

MILLENNIALS: OUR MANDATE AND THEIR MYSTIQUE

{A Five-Part Series by Gwen Diaz}



5. MY CHALLENGE TO MILLENNIALS IN MINISTRY

Dear Millennial Entering The Ministry,

In the last four sections I have tried to figure out how those of us over the age of thirty-five can best pass the Gospel baton that is now in our possession on to you. You are the next runners in this race, and it is your turn to share the message of Jesus Christ with the rest of the world.

Although you seem excited about your role, it is obvious that you would prefer to run it in a newer, much more state-of-the-art stadium than the antiquated one we are currently circling. I have already concluded that we (Baby Boomers and Gen X'ers) must be willing to make this change, since the context of the race is not nearly as important as the content of the message we are commissioned to carry.

But I feel I would be remiss if I didn't at least speak directly to you as you prepare to carry the baton around the next lap – and perhaps to the finish line! Here are some observations and advice that may help the inevitable handoff go a little more smoothly:

* We need each other. You were brought into a world that did not exist when we were born. You are the first generation of digital natives. For that reason, we rely on you in ways that previous generations haven't had to rely on their offspring. We need you to help us decipher and apply the latest technology, if nothing else.

But you need us as well. We have life experiences and insights that can help you in countless tangible and intangible ways. And you must remember that although your ideas seem extremely relevant and cool right now, in another 20 years your children will not necessarily connect to them any better than you currently connect with ours.

* Don't base your effectiveness or emotions on the applause you do or do not receive. Unfortunately we have conditioned you to expect overt approval and appreciation for everything you accomplish. But that is not what happens in the real world. Not everyone in the next church staff meeting will stand up and applaud the fact that *you* just planned and pulled off the greatest youth retreat in history. They are more likely to rejoice in the fact that two high school students made decisions to follow Jesus. Your satisfaction and fulfillment must always come in knowing that your efforts were pleasing to God.

* Be willing to accept pain as a part of the process. As you were growing up in our homes, we tried our best to shield you from adversity. Although our actions were motivated by love, they were not always wise. By doing this we took away the opportunity for you to fall on your faces and learn to get back up on your own. Your privileged upbringing cannot, nor should it, exempt you from the refining processes of life that always include struggles and trials. Without difficulty you cannot really learn to pray; without pain you will never fully experience God.

* Never settle for the easy way out. In other words, don't sacrifice your passion for lack of perseverance. In 2013, University of Pennsylvania psychologist Angela Duckworth won a MacArthur 'Genius' Grant for uncovering a powerful personality trait she called "grit." She found it to be the single most important indicator of future success. She defined it as a "tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals." This is what Paul was referring to in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 as he finished his lap in the race and declared, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return." (NLT)



* Relentlessly "seek" the Truth. Don't rely on the voices of your culture spoken through social media or popular music or even a preacher's promises to determine what you know and how you grow in your relationship with God. Spend as much time as you can in His Word discovering His principles and His promises. Pray boldly that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes and your heart to what is true.

* Intentionally "speak" the Truth. In an effort to be the "hands and feet" of Jesus in this world, don't forget to be his "voice" as well. No one can fully understand the Gospel message if they aren't *told* the story of God's love through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

* Carefully "live" the Truth. Your personal life is no longer private. The 15 seconds it takes to tweet out a disgruntled comment can cost you your reputation.

* Find a mentor. If you want to become a valued leader one day, you must begin by finding value in those who are leading right now. Look for someone who authentically lives out their faith and has already spent considerable time pursuing the same goals and dreams you have. Then ask them for advice. If they enjoy giving it to you, find out if they would be willing to partner with you and hold you accountable as you chase after the plans God has for your life. You are the future. By 2025, seventy-five percent of the global workforce will be Millennials. That means that although you may seem inconspicuous in your ministry right now, soon you'll be at the forefront.

* Don't think so highly of yourself as to believe that you are *the* one who will finally and successfully change the world – but never give up trying! Even when all you are really changing is diapers, you are making a difference. Success may turn out to be a lot different than you now envision it.

In her book *Millennials in Ministry*, Jolene Erlacher says, "Millennials are called to lead in a unique period of history. Within the next few decades, the church could fulfill the Great Commission of taking the gospel to every tribe, nation, and tongue. This generation has a unique opportunity to participate in the fulfillment of centuries of faithful investment and service by believers worldwide. With great privilege come great responsibility, sacrifice, and joy (p. 131)."

Will you respond to God's call to your generation? Will you accept the baton and boldly run with the goal of passing it on to the next generation?