

MILLENNIALS: OUR MANDATE AND THEIR MYSTIQUE

{A Five-Part Series by Gwen Diaz}



4. SHARING YOUR STORY

Originally I intended for this to be a 3-part series about how we as Baby Boomers and Gen X'ers can best minister to Millennials. However, after completing the first three sections, I felt compelled to study and learn even more. I hope I am not boring you with all this generational information, but I have decided to pass on just a little more of what I have discovered.

One of the things I mentioned in a previous issue is that Millennials do not respond well to facts and statistics. They prefer stories – genuine, quality stories about humanity! And if we are able to produce a vision that's filled with hope by relating such a story, we will be able to successfully impact their lives.

With that in mind, I recently read *The Power of Story* by Leighton Ford. It is not a new book by any means. As a matter of fact, it was written while most Millennials were still in diapers. But it is still so applicable! In the very first chapter, Ford says that our acceptance of Christ as our Savior is the result of a collision of narratives.

He puts it this way: "God's Story touches our story, and a collision takes place. People encounter stories that call their own stories into question, and they are forced to consider: *What if my story isn't the whole story? How should I respond?* In the process of reconsidering their own lives, they become caught up in the Story of Jesus, and they are *changed*."

That's what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus. His story of brutal legalism ran headlong into Jesus' story of love and grace, and he became forever a changed man with a brand new story. As a matter of fact, he tells his story three times in the book of Acts and frequently refers to it in letters to the churches he established.

If we want to reach Millennials, we must speak in terms they comprehend using methods they can relate to. One of the most compelling tools we can use is *our own story*. It is a narrative written and orchestrated by God for this very purpose.

Some friends of ours recently told the story of girl they met while waiting to board a plane. During their time together, she told her "God-story." This is what she shared with them:

Early in her dating days a young man said to her, "You won't really know me and my heart without my telling you about my faith and relationship with God. Would you be comfortable talking about that?"

Though she grew up in a completely non-religious home, she liked and respected him enough to be curious about this part of his life. So she listened and questioned. A few weeks into these conversations, he asked if she'd be interested in visiting his church. She replied, "I wondered why you hadn't asked. I'd love to."

Over the next few months, their relationship grew; their conversations deepened. Between her new friend and church, her questions and objections were addressed. She met Jesus for herself and decided to follow him. She was baptized in May, and will soon be married to the man who introduced her to Christ.

This all came about because a friend took the risk to simply ask if she would like to hear his story so she could know more about him.

In a Breakpoint blog published July 20, 2016, Eric Metaxas cited a survey of 2000 unchurched Americans conducted by Lifeway Research and the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism. According to Metaxas, the survey found that "nearly four in five of those who haven't been to church in the last six months—except for weddings and funerals—say they don't mind talking about faith if it's really important to a friend. Not only that, but 47 percent say they will discuss religion freely if the subject comes up. Nearly another third say they'll listen without responding. Remember, we're only talking here about people who *don't* go to church!"

He goes on to say, "Unfortunately, even tragically, only a third say someone has actually bothered to explain why they should be a Christian."

According to Leighton Ford in *The Power of Story*, "Our task as Christians is not to *create* a hunger for God, but to *uncover* the hunger God has already placed there." We do this for Millennials when we honestly share our personal stories of God's grace in our lives while authentically living out our faith.



How To Prepare and Tell Your Story [Adapted from a CRU training worksheet]

Take a few minutes to work through these questions. They will help prepare you for the next opportunity God gives you to share your story.

Before I Started Following Christ:

1. How did my life best relate to those who still do not know Christ?
2. What did my life revolve around the most? Where did I find my security or happiness? (An unbeliever is relying on something external to give him happiness.)
3. How did those areas begin to let me down?

How I Started Following Christ:

1. When was the first time I heard (or really understood) the gospel in a dynamic way?
2. What were my initial thoughts and reactions?
3. When did my attitude begin to turn around? Why?
4. What were some struggles that went through my mind before I accepted Christ?
5. Why did I choose to accept Christ?

After I Started Following Christ:

1. What are some specific changes that Christ has made in my life?
2. How am I motivated differently?

Be sure to check out how Paul answered these questions in Acts 22:1-21.