested (9:38), is pure in heart (4:10), shows mercy (12:1–21; 14:13–21; 15:32–39; 20:30–34), and brings peace (28:10).”²⁶

The Sermon on the Mount is an invitation to the lordship of Christ. It is a whole of life call to surrender that includes every dimension of the human experience. As Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch emphasize, “The lordship of Jesus extends to our sexuality, our political life, our economic existence, our family, our play, and everything in between.”²⁷ The counter cultural revolution Jesus was offering was relentlessly relational. It was Himself.

When Jesus used the word ‘kingdom’ in Roman Palestine, it was daring and controversial. The word for kingdom, *basileia*, meant “a kingdom, realm, the region or

²⁵ Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 43–44.

²⁶ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 149, Kindle.

²⁷ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers; Sydney: Strand Publishing, 2009), chap. 5, Kindle.

country governed by a king; kingly power, authority, dominion, reign; royal dignity. It was the title and honor of king.”²⁸ There was only one recognized kingdom — and that was the Roman Empire. Jesus was announcing to the Israelites that He was the expected Messiah — their true King. Their clear expectation was to defeat the Gentiles and receive their land in return. The empire Jesus was announcing was not at all what they anticipated when they thought of kingdom. The kingdom of heaven was an inner reality that was only visible when it was exhibited through the actions of those who lived out the instructions in these passages. It was a way of being in the world. It was the way of love. The kingdom was a way of life that influenced the world as the followers of the way embraced God’s love and let it actively flow out of their lives.

The first words of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount are words of blessing for well-being. They describe the state of being blessed with divine favour for those who live out the way of Jesus and belong to the kingdom of heaven. It is an invitation to be transformed inwardly by putting into practice the kingly power and reign of King Jesus.

John Donne, during Lent 1629, preached on the significance of the Sermon on the Mount noting that “all the articles of our religion, all the canons of our church, all the injunctions of our princes, all the homilies of our fathers, all the body of divinity, is in these three chapters, in this one Sermon on the Mount.”²⁹

²⁸ William D. Mounce, *Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Accordance electronic ed., version 3.7. Altamonte Springs, FL: OakTree Software, 2011), paragraph 2833.

²⁹ Harvey McArthur, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960) as quoted in John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 1978), 9.

The Sermon on the Mount was meant to be breathed and lived out in tangible ways. John Stott describes the potential impact of the church truly living out the Sermon on the Mount: “If the church realistically accepted His standards and values as here set forth, and lived by them, it would be the alternative society He always intended it to be, and would offer to the world an authentic counter-culture.”³⁰ This would be a true revolution.

The Beatitudes “declare the foundations on which the kingdom is built.”³¹ They are “a theological foundation for discipleship”³² and “paint a comprehensive portrait of a Christian disciple.”³³ Christ’s unique identification of what one of His followers should embody and live is what is expressed through these verses in Scripture. The Beatitudes are the instructions for building the structure in an individual’s life in order to become like Christ because, “the marks of the Christian disciple are more vividly portrayed here than anywhere else, more exactly delineated than at any other point in all the Scriptures.”³⁴ Stanley Hauerwas described the new life within the kingdom of heaven:

When He called his society together Jesus gave its members a new way of life to live. He gave them a new way to deal with offenders — by forgiving them. He gave them a new way to deal with violence — by suffering. He gave them a new way to deal with money — by sharing it. He gave them a new way to deal with problems of leadership — by drawing on the gift of every member, even the most humble. He gave them a new way to deal with a corrupt society — by building a new order, not smashing the old. He gave them a new pattern of relationship

³⁰ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 10.

³¹ William Fitch, *The Beatitudes of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), 3.

³² Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 31.

³³ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 54.

³⁴ Fitch, *The Beatitudes of Jesus*, 3.

between man and woman, between parent and child, between master and slave, in which was made concrete a radical new vision of what it means to be a human person. He gave them a new attitude toward the state and toward the “enemy nation.”³⁵

Jesus invites His followers into a deep trust. He calls them into a personal experience of His presence. The summons is to say with Peter, “We have left everything to follow you!” (Matt. 19:27). This is a relational dynamic taking place in this sermon. Jesus wants His followers to enter into the life of God and suggests they do this by calling them to imitate His example and embrace the promises of blessedness within His reign. It is immensely costly but there are benefits. Michael Crosby comments leaving everything is a blessing because “God’s presence reorders one’s attitude.”³⁶ There is a new life given. Any sacrifice offered up in response to the call is quickly eclipsed by the abundant life experienced by the follower. The blessings are gifts and privileges of being and living under the reign of the King. As Stott emphasizes, “This is what the enjoyment of God’s rule means.”³⁷ The vision Jesus gives of a way of being in the world results in the flourishing of the follower.³⁸ It was a whole new world. A new way of living. As Scot McKnight articulates, “The Beatitudes ... are a radical revisioning of the people of God.”³⁹ Jonathan Pennington captures the life, vitality and worth of the Beatitudes:

When we drill down even further into Matthew’s series of nine macarisms, we find a rich reservoir of “black gold.” It is divine gold of priceless worth, but it appears to be only darkness. And herein lies the genius of the Beatitudes: they are

³⁵ Hauerwas, Stanley, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 67-68.

³⁶ Crosby, Michael H., *Spirituality of the Beatitudes: Matthew’s Challenge for First World Christians* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 52.

³⁷ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 34.

³⁸ Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 149, Kindle.

³⁹ McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, chap. 2, Kindle.

situated in a Christ-centered apocalyptic and eschatological understanding of the world; they present true human flourishing as entailing suffering as Jesus's disciples await God's coming kingdom that Jesus is inaugurating. Implicit in any proclamation about what it means to flourish is an invitation for hearers to reorient their thinking and sensibilities about what it means to thrive and live fully.⁴⁰

There are nine Beatitudes in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. The first is "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). Being "poor in spirit" captures the idea of dependence and reliance on the Holy Spirit. As followers turn away from those things that can distract and sometimes chain them into a form of imprisonment, they can experience freedom and be released from a form of captivity. Once people are truly free, they can live a life that prioritizes God's kingdom with a focus on Christ at the center.

Being "'poor in spirit' is to acknowledge spiritual poverty, indeed spiritual bankruptcy, before God."⁴¹ Darrell Johnson says, "When we encounter Jesus Christ as He really is, beyond our inadequate images of Him — when we see Him in His Glory, full of grace and truth — we see ourselves as we really are."⁴² God lavishly loves His children. Yet, when realizing who they are in comparison to His greatness, they see just how short they fall when Christ's in-breaking kingdom sets upon them and they witness the glory of His presence.

God says, "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isa. 66:2b). This beatitude along with the fourth,

⁴⁰ Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 153, Kindle.

⁴¹ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 39.

⁴² Darrell W. Johnson, *The Beatitudes: Living in Sync with The Reign of God* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2015), 36.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6) provide a foundation for all nine Beatitudes.

The second beatitude is “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). Jesus taught His followers that comfort is found when they embrace and allow themselves the opportunity to express grief.⁴³ The qualities Jesus blessed in the Beatitudes were a direct result of the human transformation of the gospel. As Jesus called people into the kingdom, He conveyed the reality that there would be suffering in this world, but it would be with His comforting presence and it would be with hope of it being made right one day.

Jesus conveyed there will be difficulties in this world but that He was the promise of hope when He said, “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). John Redhead commented, “Trouble is not a punishment but an opportunity — a chance to build a life after the pattern of God’s Son who was ‘made perfect through suffering.’”⁴⁴ Karl Barth said, “The fact that life has become difficult is a sign or indication of the mercy of God vouchsafed to him.”⁴⁵ Suffering shows that God grants grace and mercy in His goodness.

John Stott explains that the primary mourning in this is grieving born of repentance: “It is plain from the context that those here promised comfort are not primarily those who mourn the loss of a loved one, but those who mourn the loss of their

⁴³ Johnson, *The Beatitudes*, 46.

⁴⁴ John A. Redhead, *Finding Meaning in the Beatitudes* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), 28.

⁴⁵ Karl R. Barth, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, ed. David Nelson, trans. Ross M. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 145.

innocence, their righteousness, their self-respect. It is not the sorrow of bereavement to which Christ refers, but the sorrow of repentance.”⁴⁶

The third beatitude is “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). It seems that Jesus was echoing an earlier promise in his sermon: “Cease from anger and forsake wrath; do not fret; it leads only to evildoing. For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land” (Psalm 37:8-9). Jesus is teaching His followers to leave justice for God to handle. He is teaching God’s wisdom to resist the pursuit of retaliation against those who have caused them harm. The posture of this beatitude is an inner dependence on God while experiencing the emotional intensity of hostility towards those who may have mistreated them.

In the New American Standard Bible translation of this third beatitude, the term ‘the gentle’ is used, capturing the meaning well, given that the “Greek adjective *praüs* means ‘gentle’, ‘humble’, ‘considerate’, ‘courteous’, and therefore exercising the self-control without which these qualities would be impossible.”⁴⁷ As such, this beatitude captures the idea of strength under control. The Christ follower can arise as a direct result of reliance of God’s power within. As Crosby comments, there is an authority that is present in meekness:

The meek ones are those who, like Jesus, are totally dedicated to orient their world to God’s world. Because of His meekness, which showed His concern for everyone, Jesus was blessed. Because His authority-in-meekness makes us concerned for the world and what God wants for the land, we too will be blessed.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 40.

⁴⁷ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

⁴⁸ Crosby, *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, 114.

Lloyd-Jones sums it up, “Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others. ... The man who is truly meek is the one who is truly amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do.”⁴⁹

The fourth beatitude is “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6). Revolutions imagine a new and preferred reality to replace another less desirable one. Sadly, human revolutions are often replaced by another inadequate alternative. Jesus makes it clear that in His revolution, in His new kingdom, “they shall be satisfied.” Those “who hunger and thirst for righteousness” and place their trust in the revolution of Christ are truly blessed and transformed in the experience.

Jesus is not saying in the beatitude, ‘Blessed are those who feel righteous,’ but rather, “Blessed are those who are on their way to being righteous.”⁵⁰ This life-giving power is a result of God’s goodness and grace. Blessed are those who are in the pursuit of being righteous.

A biblical understanding of righteousness is multi-faceted. John Stott clarifies:

Righteousness in the Bible has at least three aspects: legal, moral and social. Legal righteousness is justification, a right relationship with God. Moral righteousness is that righteousness of character and conduct which pleases God. Social righteousness, as we learn from the law and prophets, is concerned with seeking man’s liberation from oppression, together with the promotion of civil rights, justice in the law courts, integrity in business dealings and honour in home and family affairs.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in The Sermon on The Mount* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 68-69.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *The Beatitudes*, 71.

⁵¹ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 45.

The fifth beatitude is “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7). There is a relationship between the meaning of “meekness” and that of “mercy.” Meekness tends to react. Being merciful, on the other hand, is proactive. One example of mercy in action is within the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Unlike a certain priest and a certain Levite, a certain Samaritan ‘felt compassion.’ He experienced mercy for the man left half-dead along the way. He did this without experiencing any kindness from others at all. He was generous with his initiative.

The sixth beatitude is “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). Being pure of heart speaks of a single focus which resists distractions from seeing God. The person who is pure in heart is able to identify the invisible God through the visible reality which surrounds them. Contemplative practices can help the follower with confession and cleansing as well as cultivating beauty of inner newness. “Truly contemplative people have become like little children; they have experienced God’s power in their lives and want to live in its aura (Matt. 18:4).”⁵²

The seventh beatitude is “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). In this verse the Hebrew word *shalom* is used, which is a holistic concept that captures true harmony between people, with creation, with nations, and with every dimension of life. People are called to be shalom-makers. Isaiah describes *shalom* in his prophecy:

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
 And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
 And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;

⁵² Crosby, *Spirituality of the Beatitudes*, 165.

And a little boy will lead them.
 Also, the cow and the bear will graze,
 Their young will lie down together,
 And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
 And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. (Isa. 11:6-8)

John, in his vision, foresaw the final state of *shalom*: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” (Rev. 21:4)

Jesus blessed those who advocated for reconciliation in the pursuit of *shalom*. Jesus said, “But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers” (Matt. 8:23). Jesus referred to His disciples as brothers and brothers are family. Peacemakers model aspects of the sibling relationship in that siblings have a uniquely close bond and tend to advocate for another just as peacemakers hold a close relationship between one another and advocate for those around them. They protect unity and pursue community. As loving families do for one another, peacemakers also oppose unhealthy conflict and war between individuals and between nations. In the midst of an intense conflict, Jesus told Peter, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52). The way of Jesus is one of peace and nonviolence.

The eighth beatitude is “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10). Discipleship means suffering as Christ suffered.⁵³ When Jesus taught this beatitude, He is telling the people that those who choose righteousness in the counter cultural way of living out the kingdom

⁵³ Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 53.

of heaven, there is blessing for them beyond just having Him with them now; they will have eternity in the ultimate kingdom. As Pennington points out, “The Beatitudes simultaneously invite Jesus’s disciples into these flourishing virtues and comfort them with the promise of God’s coming deliverance and setting of the world to right.”⁵⁴ It is a gift of grace that Christ’s followers are able to endure suffering in the kingdom of God. The kingdom is “a network of persons who have yielded their hearts and relationships to the reign of God.”⁵⁵

The ninth beatitude is “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:11-12). This blessing captures the upside-down reality of the kingdom of heaven. Through insults, persecution, and all kinds of evil the “manifesto of life”⁵⁶ that is embodied in the Sermon on the Mount can be realized in the person of Christ.⁵⁷ It reveals a revolutionary relationship of obedience and demonstrates the difference Christ could make for the person who prioritizes God in their life.

⁵⁴ Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 146, Kindle.

⁵⁵ Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2011), chap. 2, Kindle.

⁵⁶ R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1989), 164.

⁵⁷ W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 435.

Committed disciples embrace the truth that Christ's "kingdom on earth is the kingdom of the cross."⁵⁸ They are blessed by their fervent love for Christ and "for his sake they are persecuted."⁵⁹ They carry Christ in their heart, but they carry the cross on their shoulders.⁶⁰ Christ alone is their life and they were ready to suffer. The blessing of the disciple was Christ. The cost was the cross.

The values expounded by Jesus were radical in the time they were spoken. Today's cultural reality is in a very similar place. It is radical to fully pursue these characteristics in a western culture that exalts power, wealth and success. Anyone in the current context who follows Jesus's approach to life as He outlined in the Sermon on the Mount commits to living against the cultural norms of today just as those in Jesus's day lived against the norms set by the Roman empire. It means being non-conformist in the dominant culture and continuing to actively pursue an allegiance to Christ Jesus. Jesus's teachings do not come from cultural contextualization, they come from the Kingdom of heaven, and so the teachings in the Beatitudes continue to make as little sense in this post-modern world as they did during the times of the Roman emperors. Following Jesus really requires the disciple of Christ to count the cost. It means "exchanging the allegiances of this world for allegiance to Jesus alone."⁶¹

⁵⁸ Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes: An exposition of Matthew 5:1-12* (London, England: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 269.

⁵⁹ France, *Matthew*, 165.

⁶⁰ Watson, *The Beatitudes*, 269.

⁶¹ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), chap. 7, Kindle.

In order to effectively live such an alternative lifestyle with spiritual fruitfulness, emerging influencers need to cultivate their disciplines and relationship with God through an intimate walk with Christ. This means keeping Jesus in the center of their personal lives by embracing sacred rhythms that constantly reignite spiritual passion and fervor. Embracing spiritual postures will help them learn what it means to receive grace and live a life truly reliant on Christ.

The Sermon on the Mount does the same for Christians today as it did for its earliest followers. It is a call to follow Christ with all of life. As Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch articulate, “There must be no limitation to the claim that Jesus makes over all of life. When we get this right, Jesus’ lordship takes on a missional edge. ‘Jesus is Lord’ is more like a rallying war cry than a mere theological statement.”⁶² A life lived against the cultural norms in pursuit of allegiance to Christ is preparation for the mission of God. “It overturns our ideas and projects, reverses the obvious, thwarts our desires, and bewilders us, leaving us poor and naked before God. All this, in order to prepare a place within us for the seed of new life.”⁶³

Jesus and Mission

Jesus was a man on a mission. He knew from a very young age that He had a purpose to fulfill. When Jesus was just a boy, He said to His parents: “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49b). In the final days of his life He “resolutely set out for Jerusalem,” knowing He would lose His life (Luke 9:51). Christ was laser-focused on fulfilling God’s plan of saving the lost. He said of Himself: “The Son of Man

⁶² Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, chap. 5, Kindle.

⁶³ Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 154, Kindle.

came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Jesus was fulfilling His calling by demonstrating the breadth and depth of God’s unconditional love to His followers.

Jesus invited His first followers, Peter and Andrew, to follow Him and join His mission. His invitation was simple and clear, and without hesitation, they accepted:

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people. At once they left their nets and followed him” (Matt. 4:18-19).

Being formed and shaped into the likeness of Christ means joining Jesus in His mission.

Spiritual formation is all about being on the mission and seeking out those who are far from God. It is about dropping nets and following Jesus.

Jesus wanted His disciples to understand His mission and why God had sent Him to earth (Mark 8:27-9:1). Disciples of Christ must understand His true identity and how His identity related to His destiny. His followers had a very different expectation and understanding of ‘kingdom’ than Jesus did.

This passage in the middle of Mark’s gospel is a turning point in the gospel: Peter’s confession as he responds to who Jesus is and what it means to be identified with him. This passage is clear in telling followers what they must both confess and embrace about Christ to become a disciple. The nature and work of Christ, as well as the theme of what it means to follow Christ, is interwoven throughout Mark’s Gospel. Jesus’s disciples “have witnessed Jesus’s mighty deeds, including healings and exorcisms; they have heard

his teaching; they have observed disputes with critics. They have in every way behaved as disciples of the Jewish masters of late antiquity.”⁶⁴

The passage is bookended with stories of blindness and receiving sight. In the previous passage, a blind man is healed and in the following passage, Bartimaeus receives sight. N.T. Wright elaborates on this development:

Mark has put together the story of the blind man receiving his sight and the blind disciples gaining their insight, in order of course, to highlight what’s going on in the second story by means of the parallel with the first. Jesus takes the blind man away from the village; he takes the disciples away from the lake and the crowds. At the end, he insists in both cases on secrecy. He’s reached the point where it’s vital that word doesn’t leak out. If his kingdom-mission is becoming more explicitly a Messiah-mission, this really is dangerous.⁶⁵

Richard Longenecker views these two healings of blind people as signaling some insight into Jesus’s mission and what it means to follow Him. In both stories Jesus calls men who experience His miracles of healing to commit fully and completely to Him and to the mission, “a commitment that involved even death, and that patterned after Jesus’s coming crucifixion.”⁶⁶ And yet, there is patience and understanding in His call to them in that He doesn’t want to fully overwhelm and confuse them. Jesus leads them forward in their understanding, but also widens the invitation providing stages of discovery, illumination, and devotion. There is in both stories “a two-stage process of illumination. The blind man sees people, but they look like trees walking about; the crowds see Jesus,

⁶⁴ Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 34b, *Mark 8:27-16:20*. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, Ralph P. Martin, James W. Watts, and Lynn Allan Losie (Dallas, TX: Word, Inc., 2001), 13.

⁶⁵ Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone* (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 2001), 107.

⁶⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 11.

but they think he's just a prophet."⁶⁷ Then, with their eyes open, Peter speaks for all of them, "You are the Messiah" (Mark 8: 29).

The issue of Jesus's identity is of utmost significance in this passage. He is revealed as the Suffering Messiah and "His true disciples are partakers of His suffering: 'If anyone wishes to come behind me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me (Mark 8:34)'"⁶⁸ Jesus's disciples, despite their failures, are also "the ones to whom the secret of the kingdom" (Mark 4:11) was given. They were the privileged insiders to whom Jesus extends this clear first invitation.⁶⁹ The irony of Peter's rebuke is that he has the conviction that Jesus is the Christ and that most certainly means "God is with him and that he cannot fail."⁷⁰ Peter does not realize it is God's choice for Jesus to experience the crucifixion. In this way God is hidden in Christ. The messianic secret is revealed to those who recognize Jesus as Christ in His lowliness.⁷¹

The revelation that Jesus was the Messiah was dangerous and risky. References in the Dead Sea Scrolls "presuppose a military leader who will defeat Israel's enemies"⁷²

⁶⁷ Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 107.

⁶⁸ William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 334.

⁶⁹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 166.

⁷⁰ Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, New International Biblical Commentary 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1989), 137.

⁷¹ R. Alan Cole, *The Gospel According to Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1989), 208.

⁷² Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 34b, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (Dallas, TX: Word, Inc., 2001), 15.

and will “engage Israel’s enemies in battle, possibly slaying the Roman emperor himself.”⁷³ In light of this, “Jesus’s command to secrecy makes perfect sense”⁷⁴.

Any friend or follower of Jesus would be familiar with the danger and risk involved in His revolution. It was a perilous time for all. The death of John the Baptist alone would have been a sobering indication of the precariousness of following Jesus. However, this was very different; the disciples were learning something new. N.T. Wright uses the metaphor of a schoolteacher who can only begin the next stage of mathematics once the students have learned to add and subtract. And as Wright comments, “This new lesson wasn’t just that there might be danger ahead; the new lesson was Jesus had to walk straight into it.”⁷⁵ Being a disciple isn’t about following Jesus on a quiet Sunday afternoon, it is about venturing on a path filled with peril. Although following Christ is dangerous, there are gradual stages of both courage and faith for the disciples to embrace as they develop and grow in their dependence on Christ. Jesus’s life and mission takes on new meaning for Christ’s followers in light of His prediction of the Passion. They now see their lives in a different light as well. “They must replace human values, which promote self and ambition, with the divine logic of triumph through death. This is the first of several passages on the nature, cost and consequences of discipleship.”⁷⁶

⁷³ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 15.

⁷⁴ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 15.

⁷⁵ Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 110.

⁷⁶ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 2, *Mark* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic Press, 2017), 202.

The disciples were committed to Christ. In Greek, the word ‘disciple’ comes from the verb ‘to learn’, and as such is an exact equivalent of the Hebrew *talmîd*, which literally means ‘learner,’ from the verb *lāmad*, ‘to learn’.⁷⁷ Jesus’s disciples were learners who lived out an active trust and radical reliance to their teacher and their Lord. As they followed Christ, their identities changed and so did their world. Christ was everything. As Peter and Andrew accepted Jesus’s call and left their nets to follow him (Mark 1:18), they accepted Jesus’s complete authority over their lives; they abandoned their identity as fisherman on the Sea of Galilee and joined Jesus.⁷⁸ Their new identity was their new destiny. As Jesus rejected the expected messianic glory and embraced the destiny of the suffering Son of Man, the disciple was called to do the same.⁷⁹

As Christ called His disciples to the way, He provided stages of spiritual discovery and illumination for anyone who wanted to respond to His invitation. Widening the net of invitation and providing a process of illumination for His growing family of disciples was characteristic of Jesus’s ministry style. He called and challenged people towards maturity and discipling. There were various stages that a person could progress into as they started to follow Christ.

Effective imagery that captures the process of moving from the place of being an unbeliever to becoming a reproducing disciple-maker is found in the four challenges Jesus gave to His followers: “come and see” (John 1:39), “follow me” (John 1:43),

⁷⁷ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 13.

⁷⁸ Schnabel, *Mark*, 202.

⁷⁹ Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark*, 175.

“follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19), and “go and bear fruit” (John 15:16).

The first stage is always “come and see” and refers to seekers. It is an invitation that Jesus gives to those who would listen. It reflects the truth that God draws people to Himself. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them” (John 6:44) indicates that the role of Christ followers is to simply discern who these people are and be ready to provide an answer to them why Jesus is the Savior (1 Pet. 3:15).

The second stage is “follow me” and refers to believers. It assumes an inner transformation in the spiritual development process. “Come and see” assumes curiosity. “Follow me” assumes commitment. This challenge is a call to a deeper level of the discipling journey than just “come and see.” Jesus reminds followers that the second stage in formational development assumes a desire to learn from the master teacher and requires an intentional walking with Christ.⁸⁰

The third stage is “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men” and refers to believers engaged and in service. Here the disciple moves from following Him to becoming part of His family or team. This is a relational invitation that involves greater investment by the follower. Jesus said:

“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” (John 13:13-17)

⁸⁰ Dan Spader, *4 Chair Discipling: Growing a Movement of Disciple Makers* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 46, Kindle.

This is a clear call not only to servant leadership but to community as family and the depth of friendship that involves significant transparency and vulnerability. Followers can learn from Jesus about how servant leadership begins with intentional acts, by observing that He uses the decisive language “I will make you”. Christ’s approach for developing His disciples involved a clear plan for the development and multiplication of His disciple-makers. Servant leadership is not about following the master but choosing to lead through serving.

The fourth stage is “bear fruit” and refers to disciples reaching others. There is a new level of relationship that Jesus calls the follower to as they transition from the third to fourth stage in the spiritual formation process. Jesus, as He was preparing the disciples for his departure, declared, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last” (John 15:16). The significance of Jesus’s words when He said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21) is that the Christian can bear fruit simply by being in relationship with Christ. There is fruitfulness in being Christ-centered. As Dan Spader acknowledges, “This challenge is not easy, but it is simple. Fruit bearing requires that we ‘abide’ in the Vine (Jesus) and allow the Vine to produce fruit through us. Our task is abiding. His task is bearing fruit.”⁸¹ Abiding is a relational dynamic involving dependency and trust. As the Christian disciple develops in their ability to be spiritually reliant on Christ, they yield the tangible results. The fourth stage is living wholeheartedly for God by actively surrendering to the pleasure, power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

⁸¹ Spader, *4 Chair Discipling*, 51, Kindle.

Jesus and Leadership

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the ideal person to whom to look for life formation and spirituality that is relevant in a post-modern and secularized environment. In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul calls on “Christian believers to focus their whole attention on Jesus Christ and to make Him the supreme model for both their overall attitude toward life and their conduct in day-to-day living.”⁸² Paul was calling his readers to place Christ in the very center of their lives. He was worth their full surrender and complete attention.

Paul’s letter to the Philippians (Phil. 2:5-11) is a call for them to imitate Christ. Since Christ did not consider His position of power and status to be held on to for His own interests but voluntarily relinquished everything for others, His followers were called to pursue the same posture. The Philippians were being called to live a life for the sake of others. Paul was speaking of a theoretical lifestyle but a tangible expression of faith. This pattern of discipleship was “less a matter of belief than practice, less a matter of orthodoxy than of orthopraxis, less a matter of what one thinks than how one lives.”⁸³

The Apostle Paul pointed to his Christ as the supreme model for them to follow as a model. He did not “consider that being equal with God was taking everything to himself, but giving everything away for the sake of others.”⁸⁴ Christ truly lived a life for the sake of others. As F.F. Bruce mentions, “The lesson for the Philippian Christians is

⁸² Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship*, 167.

⁸³ Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship*, 166.

⁸⁴ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 43, *Philippians*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts and Ralph P. Martin, (Dallas, TX: Word, Inc., 1983), 85.

plain: as Christ set aside his own interests for the sake of others, so should they.”⁸⁵ Alec Motyer captures the mind of Christ well when he writes, “He looked at Himself, at His Father and at us, and for obedience’s sake and for sinners’ sake he held nothing back.”⁸⁶

Everyone is vulnerable to exploiting their own position, platform, and power for their own gain in the same way Adam took of the forbidden tree as he grasped for his own gain. When Adam “grasped after fuller life, he actually laid hold upon death.”⁸⁷ Christ, as the second Adam, deliberately did the exact opposite. Christ patterns “a new humanity, with the divine image renewed and the divine glory restored.”⁸⁸ He gives His followers a new way of being: a pattern to follow.

Jesus was both “fully God” and “fully man.” Jesus was “in very nature God” (Phil. 2:6) while at the same time he took on the very nature of a servant being “made in human likeness” (Phil. 2:7). Jesus shared the same essential divine nature as His Father in Heaven while also sharing human nature because He chose to become human. Jesus was God but choose to embrace the limitations of humanity in order to express God’s love to His people. It is impossible to conceive what it would have been like for God to wrap Himself in human form. “Christ took the form of a slave by becoming a human being.”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ F.F. Bruce, *Philippians, New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1989), 70.

⁸⁶ J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians: Jesus our Joy*, ed. John R.W. Stott (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 118.

⁸⁷ J.A. Motyer, *The Richness of Christ: Studies in the Letter to the Philippians*, (London, England: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1966), 77.

⁸⁸ Ralph P. Martin, *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* ed Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 75.

⁸⁹ Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians*, B&H Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, 2015), 115.

That is, for Christ assuming slave status vis-à-vis His former position as equal to God was truly emptying Himself. It is beyond human comprehension. Paul used the example of a slave because it was the widest status gap imaginable by his readers, so this is the only way the readers can begin to grasp the sacrifice He made for them.

Understanding God's sacrifice lays down a theological foundation of understanding for the heart of God and the mission of his Son. In the person of Jesus Christ can be witnessed a real-life discipleship example and model. In His human limitations, Jesus demonstrates through His relational interactions with His disciples how to spiritually apprentice others. He shows that the way to do this is to hold nothing back.

Jesus and Spiritual Practices

The researcher was raised in an evangelical Christian family. In his family, a significant aspect of being evangelical meant living out his faith through activity and activism. It meant leaning into a posture of doing more than being. Being still before God was not a practice the researcher cultivated until later in life. Slowing down and being with Jesus to simply experience and receive His love has been transformational in learning what it means to be a good follower. Slowing down to be with Jesus⁹⁰ is a significant aspect of knowing Christ and being known.

The Apostle Paul instructed the church in Ephesus, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you" (Eph. 5:1a). Growing into a deeper and richer experience with God involves walking with God. The rhythm of spiritual practices helps participants walk with and become more like Christ.

⁹⁰ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 18, Kindle.

Following Jesus in spiritual habits like “solitude and silence, prayer, simple and sacrificial living, intense study and meditation upon God’s Word and God’s ways⁹¹” help facilitate relational intimacy with Him. These practices allow followers to become more alive and awake to His presence. In *The Spirit of the Disciplines* Dallas Willard writes:

We can become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.⁹²

The Apostle Paul begins his epistle to the Ephesians focusing on who the believer is in Christ. The expression ‘in Him’ is used frequently to emphasize relationship with God and union with Christ. In chapter 4 Paul makes a significant shift and writes, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Eph. 4:1). Paul calls the Christian to live a life that is “worthy of an identity rooted in God’s radical love.”⁹³ Reimer is right when he says that “your identity shapes your destiny ... if you only believed what God believes about you, it would revolutionize the way you live.”⁹⁴

Paul writes, “But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:20-21). Hearing

⁹¹ Dallas Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), preface, Kindle.

⁹² Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, chap. 6, Kindle.

⁹³ Rob Reimer, *Soul Care: Seven Transformational Principles for a Healthy Soul* (Franklin, TN: Carpenter’s Son Publishing, 2016), chap. 1, Kindle.

⁹⁴ Reimer, *Soul Care*, chap. 1, Kindle.

Christ and being in Him is critical to spiritual maturity and well-being. Being present with God in intentional and meaningful ways is transformational.

As Ken Shigematsu says, “Spiritual practices train our heart to grow continually conscious of the core truth that we are beloved of God.”⁹⁵ Time alone with Christ in silence provides the Christian with the life-changing experience of being embraced by a tangible love and hearing the soft whispers of the Spirit of Jesus. Karl Barth stated, “We can be directed. The Spirit of freedom gives us freedom to change. This is the new element in the Christian ethos. In such an ethos the prevailing question is: Do we have ears to hear?”⁹⁶

If Christ followers are to effectively “lay aside the old self” — be “renewed in the spirit” and “put on the new self” (Eph. 4: 22-24), then engaging spiritual practices is paramount. Time with God will awaken an awareness of God’s ever-present love and affirm their identity as God’s beloved children. It is true that the Christian’s “battle for identity” is a critical part of the pathway to spiritual maturity.⁹⁷ Paying attention to the loving presence of Christ is transformative. Listening to God’s quiet voice centers a person in the very essence of his or her identity as a beloved child of God. Slowing down to be with Jesus is life-giving not because that is only when He shows up but rather the listener becomes more aware that Christ is always near. It changes the listeners’

⁹⁵ Ken Shigematsu, *Survival Guide for the Soul: How to Flourish Spiritually in a World that Pressures Us to Achieve* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), chap. 3, sec. 1, Kindle.

⁹⁶ Barth, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 145.

⁹⁷ Reimer, *Soul Care*, 606, Kindle.

experience of love as they are called back to the very core of their identity. Eugene Peterson writes:

God is love. Love is the core of God's being. Man and woman, made in the image of God, are also, at that core, love. This is who we were created to be, persons who love, persons who receive love. When we love we are most ourselves, living at our very best, mature. Everyone, I venture to say, feels at some deep level this primary core identity.⁹⁸

This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he instructed the church in Ephesus to “walk in love” (Eph. 5:1a). Slowing down to be with Jesus in practices like solitude and silence leads the participants to experience their identity and the love that enables them to be their true selves. Spiritual practices lead them to Christ and to God's transforming love.

Conclusion

This project is addressing the perceived lack of Christocentric leadership development among millennial leaders.

Christ-centered leadership formation begins with a focus on Christ. Focusing on Christ through a biblical and theological understanding has a different outcome than starting with a focus on God the Father or with the Holy Spirit. The way in which Christ is understood changes the way a person thinks and practices their faith.

The Apostle Peter reminded his readers it was through Jesus that people knew God the Father (1 Pet. 1:20-21). Scripture should be primarily understood from the perspective of what Jesus both taught and modeled. Discipleship and formation should be

⁹⁸ Eugene H. Peterson, *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 213.

centered on Christ for the millennial leader to flourish in their life and influence. Having a Christocentric framework, makes all the difference to life, practice and leadership.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Canada was considered a Christian country as recently as a few decades ago. It has now become a post-Christian nation. As part of this reality Canadian participation in traditional churches has rapidly declined. As David E. Eagle points out, “Canada has transitioned from a country where less than one-fifth of the population would not set foot in the door of a church or other religious venue in a given year to one where this is the norm for almost half of the population.”⁹⁹

As a result of the Canadian cultural shift away from Christendom, the emerging millennial has adopted a rather informal and disconnected approach to both religion and morality. The shift has gone from Christian ethics and virtue to those that are highly individualistic, so people feel the authority to set their own standards of morality. The culture has elevated pluralism as an ideal and associated it with a mark of intelligence, justifying the self-selected scale of morality. The impact of this cultural shift is a country of autonomy and devolution where the definition of right and wrong can change from person to person.

Young adults who are church participants have also been influenced by the seismic shifts within Canadian culture. There is a drift towards secularism in the

⁹⁹ David Eagle, “The Loosening Bond of Religion in Canadian Society: Reply to Bibby.” (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 50, 2011), 838–39, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2011.01596_2.x

dominant culture that can be difficult to resist for the young adult. One of the pervasive themes emerging adults share is their “frequent and major life transitions.”¹⁰⁰ The Canadian millennial will naturally experience “intense identity exploration, instability, a focus on self, feelings of being in limbo,” and a sense of being in the in-between.¹⁰¹ All of this transition takes place in a shifting culture of decentralized authority and plurality.

This project considers the fruitfulness of Benedictine spirituality and contemplative practice in the pursuit of placing Christ in the center. In the midst of significant transitions and cultural uncertainty, there is an opportunity for the millennial to be shaped into the likeness of Christ. While embracing an exilic life of faith that abandons the cultural norms and instead embraces the Jesus way, the Canadian millennial can flourish in soul formation by cultivating personal soul care and engaging spiritual practices.

In order to understand how to effectively support millennials in being shaped more into the likeness of Christ, a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the Canadian millennial was essential. The influence of pluralism on the identity and persona of millennials as well as their posture toward religion was considered. In addition, the potential of Saint Benedict’s Rule of Life for the formation of the millennial was reviewed.

¹⁰⁰ Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34, Kindle.

¹⁰¹ Christian Smith et al, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 15, 2011.

The Millennial Landscape

Millennials in Canada are unique in that they are primarily shaped by one central defining phenomenon: pluralism.¹⁰² They strive to accept, understand and learn from others that are different from themselves.

Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau introduced a multiculturalism policy in the House of Commons in 1971 that fueled pluralism within Canada. He had a vision of a just society that envisioned all people being treated with compassion and inclusion.¹⁰³ Today, the actualization of his dream is apparent in the way in which millennials “recoil at the idea of intolerance.”¹⁰⁴ All are welcome in Canada including “women, people of colour, Indigenous Peoples, the physically or mentally challenged, the poor, the homeless, the young, the elderly, the LGBTQ community.”¹⁰⁵ Respected Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby reflects on Canada’s progress as exhibited in the millennial generation:

We’ve come a long way from the days when women were not defined as people, when Chinese workers were assigned “a pigtail tax,” when Indigenous people were variously seen as savages and backward individuals who needed to have their cultures eradicated, when immigrants were routinely referred to as “DPs” (displaced persons). Millennials automatically wince when people with disabilities are described as “crippled” or children with learning delays are referred to as “retarded.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

¹⁰³ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 8, Kindle.

¹⁰⁴ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 8, Kindle.

¹⁰⁵ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 8, Kindle.

¹⁰⁶ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 8, Kindle.

Canadian culture is centrally defined by pluralism and millennials are on the forefront. The culture, and therefore the millennials raised in this pluralistic culture, have used the country's commitment to diversity as a justification for leaving organized religion. Embracing diversity has been twisted into meaning accepting all options without judgement and never choosing that which may exclude any other. Organized religion and Christianity in particular are seen as excluding others. This perceived gap between the millennials' complete acceptance of all contrasted with the parameters they identify with Christianity has resulted in the natural and practical response to diversity, which is pluralism.¹⁰⁷

There have been a number of major initiatives demonstrating Canada's commitment to deal with diversity such as the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1972-75) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2012-15). Over time diversity has expanded to virtually all spheres of Canadian life including "age, gender, sexual orientation, families, leisure, lifestyles, morality, religion, education, politics, law, and physical and mental attributes."¹⁰⁸

James Cairns provides a helpful comment when considering generation of birth as a core determinant of values. He points out that, while generational cohort is one factor, one must not ignore other factors such as "inequalities running along lines of race, class, and gender that are far more powerful in shaping experiences and life changes than is

¹⁰⁷ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

¹⁰⁸ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

shared generational membership.”¹⁰⁹ Being diverse themselves, millennials can naturally “cross boundaries of ethnicity and gender because they are far more color-blind than the previous generations.”¹¹⁰

Millennials would appreciate Cairns’s more balanced insights since they are “more tolerant of racial diversity” than their predecessors.¹¹¹ Their fresh perspectives are “remaking every institution of modern life, from the workplace to the marketplace, from politics to education, and down to the basic structure of the family.”¹¹² They are highly collaborative and through their influence are helping organizations to rethink old hierarchies and develop new strategies for the future.

The millennials were born within the information and technological revolution, shaping the way they act and think in significant ways. They stand on a historical foundation of revolutions that shaped the dominant culture. There were four global revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s that set the stage for millennials: the technology revolution, the sexual revolution, the women’s movement, and the youth movement.¹¹³

It is difficult to measure the effect of the technology revolution, as an era of accelerated technological progress, not only on the global culture but on a generational cohort like the millennials. The effect of such a modern-day shift of amplified innovation

¹⁰⁹ James Cairns, *The Myth of the Age of Entitlement: Millennials, Austerity, and Hope* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 152.

¹¹⁰ Hadyn Shaw, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn’t Dying, Millennials Aren’t the Problem, and the Future is Bright* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, 2015), 89, Kindle.

¹¹¹ Don Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 10.

¹¹² Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 10.

¹¹³ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), chap. 1, Kindle.

and rapid implementation is a challenge to truly comprehend. Millennials are a unique group that were influenced by a radical phenomenon of incomprehensible consequences. The fascination with millennials is rather reasonable. They are the first generation in human history to have grown up with the influence of the internet and social media from birth.

Millennials are well informed by the information and technology skills they have acquired. There is a pervasive sense among them that they know a lot about everything. They are the first generation that didn't need to learn computers because screen-based devices were literally an extension of their earliest toys. It is part of who they are as a generation. For them, "a smartphone is a bodily appendage."¹¹⁴ As a generation, millennials have been uniquely shaped by unlimited information and global communication since the day they were born.

Technology is a natural extension of managing friendships and relationships in day to day life. The vision of Facebook was to be a virtual place "where you could be yourself, a real person, and feel free to talk with your close friends or your wider circle of friends."¹¹⁵ As geographical boundaries to relationships disappear, Canadians of all ages enjoy new friendships and enjoy established ties with people around the world.¹¹⁶

As a natural consequence of being connected and ever-present on the internet, "emerging adults are perpetually distracted by internet browsing and social networking,

¹¹⁴ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 84, Kindle.

¹¹⁵ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 55.

¹¹⁶ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 8, Kindle.

now present everywhere and at all times on laptops, tablets, and cell phones.”¹¹⁷ As Don Tapscott states, for “this generation, the internet is like the fridge. They don't belabor the nuts and bolts of its operation; it's just part of life.”¹¹⁸ In practice they spend more than fifty-three hours a week interacting with media because they use multiple formats and platforms.¹¹⁹

Millennials value relationships. They appreciate the support and resources of their parents and welcome their assistance and practical help. Millennials want their parents in their lives and see them as positive role models. A study by Thom Rainer discovered that 77 percent of millennials seek advice from their parents' regularly.¹²⁰ While 40 percent of boomers said they would be better off without their parents, more than 90 percent of millennials told Gallup they have a good relationship with their parents.¹²¹ These two generational cohorts stand in stark contrast to one another in how they value relationships.

Millennials have now introduced a new life stage as a result of the way they approach their parents and life practicalities. It has now become culturally acceptable for a person to wait to reach adulthood until around age twenty-six. This is a stage of

¹¹⁷ David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, (Grand Rapids, IL: Baker Academic, 2013), 18, Kindle.

¹¹⁸ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 41.

¹¹⁹ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 84, Kindle.

¹²⁰ Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), chap. 6, Kindle.

¹²¹ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 83, Kindle.

development and life experience that has been accepted as a norm by twentysomethings.¹²²

As emerging adults, millennials can often feel overwhelmed by their place in the marketplace and their financial realities. Typically, their lives are filled with significant work and life changes as they explore who they are and what they desire. As they acquire various skills, tasks and responsibilities, their aim is to get to a place where they can “stand on their own two feet.”¹²³

A signature mark of a millennial is confidence. Parents and teachers have instilled self-assurance into their lives. They were told they were amazing, and they absolutely believe it. In one survey, 96 percent of millennials agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement, “I can do something great.”¹²⁴ They were taught from an early age that everybody got a trophy, not just those who had achieved something, because everybody was a winner.

Shaw lists some common criticisms of the millennial cohort. The list includes them being naïve about what it takes to make organizations work, having no work ethic, being impatient and dropping out if their ideas are not implemented, being materialistic, wanting everything handed to them, and thinking they are entitled to what they want. The list also includes how they will not get off their phones, are not loyal, and do not show

¹²² Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 85, Kindle.

¹²³ Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 34, Kindle.

¹²⁴ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 83, Kindle.

respect. Shaw also mentions the criticisms that they have grown up in a sex-saturated world and are walking away from Christianity.¹²⁵

Millennials are focused on pursuing meaningful work and a place of purpose and significance where they can settle in to apply themselves. One of the positive advantages of the internet is its global reach. It has provided unique civic opportunities for the millennial cohort to engage as a “powerful kind of social activism.”¹²⁶ Some of their evident strengths are “meaning, authenticity, and teamwork.”¹²⁷

Authenticity means a lot to the millennial. They “assume people are flawed”¹²⁸ and value the art of being themselves and feeling good about their choices. It is about what works for each person and not judging others. This standard goes beyond being honourable by not judging others; millennials are “open with their lives and emotions and look for emotional openness as they search for authenticity.”¹²⁹

They value experience. They want to be entertained, “play in their work, education, and social life”¹³⁰ and prefer to process from “hand, heart, and then head: experience, imagination, and then analytic reason.”¹³¹ As a generation they love to “collaborate, customize, innovate, personalize, and scrutinize”.¹³² Millennials also “place

¹²⁵ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 87, Kindle.

¹²⁶ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 11.

¹²⁷ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 89, Kindle.

¹²⁸ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 88, Kindle.

¹²⁹ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 83, Kindle.

¹³⁰ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 35.

¹³¹ John Seel, *The New Copernicans: Understanding The Millennial Contribution to the Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 56, Kindle.

¹³² Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 36.

a high value on individual autonomy and authority”¹³³ and prefer others do not tell them how they should think or behave.

Don Tapscott tells a story about Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook. In January 2004 he was facing his first round of exams at Harvard and had not properly prepared for the first-year art history course called “Rome of Augustus.”¹³⁴ He was too busy creating a computer program that would facilitate students getting to know each other and sharing helpful information. He created a website and put pictures from the course on it with a place for discussion beside each image. Within 24 hours students filled in the blanks and Zuckerberg passed with flying colours. Following his exam on Augustus in Rome, Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook from his college dorm and ended up dropping out to become full-time CEO of Facebook.¹³⁵ In the spring of 2008 Zuckerberg said, “In order for us to be successful in this century, we're going to need to be more connected and we're going to need to have a better sense of understanding of where other people are coming from and just greater sense of like, we're all connected.”¹³⁶

Finally, millennials have developed a reputation for feeling entitled. It is commonly accepted that they want things handed to them and are reluctant to work hard or take the necessary time to arrive at their intended or expected destination. They “are focused on the here and now and give little thought and have little understanding of the

¹³³ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

¹³⁴ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 39.

¹³⁵ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 54.

¹³⁶ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 55.

long-term consequences of their decisions.”¹³⁷ James Cairns, in his book *The Myth of the Age of Entitlement*, addresses this powerful myth about millennials. He suggests it is “deeply problematic to suggest the main problem with young people today is that they expect too much.”¹³⁸

Reginald Bibby begins his book *The Millennial Mosaic* with some helpful perspective on considering the current landscape of the millennial cohort. He cites the occasion of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2000 when Alain Giguere was reflecting on his survey findings concerning the young people of the day. He told the Ottawa gathering: “I tremble to see what kind of society they are going to produce in 20-25 years.”¹³⁹ Clearly, Alain Giguere was not an optimist when it came to the young people of his time. Educator Anthony Kerr observed: “I have a pretty fair idea of history over the past twenty-five centuries and I cannot recall a time when the old were fully satisfied with the young.”¹⁴⁰ Even Socrates said in antiquity, “Children today are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers.”¹⁴¹

As the twenty-first century’s version of the Roaring Twenties begins, there is a lot at stake that is dependent on the future influence of the millennials. Despite the

¹³⁷ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 8, Kindle.

¹³⁸ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 8, Kindle.

¹³⁹ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

¹⁴⁰ Anthony Kerr, *Youth of Europe* (Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, 1964), 168.

¹⁴¹ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

pessimism and false stereotypes of some, the future outlook for the millennial generation is optimistic for Canada, North America, and the world.¹⁴²

The Millennial and Identity

The Canadian millennial is living in a cultural context of flux and rapid change. While emerging adults have always had to manage life transitions, millennials are surrounded by a dominant culture that adds to the confusion by becoming increasingly secular and unpredictable in the array of choices and options necessary to sift through during this already complex life stage. Identity exploration and a natural focus on self is part of the millennial's journey as they navigate the in-between.

Jeffery Arnett in *Emerging Adulthood* states that most identity exploration takes place in emerging adulthood rather than adolescence.¹⁴³ He provides three top criteria for adulthood: accepting responsibility for yourself, the ability to make independent decisions, and becoming financially independent.¹⁴⁴

Emerging adulthood is not considered to be a universal part of human development but is rather a life stage that is determined under certain conditions. It only occurs in certain cultures and is rather recent as a developmental phenomenon. The life stage of emerging adulthood exists wherever there is "a gap of at least several years between the time young people finish secondary school and the time they enter stable adult roles in love and work."¹⁴⁵ Millennials experience a significant amount of

¹⁴² Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

¹⁴³ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁴⁴ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁴⁵ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood* chap. 1, Kindle.

instability and uncertainty that can sometimes lead to what is referred to as a “quarter-life crisis” or simply, an identity crisis.¹⁴⁶ In fact, millennials value independence and self-determination, Michael Adams noted over two decades ago in his bestseller, *Sex in the Snow*, “My reading of Canadian values tells me that none has become more important in this country than autonomy.”¹⁴⁷ The unique identity and personhood of a millennial can take time to discover, particularly in the midst of an array of life transitions. Developing an identity can help determine direction for life and work as personal desires and priorities become increasingly clear.

There are some noteworthy characteristics of the millennial generation that apply to the majority of the cohort. One of those particular attributes is authenticity. In the pursuit of being authentic millennials hope to be courageous and daring in expressing their truth despite any potential push-back. In doing this, the desired outcome is to become a better version of themselves. They do not need to prove or strive but rather just be themselves: truly authentic.

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, author of *A Secular Age*, has called this time the “age of authenticity.”¹⁴⁸ Taylor defines the culture of authenticity as:

the understanding of life which emerges with the Romantic expressivism of the late-eighteenth century, that each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one’s own, as against

¹⁴⁶ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 7, Kindle.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Adams, *Sex in the Snow: Canadian Social Values at the End of the Millennium*, (Toronto, ON: Penguin Group, 1997), 144.

¹⁴⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), chap. 13, sec. 4, Kindle.

surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority.¹⁴⁹

Millennials have adopted Taylor's philosophy as their own. As a generation they desire that each individual realize his/her own humanity and "live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside."¹⁵⁰ Taylor advises millennials to look inward with a certain sense of self-focus.

Naturally, with the age of authenticity, there are practical consequences with respect to faith and religious conviction. Andrew Root comments that, in an age of authenticity, "to be bored is not simply unfortunate or unpleasant; it is to be oppressed, to be violently cornered and robbed of authenticity. We as individual selves are now responsible for our own spiritual journey, so if something is boring, it is worth abandoning."¹⁵¹ The 1960s were the beginning of the age of authenticity. At the time, "the church was accused of being boring, backward, and, worse, disingenuous."¹⁵² Root goes on to mention that the church was considered "a repressive cultural construction that served to keep people from authentically following their desires and shamed them for having these impulses."¹⁵³ With this view, they "presuppose that they are simply

¹⁴⁹ Brian C. Taylor, *Spirituality for Everyday Living: An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 475.

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *Spirituality for Everyday Living*, 475.

¹⁵¹ Andrew Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age: Responding to the Churches Obsession with Youthfulness*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 8, Kindle.

¹⁵² Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, 9.

¹⁵³ Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, 9.

imprisoned in their own subjective selves, limited to their biased interpretations of their own sense perceptions, unable to know the real truth of anything beyond themselves.”¹⁵⁴

As millennials turn inward to discover their personal authenticity and happiness they embrace “their leisure activities, music, the internet, and being by themselves.”¹⁵⁵ Sixty to seventy percent of Canadian millennials perceive freedom and relationships as paramount priorities along with the pursuit of a comfortable life and success.¹⁵⁶

Another noteworthy aspect of identity for the millennial is the favourable role of technology and how it relates to daily activity and relational intimacy. More than any other descriptor, millennials believe that “digital literacy/social media/the Internet” sets their generation apart from other generations.¹⁵⁷ Andy Crouch comments that technology “is in its proper place when it helps us bond with the real people we have been given to love. It’s out of its proper place when we end up bonding with people at a distance, like celebrities, whom we will never meet.”¹⁵⁸ Social media can enhance freedom and relationships, two areas valued by the millennial, or they can nudge users in the wrong direction. Crouch suggests “the art of living faithfully with technology is setting up better nudges for ourselves.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, chap. 2, Kindle.

¹⁵⁵ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁵⁶ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁵⁷ Bibby, *The Millennial Mosaic*, introduction, Kindle.

¹⁵⁸ Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2017), chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁵⁹ Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, introduction, Kindle.

The Millennial and The Church

The attendance at evangelical Canadian churches remains static due to the assimilation of new immigrants and the momentum they bring.¹⁶⁰ If it was not for the new life these new Canadians bring to the church, the church would be in serious decline. This decline of faith and church participation is “most significant among emerging adults” (ages 18-29).¹⁶¹ Although the phenomenon of emerging adult is a recent stage of development, all of the generational cohorts experience a similar phase. At this time in this cultural context, those who are currently emerging adults are also millennials. Currently, emerging adults are not only less involved in the church, but their commitment and participation tend to be less “toward a wide variety of other, nonreligious social and institutional connections, associations, and activities.”¹⁶²

Jeffrey Arnett in *Emerging Adulthood* tells the story of a young adult by the name of Charles. He grew up in an Episcopal church with his parents and stopped attending, as he described, when “I realized that I was not being encouraged to think for myself. And that has been my fundamental problem with certain forms of organized religion. It is not a matter of, ‘Take this service for what it is and integrate it into your own life for whatever it means to you.’ It is, literally, ‘This is black. This is white. Do this. Don’t do that.’ And I can’t hang with that.”¹⁶³ Charles’s attitude is representative of many emerging young adults. There is little appeal when participating “in a religious

¹⁶⁰ Stuebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *The Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁶¹ Stuebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *The Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁶² Stuebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *The Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁶³ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 9, Kindle.

institution, even a liberal one, requires them to abide by a certain set of beliefs and rules, and therefore constitutes an intolerable compromise of their individuality.”¹⁶⁴ There is also little appeal for religious services because they are in actuality “a collective rather than an individual expression of faith.”¹⁶⁵

The perception of the church as a place that is judgemental and dominated by burdensome rules is popular among emerging adults. Haydn Shaw tells the story of Katy Perry, who grew up as the daughter of a minister and began her music career in the Christian contemporary music scene. She said that “she liked to essentially cut and paste together her own religion — taking the nice, feel-good parts of the Bible and combining them with other religions and philosophies.”¹⁶⁶ Similar to Katy, Marcus Mumford, of Grammy-winning band Mumford and Sons told *Rolling Stone* that he would not call himself a Christian even though his parents are both pastors. He described his faith by explaining, “I think the word just conjures up all these religious images that I do not really like. I have my personal views about the person of Jesus and who he was.”¹⁶⁷ In an interview with *Big Issue*, he claimed that the band is “more about ‘faith’ than about ‘religion’.”¹⁶⁸

In his book, *The End of Religion*, Bruxy Cavey, writes, “Religion uses rules to force our steps, guilt to keep us in line, and rituals to remind us of our failure to live up to

¹⁶⁴ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 9, Kindle.

¹⁶⁵ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 9, Kindle.

¹⁶⁶ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 105, Kindle.

¹⁶⁷ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 105, Kindle.

¹⁶⁸ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 105, Kindle.

those rules. In doing this, religion adds more weight to those who are already burdened with life's hardships. But Jesus offers us the rest we're searching for."¹⁶⁹ Cavey goes on to encourage his readers to read the following words slowly and thoughtfully:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly (Matt. 11:28-30, MSG).¹⁷⁰

According to recent research, Kara Powell has concluded that in the same way millennials value relationships, young people desire “relational warmth”¹⁷¹ and in relationship with those who “know their name and model a life of faith.”¹⁷² She goes on to say that young adults aged 18 to 29 comprise 17 percent of the adult population but “that same age group represents less than ten percent of church attendees nationwide”¹⁷³.

George Barna and David Kinnaman of the Barna Group agree with Powell. They have heard “both from the unchurched and from local churches that are deeply engaged with the unchurched in their communities, that loving, genuine relationships are the only remaining currency readily exchanged between the churching and the churchless.”¹⁷⁴ They go on to emphasize that if “churches hope to grow their attendance numbers by discipling

¹⁶⁹ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Cavey, *The End of Religion*, 14.

¹⁷¹ Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁷² Powell, *Growing Young*, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁷³ Powell, *Growing Young*, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁷⁴ George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless: Understanding Today's Unchurched and How to Connect with Them Based on Surveys by Barna Group* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2014), 4, Kindle.

new believers, they must improve their ability to attract those who are intentionally avoiding a connection with a church.”¹⁷⁵

Kenda Creasy Dean, author of *Almost Christian*, is blunt about pointing people to the ultimate relationship, “the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as evidence of God’s love and power.”¹⁷⁶ She goes on to say that conversational Christianity requires Jesus-talk, not just God-talk. If talking about faith is something Christian teenagers seldom do, talking about Jesus is something they almost never do, which has crippling effects on Christian identity.¹⁷⁷ Dean believes that the absence of a vocabulary indicating a robust Christology, or any Christology, for that matter, has very troubling implications for the church.¹⁷⁸

As the church follows the model Christ set for it with His incarnation, there will be a light that will not simply flicker but ignite everything within its reach. Emil Brunner, the Swiss theologian, observed, “The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.”¹⁷⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor martyred by the Nazis, observed that “the church is the church only when it exists for others,” that is, for outsiders.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Barna and Kinnaman, *Churchless*, 9, Kindle.

¹⁷⁶ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), chap. 7, sec. 3, Kindle.

¹⁷⁷ Dean, *Almost Christian*, chap. 7, sec. 3, Kindle.

¹⁷⁸ Dean, *Almost Christian*, chap. 7, sec. 3, Kindle.

¹⁷⁹ Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), 110.

¹⁸⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer quoted in Barna and Kinnaman, *Churchless*, 4, Kindle.

Recent research has demonstrated that when interview participants were asked what makes their church effective with young people “nearly 60 percent named service practices, missional practices, or generally being outward oriented.”¹⁸¹ As millennials take a “do-it-yourself” attitude toward religion¹⁸² and perceive the church to be “homophobic,” “too judgemental,” and “too political,”¹⁸³ a “missional imagination calls us to rethink the nature of the church and the relationship we expect young people to have with Christianity.”¹⁸⁴ The church is an outpost of ministry in the world. It is “the very location of Jesus Christ; it is the energy to turn death into life and make us new beings who have our being and action in and through ministry.”¹⁸⁵

In *The Emerging Church, Millennials, and Religion*, Steven M. Studebaker and Lee Beach explore emerging churches in Canada in their chapter “From Monks to Punks: Emerging Christianity in Canada.”¹⁸⁶ They consider three key theological ideas that shape emerging churches in Canada.¹⁸⁷

First, these churches reflect a move from Christendom to post-Christendom and offer a model for thinking about how the Christian faith relates to a culture that is increasingly post-Christian.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸¹ Powell, *Growing Young*, chap. 7, Kindle.

¹⁸² Studebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁸³ Randall Reed and G. Michael Zbaraschuk, "Introduction," in *The Emerging Church, Millennials, and Religion*, vol. 1, *Prospects and Problems*, ed. Randall Reed and G. Michael Zbaraschuk (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), introduction, Kindle.

¹⁸⁴ Dean, *Almost Christian*, chap. 4, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁸⁵ Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, 201, Kindle.

¹⁸⁶ Studebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁸⁷ Studebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁸⁸ Studebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

Second, incarnational ministry offers an approach to ministry that has urban and rural ramifications.¹⁸⁹

Third, holistic spirituality affirms the goodness of God's creation and all areas of life are the arena of discipleship. These theological convictions promote a vision for Christian life and ministry that offers a counter narrative to the secularization and privatization of religion that is the overriding narrative of current Canadian life.¹⁹⁰

Beach and Studebaker emphasize the incarnation for churches on the rise in Canada as it "speaks to the very nature of God's redemptive activity in history." Darrell Guder has been known to ask the question: "We must ask, are our missional institutions, our churches and organizations, incarnational?"¹⁹¹

The incarnation has everything to do with being the church. It "makes personhood forever the entrance into the transcendent encounter of the divine with the human. To be 'in Christ' is not to be magical but to be a person who shares in personhood."¹⁹²

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, in *The Shaping of Things to Come*, articulate the heartbeat of the church. They describe the church as relentlessly following the model Christ has offered:

The missional church is incarnational, not attractional, in its ecclesiology. By incarnational we mean it does not create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don't yet know him.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Studebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁹⁰ Studebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁹¹ Studebaker and Beach, "Monks to Punks," *Emerging Church*, chap. 6, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁹² Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, 142.

¹⁹³ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 25, Kindle.

Kenda Creasy Dean echoes Frost and Hirsch by affirming the “root of the church’s missionary identity” is as “one who is ‘sent’ ... across boundaries – crossing every human boundary imaginable in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.”¹⁹⁴

The Millennial and Spiritual Development

The revolution of Jesus is in the first place and continuously a revolution of the human heart or spirit.¹⁹⁵ This is evident in the life of a monk who was motivated by his love for Christ which surpassed education, position and wealth.

Fifteen centuries ago a young man turned his back on his studies and on the worldly city of Rome and ventured forth into the Italian countryside in search of something more important than education, more valuable than position, and more precious than wealth. Motivated by a force whose power surpassed any of these, this young man was driven by his quest for God. As he searched, his wisdom, understanding, and compassion grew. Others on the same quest gathered around him. He guided them and they learned from him. He pointed the way to Christ through the Gospels. His name was Benedict of Nursia.¹⁹⁶

Benedict of Nursia, St. Benedict, is considered the father of Western monasticism. He is known for fleeing Rome to pursue the love of Christ in the southern mountains of Italy. He set himself apart in a cave for three years and later founded twelve monasteries —most famously Monte Cassino¹⁹⁷ — each with twelve monks. As part of leading and overseeing those monks and monasteries, he crafted the Benedictine Rule. This Rule

¹⁹⁴ Dean, *Almost Christian*, chap. 4, sec. 2, Kindle.

¹⁹⁵ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 15, Kindle.

¹⁹⁶ Jane Tomaine, *St. Benedict’s Toolbox: The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living*, 2nd ed (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), preface, Kindle.

¹⁹⁷ Wyatt North, *The Life and Prayers of Saint Benedict* (Boston, MA: Wyatt North Publishing, 2013), 9, Kindle.

remains a gift to the church across the globe and could benefit the soul formation of the millennial in the twenty-first century.

The Benedictine Vows were developed for the benefit of monks living in Italy but today they provide a framework for living out faith in a distracted world that is often fast-paced and frenzied. It is a reminder of the beautiful words that beckon in Psalm 46:10 “Cease striving and know that I am God.” Being still and looking to God is life changing. In the Benedictine Vows the framework is what can be considered the core of the Rule.

The Benedictine Vows: The Core of the Rule

When men and women commit to religious life under the Benedictine Rule, they take three vows that convey the core of the Rule. The vows are:

Stability: to remain present and faithful to people and place. For a nun or a monk under Benedictine Rule, this vow was meant to remain in a particular monastic community. Today, for us, it can be considered a call to remain where we are and to find grace in that relationship, place, or situation. Esther de Waal explains that the basic reality of life reflected in the call to stability is “the fact that you must learn to live with your fellow brethren [or sisters], those to whom you are committed.”

Obedience: to listen and respond to God’s direction coming through people and the situations of life. It is listening to what God is saying in all aspects of life and responding to what we hear.

Conversion of Life (Conversatio): to remain open to transformation. While stability calls us to remain, conversion of life calls us to change and to grow, to be transformed by the Spirit. Conversion of life is made possible by a quality of openness that enables God to change our hearts.¹⁹⁸

The Benedictine Rule, now often referred to as the Rule of Life, was intended to direct and guide the monks in their devotion to Christ within a community context. It was to help them arrange their monastic activities in such a way as to find light in the

¹⁹⁸ Tomaine, *St. Benedict’s Toolbox*, sec. 2, Kindle.

darkness, to foster a fervency in their faith. John Ortberg describes it this way, “Following Jesus simply means learning from him how to arrange my life around activities that enable me to live in the fruit of the Spirit.”¹⁹⁹

During the reign of Constantine in the early fourth century, many Christians were weakening in their devotion to Christ and Benedict fled Rome as a result. In the same way today, there is a call and desperate need in the church and among young leaders to go deeper. As Richard Foster writes, “The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”²⁰⁰ Benedict must have in part been attempting to flee the temptation resultant from his naturally rebellious nature when he retreated to a cave in southern Italy. However, he was most assuredly more in pursuit than fleeing — he was pursuing freedom for his soul with a spiritual intimacy in Christ. He was seeking the love of Christ in solitude. James Houston reflects on how spiritual freedom was understood, saying, “Freedom was viewed in a radically different way: not as the liberty to do what we want but as freedom from things — from death, from sin, from self, indeed from our own secular skepticism — to love, to obey God and to show love for others.”²⁰¹ This type of freedom far exceeds any form of cultural freedom suggested by secular humanism today. Joseph Stowell says, “Stepping into a deepening experience with Jesus is something more than keeping short accounts

¹⁹⁹ John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, exp. ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 44.

²⁰⁰ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 3rd ed (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 1.

²⁰¹ James M. Houston, *Joyful Exiles: Life of Christ on the Dangerous Edge of Things* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), chap. 2, Kindle.

with sin in our lives. It's beyond that. It is about getting far enough beyond self that we can see Him more clearly and desire Him more completely."²⁰²

Cultivating intimacy or close relationship with Christ is largely about what Benedict refers to as "obedience" in his Rule. It is becoming good listeners. It is listening to what God is saying in all aspects of life and responding to what is heard. Regarding the purpose of spiritual disciplines, Richard Foster writes "We must always remember that the path does not produce the change; it only places us where the change can occur. This is the path of disciplined grace."²⁰³

A Rule of Life is embraced with the heart of remaining centered on Christ in a world that is relentless with distractions and temptation to woo the heart and its affection. Esther De Waal expresses her experience engaging the Rule in her own life: "I can say two things about the Rule of St. Benedict. It is all about love. It points me to Christ."²⁰⁴ If the Rule of Saint Benedict or any other rule, guide, framework, or pattern is about anything other than supporting a love relationship with Christ, it can quickly become burdensome and exhausting rather than energizing and life-giving.

Alan Hirsch makes a comment related to faith and the invitation to relationship:

The invitation from God is always an invitation to relationship, not an invitation to the "right way" of adhering to rules and regulations. We fall into danger when we slip into idolatry, esteeming religious rules above relating to the living God. Reductionism happens when we make following God anything less than

²⁰² Joe Stowell, *Simply Jesus*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2002), chap. 2, Kindle.

²⁰³ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 8.

²⁰⁴ Esther De Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 38.

relationship with him. We need to understand that love (for God as well as for others) and relationships really matter.²⁰⁵

Disciplines of grace or spiritual practices lead to a divine encounter with the love of Christ. The Rule leads to the relationship. When Benedict walked into his cave, it is likely he entered a world of hope, eternal perspective and love that far surpassed his physical environment — like Lucy Pevensie in the *Chronicles of Narnia* walking through a magical wardrobe in the Professor's old house only to enter into the magical and wondrous forest of Narnia.

The invitation for Christian millennials in Canada is to walk through the proverbial wardrobe by turning away from self-reliance and personal pursuits of happiness with a turn towards God who has something far greater for them. John Ortberg asserts, “True joy, as it turns out, comes only to those who have devoted their lives to something greater than personal happiness.”²⁰⁶ The pursuit of something greater takes effort that God is eager to bless.

One of the most significant challenges of millennial Christians in Canada is to learn how to live within a cultural reality that will not allow them to feel at home. The truth is that in choosing Jesus, they are now in exile from their culture and peers, surrounded by mounting pressure to conform and to cease loving and living for Christ. In the midst of this there is an opportunity to cultivate disciplines of grace and embrace contemplative practices to open doors of spiritual intimacy with Christ. Spiritual practices can open windows of fresh air and vitality for the soul. Richard Foster affirms this when

²⁰⁵ Alan Hirsch and Mark Nelson, *Reframation: Seeing God, People and Mission Through Reenchanted Frames* (Snellville, GA: 100 Movements Publishing, 2019), chap. 1 sec. 1, Kindle.

²⁰⁶ Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, 68.

he says, “God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us.”²⁰⁷ They provide a reminder as to who humanity was created to love and worship. They call those engaged in these practices back to the Garden where they were created as masterpieces. James K. A. Smith contends “we are ‘lovers’ at our core, people whose lives are oriented by our ultimate longings and desires, by what we worship.”²⁰⁸

The distractions are everywhere. Drifting will lead to de-centering faith commitments. Being human means it is easy to quickly forget God’s activity in the world. Joan D. Chittister offers the reminder that “Benedictine prayer is designed to enable people to realize that God is in the world around them.”²⁰⁹ Practicing prayer, meditating on Scripture, and living rhythms of rest all lead to the compelling love of Christ which conforms people into His image. It sustains them and it reflects God’s beauty to others. Ken Shigematsu states that when “Christ is at the center of our lives, our primary ambition becomes incomparably greater. We long to know Christ deeply and honor his call to transform our broken world so that it reflects the justice and beauty of God’s kingdom.”²¹⁰ A rule of life can foster spiritual rhythms that awaken individuals to the love of Christ that surrounds them. “Ultimately the whole meaning and purpose of the

²⁰⁷ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 7.

²⁰⁸ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 54.

²⁰⁹ Joan D. Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from The Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1990), 28, Kindle.

²¹⁰ Shigematsu, *Survival Guide for the Soul*, 40, Kindle.

Rule is simply ‘Prefer nothing to the love of Christ.’”²¹¹ Christ desires each person’s full self. He wants to be in the very center of each of their lives. C.S. Lewis articulates this desire of Christ to have all of those who follow Him so that they can experience all of Him:

Christ says, “Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don’t want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked — the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.”²¹²

The practice of a Rule of Life provides stability by staying steadfast where one is placed with the hope of discovering God’s sufficient grace. Christ can work through relational commitments and rootedness. A rule can also foster the art of listening and enable the participant to be open to change and transformation.

Conclusion

In the strong Canadian currents of secularism and the national tides of plurality, there needs to be a spiritual intentionality for the Christian. If the millennial swims in the midst of these tides and currents without fighting against them, they will drift along with the culture no matter how much they think they are standing their ground. In the same way that a life plan is effective to find forward momentum with life and work, a spiritual plan and rhythm of life will bear fruit for the emerging young adult. Canadian millennials will benefit from practicing a Rule of Life. They will flourish by learning to be still,

²¹¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London, England: CrossReach Publications, 2014), chap. 4, Kindle.

²¹² Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 39, Kindle.

listening, and encountering the loving presence of Christ. By living out the spiritual rhythms of a Rule of Life, the Christian millennial will experience the outpouring of the presence of joy in Christ. Deliberately keeping Christ in the center of life and leadership renovates the heart and reignites a renewal fueled by faith, hope, and love. Stephen Macchia assures the millennial Christian, “A rule of life allows us to clarify our deepest values, our most important relationships, our most authentic hopes and dreams, our most meaningful work, our highest priorities. It allows us to live with intention and purpose in the present moment.”²¹³

Millennials desire authenticity, strong identity, and personal freedom in their pursuit of fulfillment. All of these can be discovered by having an intimate encounter with Jesus Christ. A person is never truer, as uniquely themselves, and whole as a human being than when they are able to return to their Creator and discover their divine purpose. David Benner says, “Paradoxically, as we become more and more like Christ we become more uniquely our own true self.”²¹⁴

²¹³ Stephen A. Macchia, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), introduction, Kindle.

²¹⁴ David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 16, Kindle.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

Project Review and Methodology

The aim of this thesis project was to address the perceived lack of Christocentric leadership development among millennials of Canadian church congregations with over one thousand people in attendance.

In response to this problem, the researcher studied Christ-centered formation and early church discipleship, and reviewed literature related to the uniqueness of the millennial cohort as it relates to leadership development. The researcher also carried out a qualitative study comparing two different cases with whom the researcher interviewed and then completed a cross-case analysis. The two church leaders were selected in light of their proven effectiveness and track record in Canada engaging and equipping young adults in large and influential Canadian congregations. This collective case study was able to compare two churches that shared the following commonalities: an effective engagement with the millennial cohort, consistent focus on Christ through preaching and teaching, an outward posture towards their city, Canada, and the world, an engagement with urban compassion and social justice issues that are relevant, and a heart to reach out to the surrounding culture and world with a holistic gospel. Millennial volunteer leaders within this collective case study were identified by their active influence and engagement in serving their churches.

Three millennial specialists were also selected for interviews to further explore the millennial cohort in Canada and the unique challenges and opportunities for leadership development and spiritual formation. Their responses were reviewed and considered with each of the case studies and within the cross-case analysis.

A thematic analysis was conducted from the two open-ended questions in the millennial surveys and the transcribed millennial interviews. This involved coding all the data inductively as themes presented themselves, using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Once all themes were listed, they were narrowed into seven key themes, into which all the identified themes from the last two questions of the surveys, and from the transcribed notes of the millennial interviews were able to fit into with ease. Similarly, a separate thematic analysis was conducted for the church leaders and millennial specialists. Each of the seven millennial leader themes were reviewed against the literature, as well as against the interview themes pulled from the church leaders and millennial specialists' interviews, to determine which themes referenced by the experts were reflected in the perceptions of millennial leaders in the church.

Qualitative Collective Case Study

This project is a qualitative collective case study. Two Canadian churches with Sunday attendance over one thousand people and a strong representation of millennials and millennial lay leaders were selected. These two churches are influential nationally and share significant similarities in their Christ-centered message, generous mission to love others, and compassionate posture towards those outside faith.

Paul Leedy and Jeanne Ormrod explain that researchers “study two or more cases – often cases that are either similar or different in certain key ways – to make comparisons, build theory, or propose generalizations; such an approach is called a

multiple or collective case study.”²¹⁵ The authors go on to say that in some cases, “The researcher has had personal experience related to the phenomenon in question and wants to gain a better understanding of the experiences of others. By looking at multiple perspectives on the same situation, the researcher can then make some generalizations of what something is like from an insider’s perspective.”²¹⁶ The researcher took an inductive approach with the coding process to see what patterns would emerge from the interviews and surveys with the millennial leaders in the collective case study. The questions crafted for the interviews and online survey were informed by the literature review.

Description of Field Data Sources

The primary data from this study consisted of two interviews with the senior pastors of the collective study case, three interviews with millennial specialists who had professional competency and experience engaging with Canadian millennials, fourteen interviews with the millennial leaders within the collective case study, and thirty-seven responses from the online survey given to millennial leaders who were actively serving in areas of influence and responsibility within the collective case study.

Online Survey

There were clear requirements for millennial leaders who completed the online survey. They each agreed that they met the following requirements: considered within the millennial cohort (born between 1981-2001 and within the age range of 18-38), consistent participation with their local church (at least monthly), actively serve in a role

²¹⁵ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 8th ed (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 18, Kindle.

²¹⁶ Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 141, Kindle.

of influence beyond Sunday morning worship attendance, and articulate a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and affirm that he was historically crucified, buried, and raised from the dead.

Staff from each church were asked to identify millennial leaders who met these requirements and obtain their permission to be contacted by email to complete the online survey. A template email was provided to the staff to minimize the work required on their part to make these requests. Each church was asked to provide names and email addresses of twenty millennial leaders to the researcher. Tenth Church provided twenty-one respondents and The Meeting House provided sixteen respondents.

Respondents were informed that their identities would be kept confidential in the reporting of the results. The commitment to confidentiality was intended to reduce the risk of answers being influenced by the respondents' concerns for their reputation or perception of them from the researcher or others reading the results of the research. The millennial leaders were not compensated for their participation; however, as an expression of gratitude they were placed in a draw with other respondents for one of two \$100 Amazon gift cards.

The survey required about ten minutes to complete and was broken out into five sections with three main parts of core survey questions. The first section was general information to be used for cross-case analysis, followed by the second section and the first core section "Part One: Jesus and You." This section focused on the relationship of the respondent and his/her relationship with Christ. The third section was the second core section, "Part Two: Jesus and Others," which focused on the relationship of the respondent and their relationship with others. The fourth section was the third core

section “Part Three: Jesus and Leadership” which focused on the relationship of the respondent and their Christian influence. The fifth section was two additional open-ended questions in addition to the twenty-one core questions that made up the online survey. The format of the online survey can be found in the Appendix.

Interviews

Three sets of interview questions were developed for this project. The first set was for the two senior pastors of the collective case study. The second set was presented to the three millennial specialists, to be used as secondary data during the analysis of the results gathered from the participating churches. The third set was used with fourteen volunteer millennial leaders who had already completed the online survey from within the collective case study. The millennial leaders were chosen from the online survey group for the purpose of consistency of findings and to minimize the amount of work required by the church staff in recruiting millennial leaders from their community. Each set of interviews presented questions that overlapped with the other two sets in order to draw out commonalities and differences in experience and perspective by focusing on the role each interviewee group plays in the leadership of millennials.

Church Leaders in the Collective Case Study

Case Study One: Ken Shigematsu and Tenth Church

Tenth Church is located in the heart of Vancouver, British Columbia, and is associated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) denomination in Canada. Tenth Church has been serving the community for approaching eighty-five years. It started as a small group praying for God to work in Vancouver in 1935. The original members started meeting at a dance saloon known as Forresters Hall. The church community had a strong evangelistic impulse to reach out to the city from the very

beginning. Land was purchased on the corner of Tenth Avenue and Ontario in 1938 and the church building remains there to this day.

Tenth was active in international missions early on as a young movement. In the 1950s there were a thousand people attending and it was a vibrant congregation. But across the decades beginning in the 1960s the church started to decline. Ken Shigematsu was hired as Senior Pastor in 1996 during a time when the church was struggling and had “cycled through about 20 pastors in 20 years.”²¹⁷ Shigematsu was able to bring new life and fresh vision to a church that needed a rebirth. Shigematsu is originally from Tokyo, Japan, although he was raised in Canada since he was eight years old. Shigematsu brought a global perspective into the dominantly Caucasian aging community when he was hired. Through Shigematsu’s passion to welcome people from diverse backgrounds, Tenth Church has re-emerged as “a more multicultural, multigenerational church with a strong commitment to pointing people to Christ who do not necessarily have a Christian or religious background, a commitment to practicing spiritual disciplines drawn from around the world and across church history.”²¹⁸ There is a collective hunger at Tenth Church for spiritual transformation and social justice with a heart for people that are vulnerable from Vancouver to Cambodia and further around the world. The community at Tenth have sent numerous missionaries around the world and have been instrumental in planting several C&MA churches.

²¹⁷ Ken Shigematsu, interview by author via telephone, Vancouver, December 17, 2019.

²¹⁸ Shigematsu, Interview.

Today, Tenth Church has a weekly Sunday worship attendance of approximately two thousand people between its five sites in four venues with the majority of the community worshipping in the main building at Tenth and Ontario.

Case Study Two: Bruxy Cavey and The Meeting House

The Meeting House is located in Oakville, Ontario, and is associated with the Be In Christ Church of Canada (BIC) denomination. The Meeting House has been in existence for approximately thirty-four years. It started as a BIC (known as Brethren in Christ at the time) church plant in 1986 by Craig Sider. The church, which at the time was named Upper Oaks Community Church, grew to about 150 people and then it leveled off. “Craig's dream from the beginning was to allow the church to grow to a larger size”²¹⁹ and he knew that was not his calling, so he moved on to make room for the church leadership to search for their next pastor. Bruxy Cavey was contacted to consider an internship and he accepted the invitation. He described his encounter with the denomination as a “where have you been all my life?”²²⁰ experience.

Cavey started at The Meeting House as the only pastor with the title of Teaching Pastor. He was on his own from a staff perspective but served with a supportive team of elders who shared the plurality of leadership. The church community had an evangelistic impulse which contributed to its rapid growth. About five years into Cavey’s leadership, The Meeting House had grown to about a thousand attendees, and a Senior Pastor was hired to help the church organize itself.

²¹⁹ Bruxy Cavey, interview by author via telephone, Vancouver, December 12, 2019.

²²⁰ Cavey, Interview.

Today, The Meeting House has a weekly Sunday worship attendance of approximately five thousand people across twenty sites throughout Ontario, Canada.

The same twenty-one questions were asked in the interviews to the two church leaders. The interviews in their entirety were effective in gaining a better understanding of each church and each leader, however the following seven questions provided the most significant qualitative data for the purposes of this project:

1. What is your personal impression and perspective on the millennial cohort as a generation? I'm defining millennials as young adults born between 1981 and 2001.
2. How do the spiritual questions of the millennial generation differ from other generations?
3. How do you consider the millennial cohort in your ministry and preaching?
4. What do you think is the most effective way to develop millennials?
5. What would you say are the possibilities and prospects for the millennial cohort?
6. Any sense of why millennials would be attracted to your church?
7. Why would millennials potentially leave your church?

Millennial Leaders in the Collective Case Study

The millennial leaders who were interviewed were respondents to the online survey and therefore met the following criteria:

1. Considered within the millennial cohort (born between 1981-2001 and within the age range of 18-38).
2. Consistent participation with their local church (at least monthly).
3. Actively serve in a role of influence beyond Sunday morning worship attendance.
4. Articulate a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and affirm that he was historically crucified, buried and raised from the dead.

From the 37 respondents to the online survey, 35 were willing to be contacted to schedule a phone interview to complete more detailed questions. Those respondents were invited to schedule interviews with a maximum of seven interviewees scheduled per church community.

Seven respondents were interviewed from Tenth Church and from The Meeting House respectively. Each of these fourteen millennial leaders answered the same seven

questions, which were provided to them in advance for review. These questions, which provided valuable insights, were:

1. Describe your day to day interaction with technology.
2. How would you describe your daily experience with Christ?
3. How do the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount inform your Christian life?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your local church community?
5. Do you have a Rule of Life? If so, what does it look like and how has it shaped your life?
6. What role has family, friends and mentors played in your life when it comes to your faith formation?
7. Describe your personal experience with anxiety (feeling troubled or uneasy about actual or potential problems).

Millennial Specialists as Secondary Data Source for Collective Case Study

The three millennial specialists selected for interviews were Joel Thiessen, Karyn Gordon, and John McAuley. Each of their areas of expertise revolve around the millennial cohort in Canada, however they vary significantly in terms of the capacity in which each of them experience, study, and support millennials in their unique challenges and opportunities of leadership development and spiritual formation. As such, the questions each of the three millennial specialists were asked varied somewhat, unlike the church leaders or the millennial leaders themselves who all were asked the same questions as their counterparts. Their responses have been reviewed and considered as secondary data with each of the case studies and within the cross-case analysis.

Millennial Specialist: Joel Thiessen

Joel Thiessen is a Professor of Sociology in the Department of Behavioral Science at Ambrose University in Calgary, Alberta. He also serves as the Director of the Flourishing Congregations Institute which researches and examines signs of life and vitality in Canadian churches. Additionally, he has written *The Millennial Mosaic* with

his Ambrose University colleague Monetta Bailey and with Reginald Bibby from the University of Lethbridge.

In Thiessen's interview he was asked fifteen questions. In particular, these five questions provided significant insight:

1. Looking at the Canadian millennial leader in the church, what do you think contributes to their development and growth?
2. In placing Christ as someone who is central to their life and priorities, do you see any unique challenges for the millennial?
3. Given your experiences with congregations, are there any spiritual practices you think would be helpful for the Canadian millennial?
4. What do you see as the greatest challenge for the Canadian church when it comes to engaging the millennial?
5. What is the greatest opportunity for the Canadian church when it comes to engaging the millennial?

Millennial Specialist: John McAuley

John McAuley is the CEO and President of Muskoka Woods. Muskoka Woods is a Christian sports resort that draws economically privileged kids to engage a high impact camp. For the vast majority of guests who attend Muskoka Woods, the camp is their single source of community spiritual influence. As part of his role, McAuley has led The Leadership Studio for the past decade, which develops their millennial camp staff and over 50 different Christian leader groups or ministries. He is also a co-author of the book *Elastic Morality: Leading Young Adults in Our Age of Acceptance*.

In McAuley's interview he was asked sixteen questions. The following five questions provided particularly significant insights:

1. How significant would you say is the interaction of technology with millennials?
2. How are the views of marriage relationships and sexuality different for millennials, compared to other generations?
3. Do you observe any Canadian distinctives with millennial leaders, particularly in relationship to Americans?
4. Do you observe a heightened level of anxiety with millennials compared to other generations?

5. What do you see as the role of faith and religion in the life of the average Canadian millennial? Do you see a hunger for spirituality?

Millennial Specialist: Karyn Gordon

Karyn Gordon is CEO and Co-Founder of DK Leadership, a global leadership coaching company that works with leaders of companies, businesses, and families with a focus on leadership development. She has her Master's Degree in Counseling and a Doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy. Gordon is a media personality who addresses various issues relevant to millennials and has also authored *Dr. Karyn's Guide To The Teen Years*, which was published in 2008 and was specifically focused on millennials.

Gordan was asked twelve questions in her interview, however, her responses to these five questions provided particularly significant insights:

1. How would you say the views of marriage, relationships and sexuality are different for millennials compared to other generations?
2. How would you say millennials value influence and leadership?
3. What is the most effective way to develop a millennial leader?
4. Do you observe a heightened level of anxiety with millennials compared to other generations?
5. What do you see as the role of faith and religion in the life of the average Canadian millennial?

Collection and Analysis Methods

Survey Collection and Analysis Methods

Each online survey respondent received an email with a link to the survey for completion by computer, tablet, or smartphone. The survey began with a place to click to confirm consent of participation and use of data without disclosure of their identity. Once the data was collected, reports were exported to review the number and percentage of responses. The open text field responses for ethnicity and church attending were bucketed prior to export. In addition, crosstab data results were pulled for all survey responses to view responses by gender, by church attended, and by ethnicity to identify variables that

potentially impacted responses by respondents. The final two questions on the survey which were open-ended were data coded into seven different coding groups to identify key themes that arose from the responses. These seven coding groups were gathered through inductive research converting the raw, qualitative data into these naturally emerging categories.

Interview Collection and Analysis Methods

Interviews were all conducted by telephone or computer using Zoom audio conferencing technology. Once a date and time was set for each interview, the interviewees were individually sent dial in and log in details for the call so they could join the call via telephone, tablet, or computer. In addition, each interviewee was sent an electronic version of a consent form to sign using electronic signatures through DocuSign. All interviews were audio recorded, which was disclosed in writing during the scheduling process. Once interviews were completed, they were sent out for human transcription to ensure the highest possible level of accuracy. Upon receiving the transcribed interviews back, the researcher listened to each recording with the transcript open and edited the transcript for any outstanding errors.

The interviews with the church leaders and millennial specialists were scheduled and conducted by the researcher directly and each took approximately forty-five to sixty minutes to conduct. The interviews with the millennial leaders were scheduled and conducted by hired interviewers, using the seven-question script provided by the researcher. The researcher sent the consent form to the interviewees directly, and the hired interviewers used the researcher's Zoom account details for all interviews and recording. The researcher sent the recordings to transcription and listened to them with the transcripts for correction himself for the millennial leaders as well.

All interviews were reviewed to identify common themes within each interview and then cross-case analysis was completed between same types of interviews and ultimately compared across all data and research. After reviewing the analyzed data from the interviews, they were analyzed against the survey results. It was from this combination of analysis and cross-analysis that the findings were identified.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS FOR COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

This collective case study required multiple sections of data observation to be reviewed prior to providing overall findings. The process undertaken was that data observations of both the church leader and the millennial leaders were reviewed as two case studies: Tenth Church and The Meeting House. These separate cases were also reviewed through a cross-case analysis by type of interviewee, and then reviewed overall with the integrated observations of the secondary data of the millennial specialists' interviews to determine findings for this project.

Data Observations from Church Leader Interviews

Case Study: Tenth Church

Ken Shigematsu immigrated to Canada with his family as a child. By the time he was in his teen years, he had actively chosen a rebellious path for his life. His father's efforts to scare him straight were unsuccessful, until he took Shigematsu to a Christian youth conference where he heard about Jesus in a way that his youthful mind could understand. This was the beginning of his spiritual journey in pursuit of "that greater, fuller life"²²¹ which he wanted for himself.

Shigematsu has worked in the corporate world, planted a church in Southern California, earned his doctorate of ministry from San Francisco Theological Seminary,

²²¹ Shigematsu, Interview.

published two books on spiritual formation and leadership, and has been leading the Tenth Church community for over two decades.

Reflective of Shigematsu's journey, the five core values of the church are relating to God, relying on God's Spirit, raising disciples, reconciliation, and reaching out. The church he has rebuilt is committed to pointing people to Christ even if they do not have a Christian background. One of the ways Tenth achieves that is through biblical social justice; that is, advocating on behalf of the vulnerable.

The Tenth community is multicultural and multigenerational. The demographics of the church closely mimic the demographics of the city in which it is located: Vancouver, British Columbia. Shigematsu shared that Vancouver has been described as "the most Asian city in the world outside of Asia."²²² There is a broad range of ages within the Tenth community as well; Shigematsu estimates that about half of the community and volunteers are millennials.

Shigematsu's personal impression and perspective on the millennial cohort as a generation is that they care deeply about justice and intolerance. Unfairness or prejudice of any kind is abhorred by the cohort in Shigematsu's opinion. He also identified that they experience a fair amount of anxiety. Shigematsu believes this anxiety is primarily future driven – anxiety about the future of politics, climate change, the planet's sustainability, and their own financial security.

According to Shigematsu, spiritual questions of the millennial generation differ from other generations in that preceding generations felt religious affiliation was

²²² Shigematsu, Interview.

important. He observes that millennials do not value Christianity and religious affiliation of any kind is simply not considered by them to be beneficial. Millennials, according to Shigematsu, want connection through relationship. They are a lonely generation who want to be marked by living a life that is meaningful. In this vein, they are more likely to be connected to a cause or group that focuses on justice or making the world a better place rather than religion. They are more inclined to take “a kind of smorgasbord approach to spirituality ... drawing on maybe the best of religions or philosophies in ways that previous generations might not have felt as comfortable with.”²²³

In response to the question of how he considers the millennial cohort in his ministry and preaching, Shigematsu believes he does this intuitively. His personal values of being authentic and real aligns well with that same value held by the millennial cohort who does not value hierarchy or titles in others. Shigematsu’s perception is that millennials have less trust in the Bible’s inerrancy, and so his approach of preaching with Scripture and also looking outside of Scripture or even to secular resources to corroborate Scripture connects well with millennials.

Shigematsu believes that the most effective way to develop millennials is “to basically follow Jesus’s style.”²²⁴ He also believes it is important to “engage in personal, relational, whole life and ideally lifelong kind of leadership development and mentoring.”²²⁵ Shigematsu points out that the millennial cohort had less parental attention from their boomer parents being primarily two income homes and being the first

²²³ Shigematsu, Interview.

²²⁴ Shigematsu, Interview.

²²⁵ Shigematsu, Interview.

generation of children to live through such high rates of divorce. These factors, Shigematsu suggests, may explain why millennials value being seen and finding real connection. He said it succinctly when he said “many young people have experienced a relationship deficit.”²²⁶ Furthermore Shigematsu referenced that the plethora of social media in the lives of this cohort is in significant contrast to the amount of in-person connection and relationship they have received.

Shigematsu is optimistic about the possibilities and prospects for the millennial cohort, saying they are more socially conscious than previous generations and as such have the potential to drive right action such as slowing climate change or bringing an end to trafficking and slavery. This generation, according to Shigematsu, is also well poised to overcome prejudices such as those that still exist against women, ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQ community.

Given who Shigematsu understands the millennial cohort to be, he believes they are attracted to Tenth Church because of the ring of authenticity in the teaching, the church’s commitment to truth, the welcoming and inviting culture, the church’s commitment to social justice, and Shigematsu’s natural style of communication from the platform. These are all areas that meet needs or values of this group within the community.

In contrast, the reasons millennials leave Tenth Church, from Shigematsu’s observations, have been overall disenchantment with institutional religion and the church at large, as well as the large size of Tenth’s community. Some millennials, in their pursuit

²²⁶ Shigematsu, Interview.

of connection, are looking for a community that is smaller and more intimate. Shigematsu points out the church is trying to address this challenge of being a larger church through three specific areas: life groups, soul trios, and coaching people to engage in some form of spiritual direction.

Case Study: The Meeting House

Bruxy Cavey is the youngest child in his family of five, born after the tragic death of his oldest brother. As such, he was born into a family who would forever be grieving a loss he did not personally experience. His family was strong in their Christian faith, but in his teen and young adult years Cavey became skeptical of Christianity and was open to other religions or even atheism. He sought the truth, knowing it was out there. Through this journey he rediscovered Jesus, making his faith truly his own, not unlike seekers or those returning to faith who The Meeting House tends to attract.

Cavey moved into theological studies simply for personal education, after completing his undergraduate degree in psychology. He was not anticipating becoming a pastor, however that time working on his master's degree planted in him a love of learning and theology that continues into the present day. Before becoming a pastor at a Fellowship Baptist church at the age of 26, Cavey worked for World Vision and performed mime as a street evangelist. He has published two books focused on the irreligious life of Jesus and His love for those who are the least of these. He has been pastoring at The Meeting House for over twenty years and has led the growth of the church to over five thousand weekly attendees across twenty sites.

When asked about the core values of The Meeting House, Cavey spoke about the denominational focus of being Jesus-centric, having a Sermon on the Mount ethic, and

seeing Jesus as God's ultimate revelation. These three areas drive their core values of peace, simplicity, and community.

The Meeting House has seen multiple transitions in their demographics over the years. At one time they were attracting so many young adults that they needed to focus more on being a place to welcome families and spiritual mentors in later life stages. This was done successfully and currently there is a good balance between the various ages and stages. However Cavey acknowledged that if attention is not given to continuing to draw in the young adult population, the church could be at risk of aging in its demographics. As a result, the leadership team pays close attention to the young adult population.

A notable trait of The Meeting House is that while they have large attendance for Sunday services, their focus is on the approximate 200 home churches that are part of The Meeting House family and spread across southern Ontario. The house church movement is what they see as core church – where smaller groups gather to talk, pray, eat, serve, and experience life together.

Cavey's personal impression and perspective on the millennial cohort as a generation is that while stereotypes have some truth in them, many of the millennials with whom he is connecting are the exception to those stereotypes. The stereotypes to which he referred include millennials being "privileged, entitled and therefore not as resilient and not as dedicated to do the hard work that is this thing, a thing called life."²²⁷ The exceptions he has experienced are deeply dedicated to discipleship – both their own and that of their peers.

²²⁷ Cavey, Interview.

The spiritual questions of the millennial generation, according to Cavey, do not differ substantially from those of other generations. He acknowledged that previous generations, when they were in the life stage of young adulthood, were also asking questions that millennials are asking while in their young adulthood stage, questions about sex, relationships, career, and making a difference. A recent poll done within the young adult ministry at The Meeting House indicated that this group wanted to hear more teaching on sex, relationships, career, the purpose of life, and creation care. Creation care, Cavey notes, may be different than what the Gen Xers were thinking about but the boomers who were a part of the hippie movement certainly had that on their minds during their young adult years.

Cavey focuses on the teachings of Jesus and giving practical application in his preaching, so he does not specifically consider the millennial cohort as he prepares his messages. That being said, the church does understand that within the greater ministry of the church this cohort needs opportunities to connect as a group, and that the voices of millennials need to be regularly considered. In order to facilitate both of these areas of need, they have a Young Adults Champion who plans occasional events, ensures millennials are a part of the church community, and are being considered in teaching and culture of the church.

The house church model is where Cavey believes millennials can be most effectively developed – it provides space for the big event but prioritizes the focus on opportunities to be intimate and interactive in order to deepen relationships and faith.

The possibilities and prospects for the millennial cohort, according to Cavey, is the same as every other Christian. He says, “They have the power to change the world if they move in step with the Holy Spirit.”²²⁸

When asked why millennials would be attracted to The Meeting House, Cavey’s response was simple: “Hopefully Jesus.”²²⁹ He is aware that millennials do not want religion as it has been presented to them in the past but he hopes they would want the purest form of Christianity which is Jesus-centered and less about the rules and religiosity.

While The Meeting House’s organic culture may be what attracts millennials, it may also repel them. Cavey acknowledged that when the church does exit interviews asking why people are leaving, it has usually been a result of lack of programming. This stems from the church’s laser focus on home church followed by Sunday service. In order to not compete with these priorities, the church offers minimal additional programming. They do offer more occasional options for millennials such as annual retreats or monthly something special but for some millennials that is not sufficient.

Cross-Case Analysis

Both church leaders in this cross-case analysis had a time of experiencing distance from God and wrestled with faith in intentional ways during their youth before choosing Jesus and Christianity fully and completely. They both entered ministry reluctantly and both stepped into a church of under two hundred and grew those churches to multi-staff, multi-site churches with global reach serving thousands of community members each

²²⁸ Cavey, Interview.

²²⁹ Cavey, Interview.

week. Both Shigematsu and Cavey have a natural connection to the millennial mindset in that they value authenticity, speak simply and passionately about Jesus, and actively invest in the young adults within their community.

Ken Shigematsu and Tenth Church seem to have taken a more scientific approach to supporting millennials, in that while Shigematsu intuitively connects with them, he is clearly well-read and well-informed about the research on millennials. The results are a church with millennials comprising half of the congregants and half of the volunteers. He has identified the burden of anxiety, their deep longing for meaningful relationships, and their willingness to create their own version of spirituality that works for them rather than choosing the traditional religious route of their parents' generation. Tenth focuses on three areas that benefit the entire community but that also speak directly to the needs of the millennial cohort. The first of these is their life groups, which is similar to the home church that operates at The Meeting House. The second area they are focusing on is "soul trios," a structured three-person group spiritual direction commitment of a year at a time that takes place once a month in the homes of those in each triad. The newest piece Tenth has added is coaching the community to engage in some sort of spiritual friendship. This has begun with an initiative Tenth is calling "Deeper," which is a nine-week commitment for those who register to seek to deepen their friendship with Jesus by engaging in fifteen to twenty minutes of prayerful meditation five days a week and developing a spiritual friendship where they talk more deeply about their life with God with that person or people regularly. This initiative launched mid-January 2020 with over 700 people from the community signing up for this commitment.

Bruxy Cavey and The Meeting House are choosing to lean more into their focus of being Jesus-centric, having a Sermon on the Mount ethic, and seeing Jesus as God's ultimate revelation. Cavey acknowledges there are unique aspects of the millennial experience, such as the shift away from organized religion and a desire to create change and make a difference, but he also points out that this is actually aligned with the focus they are already pursuing. He goes further to say that the millennials are not as different as many imply but rather much of their uniqueness can better be marked as a life stage reality of young adulthood. It occurred to the researcher that the counter cultural, irreligious approach The Meeting House has taken over the past twenty years, that has grown the church to the size it is today, may actually be more aligned with the millennial way of thinking. Therefore, the church may feel less innovative to millennials, and instead more real and resonate with them as a place that teaches truth.

The two churches have created unique cultures that reflect the heart of Jesus but also have been significantly influenced by the leaders who grew these two communities. The growth they have experienced in the two decades that the millennial cohort was growing up may have allowed them to better relate to the millennial perspective as they were growing up as pastors as the millennials grew up into adults.

Data Observations from Millennial Leader Surveys and Interviews

The millennial leaders who completed the surveys and then completed the interviews are highly engaged in their faith and in their church community. As such, they reflected what is effective and successful in these churches with the millennial cohort, but they also have a reverse lens on the church and on the leadership needs for them and their peers. Some of the observations made from their surveys and interviews are focused on what sets these individuals apart as leaders, with the intent that these distinctives provide

insight into what can be effective for millennials. Other observations from the surveys and interviews were focused on the worldview and general perspective of the millennial cohort of which they are a part and therefore likely were unable to recognize the uniqueness of their perspective. The honesty that came out as a result of this lack of awareness resulted in exposing key insights into the general thinking and values of this generation.

Survey Response Cross-Case Analysis

Case Study: Tenth Church

Tenth Church is an urban church with multiple sites, all within the city of Vancouver. Vancouver is a geographically small city of only 115 km² with a small but dense population of approximately 700,000 people within the city limits. The city has a high Asian population, which is reflected in the survey results from Tenth Church's millennial leaders, with 70 percent of respondents self-identifying as at least one Asian ethnicity.

Case Study: The Meeting House

The Meeting House is a suburban church in Oakville Ontario with multiple sites, many of which, including the main site, are in and around Greater Toronto Area, Ontario. This is the most populated area in Canada with approximately seven million people across its 7,124 km².

Cross-Case Analysis

There were a larger number of respondents from Tenth Church, with twenty-one respondents versus sixteen respondents from The Meeting House. The researcher being on staff at Tenth Church likely impacted the efforts the staff expended to recruit respondents and even though the researcher did not communicate directly with

respondents, they were informed for whom this survey was being done. The Meeting House staff made generous efforts to recruit as well, however, with respondents being less invested in supporting the researcher, and the request going out relatively close to the Christmas holidays, there may have been some reduced engagement.

The millennial leaders from Tenth Church and The Meeting House had a significant amount of overlap considering they live and serve in communities over 4,350 kms apart, in very different cultural contexts despite both being located in Canada. The ethnic diversity of millennial leaders from each church varied in a way that reflects the demographics of each region, with 70 percent of respondents in Vancouver, British Columbia identifying as Asian and 75 percent of respondents in Oakville, Ontario identifying as Caucasian. Notably however, both churches had a higher percentage of female respondents than male respondents by a significant margin. Table 1 shows the breakdown of ethnicity and gender in the respondents in each church community.

Table 1. Ethnic and Gender Diversity of Respondents by Church

	<i>Tenth Church</i>	<i>The Meeting House</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	8 (38.1%)	5 (31.3%)	13 (35.1%)
Female	13 (61.9%)	11 (68.8%)	24 (64.9%)
Asian	14 (70%)	1 (6.3%)	15 (41.7%)
Caucasian	2 (10%)	12 (75%)	14 (38.9%)
South Asian	1 (5%)	2 (12.5%)	3 (8.3%)
African	3 (15%)	1 (6.3%)	4 (11.1%)

While the interviewees from the two churches scored very similarly overall, there were ten questions in which there was some disparity (table 2). The percentages shown in the table are the combined percentage of respondents who answered Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree.

Table 2. Cross-Case Analysis Considering Key Response Scores of Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree

<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>Tenth Church</i>	<i>The Meeting House</i>
I have leadership mentors & spiritual friends who are older than me.	71.4%	81.3%
I see my Christian faith & work as an integrated whole	95.2%	75%
I have a personal mission statement.	66.7%	56.3%
I feel equipped to serve others.	90.5%	81.3%
I identify with those who are vulnerable & marginalized.	81%	62.5%
I desire to use my unique gifts & talents for Jesus.	100%	93.8%
I tell others about my faith in Christ.	95.2%	87.5%
I actively serve the poor.	61.9%	68.8%
I live by a Rule of Life.	76.2%	68.8%
Jesus influences every aspect of my heart, mind & soul.	100%	87.5%

The respondents from The Meeting House have more older leadership mentors and older spiritual friends in their life, even though both communities score quite high in that area. Cavey indicated in his interview that The Meeting House had been very intentional about bringing in older adults to the community and fostering relationship there. This may be in part the explanation for the ten percent gap in scores between churches.

The Meeting House respondents were also slightly higher in their scoring of themselves as actively serving the poor. This number on its own implies that the respondents from The Meeting House do more to serve the poor; however, when that statement is overlapped with “I identify with those who are vulnerable and marginalized,” the Tenth Church respondents scored 18.5 percent higher than The Meeting House respondents. It is possible that this result comes from a self-scoring bias of having differing standards of what is considered actively serving the poor. The high priority on social justice at Tenth Church, the fact that it is in the heart of the city with a wide range of socioeconomic and mental health needs, and that the international missions are talked about regularly at Tenth as part of social justice initiatives are all possible

factors that would have Tenth community respondents score themselves lower as they see those around them doing more.

The Tenth Church respondents also scored higher on the following three statements: I see my Christian faith and work as an integrated whole; I desire to use my unique gifts and talents for Jesus; and Jesus influences every aspect of my heart, mind and soul. The higher scores here may be influenced by two factors. The first factor is the spiritual pathway of courses the researcher developed and launched over the last five years, which many of the millennial leaders would have completed. The second factor is a recent sermon series completed at Tenth Church focusing on Practicing the Jesus Economy. Contrary to how the Tenth Church community may have under-rated themselves around helping the poor, they may have over-rated themselves in these areas. The reason the researcher proposes they were over-rating versus The Meeting House community under-rating themselves is that scores of 100 percent of respondents seems exceedingly high.

Cross-Case Analysis of Interview Responses

The millennial leader interviews were conducted by hired interviewers and not the researcher. A different interviewer was used for each church community; however, the same questions were asked of each interviewee.

Cross-Case Similarities

The majority of interviewees from both churches were in a life group or home church at the time of the interview. Life groups and home churches are similar to one another in concept. As was required to qualify to engage in the initial survey, all interviewees served in some capacity in the church at the time of the interview; however,

the majority of them serve in multiple ways and were highly committed and engaged in their community.

Regardless of church community, all interviewees indicated they use technology in significant ways in their daily lives. In some cases, interviewees needed the interviewer to explain the question because the integration of technology in their lives has always been so organic and implied.

It was notable that from both church communities, all interviewees were hungry for growth in their faith and saw a need for attention on millennials in the church context. This indicates that while they were all committed to their church community, they still wanted more for their spiritual growth and from their church community that they were not yet receiving.

Cross-Case Differences

The Meeting House interviewees seemed to have a stronger sense of community with friends they had established within the church community. They felt well connected at church and relied heavily on their Christian friends in their faith. Also, more interviewees from The Meeting House had mentors through their church, which also was reflected in their survey responses. Most of the Tenth Church interviewees did not have formal mentors at the time of the interviews, but they openly expressed a desire to find one or more and acknowledged the value that a mentor would bring into their lives as leaders and in their spiritual life. Both of these areas can be attributed to the Home Church model lived out at The Meeting House that prioritizes this weekly inward facing, coming together of intimate community with diversity of ages instead of emphasizing the Sunday service or additional programs. There is a deeper connection between the individuals who journeyed together in an ongoing, consistent way.

The Meeting House interviewees were not familiar with the term or concept of the Rule of Life, but the Tenth Church interviewees who had been through some of the formational courses offered by the researcher were better able to address this question. The Rule of Life had been explained in the survey, but for those who were not familiar with the practice, the brief explanation did not appear to be retained from completion of survey to time of interview.

Reflective of the cultures of each church community, Tenth Church interviewees were more articulate about their daily spiritual practices, while The Meeting House interviewees were more articulate about their passion for Jesus. It is noteworthy that Shigematsu, the church leader at Tenth, has published books about spiritual practices and Bruxy Cavey, the church leader at The Meeting House, has published books about Jesus being at the center of your life. The millennial cohort are very teachable and when they are bought in and have high trust, they are able to be influenced in their growth, which may explain why they were each most articulate about the topic on which their teaching pastor or senior pastor was most focused.

Millennial Leaders Findings

The findings from the surveys and interviews of the millennial leaders provided twelve key findings, summarized in Table 3 and then further described.

Table 3. Twelve Key Findings

Finding	Description of Key Finding
One	The Integration of Technology
Two	Spiritual Practices
Three	Sacred Rhythms
Four	The Value of Choice
Five	The Distinctive of Being Proactive
Six	The Challenge of Anxiety
Seven	Faith and Family
Eight	The Prevalence of Mentorship
Nine	Age Diversity is Appreciated
Ten	Authenticity and Real Conversation
Eleven	A Rule of Life
Twelve	The Power of Experience

Finding One: The Integration of Technology

Technology was indicated as part of the daily life in a significant way for every millennial leader who responded. Many used technology as part of their way to connect daily with their faith – through podcasts, reading articles for reflection, Bible apps, devotions on their phone, devotion websites, and a place to record thoughts.

Outside of faith, technology is used for work: usually computer and often also phone or tablet. Phone was identified as the primary source for personal use, but computer and tablet were also describe as used for this purpose. The main uses for technology, as described in the interviews, were social media, gaming, streaming, planning and coordinating events, organizing life, messenger to connect with others, audiobooks, e-books, and getting directions. An unexpected common theme that arose was how many are tracking their screen usage or setting up rules or limits for themselves to manage themselves more effectively. They described proactively making themselves aware of their usage and making choices on how they spend their life on technology.

Both the term proactive and choice are key to millennials, as described in Findings Four and Five.

Finding Two: Spiritual Practices

Most millennial leaders interviewed described time in the morning as part of their daily routine with God. Also, regardless of time of day, most interviewees included some form of quiet time with God in their day. It was also common to have regular times of talking to God throughout their day.

Faith was incorporated throughout the day through meditation, gratitude, prayer, quieting their mind to allow Him to speak to them, music, ambient music, repetitive songs to help focus, being in nature, driving and praying, starting or ending their day with God, talking with God throughout the day, Scripture reading, and journaling.

Finding Three: Sacred Rhythms

Routine or structure seemed to be really important to the millennial leaders: either as a guide like the Beatitudes, or routines for time with God, weekly rhythms with activities and life and work, mentorship, and day-to-day living.

The structure or routine are guides with the purpose to better live out their faith. The experiences are what made their faith concrete. See more in Finding Twelve on the importance of experience. There is a high level of resonance with the Beatitudes because of their strong leaning to social justice and being present for others. With that, many have non-Christian friends or colleagues who are important to their faith journey as they hold them accountable and motivate them to share their faith by living it out with integrity and then being available for Jesus-focused conversations if that opportunity presents itself.

Finding Four: The Value of Choice

Choice was identified as highly valued to these millennial leaders. They spoke about how they chose their church on their own, chose how to make their faith their own, figured out and chose how to make their own unique way of daily connection with God, chose which social media outlets of which they wanted to engage, chose how they experience quiet time with God, and so on. They even researched online to figure out what other choices they might have in areas such as stress management.

Finding Five: The Distinctive of Being Proactive

These millennial leaders described themselves as proactive. They were proactive with their relationships: intentional in who they spent time with and how they spent time with them, proactive in which social media they engaged with, proactive with how they became involved in their church community so they could make friends and have an impact by giving back. They were proactive about seeking out mentors, proactive about serving, and even proactive about managing their technology consumption.

Finding Six: The Challenge of Anxiety

Worry was identified a significant area of struggle for many millennial leaders. Much of the worry was tied to future, career, past and future mistakes, and responsibilities. Most were managing that worry through self-reflection, ongoing choices to trust God, talking with friends or mentors, or spiritual practices like meditating, being quiet and listening to God or prayer.

Finding Seven: Faith and Family

The vast majority of the millennial leaders from both churches were deeply influenced by their family as the base for their faith. Many continued to lean on family for their faith journey at the time of the interviews. The current faith journey for those

interviewed was influenced strongly by Christian friends, mentors, family, and even non-Christian friends. It appeared that the support and example of the family of origin had significant impact on the millennial leaders interviewed and a high percentage of families of faith background may be an indicator that this is a key driver toward leadership engagement and church engagement in millennials. As shown in table 4, their desire to build and serve community was a key factor in them leaning into leadership as compared to their peers. This table shows that while almost half of the respondents indicated their desire to build and serve as a key factor, the majority of them also provided a second reason as well – with a quarter of them modelling what they experienced in their family of origin. Others still leaned in because of mentors, encouragement by others and being invited into leadership.

Table 4. Data Coding Results to Survey Response 9: In your view, what are the factors that had you lean into leadership and service, as opposed to your peers who have not?

	<i>Desire to build and serve community</i>	<i>Mentors/ encouraged by others</i>	<i>Passion for people</i>	<i>Modelled in family of origin</i>	<i>Overcoming self-esteem issues</i>	<i>Being invited into leadership</i>	<i>Relationship with Jesus</i>
# Respondents	17	10	6	9	2	8	10
% Respondents	45.95%	27.03%	16.22%	24.32%	5.41%	21.62%	27.03%

Finding Eight: The Prevalence of Mentorship

Mentorship was shown to be very prevalent in the millennial leaders' cohort. Most had sought out a mentor formally or had one or several informal mentors. While many had mentors for various aspects of their lives, the interview focused on mentors in their faith journey. Mentors had been instrumental in turning their faith from boring to adventurous, had created space for open, honest conversations, were a safe person with whom to question or wrestle with what life was presenting them, had given insight and

supported their growth, created more other-centered thinking in their lives, helped with overwhelming feelings and helped them lean into their giftings.

Finding Nine: Age Diversity is Appreciated

Diversity of ages in the people they interacted with, leaned on for advice and socialized with was described as very important to the millennial leaders. They articulated understanding and appreciation that older people offered wisdom worth hearing and from which they could learn. Some millennial leaders acknowledged that in their current context they could be that older person or mentor to someone younger than themselves. They identified mentorship and diversity of age as cyclical, not simply unidirectional for their benefit.

Finding Ten: Authenticity and Real Conversation

Authenticity and real conversation were key for the millennial leaders. Even in how a sermon was presented — having it feel preachy was not preferred. A sermon that felt more like a conversation and engaged their thoughts and heart fully was more appealing. Similarly, authenticity in people keeping their word, following through and even meeting unspoken expectations played into this aspect of authenticity. It was noted by one millennial leader that skeptics in faith often are difficult to convert because church culture tells them to just have faith, but this generational cohort sees their peers in need of something more concrete and reassuring than the abstract, unquestioning act of faith in order to trust the church at all.

Finding Eleven: A Rule of Life

Most of the millennial leaders did not have a Rule of Life or know what it was — unless they had taken a leadership course offered by the researcher. This was an area for potential improvement.

Finding Twelve: The Power of Experience

Millennial leaders had their relationship with Christ shaped through seven main data coded areas. The area that most consistently impacted the trust relationship with Christ of the interviewed millennial leaders was having tangible experiences of God's faithfulness or presence. In fact, as shown in Table 5, of the fourteen leaders interviewed, 72.97 percent of them conveyed experiences of God's faithfulness or presence as the area or one of the areas that impacted this trust relationship.

Table 5. Data Coding Results to Survey Response 8: What has most significantly shaped your trust relationship with Christ?

	<i>Family of origin</i>	<i>Mentors, spouses, friends or colleagues</i>	<i>Christian community</i>	<i>Personal desire and seeking him out</i>	<i>Reading, prayer and spiritual reflection</i>	<i>Experiencing God's faithfulness or presence</i>	<i>Church Leadership</i>
# Respondents	5	6	7	4	5	27	2
% Respondents	13.51%	16.22%	18.92%	10.81%	13.51%	72.97%	5.41%

Data Observations from Millennial Specialist Interviews

The millennial specialists provided substantive value to the research with their insights and perspectives.

Analysis of Interview Data: Joel Thiessen

Thiessen's overall description of the millennial cohort was that they were more similar than dissimilar to previous generations. One of the key differences he noted was their relationship with technology and social media. This is how millennials primarily acquire information and knowledge and how they relate to one another. Additionally, Thiessen addressed that their views on sexuality and gender were more tolerant and inclusive than previous generations. All of these differences were reflective of the larger

social shift that had been taking place around them. It has shifted their experience and how they make decisions and choose to lead in significant ways.

There were five questions provided to Thiessen that offered particularly significant insights. The first was his response to being asked what he believed contributed to the development and growth of the Canadian millennial leader in the church. Echoing his initial statement that this cohort was more similar than dissimilar to previous generations, he articulated that much like young leaders from previous generations “good mentorship and formation from those who are older than themselves”²³⁰ was a key aspect that contributed to their growth and development. He also said that giving young people opportunities to lead with mentorship was a key for young leaders. Furthermore, Thiessen addressed the millennial leaders’ desire to learn through experience so that they were not just acquiring knowledge from books and teaching but were also able to understand the social environment in which they were ministering. In his studies, he observed that the millennials’ awareness of the changing social environment was significant, and that they were eager to contribute.

Thiessen addressed the unique challenges for millennials in their being able to place Christ as someone who was central to their life and priorities, in that they lived in a more secular environment than any generation before them. Even the concept of what it means to follow Christ is a changed concept which would be described very differently by a millennial than those in other generations. This cohort was consistently leaning more

²³⁰ Joel Thiessen, interview by researcher via telephone, Vancouver, December 16, 2019.

towards inclusive tolerance, so as they defined what it meant to follow Christ, it was more commonly described as caring for the vulnerable and marginalized.

Given Thiessen's experience with congregations, he articulated that the spiritual practices he believed would be helpful for the Canadian millennial center around physical exercise. In a survey he was still in the midst of conducting at the time of the interview, with almost two hundred Canadian churches and over 8,500 individuals, some of the early data pre-publication indicated that millennials identified physical exercise as their number one most critical area for their own spiritual formation. Thiessen explained, "they see the caring of their body and for their body as a spiritual act of one way in which they honour God."²³¹ Of course, while there are many ways millennials engaged, as we're all unique individuals, another aspect that set them apart was that they have more options than any generation before them and they valued those options. Technology and exercise all become a part of adding to the layers of their options.

The greatest challenges for the Canadian church regarding engaging the millennial, according to Thiessen, was ultimately the church itself. The older adults within the church community had false assumptions about millennials which increased the gap of connection between generations instead of building bridges, which meant a lack of mentorship for this generation who wanted that so desperately. Thiessen articulated this greatest challenge during the interview by first addressing four other key challenges. He named parents as one of those key challenges because parents had not

²³¹ Thiessen, Interview.

been actively engaging with these children and therefore, the millennials had not been effectively socialized within their families. The church's willingness to provide opportunities for young people to lead was the second area of challenge he mentioned. The third challenge was the lack of opportunity for genuine dialogue and debate that the millennials sought out. Most church experiences had set themselves up as one-way monologues without opportunity for participation or religious expression. The fourth challenge led into the main challenge itself – not understanding young people. He clarified by saying “And you have to look no further than parents and educators and religious leaders who have formed them, who are giving participation badges just for participating. Those kinds of things actually make a difference in how the next generation sees itself and evolves and develops over time.”²³²

The greatest opportunity for the Canadian church when it came to engaging the millennial according to Thiessen was crystal clear: take mentorship seriously. With more choices than ever before, millennials had more decisions to make than any generation before them, and yet they were not being taught how to discern well within those decisions. This naturally carried into leadership development and formation so that this cohort could then discover and utilize the strengths and gifts God had given them.

Analysis of Interview Data: John McAuley

John McAuley, as the CEO of Muskoka Woods, launched into his interview with the synopsis of the primary purpose of Muskoka Woods, which is “to be a living exhibition of life with God.”²³³ This primary purpose framed many of his interview

²³² Thiessen, Interview.

²³³ John McAuley, interview by researcher via telephone, Vancouver, December 19, 2019.

answers. The leadership team at Muskoka Woods were to live out faith and spiritual practices in such a way that guests could observe their lifestyle then decide whether they were legitimate in their faith journey. The leaders were intentional in providing space for the guests to allow Jesus to show up.

When talking to McAuley about his perception of the significance of technology and how millennials interact with technology, he pointed out how much technology distracts from engaging and relating and being present with one another. He gave examples of instructors being on cell phones instead of engaging with their campers before they banned staff cell phone use during the day, and described the depths of the unconscious use of technology that millennials are engaged in. He drew a connection between the constant connectivity through technology and anxiety and depression. Furthermore, he pointed out that technology provided a false sense of knowing because they have Googled it versus knowing through having a shared experience.

McAuley shared his belief that views on marriage relationships and sexuality are different for millennials compared to other generations. He described how marriage had been delayed significantly because Christians had chosen to live together with no sense of embarrassment or shame in doing so. He spoke about the contrast to his generation when he was dating his wife and how even non-Christians held him to the higher standard of not living together before marriage given his profession of faith.

When asked if he observed any Canadian distinctives with millennial leaders, particularly in relationship to Americans, McAuley quoted a woman named Emma

Duncan in saying “Canadians are so nice to the point of extinction.”²³⁴ What he meant here was that Canadian millennials were more sensitive to cultural appropriateness, political correctness, and the current cultural standards of how people ought to be living. McAuley’s experience was that this was occurring far less with American millennials than Canadians.

McAuley indicated that he observed a catastrophically heightened level of anxiety with millennials compared to other generations. He had seen many young adults in a summer out of his 350 staff contemplate suicide in ways he had never experienced prior. The camp had hired a chaplain and had leaders trained in mental health intervention available to staff to respond to the needs around anxiety and depression. The positive side of this was that with media campaigns raising awareness around mental health, the millennial cohort was not afraid as previous generations were to ask for help or articulate they struggle with their mental health.

One of the last questions answered by McAuley was around what he had seen as the role of faith and religion in the life of the average Canadian millennial and whether or not he had seen a hunger for spirituality. McAuley absolutely had seen the hunger but it was through the lens of syncretism. Most of Christianity was not attractive to millennials according to him. The risk he identified in this was that when at 35 years of age, the age he had often seen people return to faith, previous generations had a level of spiritual literacy that they could lean on in that time. The millennials had not had that spiritual literacy, and so when the older millennials had started to search, they had no clarity on

²³⁴ McAuley, interview.

where to turn, and he expected it will be the same for the rest of the cohort. And the result was, “They’re going to a wider sphere of spiritual menus than I would be comfortable with.”²³⁵

Analysis of Interview Data: Karyn Gordon

Karyn Gordon’s overall impression of the millennial cohort as a therapist and leadership coach was that they are passionate, misunderstood, and socially responsible. She felt the reason there were so many problems with millennials in the workplace was due to this misunderstanding.

Regarding the views of marriage, relationships and sexuality, Gordon talked about how they were different for millennials compared to other generations. She said that while they were adopting a lot of traditional mindsets, such as wanting to get married only once, they are geographically and emotionally so disconnected from family that their workplace had become their new family. The absenteeism of the family geographically was a result of people moving further away for work opportunities or lifestyle, while the emotional absenteeism could be in part identified as a result of the high divorce rates in their families.

Gordon described the way millennials value influence and leadership in that their love for leadership and their desire to work with top leaders had begun to push organizations to be flatter, with less hierarchy. Having access to senior leaders was important to the millennials because access equated to relationship and opportunities for mentoring, which was one of their highest values.

²³⁵ McAuley, interview.

The follow up question here was: what was the most effective way to develop a millennial leader? Gordon's answer again was mentorship. Millennials were open to formal or informal mentorship, but part of why mentorship was so important to them was the support they received around how to make decisions that arose in their everyday life.

Gordon said that anxiety had spiked way up compared to other generations. And while there were many factors that contribute to this, Gordon articulated that one of those reasons is their parents. The boomer generation had a tendency to be workaholics and as parents they were over functioning and micromanaging their children to compensate for their guilt for being absent. As a result, the millennial cohort were not equipped to handle situations because they never had to do that on their own thus daily stressors created heightened anxiety.

The role of faith and religion in the life of the average Canadian millennial, according to Gordon, was that they craved spirituality, but religion was unattractive to them because of their perception of the rules and hypocrisy that were tied to religion. Gordon summarized it this way “unless somebody has a really well thought out, apologetic kind of theology that they can communicate to a millennial, the millennial will not just believe it for the sake of it.”²³⁶

Integrated Data Analysis of Combined Data Observations

In combining the data observations from all surveys and interviews, the findings showed that the key priorities for millennials, and therefore, key priorities for churches to consider to re-engage millennials into Christ-centered leadership were mentorship,

²³⁶ Karyn Gordon, interview with author via telephone, Vancouver, December 18, 2019.

community that creates intimacy, dialogue instead of one-directional teaching, routines and schedules for deepening faith, development of relational skills that may be deficient, opportunities to practice leadership and learn through experience, and developing a healthy identity. These were the themes that were recurring throughout the surveys, church leader interviews, millennial leader interviews and millennial specialist interviews.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND SEVEN LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

The problem this project set out to address was the perceived lack of Christocentric leadership development among millennials of Canadian church congregations with over one thousand people in attendance. The research completed to address this problem included in-depth literature and theological reviews, alongside qualitative research of 37 millennial church leader surveys, fourteen millennial church leader interviews, two church leader interviews from the churches attended by those millennials, and three interviews with millennial specialists in Canada. After comprehensive inductive data coding and analysis, the researcher was able to identify seven leadership principles in Christ-centered leadership for millennials living in Canada. These principles are intended to act as a guide for church leaders to improve their leadership development of Canadian Christ-centered millennials.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

The qualitative aspect of the research in this project made it complex and layered to analyse. The strength of this qualitative approach has been that the researcher was able to gather large amounts of data on aspects of the millennial cohort he was not initially anticipating. In a more quantitative research model, some of these findings may not have been exposed simply by lack of asking for the information. The qualitative approach allowed the respondents from the surveys and the interviewees from the nineteen interviews completed to provide their own perspective and add context to their thoughts

which highlighted clearly which information was recurring and required further consideration.

The key weakness identified in this project was primarily the quantity of qualitative data to sift through, interpret, and analyse. Much of the interpretation and analysis was subjective to the researcher's observations of themes and similarities. The researcher attempted to mitigate this weakness by using a Likert scale on most questions in the survey and looked for corroborating research for the key themes identified from the interviewees and respondents. Another weakness of this study was that there were only two churches in Canada considered in the collective case study. While the external research and secondary data from the millennial specialists backs up the conclusions drawn from the two case studies considered, having three to five churches in a follow up study may provide more generalizable results. If more churches were considered, the country's vast geographical reach could be better managed by including a church from the East Coast and perhaps one from Quebec and/or the prairies. Similarly, the two churches considered are from highly populated, professional areas of the country. Having more churches in the mix would allow the research to consider more rural large churches or those in more outlier suburbs alongside the city churches. It is worth noting that there would be limited numbers of rural churches that would meet the criteria of over one thousand in Sunday attendance, so this weakness may be one more of perception than reality.

Seven Principles for Christ-Centered Leadership Formation

The researcher has identified seven principles (see Table 6) for Christ-centered leadership formation that can be used by churches across Canada to better understand the needs and drivers of the millennials in their congregations, and to be a guide for how to

develop those millennials into leaders within their church community. The church community will always continue to age, by the mere fact that it is made up of human beings, who all experience and are impacted by the passage of time. With existing leaders investing in the young adults, who are currently millennials, they will be equipping the church in coming generations to continue to thrive. Justin Irving advises, “A leader’s primary role is to work him- or herself out of a job, to equip and empower others to utilize the gifts and abilities they have been given.”²³⁷

Table 6. Seven Leadership Principles

Principle	Principle Concept
One	Mentorship Matters
Two	Friendships are Formational
Three	Conversations Create Confidence
Four	Contemplative Spirituality Cultivates Wholeness
Five	Relationships Require Emotional Resilience and Skill
Six	Training and Opportunities Create a Context to Grow
Seven	A Healthy Identity Increases Leadership Effectiveness

One: Mentorship Matters

Canadian sociologist Joel Thiessen conveyed in his interview for this project that good mentorship from someone older than themselves contributed to the development and growth of the Christian millennial leader in the church.²³⁸ Mentorship from someone older than themselves was a leading contributor of the leadership formation of the millennial serving in a position of influence. Millennials who were given opportunities to

²³⁷ Justin A. Irving and Mark L. Strauss, *Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), chap. 1, sec 1, Kindle.

²³⁸ Thiessen, interview.

lead at a young age with the influence of mentoring relationships along the way was key in the formation of young leaders.

The overall findings of the study showed that mentorship had been a significant contributor to the shaping of millennial leaders in their life and leadership. Having someone else speak into their life along the way had been a factor in keeping Christ in the center of their priorities. Millennials crave attention and it has been made evident in the interviews of the study that the millennial leader craves mentorship. Relational investment from others that have something to contribute was both desired and warmly welcomed. Gallup discovered that millennials “care about having managers who can coach them, who value them as both people and employees, and who help them understand and build their strengths.”²³⁹ Millennial leaders who were actively experiencing the benefits of mentorship or had experienced mentorship in the past were able to clearly articulate it as a leading factor in their formation. They need relational support and structure to thrive in their faith. A Canadian study has shown that in a culture “that so often leans away from God, only with intentional support will they be able to live tangible faith.”²⁴⁰

Bobb Biehl defined mentorship, ideally speaking, as “a lifelong relationship in which a mentor helps a protégé reach his or her God-given potential.”²⁴¹ As someone

²³⁹ “How Millennials Want to Work and Live,” Gallup, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/238073/millennials-work-live.aspx>

²⁴⁰ Chris Tompkins, Don Posterski, and John McAuley, *Elastic Morality: Leading Young Adults in Our Age of Acceptance* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2011), chap. 9, Kindle.

²⁴¹ Bobb Biehl, *Mentoring: Confidence in Finding a Mentor and Becoming One* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1997), 19.

who equipped many effective leaders, Howard Hendricks suggested “a mentor is a person committed to two things: helping you grow and keeping you growing, and helping you realize your life goals.”²⁴² He went on to be more specific, describing a mentor as someone who: “(1) promotes genuine growth, (2) is a model to follow, (3) helps you efficiently reach your goals, (4) plays a key role in God’s pattern for your growth, and (5) benefits other people in your life.”²⁴³

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Thessalonians that, “Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well” (1 Thess. 2:8). This was the kind of influence Bobb Biehl and Howard Hendricks were referring to when they defined mentorship.

Ultimately, they described mentorship as sharing lives together in a significant way with life on life influence.

The current challenge for the local church context is suspicion and bias by earlier generations towards millennials as potential leaders. The result of this suspicion and bias has been that rather than coming alongside the millennial leader, the older influencer in the church has moved away from the millennial. This has been frustrating to young adults who have been looking for the older leaders to intentionally choose to care and share their lives with the younger generation. As was highlighted in the literature review of this project, millennials value relationships and want to be in relationships with individuals

²⁴² Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron: Building Character In a Mentoring Relationship* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1995), 25.

²⁴³ Hendricks and Hendricks, *Iron Sharpens Iron*, 25.

who model a life of faith and know their names.²⁴⁴ Mentorship is one way to meet this need for millennials, while also equipping them for leadership.

Most millennials expressed warmth at the idea of spending time with those who could coach them and show them the way already travelled. One millennial leader shared, “I think opportunities to encourage maybe intergenerational mingling, I guess, with both people who are younger and people who are older. I think that that is something that's really important to me and a lot of my friends, is to have input from people of all ages.”²⁴⁵ Another interviewee expressed their desire for mentorship: “I don't have a mentor in my life, but this question, well it brings to mind that I really do need a mentor in my life right now just to help guide me and just to rely on and just I mean my path with Christ I think.”²⁴⁶ Canadian research has shown that “young people are hungry for relationships, and technology has changed the way they build them. Facebook has re-invented the way we use the word friend and perhaps even the nature of friendship itself.”²⁴⁷

During his interview, Joel Thiessen mentioned, “one of the levels of angst that young people have today as with previous generations with local churches is that young people aren't necessarily given the space or freedom to lead and to learn and to try and experiment new things.”²⁴⁸ As mentioned in an interview with another millennial

²⁴⁴ Powell, *Growing Young*, chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁴⁵ Interview with millennial leader, December 16, 2019.

²⁴⁶ Interview with millennial leader, December 14, 2019.

²⁴⁷ Tompkins, Posterski, and McAuley, *Elastic Morality*, chap. 4, Kindle.

²⁴⁸ Thiessen, interview.

specialist, John McAuley, there should be a reasonable caution releasing millennials into high levels of responsibility prematurely. Millennials can learn information at lightening speeds and are able to learn quickly through internet search engines like Google, but McAuley pointed out most millennials had not acquired their knowledge through shared experience. Paired with the lack of spiritual maturity, the risk could be that this makes them more reckless than effective in their responsibilities. In his interview, McAuley said, “Absolutely, we want to give young people incredible opportunities to lead, but not at the expense of wisdom and experience.”²⁴⁹ McAuley went on to describe young leaders with massive platforms of influence “that have no theological training, no concept, and yet are having masses of minds of influence over people, but there's just not what I would describe as any kind of substance theologically or biblically.”²⁵⁰

In Karyn Gordon’s interview, she commented, “The speed that they can do work is just so much faster, which is amazing. The downside, I think, is that some can kind of hide behind it.”²⁵¹ Millennials are fast learners and efficient at what they do but they desperately need someone to speak into their lives. This is the exceptional opportunity for mentorship. Millennials can slow down to become more effective as leaders with an older or more experienced person coming alongside them. They can take advantage of learning from the lives of influencers who have both life experience and spiritual maturity. James Houston articulates this wonderfully with respect to following Jesus more easily and more deeply along the hidden pathways:

²⁴⁹ McAuley, interview.

²⁵⁰ McAuley, interview.

²⁵¹ Gordon, interview.

Ecologists remind us that a tree planted in a clearing of an old forest will grow more successfully than when it is planted in isolation in an open field. The roots of the new planting will follow more easily and more deeply the hidden pathways of old root systems. Likewise, human beings thrive best in following the paths of life already taken by others before them. None of us needs to reinvent the wheel or live as if no one has preceded us in the pathways of the wise.²⁵²

One interviewee conveyed that having mentors and mentees helped him to be “grounded.”²⁵³ His mentoring conversations helped keep Christ centered in his life. He went on to explain that in learning from his mentor, he had been able to compare the longer life of his mentor to his, which had allowed him to see “the life that I potentially could walk ahead of me as well as reminiscing back about the life that I have walked past,”²⁵⁴ and articulated how this was helpful to maintaining a Christ centered life through a longer view lens.

Spiritual mentorship is an art that has been lost and is in need of rediscovery and resurgence. One of the dynamics impacting this development is the learning process in the modern era. Paul Stanley explained:

Throughout human history, mentoring was the primary means of passing on knowledge and skills in every field - from Greek philosophers to sailors - and in every culture. But in the modern age, the learning process shifted. It now relies primarily on computers, classrooms, books, and videos. Thus, today the relational connection between the knowledge-and-experience giver and the receiver has weakened or is nonexistent.²⁵⁵

²⁵² James M. Houston, *The Mentored Life: From Individualism to Personhood* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 16.

²⁵³ Interview with millennial leader, January 4, 2020.

²⁵⁴ Interview with millennial leader, January 4, 2020.

²⁵⁵ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), chap. 1, Kindle.

Steve Saccone, in his experience developing ambitious and talented young adults in Los Angeles within the context of a creative church environment, cautioned, “We must remember that the mentoring process is not merely ‘information transfer’ from one generation to the next, as if young leaders simply need to learn how the older leaders did it so they can repeat the same thing. Holistic leadership development is much more nuanced.”²⁵⁶ Saccone went on, saying, “There's a deeper, more multidimensional way of mentoring and being mentored that the church is in desperate need of if we desire to forge a new future together.”²⁵⁷ Keith Anderson and Randy Reese agreed, mentorship is “a way of life that is formed, not merely instructions that are given.”²⁵⁸ Mentorship matters and looks much more like the love that fueled the Apostle Paul’s influence on others (1 Thess. 2:8).

Spiritual mentorship is less about acquiring or passing along skills and more about shaping character. Natasha Robinson described mentoring as “intentional discipleship”²⁵⁹ that includes slowing down to be with Jesus to shape character. Bobb Biehl commented, “Love is a key dimension of your role as a mentor.”²⁶⁰ The Apostle Paul was committed to giving his life to others. He loved them. Most millennial leaders learn quickly and

²⁵⁶ Steve Saccone and Cheri Saccone, *Protegé: Developing Your Next Generation of Church Leaders* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁵⁷ Saccone and Saccone, *Protegé*, chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁵⁸ Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁵⁹ Natasha Sistrunk Robinson, *Mentor for Life: Finding Purpose through Intentional Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), chap. 6, Kindle.

²⁶⁰ Bobb Biehl, *Mentoring: How to Find a Mentor and How to Become One* (Mt. Dora, FL: Ayleen Publishing, 2007), 140.

aspire to advance even faster, but mentorship takes time because it is “about participating in the learning process of life itself, richly cultivated and nourished.”²⁶¹

Two: Friendships are Formational

Millennials are family-centric in their outlook and posture. They value friendship. According to C. S. Lewis, “Friendship is one of the four basic human loves, the others being affection, eros and charity. Long overshadowed by romantic love, friendship is easily undervalued. The ancients viewed friendship as the crown of life, the fulfillment of all that is most distinctively human.”²⁶² Bruxy Cavey wrote, “We may not need a special holy class of professionals called ‘priests’, but we do need community, spiritual family, and authentic friendship. That’s how God works. In other words, we may not need religion, but we do need relationship.”²⁶³

Participating in churches of thousands can be a challenge when it comes to making friendships. Ken Shigematsu identified this large church limitation as one of the main reasons he believes millennials leave Tenth Church.²⁶⁴ Participating in small groups is an effective way to break down that barrier and cultivate close friendships. One interviewee shared, “When I first came to Tenth, it was very difficult because Tenth was very big. ... I think serving does help to getting to know people ... or joining a small

²⁶¹ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*. chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁶² David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), chap. 3, Kindle.

²⁶³ Bruxy Cavey, *Reunion: The Good News of Jesus, for Seekers, Saints and Sinners-* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press, 2017), chap. 10, sec. 2, Kindle.

²⁶⁴ Shigematsu, Interview.

group that really helps as well.”²⁶⁵ Another interviewee shared, “I didn’t know a lot of people ... so I got connected to a Life Group pretty quickly.”²⁶⁶

Three: Conversations Create Confidence

Millennials like to engage and have conversations versus simply going along with the status quo. According to Gallup, “Millennials don’t want annual reviews — they want ongoing conversations. The way millennials communicate — texting, tweeting, Skype, etc. — is now real-time and continuous. This dramatically affects the workplace because millennials are accustomed to constant communication and feedback. Annual reviews no longer work.”²⁶⁷ This resonated with Karyn Gordon who said, “[Millennials] need much more in depth explanation around kind of faith and Christianity and really be able to kind of stand that up against other world religions.”²⁶⁸ Millennials enjoy and value dialogue.

Spiritually speaking, millennials can grow in their faith by engaging with coaching, feedback, and dialogic teaching. Meaningful conversations can deepen in the spiritual understanding of the millennial.

In their desire to engage and have conversation, the millennials can be loosely compared to the disciples of Jesus, in that they were learners who were following Jesus. While as disciples, they had an active trust and radical reliance to their teacher, it was only when they followed Christ that their identities and their world began to change. Jesus called his disciples to the way, but then he met them where they were, providing a

²⁶⁵ Interview with millennial leader, December 14, 2019.

²⁶⁶ Interview with millennial leader, January 3, 2020.

²⁶⁷ Gallup, *Work and Live*, 3.

²⁶⁸ Gordon, interview.

journey for them to spiritual discovery that centered around a dialogue. The first stage of “come and see” is about being invited to listen as those Christ followers around them provide answers to them about why Jesus is the Savior. Jesus is reminding His followers to have conversation and engage. He did this with His disciples, His disciples did this with others, and so the church is called to do this with millennials.

Four: Contemplative Spirituality Cultivates Wholeness

The millennial is achievement-oriented and tech-savvy. They live in a fast-paced world that often leads them into a place of being anxious for a future they cannot control. One of the emotions that is becoming commonplace for the millennial is anxiety. A slow-down spirituality can awaken their awareness of God’s ever-present love. Cultivating wholeness for millennial leaders “is not a process of therapeutic personal improvement as much as a process of reorienting the heart’s affections, counting the cost of discipleship, and abiding with Christ in all of life.”²⁶⁹ Silence and solitude can be healing and lead to wholeness.

With twenty percent of millennials suffering from depression, they have far surpassed boomers and Gen X. They are dealing with a level of mental health problems that are uniquely characteristic of their generation. According to David Michigan, quoted in Forbes Magazine, “it’s not just depression that’s having an impact on millennial leaders. They also have significant levels of stress and anxiety. These are caused by a

²⁶⁹ Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, chap. 2, Kindle.

combination of organic factors as well as stressors that come from the current economic and geopolitical crises that impact the life of millennials.”²⁷⁰

There are four actions that are suggested by Michigan to be implemented by millennials as they strive to overcome mental health challenges. The first action is to include mindfulness in employee wellness efforts. Research has shown that even over a short period of time, when people participate in mindfulness meditation the amount of cortisol they produce decreases and the quality of their sleep increases. Other physical changes in the brain take place as well when mindfulness is practiced, and these changes show correlations with lessened anxiety, improved concentration and improved overall psychological well-being.²⁷¹

The second action suggested by Michigan is to encourage those struggling to overcome mental health challenges to make a daily plan. Developing and implementing healthy coping strategies has been shown to benefit those struggling with mental health. Michigan states that it is believed among professionals in the field of mental health that deliberately implementing these strategies is most effective when used in a daily plan.²⁷²

Third is the action to emphasize the importance of social connections. “Sadly, mental health issues are very isolating. For millennials, this is often compounded by the false, social narrative that has been created about them,” Michigan said. “Not only do

²⁷⁰ Kimberly Fries, “4 Ways To Help Millennial Leaders Overcome Mental Health Problems,” *Forbes*, Dec 18, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimberlyfries/2017/12/18/4-ways-to-help-millennial-leaders-overcome-mental-health-problems/#2a6a36fa11f9>.

²⁷¹ Fries, “Mental Health Problems.”

²⁷² Fries, “Mental Health Problems.”

they suffer because of mental health problems, they also fear being labeled ‘special snowflakes’ or seen as being spoiled and entitled.”²⁷³

The fourth action is to design absentee policies that support seeking treatment for those with mental health issues. Typically, policies around absenteeism in work environments work against those with chronic health issues.²⁷⁴

Five: Relationships Require Emotional Resilience and Skill

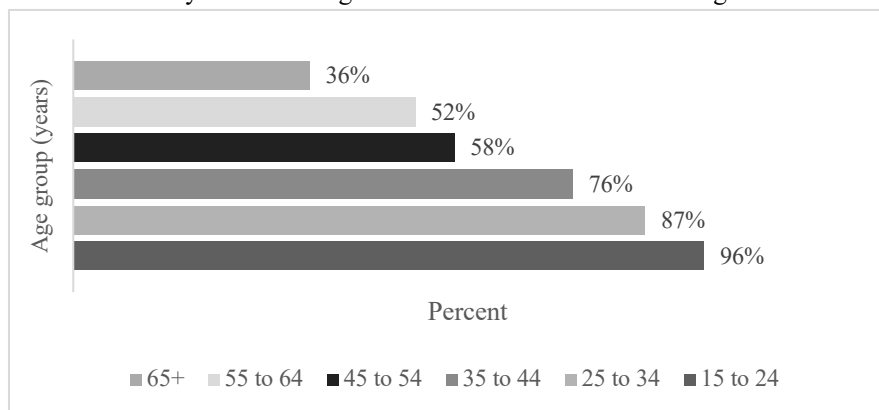
Social media and technology have changed the way the millennial communicates, and it is not all good news. Canadian youth are highly connected to technology. Consistent across all provinces and all household income groups, as shown in Table 7, nearly 100 percent of youth aged 15 to 24 use the Internet on a daily basis or own their own smartphone. Those between the ages of 15 and 34 use the Internet to follow news and current affairs at more than twice the rate of older Canadians, with more than three quarters of this age group identifying as doing so. One half of adults aged 25 to 34 conduct transactions on the Internet at least weekly which is almost twice that of older Canadians. And nearly half of 16 to 24-year-olds participate in real-time discussions on the Internet, compared with less than ten percent of older Canadians who do the same.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Fries, “Mental Health Problems.”

²⁷⁴ Fries, “Mental Health Problems.”

²⁷⁵ “A Portrait of Canadian Youth,” *Statistics Canada*, last modified August 24, 2018, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2018001-eng.htm>.

Table 7. Virtually All Youth Aged 15 to 24 Use Social Networking Sites



Source: Data from “What 15,000 Millennials Reveal About Millennials,” Environics Research, accessed January 6, 2020. <https://environicsresearch.com/insights/15000-millennials/>

Millennials need to be intentional to pursue opportunities in which they can develop relational skills so they can thrive in their interactions with others. This is especially critical given the limited appeal to the church in that, as described in Chapter 3, in choosing Jesus, they become exiled from their culture and peers, thus requiring additional support from the church community as they begin to lean in. Also in Chapter 3, it was acknowledged that more than ninety percent of millennials indicated in a study by Gallup that they had a good relationship with their parents.²⁷⁶ When paired with the additional understanding that the millennial cohort is the first to delay reaching adulthood until around age twenty-six,²⁷⁷ the literature corroborates the perspective of millennial specialist Karyn Gordon who spoke about the boomer parent generation’s tendency to be absent due to divorce and work pursuits which resulted in over functioning and micromanaging their children.²⁷⁸ This parenting approach has left the millennial cohort

²⁷⁶ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 83, Kindle.

²⁷⁷ Shaw, *Generational IQ*, 85, Kindle.

²⁷⁸ Gordon, Interview.

ill-prepared to move into adulthood at the time of previous generations due to a lack of resilience and emotional skills. This is a significant need for millennials and a doorway for the church to create a safe place for millennials to begin to pursue Christ and leadership with relationship at the heart of their journey.

Six: Training and Opportunities Create a Context to Grow

Leadership development is essential for the millennial. Millennials deeply desire personal development and growth. As such, as was described in the literature review, they are actively seeking out meaningful work and places of purpose and significance where they can apply themselves.

Millennial specialist Karyn Gordon also identified the high value millennials place on leadership development by describing how they have actually pushed change in corporate organizational structures to be flatter in order for them to have more direct access to senior leaders for development and training.²⁷⁹ According to Gallup, “millennials are not pursuing job satisfaction — they are pursuing development.”²⁸⁰ When millennials are seeking out new jobs “opportunities to learn and grow are highly important.”²⁸¹

Intentional spirituality leads to spiritual vitality. A Rule of Life is a spiritual practice that can offer a context and structure for personal development and growth. As seen in the high responses from the Tenth Church millennial leaders who had completed spiritual training around a Rule of Life, the hunger for a context to grow is rich. When

²⁷⁹ Gordon, Interview.

²⁸⁰ Gallup, *Work and Live*, 3.

²⁸¹ Gallup, *Work and Live*, 10.

instruction and support are provided around development and application of a Rule of Life, the millennial leaders have been shown to embrace it and apply it in their lives.

Seven: A Healthy Identity Increases Leadership Effectiveness

Identity is a significant area of consideration for the millennial. Identity “refers to a sense of who one is as a person”²⁸² and “provides one with a sense of well-being, a sense of being at home in one’s body, a sense of direction in one’s life, and a sense of mattering to those who count.”²⁸³

According to Gallup, millennials “are a notably large and diverse group, so it is important to note that they cannot be homogenized. However, there are common characteristics of this group that can encourage an understanding of millennials’ behaviors and attitudes.”²⁸⁴

According to Environics Research, Canadian millennials can be classified into six unique values tribes. These six tribes are identified with the key values held by those in that group. In Table 8 the statistical commonalities of those who were classified in each of the six tribes are identified. Some of the variables that stood out in the research as being correlated to millennials in each particular tribe included typical marital status, gender, socioeconomic group, religious beliefs, age within the millennial cohort, or

²⁸² Justin T. Sokol, “Identity Development Throughout the Lifetime: An Examination of Eriksonian Theory,” *Graduate Journal of Counseling Psychology* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 4, <http://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=gjcp>

²⁸³ Sokol, “Identity Development”, 4.

²⁸⁴ Gallup. *Work and Live*, 8.

country of origin. These data caricatures capture various characteristics among a wide range of Canadian millennials that demonstrate different motivations and attitudes.²⁸⁵

Table 8. The Six Millennial Tribes

<i>Lone Wolves</i>	<i>Engaged Idealists</i>	<i>Bros and Brittanys</i>	<i>Diverse Strivers</i>	<i>Critical Counter-culturists</i>	<i>New Traditionalists</i>
Key Values: Doing their own thing, cynicism, keeping things simple, buying things on a whim if they want, laying low.	Key Values: Seizing the moment & new experiences, learning from others, being open-minded, a meaningful career, nature & environment, creativity, originality.	Key Values: Clear gender roles, being respected, looking good, taking some risks, blowing off steam, getting paid.	Key Values: Being connected to community, thrills & excitement, buying things, being safe from violence, status & respect.	Key Values: Political & social engagement, being open-minded, nature & environment, learning from others, a meaningful career.	Key Values: Religion, family, doing your duty, family values.
High proportion living in Quebec	7 in 10 are women	More likely to live in the suburbs	High percentage are late millennials	High percentage are early millennials	61% are conservative Protestants
Likely to live in urban or rural areas	45% are single women	Representing ¼ of millennials	1 in 4 were born outside of Canada	83% have no religion	Most likely to be married with kids
Most likely to live alone	High percentage are early millennials	More likely to be single men	Most likely to have over 6 figure household income	Nearly half are single men	Almost 6 in 10 are women

Source: Data from “Meet the Millennials,” Environics Research, accessed January 6, 2020. <https://environicsresearch.com/insights/meet-millennials/>

Imagination, creativity and the appreciation of beauty can be powerful tools for connecting one’s identity as God’s beloved with the details of their daily life - especially in an age when so many live largely disconnected from the natural world or at a pace that does not allow them easily “taste and see” that God is good.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ “15,000 Millennials,” Environics Research, accessed January 25, 2019, <https://environicsresearch.com/insights/15000-millennials/2014>.

²⁸⁶ Mark Scandrette, *Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), chap. 7, sec. 2, Kindle.

Carson Pue, who has developed countless leaders through Arrow Leadership, speaks about the importance of the spiritual identity of the Christian leader:

Self-awareness is at the very core of your development as a leader. You must have an accurate self-awareness, not simply of your abilities, gifts, and skills but also of the shadow side of your life as a leader. Most importantly, leaders must have absolute clarity on who they are as children of God. Self-awareness is about finding and being secure in your identity in Christ.²⁸⁷

The millennial leader who is able to find their identity in Christ is able to have an accurate and humble perspective not only on their abilities and giftings but also on their shadow side. Mike Breen has personal experience in developing missional church leaders understands the struggles of an influencer. He believes “we need to look at the issue of identity, because it is the main battlefield when it comes to character. It is where the Devil attacked Jesus and where he attacks us, and, if not addressed, can sideswipe a missional leader.”²⁸⁸

Embracing a true sense of who one is as a person takes courage and is possible when standing in the security of a child who is unconditionally loved by their Father in heaven.

²⁸⁷ Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2005), 21, Kindle.

²⁸⁸ Mike Breen, *Multiplying Missional Leaders: From Half-Hearted Volunteers to a Mobilized Kingdom Force* (Pawleys Island, SC: Zondervan, 2012), chap. 3, Kindle.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

Personal Growth through the Project

Pursuit of this thesis project has been one of the greatest challenges the researcher has ever undertaken. It has also been one of the most rewarding adventures he has committed himself to as a student. It is always about the people, and the Bethel Seminary faculty and academic peers have been no exception. Professors, guest lecturers, and cohorts were divergent in views and always generous and kind in posture, which added to the richness of this experience.

The researcher has been blessed to attend two dynamic Christian institutions in America and feels both indebted and privileged. As a Canadian, he sees through a different lens than most church leader colleagues south of the border as a result of living within a different cultural framework and history. How fitting it has been to study in the global and contextual stream at Bethel Seminary.

When prayerfully considering further education, the researcher had a coffee with his friend Eric Bryant. He was contagious in his enthusiasm about Bethel Seminary. His personal invitation into the program at the San Diego campus made all the difference at the time. Getting to know Bethel better has been an expectant joy for the researcher who is proud to be associated with the school and grateful for people he has encountered along the way.

His greatest growth came through a personal struggle with his health this past year. For the past two years the researcher has been losing physical strength and his days

have become shorter and shorter as far as expended energy and the ability to make it through the day. The cause of this health challenge became clear when he received a diagnosis of serious heart failure. This past year the researcher has been extremely low functioning and just not himself. His new limitations have been difficult to accept, especially in light of the demands of ministry, being a dad of two energetic boys, and the additional time investment required for this project.

Most of his personal growth in the research and analysis of this project has been through his deepening understanding of millennials. As a Gen Xer, the researcher can strongly identify and relate with the prominent characteristics of his own cohort, which comparatively speaking, many boomer colleagues share as well. The researcher has come to both appreciate and grow in his love for young adults and the unique factors that continue to shape the millennial cohort.

It has been humbling for the researcher as a father to realize just how much influence a parent has over his children. The millennial generation were mostly shaped by the boomer cohort. Their cultural rhythms and characteristics shaped a generation. Parents have been given the opportunity to shape the lives of their children and this study has reinvigorated a drive in the researcher to do that well as possible.

The emotion of anxiety and its effect on the millennial generation has been rather enlightening for the researcher. He has come to understand the various external factors and the practical ways millennials can feel out of control for the future. Even as a Gen Xer he can also experience heightened anxiety and his hope is to continue to be centered in his trust relationship with Christ when he feels overwhelmed or fearful. Spiritual practices have been life-giving for the researcher.

Technology has changed the world. Growth for the researcher through this study has come in part by learning so much about the effects of technology on the millennial generation as well as in his own life. The negative effects on cherished relationships and to his well-being overall as he over-indulges in the pervasive medium have become even more apparent. This has begun a shift in how he manages technology in his day-to-day life. That being said, the researcher also celebrates the positive ways he is able use technology and leverage it for good.

Topics for Further Study

As the researcher looks beyond this project, he sees three key further research questions arisen from the answers to the questions received from the surveys and interviews.

Technology

This research exposes the lack of clarity around what a healthy balance looks like in today's culture between technology and relational connection. It is a moving target. Developing a clearer understanding of these complex dynamics could have significant positive impacts for the millennial cohort as they age, as well as for the next generation.

Diversity

Another consideration the research brought up is the need to understand what a healthy multigenerational church would look like that engages all cohorts. Cavey implied in his interview that living the Jesus way ultimately connects with all generations. The researcher would like to lay out a more concrete framework for what that can look like integrating technology, multiculturalism, and the societal leaning away from organized religion. As Eric Bryant has written, "Jesus' eternal cause also creates a diverse community. A community on a mission to love and serve its city becomes diverse

through the natural connections of relationships.”²⁸⁹ There is so much beauty and possibility of diversity in the context of a Jesus-centered life.

Similitude

The third question the project leaves the researcher with is more about the similarities between the generational cohorts. It would be of value to study the young adult life stage across multiple generations to identify the commonalities that exist. Understanding the points of similarity between generations by stage of life will allow churches and leaders to more effectively anticipate needs of future generations as they approach young adulthood. It will also allow the church to consider the changing needs of the millennial cohort as they shift from young adults to middle aged adults and ultimately to seniors. The church is here for each cohort and each individual for a lifetime, and so anticipating the changing needs of the community seems essential to continuing to nurture and disciple those who are following Jesus and those who are seeking some form of comfort and are not yet sure what that might be.

²⁸⁹ Eric Michael Bryant, *Not Like Me: A Field Guide for Influencing a Diverse World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 88.

APPENDIX: ONLINE SURVEY FOR MILLENNIAL LEADERS

Online Survey Questions

1. I was born between January 1, 1981 and December 31, 2001, and within the age range of 18-38.
2. I am: male/female
3. What is your ethnicity?
4. What is your Full Name?
5. What is your current email address and phone number?
6. What is the name of your church?
7. In addition to this online survey, would you be willing to engage 7 interview questions for this project?

Part One: Jesus and You. This section focuses on your relationship with Christ.

Each statement has the following five options for response: strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

1. I have an intimate relationship with Christ.
2. I see God's redemptive work in my life story.
3. The meditation of Scripture draws me closer to Christ.
4. Conversations with Christ are part of my daily experience.
5. Jesus influences every aspect of my heart, mind and soul.
6. I express my love to Jesus by giving and tithing to my church regularly.
7. I live by a Rule of Life (a personal Rule of Life is a description of your life rhythms, relationships and spiritual practices that help keep Christ in the center of your life)

Part Two: Jesus and Others. This section focuses on your relationship with others. Each statement has the following five options for response: strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

1. I actively serve the poor.
2. I tell others about my faith in Christ.
3. I desire to use my unique gifts and talents for Jesus.

4. I regularly practice acts of kindness to my neighbours
5. I see a significant part of my personal purpose as serving others
6. I identify with those who are vulnerable and marginalized
7. I experience joy by practicing the teachings of Jesus (such as the Sermon on the Mount and Beatitudes)

Part Three: Jesus and Leadership. This section focuses on your Christian influence. Each statement has the following five options for response: strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

1. I feel equipped to serve others.
2. I have a personal mission statement
3. There is opportunity for leadership training at my church
4. I desire to influence others towards following Jesus
5. I see my Christian faith and work an integrated whole
6. I have leadership mentors and spiritual friends who are older than me
7. I have been taught and modeled servant leadership in my local church context

Two additional opened-ended questions:

1. What has most significantly shaped your trust relationship with Christ?
2. In your view, what are the factors that had you lean into leadership, and service, as opposed to your peers who have not?

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