

On Mission 2020

Topic Focus: Mobilization

Tanner Callison - The Traveling Team Mobilizing Millennials and Generation Z

Hey there, my name is Tanner Callison and I work for an organization called The Traveling Team. Over the last five and a half years, I've traveled campus to campus around the United States mobilizing this generation of college students to play a part in God's mission to reach all of the nations of the earth. So the topic that we're going to talk about over the next eight to ten minutes is this idea of Mobilizing The Millennial Generation and Mobilizing Generation Z.

Now there's a lot of similarities, but there's also way more differences between these generations. And so we're going to briefly cover some of these things but my hope is that we will continue to grow and learn more about these generations. And here's the deal, here's why this is so important for us to understand, if we care about the task, if we care about reaching the world, if we care about reaching all the nations of the earth and letting Jesus be known to the ends of the earth, we must care about these generations. Because these generations are huge.

The Millennial Generation and Generation Z together equate to 50% of the US population. Within the US- these are a large generations and they are going to be the next pastors, the next teachers, the next professors, the next doctors, the next lawyers. They are it if they're not already. And so it is important for us to understand the role that these two generations have been finishing the task. But when it comes to generations often when it comes to generations that are different than ours, whether we're millennials and we're we're looking down the Gen Z, or whether we are Gen X and we're looking down the Millennials, or Baby Boomers looking down the Millennials or whatever it is, like, we often don't know. We don't know.

A few months ago, I was sitting with some friends talking about Generation Z, which their kids are Generation Z. They're in High School and we were talking about the idea of one of the most well known words among Generation Z is this word called "yeet". I'm not sure if you've heard it before and what's funny about the words it doesn't have a dictionary definition, but it is used in so many different variety of ways. And my friends essentially said, "My kids do not know what yeet is. Not a chance." And so we called the kids in and we say, "Hey do you know what yeet is?" He said, "Yeah, it's my favorite word." They're like, "Wait, you know what yeet is? Yeet. It's my favorite word." He said, "What is the definition of yeet?" He's like asking his son and he says, "Dad, everyone knows yeet does not have a dictionary definition. But we use it all the time and in fact, it is so much of my favorite word that it is my username on a game called Fortnite. My username is Yeet Nugget."

Yeet Nugget. It is so funny, you know, oftentimes we don't know what we don't know. And that's not a bad thing necessarily but often we're missing out on what God desires to do with generations because we have the tendency to look down and to critique, and to misunderstand rather than to embrace and to learn, to love, and learn to care and to invite to empower these generations.

And so very quickly just to give a foundation with in both of these generations, I want to give a couple of quick facts. I want to look at the world that they live and a couple of the values they have and what that means for us mobilizing this generation. And so a couple quick facts when it comes to these generations that Millennials and Generation Z - they're not the same. Not at all. They're different generations. They're totally different generations. Millennials were born between the years of 1980s. 1995 that means that puts them between the ages of 25 and 40. Oftentimes, we talk about younger generations. We call them millennials but they actually are Generation Z because Generation Z, they were born between the years of 1995 and 2010. So that put them between the ages of around 9 or so and in 24-25. So these numbers are rough but we understand these are different generations. Equating together though, like I said, is around half the population of the US within these 2 generations. So these are deeply important generations to understand.

So what about the world that they live in? Those are some really, really quick facts to understanding how big they are but the world that they live in is also the world that we live in. And here's the thing we live in a world that is deeply influenced by technology and we live in a world that is increasingly secular.

So let's look at secularism real fast. And so secularism- I'm not just talking about general decline in religious activity which is true, there's a decrease among these younger generations in church attendance and religious interest and things like that. And so we have a decrease in that, but I'm also talking about the fact that we live in a world that there is a million options when it comes to belief. You can be to someone who doesn't believe in anything and someone who believes in Jesus and you can have everything in between. You can have total atheists and you can have completely devoted Christian you can have a Hindu or Buddhist and we live in a society where all of those kind of coexist together in a really, really interesting way. And So what I mean by secular is there is just this mixture of truth and thoughts and all of these different things within our society. And this is the world that Millennials grew up in, their generation is growing up in, Generation Z is growing up in. So it's in a world that's secular but also were deeply influenced by technology.

So technology is really big. I mean, we wouldn't be able to virtual conference like this unless technology has had this huge boom in the last few decades. And so what's interesting about technology when it comes to these generations, though, is that most of the Millennial Generation, they can remember a time when they didn't have- always have access to the internet. They can remember a time when there wasn't smartphones, when there wasn't Netflix or streaming services. But for Generation Z, most of them can't. Most of them can't imagine a world without a smartphone, can't imagine the world without Instagram or Snapchat or

Facebook. They can't imagine the world without Netflix or Amazon. All of these things are something that Generations Z has known for their entire life.

So, something I want to just pause for real fast- technology. So I think oftentimes older generations can criticize Millennials and Generation Z for being addicted to technology. But the truth is, it's the older generations that created those devices for the younger generations to be addicted to. And honestly, just my experience of people all across all generations as soon as they get their hands on smart phones and technology everyone is deeply addicted and distracted. But these are things for these two generations they grew up with. And so those are some quick facts about the world that they live in - technology and secularism.

But then I want to look at some of the values that they have really briefly and so what are the values they have? And this is where the generations- they begin to diverge even more. And so one of the major values that both of them have, but it's approach differently is relationship. So both of these generations are deeply relational. They desire to be in a relationship. They desire to spend time with people. They desire to walk with people. They're not just addicted to their phones and no desire to walk with people or anything like that, that's just not true. But the way technology has affected relationships is that it changes the way that people communicate in their preferred methods of communication. It changes just the culture of talking and hanging out and things like that. So for Generation Z, for example, what will happen is they'll have a conversation at school, and now in school, and they'll just keep picking up that exact same conversation as they go home. They'll be doing it through text messages or through Snapchat or through some other service. They're using their technology to augment their relationships. It is something that just continues on the relationship that has already been happening. And Millennials do that to a large degree as well but it is a very big cornerstone of Generation Z and so we must not think that they're not relational and they don't desire to communicate they might just have different communication preferences than we do. And so as we're thinking about mobilizing them, whether we're pastors or we're mobilizers at the mission agency or working for a nonprofit or something like that, we need to understand that they love relationship and they want to be in a relationship, but they might just communicate differently than we do. And so, if we're serious about engaging with them, what would it look like for us to send a text message instead of a letter? What would it look like for us to send a text message instead of an email? Honestly, text messages is probably the best form of communication that's not creepy. Do not try and get Snapchat and Snapchat someone of the younger generation. That's really, really weird. Don't do that. But text messages- and that's a great way to connect with people. And so they're deeply relational. That's a value that they have.

And both of these generations- really quickly- they also value success. And so this idea of the American Dream, and having a job, and having a family, or having a place where family can live and things like that, that's totally normal within these generations. They care about success. But success and their approach to it might look a little bit differently based off their childhood and what affected them. For Generation Z for example, they grew up- many of them were alive when the Great Recession hit and so they thought families lose houses and jobs and so they're a little bit more or less likely to take risks when it comes to a lot of areas of life. Specifically within jobs, they're wanting to take more stable jobs like Accounting, or things in

Engineering and Science and things like that- less likely to do things within the Arts because they want to be a little bit more practical and avoid the risk of losing their job. And the idea of risk actually carries over to a lot of different categories that we don't even have time to carry forward but Generation Z- we need to know that they're risk- averse. And so, that is a huge topic for us to understand.

But let's dive into the third value about these generations- both of them- Millennials and Generation Z. Both of them desire to change the world. They see the News, they see Social Media, and they feel the injustice. They want to change the environment. They want to be involved in ending human trafficking and things like that. They deeply care about these issues and for those of us, I mean, as we're seeking to mobilize them and care for them, engage with them with God's mission, we need to understand that there is no bigger thing to invite these generations than into those God's mission to reach all the peoples, and all the nations, and all of the Earth with the good news of Jesus. It is the biggest thing we can invite people into.

And so our role as mobilizers of these generations is twofold. The first one is we need to have compassion on these generations. We need to learn more about them, and engage with them. I'm not talking about just reading the News or reading one book. I'm not talking about doing all those things. But then sitting down with people who are a different generation and you're asking questions and engaging with them. How do you relate? How do you want to communicate? What is your purpose? How can I help you align God's purpose with your purpose and things like that. We need to have compassion with them and care for them.

And the second thing is we need to invite them and empower them. We have all been invited into this mission to reach all the peoples and all the nations in all the Earth. And we need to send that invitation forward to these younger generations. I think we have the tendency to believe that maybe they can't do anything, or people used this word like a "snowflake generation" or something like that, which is not true. What would it look like for us to love and engage them well, invite them to the mission, and then empower them.

And one of the ways that we empower them -really quickly, as we close- is that we need to understand their obstacles, we need to understand their excuses. Every single generation has obstacles to mission. Every single generation has obstacles to going, to giving, to praying, to welcoming internationals and things like that. But we need to learn how we can help these generations overcome those obstacles. There was someone who did that for us. And we need to do the exact same thing and that takes patience and compassion to do that. We empower them through their obstacles.

And so mobilizing Generation Z and mobilizing Millennials is very, very, very important. I'm glad we got to spend this last eight to ten minutes together talking about this idea. And what I'd love for us to do is to continue to learn and to grow and so, if you guys have questions or need access to resources, I want to create an opportunity for you guys to do that. You guys can reach out to me and I've also given a list of books and resources that will help you continue to grow when it comes to understanding mobilizing this generations.