

Top Reasons

MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z HATE YOUR CHURCH

(And what you can do about it)



SOLUTION GUIDE

The ministry ideas, how-to's, tips, and advice you need to engage millennials & Gen Z at your church. PLUS... how our software, Realms® can help you achieve this ministry goal.

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What's the Problem with Millennials Anyway?

Millennials are not a monolith. Let's just put that out there at the start. However, further studies of this huge generation reveal trends and commonalities that can be honed in on to determine the right approach to building better engagement with millennials. Obviously nothing applies to any single generation. What we're suggesting in this guide are overarching strategies to reach the most with the best.

Despite what you may have read, millennials still believe in God, hold to absolutes of right and wrong, and pray as much (or in some cases more) than people among their age group in the past. But at the same time...

Millennials are far less engaged with church affiliation than any generation in recent American history.

source: [Pew Research Center](#)

So what gives? Where is the disconnect? Why are millennials just as spiritual, but far less religious? What's their beef with the church that is causing so many to be losing them in droves?



Let's Not Forget Gen Z

In some ways, they are different. In some ways, quite similar. For example, Gen Z's are proving to be more independent and competitive than millennials, perhaps a result of growing up in a recession and during a time when fitting in was overhyped. And yet, they are just as open to spiritual concepts and faith.



More worrisome, Gen Z's are twice as likely to be atheists, opting for a tangible reality than a spiritual one.

Millennials want authenticity, but Gen Z takes it a step further. They want a real-world experience, which is one reason they are more likely to resist online shopping and opt for less-highly produced entertainment experiences.

Both are highly informed and influenced by narrative. Both understand and adapt well to technology, and both are the future of the Church. So, it's important that you get this right.

There's no shortage of opinions about what millennials and Gen Z are wanting and needing from a local church. And it's not always easy to boil down points of view in a practical way that you can actually apply in ministry. But that's exactly what this guide is intended to do.

A Matter of Words

When discussing and researching this topic over time, there are certain keywords or phrases that seem to resonate with millennials and their thoughts about the church. When asked what they want, themes emerge that you would do well to notice. Words such as authenticity, purpose, relationships, community, and serving seem to permeate the conversation. The importance behind these words are the beliefs they embody. Gen Z shares these values but puts a higher value on individualism and pragmatism.

Millennials want to be part of something that matters. They see through the fake stuff, the moving lights, and the lasers. They want to discover God in the context of community and be on mission to make a difference in their neighborhoods. Gen Z also shares these values. In fact, the emphasis on authenticity and meaning is so strong in both groups, that it's working its way up through the generations, affecting the value systems of the entire world.

At the same time, their involvement in the one place that could meet their most sought after life goals is declining. Millennials and Gen Z are leaving (or never going to) the very thing that could offer more authenticity, community, individuality, meaning, story, and purpose than anything else - the Church.

Let's turn the trend around and help younger generations fall in love with church all over again.

To be clear, millennials and Gen Z are NOT the same. But when it comes to the following, there are a lot of similarities. And, where they differ, the response needed from the church is often the same. Read on to see how your church can be engaging to both millennials and Gen Z.

Here are the top reasons millennials and Gen Z hate your church and what you can do about it.

Reason #1

YOUR VISION IS TOO NARROW

Seeing the big picture, the outcome, and the benefit is appealing to anybody. It's especially appealing to young adults who are planning for their futures and dreaming of making the world a better place. If your vision is small and the expected outcomes are not communicated, it will be tough to get millennials and Gen Z engaged in your church's mission - the thing that will make your vision come to life.

Your vision has to include a positive outcome for people from all walks of life. It's not enough to target a particular audience. Millennials and Gen Z want to know that various people groups are being considered and all are welcome to take part in the journey.

Casting a big vision requires great communication.

Communication of all types is required to reach people in the ways they are listening. Targeted messages delivered in context are much more likely to be heard. Even better, when you are able to communicate at both a micro and macro level, it becomes easier to tie in the bigger vision with specific actions and events.

For example, if your vision is to eliminate poverty in your neighborhood, you could set up a group (or groups) devoted to connecting people with job opportunities. Then when the next job fair rolls around, you can message that group with details of how they can be involved and how their involvement serves the



bigger vision to eliminate poverty. Now instead of just telling people about a local event, they recognize that their involvement is a critical part in eliminating poverty in their streets.

A mobile app with churchwide, group, and personal communication tools is the best solution for making sure you're casting a big vision to a big audience in small but powerful ways. Use the Realm Connect app to send messages, comments, notifications, alerts, and invites to exactly who you want, when you want, where they are.


Reason #2

YOUR COMMUNITY IS A SHAM

It's all about relationships. Millennials and Gen Z - like all generations - want to connect, be in the loop, and form relationships that mean something. According to the **Barna Group**, community relationships are the number one, most important reason millennials go to church.

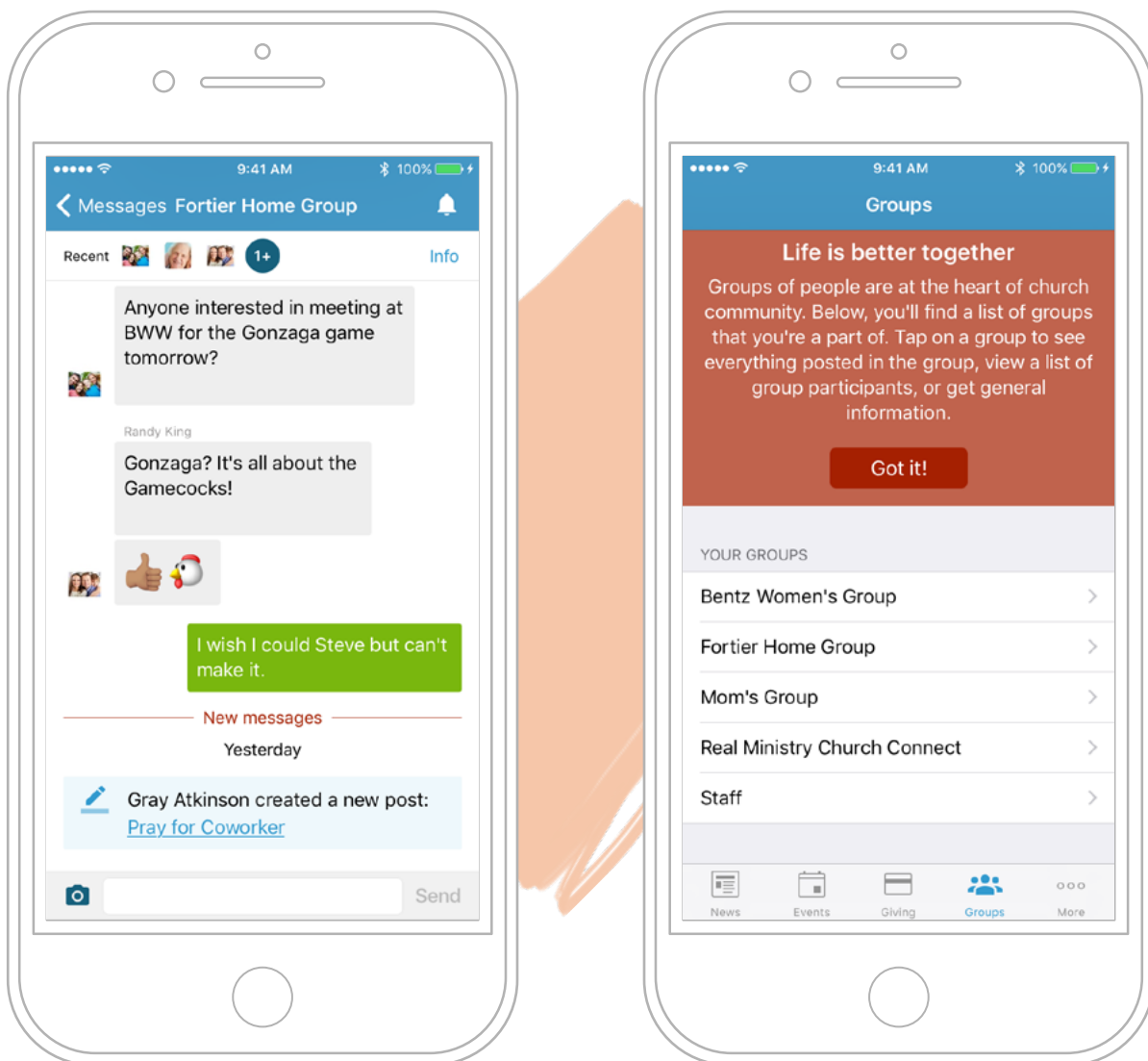
Groups are one of the best ways to develop relationships. But with people more connected via technology yet disconnected with busyness and hectic lifestyles, the challenge for churches becomes how to grow connected groups.

People have to meet in person, face-to-face. The church needs to spend time together. This is especially important for Gen Z, who prize actual experiences over simulated socialization. There is just no getting around that reality. But to accommodate an ever-shifting, mobile culture, people are actually getting less face time (not the app, the real thing) than ever before.



Simply put, if your church is not promoting strong relationships and connected community, younger generations won't get engaged.

To help your groups make the most of the time they are apart so they can do the most with the time they have together, consider using a group communication app that lets them talk throughout the week. Whether it's sharing prayer requests, cracking jokes, asking for or offering help with any variety of needs, sharing digital resources or discipleship materials, posting encouraging remarks, or just chatting. A great way to connect in community is to connect online with a safe, convenient mobile app.



Reason #3

YOU'RE NOT TRANSPARENT (OR AT LEAST, THEY CAN'T SEE IT)

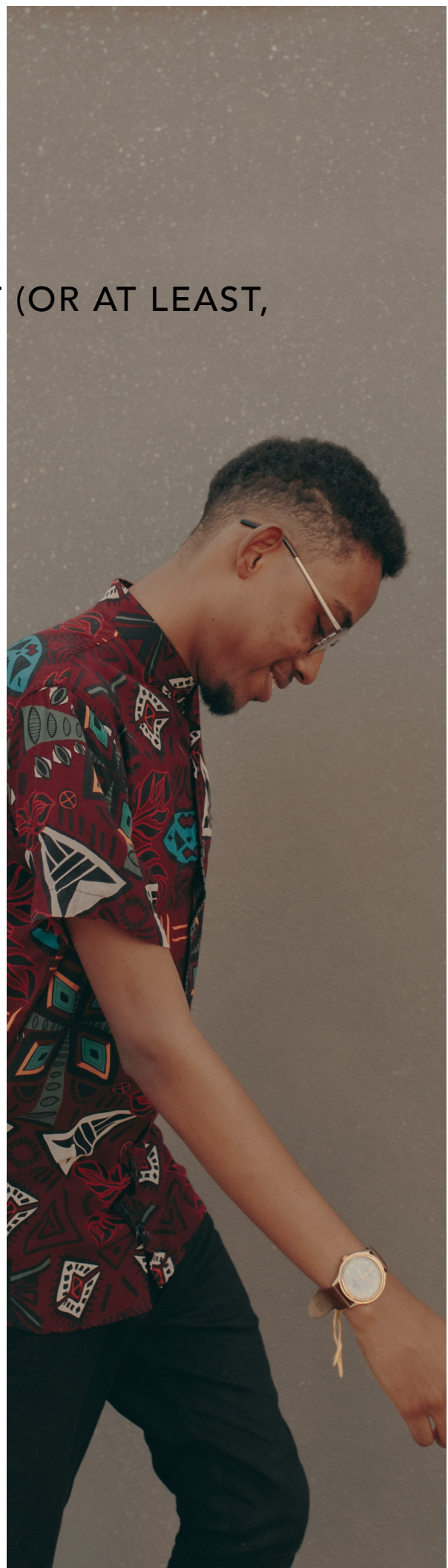
Okay, this one matters a lot. While the number one reason millennials will stay at a church is relationships, the number one reason they'll leave is hypocrisy. Gen Z has even less time for hidden agendas, making them more likely to call out whatever is behind the curtain. No matter what blog post you read or study you examine, you'll find that younger generations hate all things fake.

Raised with commercials on every channel and ads inside every cereal box, millennials and Gen Z know when someone is selling them a bill of goods. Even more, they know when things are being hidden, when cliques are forming, and when someone is trying to manipulate their behavior.

Keeping things in the dark is just not an option when dealing with a bright generation.

A good church ministry software should provide tools to bring things to light. Giving and spending reports, online directories, group listings, and multiple giving options let people know that whether you're a leader, a member, or a visitor, you're all working hard to keep everything out in the open, while at the same time, keeping personal matters and private information secure.

As a subtle example, even something simple like letting people manage their online giving from their phones lets them see



that no one is trying to trick them into giving more money. There is no manipulation, just provision of the right tools to help them with stewardship. It helps millennials to see they are part of something. It helps Gen Z to see their impact on the same thing.

Or take public group listings and individual directories. This lets people see who is part of the church and how they are involved. It lets people share in the experience but still give them private controls to decide what personal information to share and what to keep safe.

The key to being transparent is keeping things secure. With the right balance, people will feel safe enough to share and share enough to build trust.



Reason #4

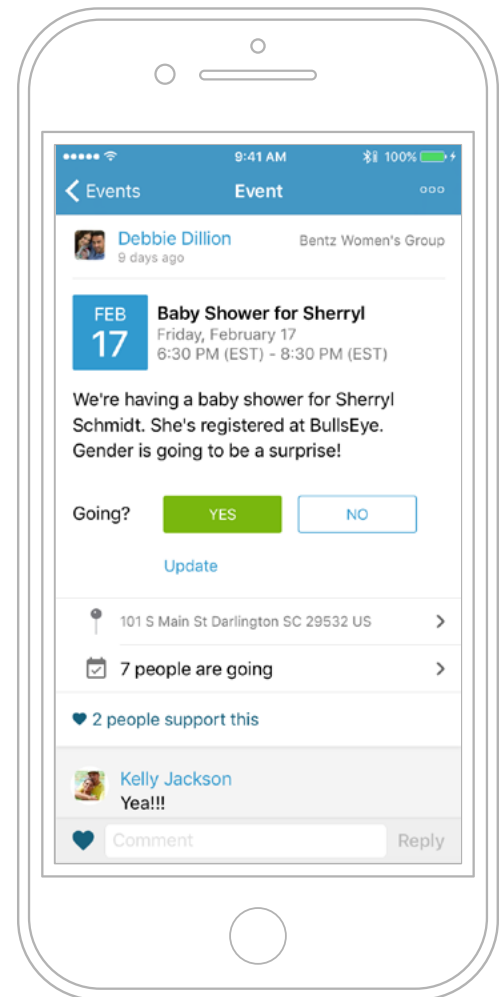
YOU LACK UNITY

So now that you know you need to cast a big vision and get people connected, you need to stick together. One of the best ways to engage millennials is to share a common purpose. It's not enough just to hang out. You have to live outward.

Doing real ministry means getting together and actually serving in some way. But that can be hard unless you have a solution to manage your service projects, outreaches, and whatever other events you have planned throughout the year.

Using events on Realm, people can register, invite lists of people, and sign up to bring requested items. It's a sure way to keep up the cause and keep doing great ministry together.

Millennials want to do something together that actually matters.





Reason #4.5

YOU LACK INDIVIDUALITY

No, we're not talking out of two sides of our mouth. Both millennials and Gen Z desire shared experiences and unity. However, Gen Z is less likely to sacrifice their individual desires for the greater good. They'll fight for ministries that meet not a common, but an individual need. This means highlighting specific people and honoring achievement.

The best way to develop an individual experience in a shared setting is by customizing your tools, communication, and events to allow for maximum participation and varying levels of involvement.

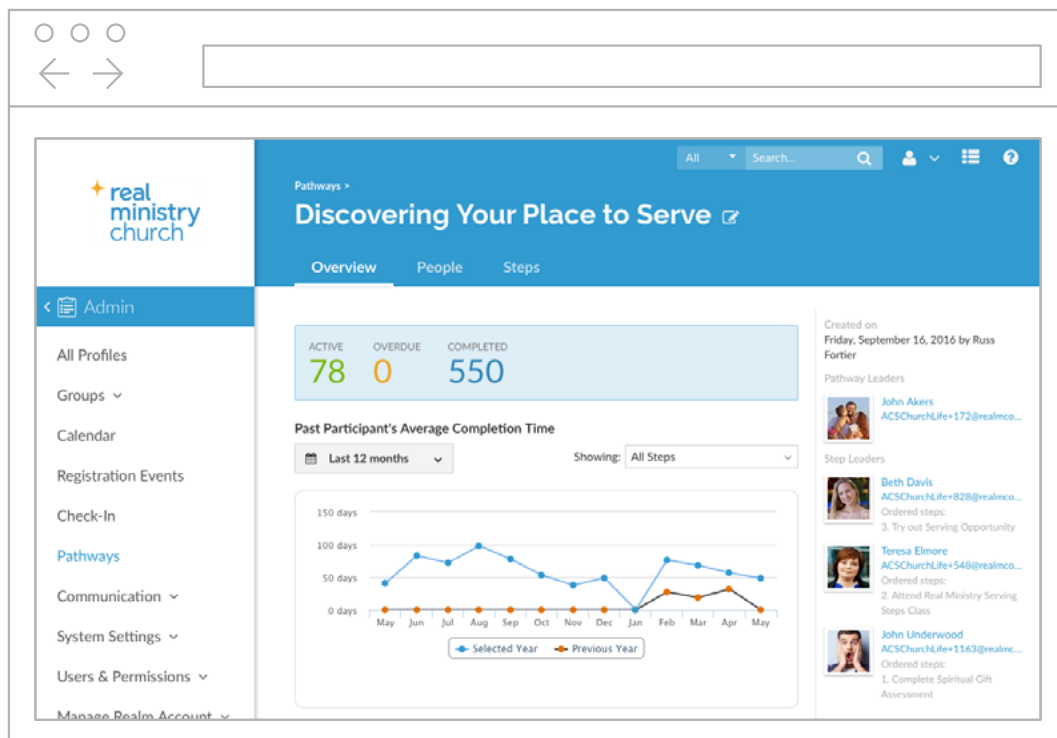
Reason #5

YOU AREN'T CHALLENGING THEM

Millennials aren't scared of a challenge. And Gen Z, well, they welcome them. What's more, the bigger the challenge the greater the buy-in. Younger generations come to church to discover, to grow, to mature, and to matter. There isn't room for weak suggestions or flaccid prescriptions.

Millennials and Gen Z are serious about growing in their faith.

Pathways on Realm is the perfect tool for moving millennials further in their faith by providing a solution that moves them through processes at your church. It empowers staff and leaders to assign steps, check in, follow up, and move along. No more guessing how people are engaged. You'll know.



A Bunch More Reasons:

Now that we've listed the big ones that are most common between both generations, here are a few more reasons millennials and Gen Z are avoiding your church like the plague, plus hints of how you can turn it around:



1. ***You place too much emphasis on being cool instead of being real.*** Create a value for normal experiences and less hype.
2. ***Your budget is weighted toward buildings and programs instead of people.*** Help them see how buildings and programs help people.
3. ***You don't care enough about the experience.*** Destination is important for vision casting, but the journey has to be meaningful.
4. ***You're all about the money.*** Talk more about how resources will be used instead of how much you need.
5. ***You're not about the money.*** They get it takes money to make the world go round. Don't hide it. Just be honest.
6. ***Your jeans are too tight.*** They don't need you to be just like them. Just *like* them.
7. ***You're nowhere to be found.*** Get on Instagram and Snapchat, and start a conversation where they are.
8. ***Your programs are missing the mark.*** Yeah, marriage and finances will always matter, but what about depression, bullying, peer-pressure, and other societal concerns?
9. ***Sunday mornings aren't the best.*** Consider offering multiple - and even mid-week - service times.
10. ***You're not making sense.*** It's not enough to talk about why or what God does. You need to help them see how He moves in a real and explainable way.
11. ***It's not you, it's them.*** Stop talking about how great your ministry is and start talking about how your ministry will impact their lives and meet them where they are.

The Future is Worth It

The future of the church rests in the hands of the youngest generations. Engaging millennials and Gen Z matters more than most might think. If you're reading this guide, you're probably not one of those who thinks they are all spoiled brats who just want things their way. You're smart enough to know that they comprise two very unique and diverse generations who need to be uniquely reached for greater Kingdom impact.

It's not about coddling, changing the Gospel, or capitulating to their every whim; it's about understanding who they are, what makes them tick, and how the life-changing power of the Gospel can pierce their perceptions and their hearts.

When your church goes the extra mile for millennials and Gen Z, your church will be bursting at the seams with people who are passionate about their purposes and on fire for God. There's no better feeling in the world.

So what are you waiting for? Take this guide, then go online to realmchurch.com and discover why Realm is the solution you need to help millennials and Gen Z start falling in love with Church all over again.





Throughout this guide, you have seen several ways that Realm helps churches reach new people and manage the life and operations of a church. We're excited to share more about our revolutionary ministry tool, Realm.

Realm provides solutions that will make your ministry and life way easier. It is cutting-edge church ministry software that combines administration, accounting, and community into one system. It also connects your entire church and personalizes each person's involvement in your ministry.

We'd encourage you to explore all that Realm makes possible by taking a demo, walking through a self-guided tour, or speaking with an associate today!



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