

HOPE OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE 2018

Session 4: Meet Generation Z

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Session Notes

Introduction

1 Chronicles 12:32 “from Issachar, men who understand the times and know what Israel should do...”

In the Talmud it says that the men of Issachar were sought after to be members of the Sanhedrin because of their wisdom.

Church leaders today should be like those men, understanding the times that we live in and knowing how to respond to them (cultural exegesis is as important as Biblical exegesis).

The Challenge to the Gospel today

The Seventh Age

The historian Christopher Dawkins identified six ages of the church through history, each lasting 300-400 years . He believed that each church age began and ended with a crisis from inside and from outside the Church which it was successfully able to withstand.

James Emery White believes we are at the beginning of a seventh age. What are the patterns, trends and crises we are facing that we should pay attention to?:

- From Within. The centre of the Christian faith is moving to the southern hemisphere and with it the challenge of the globalisation of Christianity (the relationship between the western and non-western church has not always been an easy one!).
- From Outside. The rise of Islam and whether it will modernise peacefully or result in the ‘clash of civilisations.’ The fall of Marxism in China and what will replace it – authoritarianism, a type of Buddhism or the surfacing of the underground Church? The radical redefinition of

marriage and the family which leads into the BIG question, “What does it mean to be human?”

The Biggest Threat

The Biblical doctrine of humanity is under attack (stem cell research, human cloning, AI, trans-sexuality etc.). The great crisis of this seventh age is that there has been a Second Fall. The world operates with no reference to God. “The cultural context itself is the most profound challenge. God kicked man out of Eden. We have returned the favour.” Theists still outnumber atheists worldwide but the change is that instead of people thinking about religion and rejecting it, they are not thinking about it at all.

The Rise of the Nones

NONE refers to the tick box on forms for people who have no religion. Nones are the new largest group in America and the number continues to rise, especially among the young (39% of Nones are aged 18-39, latest figures). The same trend is happening in the UK and the number of Christians in this country is shrinking (for every new convert there are 26 raised as Christians who leave the faith). The Nones have not gone anywhere else, they have just stopped being spiritual. BUT Christianity worldwide is on the rise. It is still the world's largest faith and by 2050 should still just be maintaining that lead.

So who are Generation Z?

In the west (USA and UK) we have gone through four generations since the end of the war. The Baby Boomers, the Busters (Generation X), the Millennials (Generation Y) and now Generation Z who were born between 1995-2010, under the age of 25 and not to be confused with the younger end of the Millennials (1980s-2000)

Four Defining Characteristics of Generation Z

1. Recession Marked.
 - a. Their lives have been shaped by the War on Terror (9/11 etc) and the financial meltdown of 2007/8, the worst recession in the world since the war.
 - b. Chaos and uncertainty has always been there for them and they are a worried generation. Their coping mechanisms are to be independent and entrepreneurial and to try to make a difference in their generation (E.g Me and the Bees Lemonade–Mikaila Ulmer. <https://www.meandthebees.com/>)
2. Wi-Fi enabled.
 - a. They are the “internet in your pocket” generation with access to the web at all times.
 - b. The pivotal year in technology was 2007, Steve Jobs and the iPhone.
 - c. Generation Z has all the knowledge at their fingertips but this makes them vulnerable because they have no access to wisdom (knowledge without understanding or moral compass).
 - d. Social media is their primary medium, where they will be connected to get and share information.
 - e. Unfortunately, acceptance is interchangeable with affirmation i.e. to accept someone is to affirm their lifestyle. This has a big impact on the next point.
3. Sexually Fluid.

- a. Their view is do your own thing if it makes you happy, set your own boundaries, if any.
 - b. They are 73% in favour of same sex marriage, 74% in favour of transgender rights.
 - c. They have no definite gender identity and change around through hetero, homo, bi sexuality, trans, binary etc.
4. Post Christianity.
- a. They do not have religious leaders as role models.
 - b. Generation Z are unchurched, spiritually and biblically illiterate and there are twice as many atheists in this generation than in the rest of the population.
 - c. They are a lost generation who have no memory of the gospel.
 - d. The church needs to change its methods and strategies if it is going to reach this generation.
 - e. This generation needs values but it can't find them. If the church changes where it needs to, there is hope. They have empty souls that need to be filled.

How to Evangelise?

The church needs to be increasingly counter-cultural. It needs to rethink evangelism as process *and* event, not just event. Apologetics needs to be the raw explanation because they are not asking questions any more. The church has to make key decisions related to strategy and methodology.

Process Tools

1. James Emery White is talking about America primarily, but how soon will this situation cross the Atlantic, or is it already here?
2. How should we, the body of Christ, respond to this situation?
3. What strategies will work in this country? James Emery White thinks we need new strategies and he outlined some at the end of his talk. See the strategies that have worked at Mecklenburg Community Church: <http://www.churchandculture.org/Blog.asp?ID=11655>
4. See also: <http://www.churchandculture.org/Blog.asp?ID=11618>; <http://www.churchandculture.org/Blog.asp?ID=11088>
5. Finally here is a quote from James Emery White to challenge you (if you have not already been challenged enough!): "What is killing the church today is having the mission focused on keeping Christians within the church happy, well fed and growing. Discipleship is continually pitted against evangelism and championed as the end game for the church." What do you think about this?