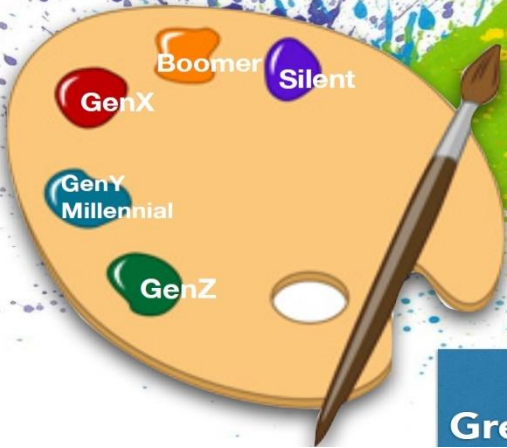


# Our Generational Palette



"It takes a rich palette to paint a beautiful future..." Keith Lowry

Keith Lowry  
Great Commission Team

★ TEXAS BAPTISTS®

*"People fear what they don't understand and hate what they can't conquer."*

## UNDERSTANDING



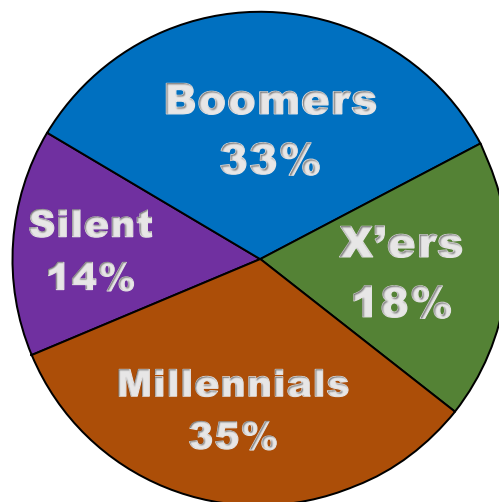
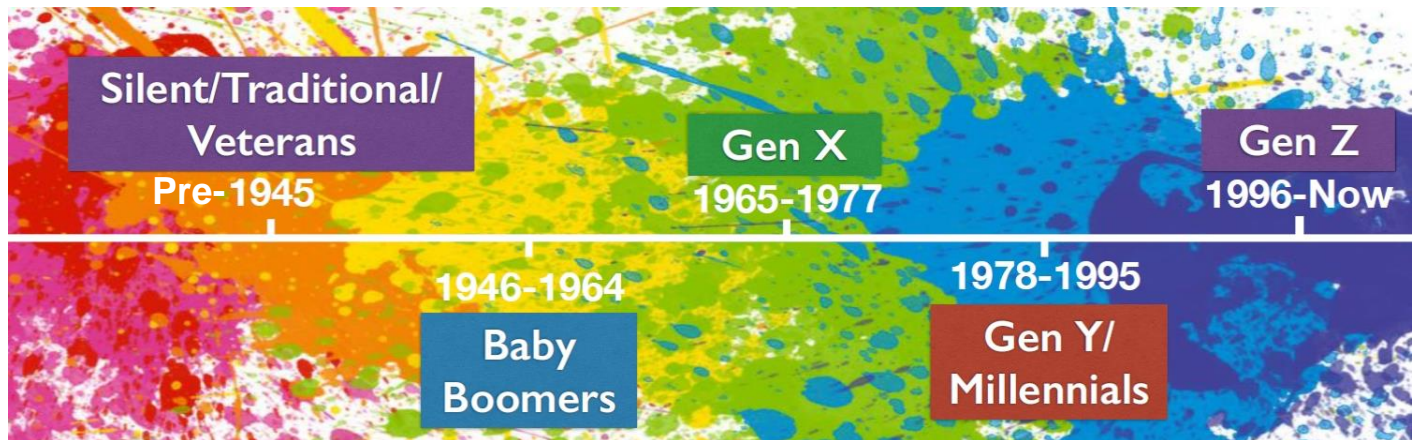
"Your mother and I found out you've been blogging. We don't know what that means, but we'd like you to stop."

How generationally interconnected are the activities, classes, groups, and events in your church? What practices have we tended to follow in the past that add to or exacerbate the **divisions** between the multiple generations who enter our doors rather than take advantage of the relational **possibilities** they represent?



**"Generations are powerful clues about where to start to better connect with, influence, and minister to people of widely varying ages."**

### Understanding the generations



**Our changing generational landscape in the church...**

## Discuss:

- Who can you name from each of these generations?
  - **GI/Silent** – George H. W. Bush ('24), MLK, Jr. ('29), Tina Turner ('39)
  - **Boomers** – George W. Bush ('46) Oprah Winfrey ('54), Steve Jobs ('55), Michael Jordan ('63)
  - **GenX** – JayZ ('69), Adam Sandler ('66), Matt Damon ('70), Sarah Jessica Parker ('65), Tiger Woods ('75)
  - **GenY/Millennial** – Christina Aguilera ('80), Beyonce' ('81), Mark Zuckerberg ('84), Zac Effron ('87)
  - **GenZ** – Jaden Smith ('98), Shiloh Jolie-Pitt ('06)

Do YOU know someone, perhaps someone in your family, or someone in your church, in each of these generations? It helps you get a handle on the characteristics of the generation if you know someone personally from that era.

- Overall – what is your short, one-two word assessment of each of these generations? How would you describe them?
  - Silent -
  - Boomers –
  - Gen X –
  - Gen Y/Millennials –
  - Gen Z –

*Discuss these details below and compare with persons you know from each of these generations and with your brief one-two word assessment.*





## QUESTIONS:

- How do these details and differences impact how we engage with and minister to this broad array of people in our work?
- How can we utilize this information to do a better job of crossing generational lines in the ministries we plan, so that each generation benefits from the strengths of the others and learns from the wisdom, mistakes, and grace gained through the faith-life they have lived?
- Share your stories of helping people cross generational lines more effectively and get out of the programmatically imposed generational silos we have so often created.

## A Generational Impact Story (True Stories of painting with our rich generational palette)

### The GENIUS BAR, Trinity Baptist Church, San Antonio

At Trinity Baptist, pastor's wife and senior adult minister Vicki Hollon, along with youth minister Dara Ake, teamed up on several ideas to engage their youth with their mature adults. One in particular was exceptionally well received -- They called it the **GENIUS BAR**. They asked their older students who were comfortable with technology (this was most of them!), to help staff the **Genius Bar**, (Like at an Apple Store), and they told their mature adults to bring whatever piece of technology was giving them fits; their smart phone, iPad, Kindle, laptop, even remote control for the tv. ANYTHING they didn't understand, they were welcome to bring to the Genius Bar. The students shone! They were WHIZ KIDS with all the technology, and were patient, loving, and kind in explaining things to the senior adults. The adults LOVED the attention and the kindness, and several offered to pay some of the kids if they'd come set up their tv/sound equipment, etc. at home. It was a huge success. One side benefit has been that on Sunday mornings, both groups have started to make an effort to go see the other, with the kids stopping by the senior adult hall to say "hi" and the seniors stopping the kids in the hall to give hugs or invite them to dinner, etc. They plan more Genius Bar events, but this one event has had a huge, lasting impact. Said one of the youth -- "They know my name!" Impact, indeed!

## REACHING

- **Silent Generation** – respect them, love on them, minister to them. Because they tend to have such a profound respect for God's WORD, they respond positively to scripture based evangelism efforts. The silent generation wants to know they have not been put out to pasture, but are still valued and have a place to serve and are needed in God's kingdom. Don't make the mistake of thinking every white-haired person who visits your church is already a believer. Many senior adults need a savior.
- **Boomers** – Boomers often feel they have wasted the first half of their lives by working too many hours and ignoring the things that really matter. As a result, they are looking to invest the second half of their life in something that will allow them to make an impact. Also, many were raised in church, ignored it during their working life, and now, for the sake of grandchildren or second families, want to reengage with the church. Show them opportunities to make a difference using their uniquely driven skill sets for Christ in short term mission opportunities. Through engagement in these opportunities, many will come to Christ.
- **Gen X** – Gen Xers were the forgotten, overlooked, children of divorce and latchkey kids, and have often felt like the middle child on the generational palette. Show them respect, let them see that we value them because Christ values them. Let them come at their speed and by way of their own discovery of biblical truth to an understanding of the gospel and help them overcome their natural skepticism.
- **Gen Y/Millennials** – Build relationships with these creative, outgoing, socially astute individuals. Be willing to speak their (*media*) language to initially reach them, and help them recognize you need them to be able to understand and relate to their peers and those who follow. They are brilliant and willing to teach and be taught. They prefer to discover biblical truths for themselves. Give them the tools to do so and help them come to value God's Word as much as you do.
- **Gen Z** – These techno-giants have never known an unconnected moment in their lives. Don't be intimidated if when you first meet them, they keep their eyes on their phone while you introduce yourself. Don't take it personally. In fact, you'll be miles ahead if you utilize their tools to actually meet them and introduce them to Christ. Get your Gen Y's and Millennials to help you use the right tools to engage the natural curiosity of these Z's in discovering that God's Word is actually *relevant* to their own lives and speaks to them in a personal way. Help them discover that THEY are part of the beautiful picture God is painting, through Christ.



## TEACHING:

- **Silent Generation** – This generation has, for years, due to their makeup and the way they were raised and how they worked, been perfectly happy for us to prepare a lesson and then “*deliver*” that lesson. They will sit quietly and let us tell them what they need to know. Participation rates tend to be very low in these classes. There is some “*discussion*” (*which often sounds like mild arguments among friends*) in those classes that have become used to that style, but many of our “senior adult” Sunday School classes feature one person talking and lots of nodding heads. (or nodding off!)
- **Boomers** – Boomers have always been the “ME” generation, and that is very true in the way they prefer to learn. The old Burger King commercial – “Have it YOUR Way” applies to boomers’ learning as much as anything else. They do not want you to tell them what they are supposed to know. Boomers are keenly aware of their gifts, skills, AND their preferred learning styles, and if your teachers are UNAWARE of those things, boomers will “HAVE IT THEIR WAY”, even if that means finding a different class or a different CHURCH where people are willing to make adjustments so that the learning experience is more to their liking. Just know that boomers as a cohort have been catered to their whole lives. It has had a HUGE impact on their expectations as individuals, as well. They like excellence in EVERYTHING, and absolutely expect it in the teaching experience as well.
- **Gen X** – If Gen X-ers had to be described by a single word, that word would likely be skeptics. Not necessarily in a bad way, but their reliance on self and their desire for freedom from outside influence has created a generation that pushes back against being told what to believe. This generation, much more than any before, responds very positively to discovery learning. If we can give them the tools to make discoveries on their own in God’s Word, they will come to see it as trustworthy and reliable, and learn to love and value it as highly as we do. Until we allow THEM to get there at their own pace and in their own way, we risk ruining our credibility with them by trying to force-feed them our belief system.
- **Gen Y/Millennials** – This is a very participative, fun, social, confident set. With very little help, they can self-motivate (*they’re very goal oriented*) themselves toward developing great Sunday School class structures, leadership development, teaching styles that work for them, and growing their class(es). They will seek and find the help they need with or without you. But if you try to put these motivated individuals into a class structure where they are asked to sit and listen and fit in, you will see them fade away. *No thank you!* Give them freedom to succeed in their own way, and they will likely take over. (In a good way.)
- **Gen Z** – This young emerging techno bunch will have your head spinning before you know it when you see all the ways they will have found to include live video chats, snapchat, and interactive media of all kinds, online bible study tools, everyone talking at once, fun, creativity, collaboration, and more. You’ll be shocked at the amount of things going on in their classroom(s) when you drop in, but it will be exciting and entrepreneurial. Give them some space to explore the possibilities, and watch them blow the top off. But try to squeeze them into your square mold? Not gonna happen.

[www.texasbaptists.org/thestudy](http://www.texasbaptists.org/thestudy)

## Questions:

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*“It takes a rich palette to paint a beautiful future. Paint with your whole palette.” Keith Lowry*

# Engaging Our Diverse Generations

## Tips for working with the GI & Silent Generations:

- Listen to their stories
- Appreciate and respect their experience
- Allow the employee to set the “*rules of engagement*”
- Use them as a mentor or coach
- Structure technology training carefully
- Provide flexible work options to retain them
- Provide continuing opportunities to learn & grow
- Express value for their experience and contribution
- Emphasize that you’ve seen a particular approach work in the past, don’t highlight its uniqueness

## Tips for working with Boomers:

- Recognition/Rewards/Credit
- Respect their hard work
- Opportunity to work in teams
- Assess their comfort level with technology in *advance*
- Work to build consensus; gather their input
- Opportunities for personal & professional development
- Capture their experience
- Emphasize that serving with your team will be a good experience for them
- Emphasize that their decision is a good one and a “*victory*” for them- they’re competitive and want to win
- Follow up and check in and ask how the individual is doing on a regular basis

### Recognition Tips:

- ▶ Recognition is personal. Find out preferences for type of recognition.
- ▶ Recognition is about people and relationships, not things.
- ▶ Learn to say and show “thank you” in many different ways.
- ▶ Demonstrate that you trust people
- ▶ Making time for recognition is simply a choice.

## Tips for working with Gen X:

- Allow autonomy
- Put all the options on the table
- FAST Feedback (**F**requent, **A**ccurate, **S**pecific, **T**imely)
- Opportunities for continued learning and development
- Open communication, information
- Be prepared to answer “*why*” (*often*)
- Access to info and decision-makers
- Present yourself as an information provider
- Challenge, fun & excitement
- Watch for *results* not *process* (*Process may drive you nuts!*)
- Use their peers as testimonials when possible
- Follow up and meet your commitments. They want to improve & expect you to follow through

### Retention Tips:

- ▶ Make more time for *orientation & training* of new people.
- ▶ Communicate mission & goals clearly.
- ▶ Demonstrate respect for the lives of others outside your specific ministry group.
- ▶ Ask people how they learn best.
- ▶ When people ask for the tools to do their work, give them the tools they most need and relate to, not necessarily the tools *YOU* are most comfortable with.
- ▶ Provide the latest technology as monies permit.
- ▶ Expect & plan for personal and professional development.
- ▶ Communicate how well they are doing and where they can improve.
- ▶ Set goals and help with the plan to achieve them.

## Tips for working with Millennials:

- Provide structure, information and guidance
- Offer customization-a plan specific to *them*
- Ask for their input (*they will give it anyway*)
- Team orientation – help them understand how your team functions
- Offer peer-level examples
- Maintain technology (*invite them to assist with this*)
- Manage **projects**, not **time** (*This will be a challenge for older generations*)
- Provide challenging & increasing responsibility
- Stress mission & values yet somehow “*rock their world!*”
- Be willing to be impressed with their decisions



# Commonalities of the Generations

1. Everyone wants to succeed
2. Everyone wants to feel valued
3. No one likes conflict
4. Everyone wants clearly defined goals/objectives
5. Everyone needs clear communication
6. Everyone likes to have fun and enjoy their work

## 5 Points to Navigating a Multi-generational Volunteer force

1. Remember commonalities amongst the groups:
  - a. 3 R's -- Respected, Remembered and Recognized
  - b. 3 C's -- Coached, Consulted and Connected
2. Avoid stereotypes (*Everyone in a generation doesn't fit the generational standards. Get to know individuals.*)
3. Communicate strategically (*in multiple formats*)
4. Encourage collaboration (*mentoring*)
5. Capitalize on the diversity of thought

## GENERATIONAL LEARNING STYLES

### **Traditionalists**

#### Learning Motivation

Knowledge of history & context  
Public recognition  
Training relevant to organizational goals  
Leadership opportunities

#### Delivery Methods

Accustomed to classroom-based lectures  
Dislike role playing and learning games; they fear feeling foolish

#### Feedback

Assume they are meeting objectives unless they receive specific feedback to the contrary

### **Baby Boomers**

#### Learning Motivation

Public and peer recognition  
Training relevant to career goals  
Training by invitation as a perk

#### Delivery Methods

Accustomed to lecture and/or workshops  
Small group exercises  
Discussion may elicit "safe" rather than honest answers

#### Feedback

Prefer well-documented feedback all at once

### **Generation X**

#### Learning Motivation

Training relevant to personal goals  
Recognition from instructor  
Mentoring opportunities

#### Delivery Methods

Accustomed to eLearning  
Experiential learning, such as role play  
On-the-job training and self-study, allowing them to multi-task

#### Feedback

Prefer regular feedback

### **Millennials**

#### Learning Motivation

Training as fast track to success  
Structured assignments with tight deadlines  
Networking opportunities

#### Delivery Methods

Accustomed to eLearning, leveraging wikis, blogs, podcasts, mobile applications, Hands-on learning and collaboration  
Leveraging technology

#### Feedback

Prefer frequent, on demand feedback



## 20 Suggestions for Working w/Millennials and X'ers

1. **Give them freedom with their schedule.** Admit it, this one is tough for some of us old-timers.
2. **Provide them projects, not a career.** "CAREER" just doesn't mean the same thing it used to. These younger generations desire options. Sort of like free agents. Some of them may have 5-6 or more mini careers.
3. **Create a family environment.** Work, family and social life are all intertwined, so make sure the work environment is experiential and family oriented. *Everything is connected.*
4. **Cause is important.** Tie in compassion and justice to the "normal." Causes and opportunities to give back are important.
5. **Embrace social media.** Face it... It's here to stay. BTW – these guys can mentor you on how to do this.
6. **These kids are more tech savvy than any generation that has gone before.** Technology is the **NORM**. XBOX, iPhones, laptops, iPads, iWatch, and every new gadget you can imagine... it's all they've known. If you want a response, text first, then call. Or send a SnapChat. Don't take it personally if you don't get a call back.
7. **Lead each person uniquely.** Don't create standards or rules that apply to everyone. **Customize your approach.** *(For many of us, this one is difficult too, especially in highly regimented cultures.)*
8. **Make authenticity and honesty the standard for your corporate culture.** X'ers and millennials are cynical at their core, and don't trust someone *just because* they are in charge. More communication is an advantage.
9. **They are not really interested in "climbing the corporate ladder."** They are much more concerned about making a difference and leaving their mark.
10. **Give them opportunities early with major responsibility.** They don't want to wait their turn. They will want to make a difference **now**. And they **will** find an outlet for influence and responsibility somewhere *else* if you don't give it to them. Empower them early and often. *(I know, I know... our innate sense of "that's just not RIGHT!" will make us want to ensure they wait their turn or earn their opportunity, just like WE did it back in the day..., but we risk losing exceptional talent if we try to enforce some arbitrary, regimented rules that just don't work for these generations.)*
11. **It's all about the larger win, not the personal small gain.** Many of these young leaders have an *abundance* mentality instead of a scarcity mentality. They're thinking big picture. Bet the whole pot. Look at the possibilities!
12. **Partnering and collaboration are important.** They're not interested in drawing lines. Collaboration is the new currency, along with generosity. They do not see the old lines or silos we have adhered to in the past.
13. **It's not about working for a personality.** They are not interested in laboring long hours to build a temporal kingdom for one person. But they will work their guts out for a **cause** and **vision** bigger than themselves.
14. **They deeply desire mentoring, learning and discipleship.** Many older leaders think millennials & X'ers aren't interested in generational wisdom transfer. **Not true at all.** Younger leaders are **hungry** for mentoring and discipleship from someone who will be authentic, so build it into your organizational environment.
15. **Coach them and encourage them.** They want to gain wisdom through experience. Come alongside them. Just don't **tell** them what to do.
16. **Create opportunities for quality time-** individually and corporately. They want to be led by example, not just by words.
17. **Hold them accountable.** They want to be held accountable by those who are living it out. Measure them and give them constant feedback. NOTE: *They WILL call you out if they see you saying one thing and doing another.*
18. **They've been exposed to just about everything, so the sky is the limit in their minds.** Older leaders have to understand younger leaders have a much broader and global perspective, which makes wowing these young leaders much more difficult.
19. **Recognize their values, not just their strengths.** Be careful not to appear to be capitalizing on their use the organization without considering how they will benefit, too. Don't use them without truly **knowing** them.
20. **Provide a system that creates stability.** Clear expectations with the freedom to succeed, and providing stability on the emotional, financial, and organizational side will provide the opportunity for great potential and real success, for EVERYONE in the organization. Cross-generational relationships can lead to many win/wins.

**"You can shut them down or give them wings. Guess which one works best?" Keith Lowry**

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### Suggested Reading and Bibliography for Further Study:

- **You Lost Me** – *Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Faith* – David Kinnaman with Aly Hawkins. 2011 Baker Books
- **UnChristian** – *What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity... And Why it Matters*. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons. 2007 Baker Books
- **Good Faith** – *Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme*. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons. 2016 Baker Books
- **Baby Boomers and Beyond** – *Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50*. Amy Hanson. 2010 Jossey Bass
- **When Generations Collide** – *Who they are. Why they clash. How to solve the generational puzzle at work*. Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman. 2002 Harper Business
- **The Millennials** – *Connecting to America's Largest Generation*. Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer. 2011 B & H Publishing