

On Mission 2020

Topic Focus: Mobilization

Stephen - Café 1040

Mobilizing Millennials and Generation Z

Hello and thank you so much for joining us today. My name is Stephen and I serve as the Director of Mobilization for Cafe 1040. At Cafe 1040, we have the mission of leading a generation to tell the story of Jesus where it's never been told. We were specifically created to work with and engage the emerging generation of missionaries to help them find their role in God's great mission in the world, which is why I'm so excited for our topic today, "Mobilizing Millennials and Gen Z."

Now this has become a very important conversation in the missions industry today. More and more agencies are realizing if we don't solve this problem, if we don't learn how to more effectively mobilize the next generation, we're going to feel the impact of that for years to come, maybe even decades to come. Now I know some of you are thinking hold on a second, God mobilizes. We don't mobilize. And that's true. I completely agree. At the same time I do believe there are some things that we could do to more effectively work with this emerging generation and help them take steps forward on their missions pathway. We've had a number of conversations with agencies who have come to us and said, "Hey, we need help. We need to get younger. We have some wonderful missionaries on the field, but they've been on the field for many years now. We need help, in engaging this next generation." So the question we're all trying to answer, the question we're trying to solve is how do we mobilize Millennials and Gen Z? Because I think most of us are realizing the traditional recruiting and mobilization methods simply aren't working anymore.

We need a solution we need some change. We need to take steps to more effectively mobilize the next generation. And after doing this for about fifteen years, I believe Cafe 1040 has learned a few things that can help us do this just a little bit better. Now, I want to be clear that there's no silver bullet here, there's no magic button that's going to suddenly make missions mobilization easy. But there are a few things that I think we can do to help make us a little more effective. And most of what I'm going to say today is going to revolve around this one central idea, this one central premise, that what the young adults of today, that the next generations of missionaries - what they need- is a GUIDE. They need a guide. They need someone who's a little bit farther along the journey to come alongside them, answer their questions, point them in the right direction. And ultimately help them find their place in God's mission. So I'd like to share with you today three things that I think can help make us more effective guides as we work with these generations.

So number one: What do they need? What do they need from a guide? They need steps. They need some steps. They need concrete, practical, tangible steps to move forward on their missions journey. The honest truth is set for many young adults that the gap in between. I'm thinking about becoming a long-term overseas missionary to actually becoming an overseas missionary is a giant gap that they're simply not willing to cross. Mostly because there isn't a clear practical next step. As guides, we need to show them what that next step is. Now here's where it gets a little difficult. Most of us are linear thinkers, right? When we think about getting from point A to point B -from here to there- we want a straight line. We want step after step after step. And the truth is, missions mobilization simply doesn't work that way. In fact, you want to know how missions mobilization really works? Have you ever played the game of Chutes and Ladders? Yeah, that's missions mobilization. So few steps forward and then a few steps back. You go up a few levels on the game board and then you slide back down. You might even get to the very top of the board and see the finish line just a few spaces away. But then you catch that last slide that brings you almost all the way back to the beginning. That's missions mobilization - few steps forward a few steps back. But do you want to know how you win Chutes and Ladders? You keep moving forward. You keep taking steps.

And when we're talking about mobilizing this next generation, we need to help them identify the next step and keep moving forward. At Cafe 1040, when we talk about mobilization, we talk about hearing, seeing and doing your role in the Great Commission. Hear it, but use the word exposure. We expose them to the biblical basis of missions, the state of the world, the task remaining, how to find your role in God's mission in the world. We want them to hear it. See it, we use the word encounter. We want to help them encounter the nations, get outside at their own culture, experience a different culture. It's amazing what happens when they do that. God opens their eyes when they begin to encounter the nations. And do it, we use the word engage. Engage their role in the Great Commission -might be giving, might be praying, might be sending, might even be going. But we want to help them find their role. And so we're talking about mobilization, they might be hear it, and then hear it, and then hear it, and then see it, and then hear it again. It's not a linear process, but we need to help them take steps forward.

Number two -they need someone to believe in them. They need someone, saying to them you can do this. Because the honest truth is, when it comes to missions they're hearing the exact opposite. I know some of you were thinking, "Wait, I've read some articles out there. Now I've studied Millennials and Gen Z. I've heard that this is an over-coddled generation. They've been told from the day they were born, you know, 'You can change the world.' 'You can do anything.'" And maybe that's created some sense of unwillingness to persevere through challenging circumstances. Maybe some of that is true but I got to tell you when it comes to missions, that's not what they're hearing. What they're hearing is, "You shouldn't do that." "You can't do that." "I don't want you to do that."

They're hearing, "Why would you do that when there's so much work to be done here?"

They're hearing, "You need to worry about stability and security."

They have so many options around them, so many

pressures that they're facing. They need somebody out there saying to them, "You can do this."

You know one of the most powerful aspects of Cafe 10:40's three months overseas mentorship is that these young adults, they're living overseas for three months. And while they're there, there's a long-term missionary that's mentoring them through that process. And that mentor is pushing, challenging, asking them to step outside of their comfort zone, but all along the way, saying to them, "I believe in you." "You can do this." And it's amazing when that light bulb goes off, and they actually start to believe that. It's amazing when they start to realize, "Wow, maybe I do have what it takes! Not of my own strength, but in the power of the Holy Spirit because Christ has given me everything I need. Maybe I really can do this." It's a powerful thing. They need somebody saying to them "you can do this."

And finally, they need community. Perhaps more than any generation before. Millennials and Gen Z needs a missions-minded community to go through this journey with. If a young adult is the only one asking these questions and they're looking around and no one else is going through these difficult conversations, it's so much harder to continue persevering down that pathway. But if they look around and there are other people like them asking these same questions, having these difficult conversations and continuing to move forward, they're so much more likely to keep taking steps. If we're going to guide them, we need to help them find some missions-minded community and that might even mean helping create some missions-minded community in our churches, in our neighborhoods. I believe so much in this emerging generation - our Millennials and Gen Z. There's so much potential for these young adults to be used by God, get launched out to the mission field. But they need a guide, they need someone to show them the steps to get there. They need someone who believes in them. They need to find some missions-minded community to do this journey with.

Just one closing thought for you, it's a phrase I heard many years ago that I continue to use today. In the phrase is "Mobilization exists because good discipleship doesn't." And I believe that really lays the foundation for us and ties together everything we're talking about today. If we're going to mobilize the next generation, we need to disciple them well, discipling them into understanding that your life is not your own, that your primary purpose in life is to bring glory to God. And if that happens, I think we will start to see this next generation launched all over the world. Thank you so much.