

next  
generation  
series

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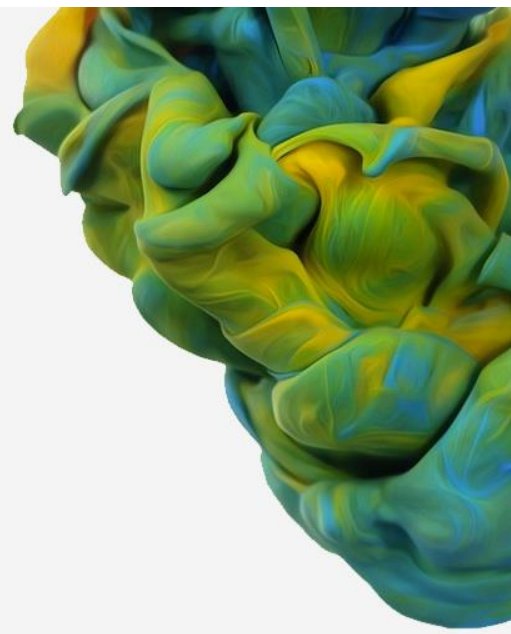
# WHO AND HOW ARE THE NEXT GENERATION?

“BUT AS FOR ME AND MY  
HOUSEHOLD, WE WILL SERVE  
THE LORD.” (JOS. 24:15B)



ISAAC Y. CHOI (CHICAGO UBF)

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# WHO ARE THE NEXT GENERATION?

# Who and how are the Next Generation?

(Is the church losing the next generation?)

Chicago UBF Isaac Y. Choi

**“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”**(Jos. 24:15b)

***Writer’s note:** During the pandemic, my “Family discipleship” lecture have inspired of me this subject, “The next generation,” because it is an important prayer topic in our community as well as churches of the world in today. I researched this subject by reading the books and participating in web-workshops and so on. Through this next generation series, I have learned that, in order to succeed the next generation matters, we have to understand them; find where we stand on, and then, we can pursue the direction to the goal of it. My report does not point anybody’s fault, but to find the common ground for improving the work of God in the next generation. This is my prayer for them, and also our church leaders, teachers, parents, and ultimately for God’s glory and His life-giving work as well.*

**Every generation needs Jesus and the truth of the gospel.** No matter what cultural headwinds or challenging circumstances Christ followers face, we are called to contend for the faith, not be conformed to the pattern of this world, pass on that faith to the next generation as we make disciples and walk in the good works that God has prepared beforehand.

During the 1975-1995, there was no mention for **“next generation”** in our church. It was because we were all first generation, and no children were grown up yet. It was busiest time to participate in Jesus’ world mission command, and to pioneer nations of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was like the works of the Holy Spirit in the book of the Acts in the New Testament; which more than thousand missionaries were sent out to over seventy major countries in the five Oceans and the six Continents in the world. **What a mighty life-giving work of God through many obedient servants who sacrificed their youth and families to the Great Commission of Jesus!**

From the later part of nineties, we began to notice the word **“next generation”** because our children were growing. First it was small numbers, then grew and increased more and more. As a result, their numbers are more than first generation. We began to call them, **next generation, second**

**generation, new generation, emerging generation, or future generation.** They are our future and hope for the work of God. They can carry the torch of the gospel to the end of the earth. Then, we realize that the first generation has a responsibility and obligation to lead and support them to their continuing mission of Jesus to the world. Through this next generation series we need to help the next generation of Christ-followers deal with cultural accommodation; we need to help them live in-but-not of lives. And in the process, we will all be better prepared to serve Christ in a shifting cultural landscape.



## **I. Who are the next generation?**

Millions of young adults leave active involvement in church as they exit their teen years according to the Barna group research. Most of their stories include significant disengagement from church and sometimes from Christianity altogether.

- **Some never return,**
- **While others live indefinitely at the margins of the faith community.**

- **While some remain faithful through the transition from adolescence to adulthood and beyond.**

This dropout problem touches countless students, parents, and church leaders, but many of these have only a vague grasp of what, exactly, the dropout reason is. The first step in the discovery process is to understand two simple facts:

- 1) **Teenagers are some of the most religiously active American.**
- 2) **American twentysomethings are the least religiously active.**

The age eighteen to twenty-nine are the black hole of church attendance; this age segment is “missing in action” from the most congregations. About eight million twentysomethings who were active churchgoers as teenagers but who will no longer be particularly engaged in a church by their thirtieth birthday. The problem is that much spiritual energy fades away during a crucial decade of life—the twenties.

**The great struggle of the emerging generation is learning how to live in a new context of Christian influence & cultural accommodation, to be in the world but not of the world.** So the dropout problem is a faith-development problem. **In other word, that is a disciple-making problem.** The church is not adequately preparing the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture. In order to search out the causes, we have to know about generations, and analyze their characteristics, and apply it to them.

#### **\*The next generation**

When we read **Matthew gospel** chapter 1, we easily come to know what the generation is about. Verse 17 says, “Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.” This verse tells that one generation represented one’s whole life span.

Also **Deuteronomy 2:14b** said, “...By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the Lord had sworn to them.” Based on this verse, a generation numbered forty years in the wilderness.

**The Barna** research defines, “**A generation is an analytical tool for understanding culture and the people within it. It simply reflects the idea that people who are born during a certain period of time are**

**influenced by a unique circumstances and global events, morals and social values, technologies, and cultural and behavioral norms.”**

In order to understand “generation,” we have to know “why culture matters.” It is because the culture influences a generation the most.

### **\*What culture is and what does to us**

Among Christians, culture is a word much used but rarely defined. It comes from the Latin word, “agriculture.” If plowing, tilling, and cultivating come to mind, they should.

- In its most basic sense, culture refers to what people do with the world: we build, we invent, we imagine, we create, we tear down, we replace, we compose, we design we emphasize, we dismiss, we embellish, we engineer. **As Andy Crouch, the author of the book, “Playing God and culture making” says, “Culture is what human being makes of the world.”**
- Culture is not people; culture is what people do as people. Culture is dynamic. It changes according to human innovations, inventions, fashions, and ideas. What one generation considers normal, the next generation thinks of as odd or funny.
- Culture includes the good, the bad, the morally neutral, and the morally complex. We also should distinguish between people and culture. People make culture and are, in turn, shaped by culture, but equating them with culture is wrong and can even be dangerous.
- **Culture is especially important to human beings, like water is to fish. If the water is dirty, the fish will die. But if the water fresh, the fish will thrive.** When a godly culture is formed—reflecting God’s attributes of love, truth, justice, holiness, kindness, respect, and trust—good spiritual fruit will be produced. On the other hand, ungodly culture—characterized by sexual immorality, violence, lies and deceit, greed, hatred, jealousy, division, and unfaithfulness—produces bad fruit.

### **\*What culture is made of**

When we say that culture shape us, what do we mean? Primarily, we are talking about how culture catechizes us to its way of life, or forms us into its image.

- **First, we absorb the ideas of our culture. Culture is built on ideas, though these ideas often fly under our radar.**
- What is true? What is good? What is worthy of our love and devotion? In a pluralistic society like ours where so many different ideas about

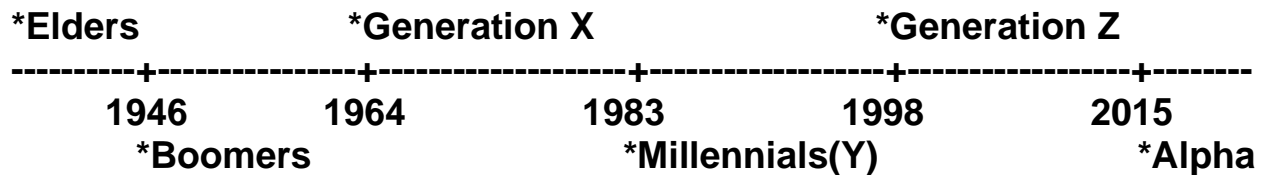
life and the world have a say, it's tempting to embrace the idea that truth, goodness, and beauty are mere matters of opinion rather than objective for all people whether they believe it or not.

- Ideas spread in a culture through champions. Certainly, this would include philosophers and academics. However, those originators of ideas rarely change culture without significant help from artists, storytellers, educators, and entrepreneurs.

**They communicate their ideas through their artifacts—songs, books, classes, tools, and other means. These artifacts become part of our experience and shape our culture.**

- Culture tends to shape us most deeply by what it presents as normal. We are creatures of cultural habit. Our loves, our longings, our loyalties, and our labors can become products of the liturgies our culture imposes. We live according to them but rarely think through them. Unintentionally, we become culture shaped rather than intentional about shaping culture.

**\*How are the modern five generations of America based on these?**



**1) Elders generation (Builder) were born before 1946.**

“Work ethic, Smarter, Honest, Values & morals.”

World War II, Depression.

**2) Boomers generation were born from 1946 to 1964.**

“Work ethic, Smarter, Respectful, Values and morals.”

Post World War II prosperity & the rise of consumer economy, Vietnam War & the Civil right movement. Woman liberation (Sex revolution)

**3) Generation X (Buster) was born 1965 to 1983.**

“Technology use, Work ethic, Smarter, Conservative / Traditional, Respectful.”

The end of the Cold war, No fault divorce, Hippie culture. Personal computer.

**4) Millennials(Generation Y, Mosaics) were born from 1984 to 1998**

“Technology use, Music and pop culture, Smarter, Liberal / Tolerant, Clothes.”

Internet, Video game and mobile technology, Globalization and diversity.

The consumer mind-set of their Boomer parents

**5) Generation Z (Screenagers) were born from 1999 to 2015.**

“Digital technology, Smartphone, Virtual space.”

9/11 attack, The war on Terror.

Smartphone radically changed every aspect of teenager’s lives.

Nomophobia: a feeling of anxiety any time they are separated from their mobile phone.

Physically safer, but they are psychologically more vulnerable.

(Suicide & depression high due to no social life with others-only with screen & virtual space they use.)

While teen pregnancies, for example, are rarer than ever, rates of teen suicide and depression have skyrocketed.

Because teens live their social life alone and often distressed.

They replaced basketball courts and town pools with apps and webs by virtual spaces.

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Thanks for reading!

**Next Series Topic: *Topic 2 - “What are Their Characteristics?”***