How to reach Millennials and a plan to disciple Boomers

We've messed up. We've blown it. Not only is Christianity's influence in the world declining, but also the religious unaffiliated are on the rise.[1] This isn't something that has happened over night. It's been coming for many years. Even though Christianity is the largest, worldwide, faith group, those calling themselves Christian are losing their influence. However, all's not lost – we can rectify the situation. To do so, the church must be proactive and intentional in evangelism and discipleship, or church growth.

The best way to motivate people to desire church growth is not by teaching them a new program alone, even though training is important. The best way to promote church growth is by casting a vision that ignites an internal flame of God's redemptive plan for the local church. This flame will become the driving force that leads people to become ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors of Christ imploring people to return and pursue God.

To cast a vision of church growth (evangelism and discipleship), churches must lead their congregation to understand the current state of Christianity in the world. We must take a look at the global, national, and local statistical state of Christianity. These statistics will reveal the current trends and realities affecting today's church.

More than 84%[2] of the world's population (7,224,765,230 people)[3] is affiliated with a religious group. Christianity is the largest group (Chart 1).[4] Christianity has quadrupled in the

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1 Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, "Nones, on the Rise," Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project. Last modified October 9, 2012, accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/

2 Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, "The Global Religious Landscape," December 18, 2012, accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/

3 Worldometers: Real Time World Statistics, "World Population by Religion," April 7, 2014, accessed, April 7, 2014, http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/
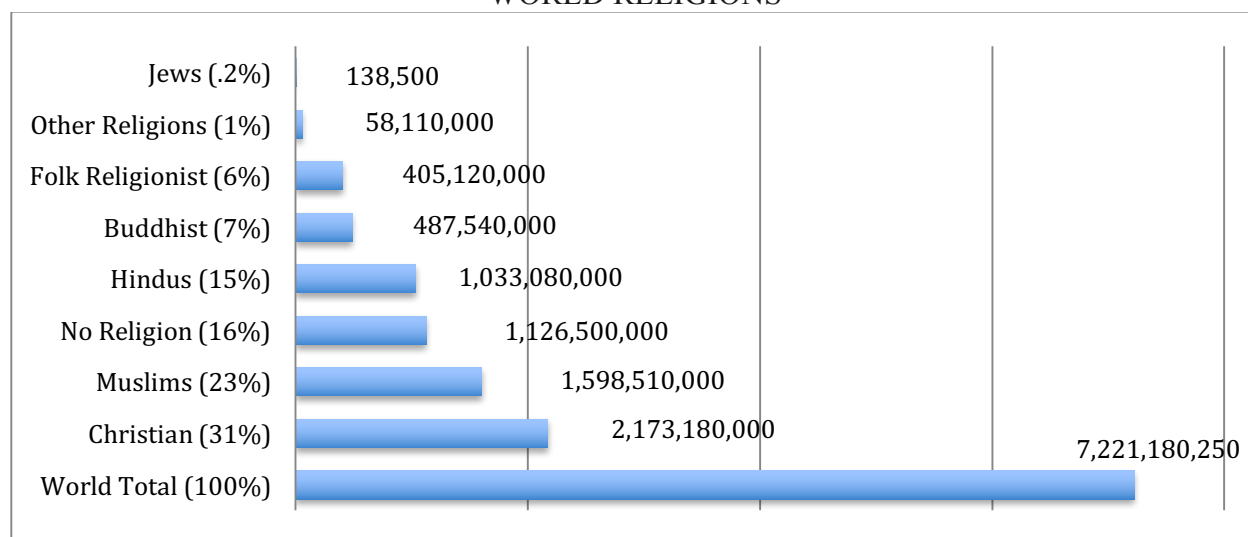
4 Worldometers: Real Time World Statistics, "World Population by Religion,"

last 100 years, from 600 million (1910) to more than 2 billion (2010).[5] However, the world's

population has more than quadrupled from 1.8 billion (1910) to 6.9 billion (2010). As a result,

Christians make up about the same portion of the world's population today (32%) as they did a

century ago (35%). In other words, Christianity's growth is not keeping up with the population

growth.[6]

CHART 1

WORLD RELIGIONS

Adapted from: Worldometers: Real Time World Statistics, "World Population by Religion, " April 7, 2014, accessed
April 7, 2014, http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/

Four theologically diverse groups represent Christianity. Catholics (50%) are the largest

group followed by, Protestant, Orthodox, and other groups,[7] such as Mormons and Jehovah

5 Pew Research: Religion and Public Life Project, "Global Christianity – A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," December 19, 2011, accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/

6 Pew Research, "Global Christianity."

7 Worldometers, "World Population by Religion,"

Witness[8] (Chart 2). These groups are divided into numerous subgroups. Movements such as

Fundamentalism, Pietism, Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism and the Holiness Movement cross

these denominations and form even more groups. [9] Globally there are approximately 42,000

different Christian denominations.[10]

CHART 2

GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY
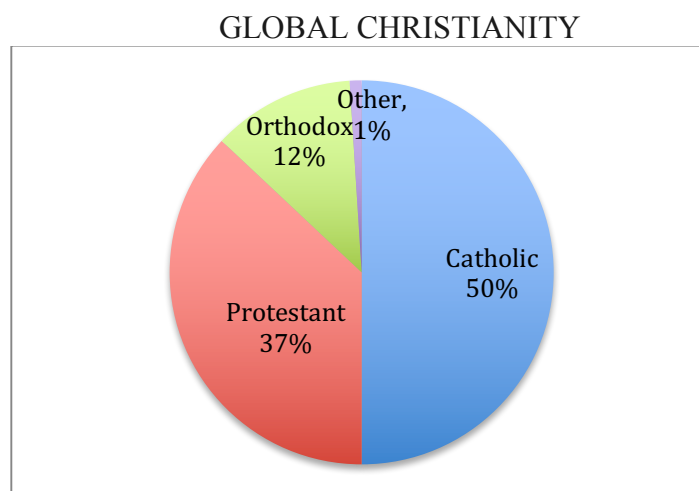
Source: Worldometers: Real Time World Statistics, "World Population by Religion, March 10, 2014, March 10, 2014, http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/

Protestants include thirteen different faith groups (Chart 3).[11] Those classified as "Other"

is the largest group. This group, however, this group is made up of Independent, Non-

denominational, and those groups that are very small or difficult to classify. Protestants can be

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8 Pew Research, "Global Christianity."

9 Wikipedia, List of Christian Denominations, April 9, 2014, April 9, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations#cite_note-3
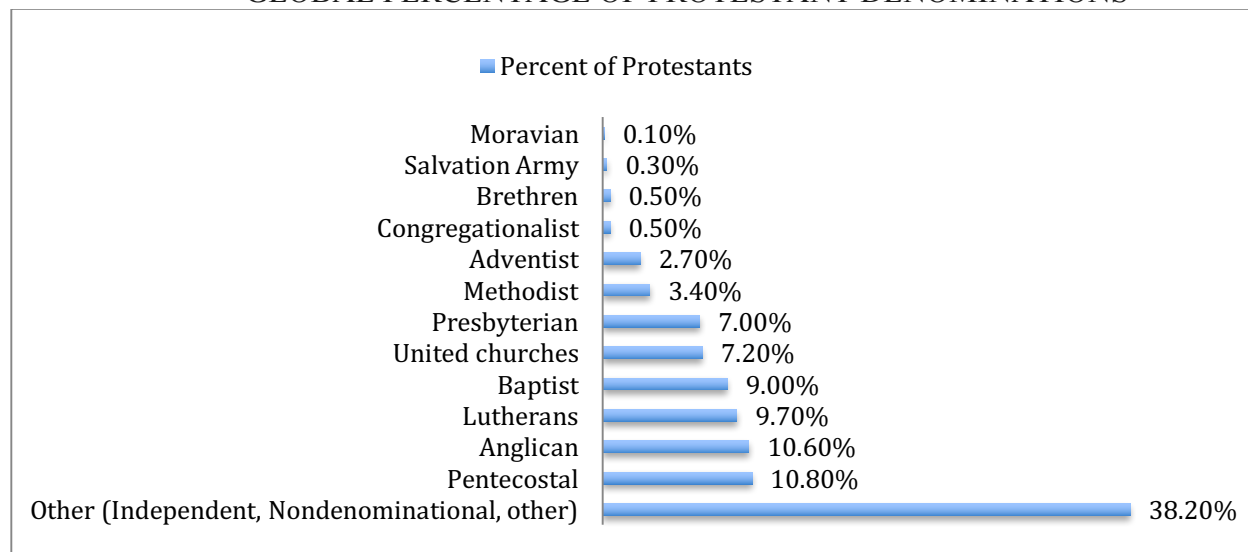
10 Wikipedia, "List of Christian Denominations."

11 Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, "Christian Movements and Denominations," December 19, 2011, accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-movements-and-denominations/#defining

divided into three major groups: the Revisionist, the Moderates, and the Evangelicals.[12] The

Revisionist adjusts and revises the Word of God to reflect upon and support their personal

experiences. They do not want to be offensive to the world. The Moderates feel that a person's

position on societal sin, such as homosexuality and gay marriage, is not an essential point of

theology. They believe we can differ in these areas as we differ on baptism or the work of Holy

Spirit as long as we are unified in our love for the world and each other. Evangelicals believe the

Bible is clear in its teaching.

CHART 3

GLOBAL PERCENTAGE OF PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS

Source: Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, "Christian Movements and Denominations," December 19, 2011, accessed March 10, 2014 http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-movements-and-denominations/#defining

Ultimately, evangelicals assert that the entirety of the Bible is essential and should be the

final authority on living the Christian faith. Other groups, while agreeing on the essentials of the

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12 Trevin Wax, "The Gospel Coalition, The Fault Lines Before the Evangelical Earthquake," *Kingdom People: Living on Earth as Citizens of Heaven Blog*, April 2, 2014, accessed April 9, 2014, http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevinwax/2014/04/02/the-fault-lines-before-the-evangelical-earthquake/

faith, choose to not uphold the Bible in the non-essentials of the faith. The essentials of the faith refer to those beliefs necessary for salvation; the non-essentials of the faith refer to those beliefs that are non-essential to salvation.

While the Catholic faith dominates global Christianity, Protestants dominate Christianity in the United States. Protestants represent 48% of the U.S population.[13] However, over the past five years, Protestants have dropped from 53% to 48% of the American people. The Unaffiliated, atheist, agnostic, and those who identify themselves as no religion, have increased from 15.3% to 19.6% (TABLE 1).[14]

TABLE 1

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN THE U.S

GROUPS	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	07-12 CHANGE
Christian	**78**	**77**	**77**	**76**	**75**	**73**	**-5**
Protestant	53	52	51	51	50	48	-5
Catholic	23	22	23	23	23	22	-1
Mormon	2	2	2	2	2	2	-
Orthodox	1	1	1	1	1	1	-
Other Faith	**4**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**+2**
Unaffiliated	**15.3**	**16**	**16.8**	**17.4**	**18.6**	**19.6**	**+4.3**
Atheist	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.2	2.4	+0.8
Agnostic	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.6	3	3.3	+1.2
Nothing	11.6	11.9	12.4	12.9	13.4	13.9	+2.3
Don't Know	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**-**

Source: Pew Research Religion & Public Life Project, "Nones, on the Rise," (October 9,2012)
http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/

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13 Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, "Nones, on the Rise" Last modified October 9, 2012, accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nognes-on-the-rise/

14 Pew Research, "Nones, on the Rise,"

To put this into perspective, 314,000 (90%) of the 350,000 religious congregations in the United States are Protestant.[15] Of that 350,000, approximately 340,000 congregations (85%) are plateaued or are declining in attendance.[16] Furthermore, roughly 10% of the churches (3,500 – 4,000) in the U.S. die each year while only 1,500 new churches are started.[17] These calculations would indicate that only 5% of the churches in America are plateaued or growing.

My home state of North Carolina is not performing any better. North Carolina is the 10th most populated state and is located in the Southeastern United States. Forty-eight percent of the state identifies itself with a religious group, and 19% are identified as Baptist.[18] The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is the largest Baptist denomination in the state.[19] North Carolina Baptist (SBC) is made up of 78 associations and about 4,300 churches.[20] According to the 2013 North Carolina Baptist Press, the SBC increased the number of churches by 270, but membership declined more than 100,000 people. Membership has declined .7% and attendance has declined 3.1%.[21]

North Carolina is comprised of 100 counties. Cleveland County (population of 98,078) where I grew up and currently live is one of them. According to the 2010 ARDA (Association of

15 Hartford Institute for Religion Research, "Fast Facts about American Religion," June 11, 2013, accessed March 10, 2014, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#numcong

16 Christianity Today: Leadership Journal, "Back from the Brink: A Leadership Special Report," June 13, 2013, assessed March 14, 2014, http://www.ctlibrary.com/le/2005/fall/8.24.html

17 Win Arn, *The Pastor's Manual For Effective Ministry* (Monrovia CA: Church Growth, 1988), 41.

18 World Population Statistics, "North Carolina Population - 2013," August 20, 2013, accessed March 11, 2014, http://www.worldpopulationstatistics.com/north-carolina-population-2013/

19 North Carolina Baptist, "History," 2014, accessed March 11, 2014 http://www.ncbaptist.org/index.php?id=760

20 North Carolina Baptist, "History."

21 Marty King, "Churches Increased in SBC in 2012," Baptist Press, June 5, 2013, accessed March 10, 2014, http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=40451

Religion Data Archives) county membership data there were 36,854 SBC members (TABLE 2).[22] However, the Greater Cleveland County Baptist Association (GCCBA) 2012 annual minutes reported the county association had 24,151 affiliates.[23] The discrepancy of the ARDA's and GCCBA membership may be due to the difference in collecting data. ARDA's membership numbers include congregational members, their children, and others who regularly attend services. In contrast, the GCCBA's membership includes only those who have been baptized or who have joined through statement of faith.

TABLE 2

CLEVELAND COUNTY FAITH GROUPS

Groups	Congregations	Members	%
Southern Baptist	104	36,854	37.50%
Evangelical Not Southern Baptist	58	7,143	7.30%
Mainline Protestants	48	9,411	9.60%
Black Protestant	22	5,291	5.30%
Catholic	2	991	1.01%
Orthodox	0	0	0%
Other	3	960	0.97%
Un-churched	-	37,627	38.40%
Total:	237	98,277	100.08%

Adapted from the Association of Religion Data Archives, County Membership Report," 2010, Accessed April 2, 2010, http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/37/rcms2010_37045_county_name_2010.asp

ARDA also stated that from 2000-2010 even though 13 Baptist churches had been added to our association, the Greater Cleveland County Baptist Association (GCCBA) lost 5,881

22 Association of Religion Data Archives, County Membership Report," 2010, Accessed April 2, 2010, http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/37/rcms2010_37045_county_name_2010.asp

23 Greater Cleveland County Baptist Association, *Uniting Congregations in Missions and Ministry, 2012 Annual Session,* 2012,

members.[24] According to the 2012 GCCBA minutes there were 475 baptisms (TABLE 3).[25]

Twenty-seven percent of the baptisms were from three churches and the rest (73%) were from 89

churches. Out of the 89 churches that make up 73% of the GCCBA each of them only baptized

between 0 - 22 persons per year.

TABLE 3

GREATER CLEVELAND COUNTY BAPTISMS

Congregations	Total Baptisms	Ages 9-11	Ages 12-17	Ages 18-29	Ages 30-59
89	475	218	101	45	111

Adapted from the Greater Cleveland County Baptist Association, Inc. *Uniting Congregations in Missions and Ministry, 2012 Annual Session,* 2012.

The SBC reported that U.S churches contributed $481,409,086 to its Cooperative

Program (missions) during the year 2011-12 to support church growth. [26] North Carolina alone

contributed $29,821,985 to these causes. These monies helped to plant more than 1,000

evangelical churches, baptize 333,341 new believers, and train 16,000 pastor, missionaries and

church leaders.[27] As great as these statistics are, they have not been enough to keep up with the

global population increase. Therefore it can be said that NC Baptists have only helped maintain

Christian influence, not grow it.

There is much that needs to be done for Christianity to grow. For starters, church

members must be willing to discuss and confront the barriers in their church that has created

24 Association of Religion Data Archives, "County Membership Report,"

25 Greater Cleveland County Baptist Association, 126-128.

26 Southern Baptist Convention, "The Cooperative Program, 2012, accessed April 15, 2014, http://www.sbc.net/cp/

27 Southern Baptist Convention, Contributions by State Convention, "History of CP Distribution Between the SBC and All State Conventions," 2014, accessed April 15, 2014, http://www.sbc.net/cp/statecontributions/

problems. Once these barriers have been addressed and removed, churches must boldly move forward to be the church that Jesus created – a church that not only understands the need for church growth, but also implements church growth strategies.

Who is leaving today's Church and why? One group that is leaving is the Millennials (born 1980-2002). Nearly six in ten (59%) of these young people attended church as a child however later decided to leave the church. As a result the un-churched segment has increased in the last decade, from 44% to 52% of Americans. Of the Millennials that are leaving the Christian faith, 30% identified themselves as unaffiliated and a third said they have no religion.[28]

It's interesting to note, Millennials desire a mentor and coaching relationship with those that are much older.[29] However, many Millennials are choosing not to have older adults mentor or coach them in anything. When asked why, many explained that instead of experiencing a community of older Christians who exemplify Jesus in their relationships to others, the older Christians are "judgmental, hypocritical, old-fashioned, and too involved in politics."[30] This has led many to believe what Brannan Manning proclaimed, "The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, and walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."[31]

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28 Sandi Villarreal, "Study: 20 Percent of U.S. Adults Have No Religious Affiliation," God's Politics a blog by Jim Wallis and friends October, 9, 2012, accessed March, 10, 2014, http://sojo.net/blogs/2012/10/09/study-20-percent-us-adults-have-no-religious-affiliation

29 Miranda Green, "Millennial Workers Want Flexibility and Membership from Skeptical Managers," The Daily Beast Blog, September 3, 2013, assessed March 14, 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/09/03/millennial-workers-want-flexibility-and-mentorship-from-skeptical-managers.html

30 David Kinnaman, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity…and why it matters.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 29-30.

31 Brennan Manning, Introduction to the song, "What If I Stumble?" on DC Talk's 1995 album, Jesus Freak.

While some Millennials are deciding to leave Christianity, some senior adults have never chosen to be a part of it. Some of the reasons Senior Adults have given for not becoming Christians are; "I didn't think I needed Jesus," "I resisted the legalistic approach I saw in my church,' "No one shared the Gospel with me," and/or "I didn't understand how to be saved." [32] The top two reasons senior adults gave for not attending church are, "I find God elsewhere," (40%) and, "Church is not relevant to me personally" (35%).[33]

In 2007, the Barna Group conducted a random sample of 2006 adults (18+) and concluded that one out of every three adults (33%) is classified as un-churched - meaning they have not attended a religious service of any type during the past six months.[34] Currently in America, there are approximately 73 million adults and over 100 million people, if you add the unchurched children and youth. [35] To put that amount into perspective, "If these people were a nation to themselves they would be one of the twelve most populated nations."[36] Other research found that "only 2/3 of those calling themselves Christian are actively involved in a local church…30% identified as Protestants are not on any church roll… and, 40% are not active in their church of membership."[37]

The reasons many Christians have decided to leave the faith are roughly the same reasons

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32 Arn, *White Unto Harvest*, 60.

33 Barna Group, Americans Divided on the Importance of Church," March 25, 2014, assessed April 2, 2014, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/661-americans-divided-on-the-importance-of-church#.U0Xz3141kx4

34 Barna Group, "Unchurched Population Nears 100 Million in the U.S.," March 19, 2007, assessed March 20, 2014, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/107-unchurched-population-nears-100-million-in-the-us#.UyrlKtw1kx4

35 Barna Group, "Unchurched Population Nears 100 Million in the U.S."

36 Barna Group, "Unchurched Population Nears 100 Million in the U.S."

37 Arn, *White Unto Harvest*, 30.

Christianity is losing its influence. People, the world over, are confused with who Christians are. The confusion stems from the reality that what many Christians say they believe is not consistent with how they live their personal lives. Pew Research asked over 1000 people from various countries about the importance of their faith. Their research revealed that in the United States, 50% view their faith as their most important asset. Other nations viewed their religion with much less importance (CHART 4).[38] This same research also revealed that many people hold their national and political views equal, or, more important than their Christian view (CHART 5). [39]

CHART 4
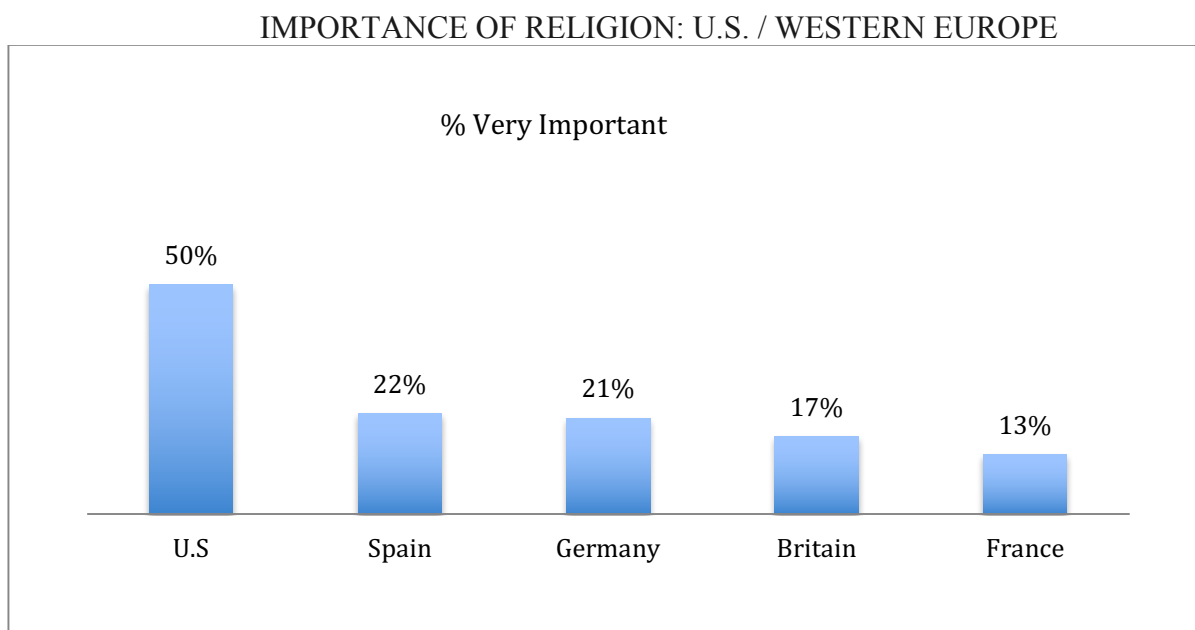
IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION: U.S. / WESTERN EUROPE

Source: Pew Research: Global Attitudes Project, "The American-Western European Values Gap," November 17, 2011, assessed March 9, 2014, http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/

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38 Pew Research: Global Attitudes Project, "The American-Western European Values Gap," November 17, 2011, assessed March 9, 2014 http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/

39 Pew Research, "The American-Western European Values Gap."

CHART 5

CHRISTIAN'S IDENTIFY WITH NATIONALITY vs. CHRISTIANITY

Pew Research: Global Attitudes Project, "The American-Western European Values Gap," November 17, 2011, assessed March 9, 2014, http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/
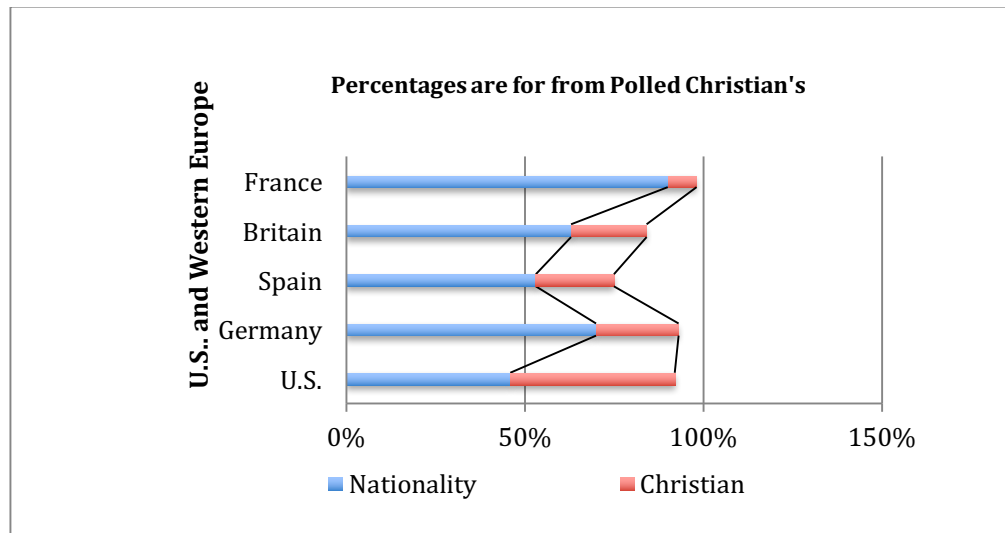
In 2013, Barna Research further explored Christians' actions and attitudes in relationship with community. Sadly, their findings indicated that "instead of exemplifying the qualities of Jesus, like empathy, love, and a desire to share their faith with others" - they found a 'Pharisaical, self- focused, hypocrisy" among those professing to be Christian.[40] This same Barna study found that, despite not being perfect, the evangelical group, out of all other Christians, is most like Christ (CHART 6).

The one area that evangelicals didn't perform well in is the Attitude NOT Action category. This is why Kinnaman says, "Evangelicals are often targeted for claims of hypocrisy; the unique 'sin' of evangelicals tends to be doing the 'right' thing but with improper motives."[41]

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40 Barna Group, "Christians: More Like Jesus or Pharisees?" April 30, 2013, March 10, 2014 https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/611-christians-more-like-jesus-or-pharisees#.U0aRvV41kx4

41 Barna Group, "Christians: More Like Jesus or Pharisees?"

Barna's study also revealed that evangelicals that are age 67 and older, Christians with a conservative political ideology, and men are less likely to have both Christ-like actions and attitudes.[42]

CHART 6

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANS

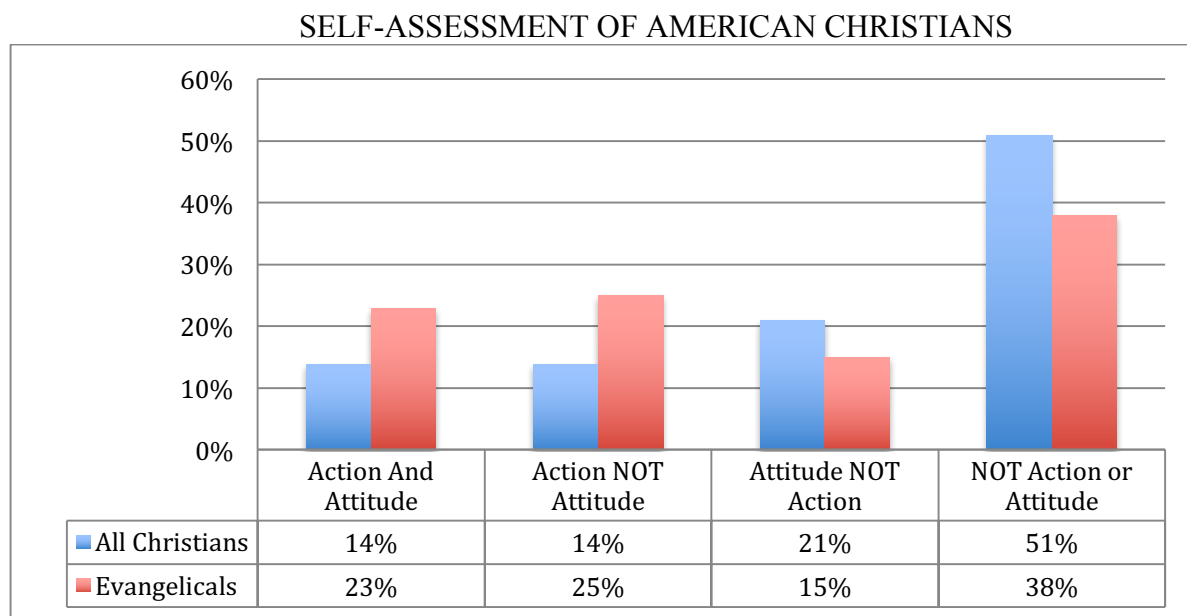|	Action And Attitude	Action NOT Attitude	Attitude NOT Action	NOT Action or Attitude
■All Christians	14%	14%	21%	51%
■Evangelicals	23%	25%	15%	38%

Adapted from Barna Group, "Christians: More Like Jesus or Pharisees?" April 30, 2013, March 11, 2014, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/611-christians-more-like-jesus-or-pharisees#.U0dbl141kx5

From this research one could conclude that many Christians have a meaningless faith. Pew Research and the Barna Group both indicate there is little if any connection between Christian's faith and lifestyle. It would seem that most do not know what it means to be a Biblical Christian, and have deduced being a Christian to someone who made a decision at some time in their life to accept Jesus and is nothing more than that.

The inconsistency of previous generations words and actions have done little to convince Millennials to be obedient to God. No one will ever convince others of God's transforming

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42 Barna Group, "Christians: More Like Jesus or Pharisees?"

power if the results aren't evidenced in their own life. Possibly the reason for this inconsistency in older generations words and actions are because they have not experienced Jesus' transforming work in their own personal lives, and/or are not honest about life's hardships.

The bottom line for Christians is that Millennials are leaving the church in droves, and many senior adults have not and are not making a commitment to Jesus Christ. Unfortunately over time each generation has seemingly become less and less interested in being a part of the church community or the Christian movement.[43] This is not to point the finger at today's senior adults, but it is to say that each generation is a product of those who came before them.

The church has been become a place where people go to church rather than be the church.[44] Those holding offices have been more about holding to their power and positions, and taking care of their personal needs that they have lost their mission of reaching others.[45] In fact many Christians habits, traditions, and lack of faith have become so ingrained in their minds and heart they no longer know the difference between tradition and Scripture.

The attitudes and actions of these individuals who call themselves Christian, but are not Christ-like, are hurting the influence of the Church and are preventing church growth. It is obvious that the church has misunderstood the whole concept of church growth, as well as what constitutes church growth. Unfortunately, senior adults who do not have a biblical understanding of church growth are leading the existing model church in America today.

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43 Public Religion Research Institute, "Survey | A Generational in Transition: Religion, Values, and Politics among College-Age Millennials," April 19, 2012, accessed March 18, 2014, http://publicreligion.org/research/2012/04/millennial-values-survey-2012/

44 Edward H. Hammett with James R. Pierce, *Reaching People under 40 while Keeping People over 60*, (St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2007), 76.

45 Hammett with Pierce, *Reaching People under 40 while Keeping People over 60*, 81.

What Needs To Be Done In The Church Today?

The answer to growing Christianity's influence in the World is by moving followers of Jesus Christ from merely making a decision to accept Jesus to becoming a lifelong disciple of Jesus seeking to evangelize the lost. Unfortunately, discipleship has slowly become a lost reality in the church today. The Apostle Paul would have viewed a decision to follow Christ without becoming a disciple of Christ much like he would have viewed unicorns – it simply doesn't exist in the New Testament. Interestingly, when Jesus recruited the apostles, the decision they made was not a one-time decision to accept Jesus' teachings, but a daily commitment to follow His Way and submit to His authority. This is where the Christians of today and yesterday have missed it - many have decided to accept Jesus as the Messiah, yet they have submitted to His Word, the Bible.

Over time, generation after generation has become less moved and affected by the Bible and thus have veered off the Christian path. If the church does not soon implement a church growth discipleship ministry plan, our churches, today and the generations to come, will find themselves even further from the Truth of Scripture. The model Christians should use for discipleship and to increase its influence, is the model of Jesus.

Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew 28:16-20 to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded." This became known as the Great Commission. As the disciples went into the world, they would help hold one another accountable to the Way of Jesus that they had previously committed themselves too. This method and experience is known as discipleship.

Discipleship is the process of "moving a person from the self-absorbed decision to one whose mission is focused on helping others understand who they are in Christ and helping them make disciples of others."[46] Scripture is clear on the methodology of discipleship. Adults are to teach (read disciple) the younger generations, and the younger generations are taught to look to the older generations for wise counsel and moral example (Titus 2:3-5).

This biblical discipleship model is best seen and lived through an evangelical faith. Evangelical Christians believe God created the universe and rules today in the world and in the lives of believers. They believe Jesus lived a sinless life and have committed themselves to Him as Savior and Lord of their lives. They believe eternal salvation is through grace, not works. The promise of that salvation is life for eternity in heaven when they die.

Evangelicals' faith is important in their lives. They believe the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches and is important in making daily decisions. They also believe that Satan exists but because of Jesus power in them they can resist his temptations. Through this practice of submission to God and His Word and resisting Satan the Christian is transformed into the likeness of Jesus, a process is called sanctification.

Evangelicals believe it is their responsibility to share the Gospel of Jesus to others. However, the responsibility that they have is not what motivates them for church growth. Their love for God and the Gospel of Jesus compels them to go forth into the World.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery has once said, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea"[47] Likewise, if we want to grow the church, we must teach

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46 Neil Anderson, *Discipleship Counseling*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003).

47 Antoine de Saint- Exupery, 2014, accessed April, 23, 2014, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/antoinedes121261.html

seniors to long for the vastness of God's redemptive plan for the church in the world. In other words, we must cast a vision that leads seniors to a longing for a different kind of church.

If Christians are going to build their influence in the world, a church growth discipleship plan must be implemented in the church. This plan should begin with a target group of people who are not only positioned to influence church growth, but also have the greatest potential to influence current and future leaders. Therefore, the church should target the younger senior adults, the Boomer generation, through a discipleship process to implement change.

The Boomers are one of the largest generations who not only have the standing to influence their peers and the older generation but also are in the position to influence and mentor future generations. By focusing efforts on making senior adults ministers of reconciliation, we are positioning and empowering them to evangelize, disciple, and equip others. The result is that senior adults will influence today's younger generations and impact today and tomorrow's leaders with the biblical principles of church growth.

Senior adults, specifically Boomers, are best positioned to make the greatest impact in the world, thus we need to know who they are so we can best evangelize and disciple them for church growth. **Who are today's Senior Adults?** Senior Adults represent two major generations, the Greatest Generation, made up of G.I. Generation (1901-1924) and the Silent Generation (1925-1945), and the Baby Boomers (1946-1964). Collectively these three groups represent 13.7% of the total U.S. population, or 43 million people (TABLE 4).[48] Even though 4,550 G.I.'s are dying each day, 5,600 Boomer's are celebrating their 65th birthday and are

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48 U.S. Administration on Aging, "A Profile of Older Americans, 2013," accessed March 11, 2014, http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2013/3.aspx

joining the ranks of the senior adult group.[49] These numbers represent an actual increase of 1,050 senior adults per day. By 2030, senior adults are projected to increase from 43 million to over 70 million people in America (TABLE 4). By 2020, senior adults are predicted to increase to 55 million people. [50]

TABLE 4

WHO ARE THE SENIORS?

GENERATION	YEAR BORN	TODAY'S NAME	AGE IN 2012	NUMBER in U.S. in 2012 *	% U. S. Population 2012	PROJECTED 2030**
Baby Boomer	1946-1964	Young Old	65-74	24 million	7.6%	38.7 million
Silent Generation	1928-1945	Older	75-84	13.3 million	4.2%	24.5 million
G.I.'s	1901-1928	Oldest Old	85+	5.9 million	1.8%	8.7 million

* Adapted from the Administration on Aging, "The Older Population," 2012, assessed March 11, 2014, http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2013/3.aspx
** Adapted from the Administration on Aging, "The Next Four Decades: The Older Population in the United States: 2010 – 2050," accessed March 10,2014, http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Aging_Statistics/future_growth/DOCS/p25-1138.pdf

In my own state of North Carolina there are 1,347,869 (65+ year old) residents, which make up 13% of the total population of N.C.[51] By the year 2030 it is predicted that there will be over 2 million seniors representing 17.8% of N.C.'s total population.

This statistical data tells us much about this group of people, but to understand them we need to know about them. Humans are a part of the animal kingdom, and like every animal in the world, there are practices, habits, etc. that make that animal unique. Such is true of people, and thus is true of Senior Adults. We need to understand their history, struggles, challenges, values,

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49 United Methodist Church, "Aging in the United States –The Church's Response," adopted 1988, revised and adopted 2000, accessed April 1, 2014, http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=4&mid=839

50 U.S. Administration on Aging, "A Profile of Older Americans, 2013"

51 U.S. Administration on Aging, "A Profile of Older Americans, 2013,"

lifestyle, and practices that make them unique to best evangelize and disciple them.

HISTORY

The G.I. Generation was born during the economic boom called the roaring 20's. As this generation grew older, life was interrupted by the stock market crash, followed by the Great Depression. A quarter of the work force lost their jobs. Life became more about survival and trying to maintain financial status. Many lost their homes and land because they could not pay their loans. When life didn't seem as though it could get any worse, World War II began.

Following this generation came the Silent Generation. Many of this generation were born right before or during WWII. In their attempt to overcome the influence of the Depression and War many sought status, power, and achievement. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt brought jobs, capital to the economy, and educational opportunities. Although this group was not old enough to fight in WWII many fought in the next war America was a part of, The Korean War.

The G.I Generation and the Silent Generation are known as the Greatest Generation for both generations are known for their economical growth to the country. Although the G.I. Generation lost much of their wealth and status their achievements have greatly impacted our society today. Ultimately, the Silent Generation built back and better what the G.I. Generation lost. They are known for their great innovations: space programs, and vaccines for polio, whooping cough, tetanus, and tuberculosis.

Baby Boomers are the largest generation of the twentieth century and are known as Post-World War II Babies. Their lives are marked by memorable events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, political and racial unrest, assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., sexual liberation, Cold War, Vietnam War, Watergate, President Nixon's resignation, inflation, gasoline shortage, and space exploration. This generation was the

first to grow up with television, transistor radios, rock and roll music, the Beatles, and Motown.

VALUES

The Greatest Generation worked to live. Most of the men fought in a war while the women held things together by working in factories. Many children were forced to work therefore labor restrictions were passed forbidding children, under the age of 14, from forced labor.

Following the war, as the men went back to work they formed unions. Desiring stability, this generation was loyal to the company that hired them, respected authority, and was known to follow rules even if the rules didn't make sense. They valued hard work and discipline. They fought for better wages, benefits, and working conditions, and their reward was a job well done.

Governmental leaders brought them out of the war and brought jobs, therefore, this generation placed their trust in the government. They believed the government would provide safety and security for their future. They believed that as they got older, they would receive more authority/seniority. This led them to highly respect their seniors and the traditional leadership model, i.e. longevity equals position. This generation wore suits and ties everywhere. In fact, evidence of this value is seen today in their perception of what type of dress is appropriate.

Baby Boomers, on the other, hand lived to work. They equate work and position with security and self-worth**.** Their strong work ethic combined with a competitive attitude created much financial success and opened up many doors for formal education. Many earned degrees while holding full-time jobs, which promoted them to better positions, and gave them perks and prestige.[52] Unlike the builders, who worked for a job well done; Boomers, seek money, title, and

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[52] Sally Kane, "Baby Boomers," About.com: Legal Careers, 2014, accessed March 10, 2014, http://legalcareers.about.com/od/practicetips/a/Babyboomers.htm

recognition.

As a result of their work ethic, many became very successful which led them to become confident, independent and self-reliant. While they often questioned authority, they were loyal to their career. Their loyalty to the company led many of them to make good incomes and acquire great wealth.

The Greatest Generation and Boomers vary a great deal when it comes to worship style. The Greatest Generation prefers, "quietness, hymns, expository sermons, pastoral prayer, organ/piano, formality, predictable pace and soft music."[53] However Boomers prefer, "talkative, praise songs, how-to sermons, various people praying, guitars/drums, casual, fast pace and loud music,"[54]

This difference in worship style has proven to be a problem when churches have looked to meet the needs of their members. Interestingly, Pew Research polled 1000 Americans (CHART 7), and found that at least half of older Americans think that their culture is superior to others.[55] This thinking has carried over to other areas in their life, such as church and has brought about issues, i.e. worship wars, etc. This has greatly hurt the Church's influence and witness in the community.[56]

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[53] Gary McIntosh, *Make Room for the Boom or Bust*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming Revell, 1997), 18-21.

[54] Gary McIntosh, *Make Room for the Boom or Bust*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming Revell, 1997), 18-21.

[55] Pew Research: Global Attitudes Project, "The American-Western European Values Gap," February 29, 2012, accessed March 13, 2014, http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/#religious-vs-national-identity

[56] Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander, *Extreme Church Makeover*, (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 2005) 63.

CHART 7

CULTURAL SUPERIORITY AMONG NATIONS
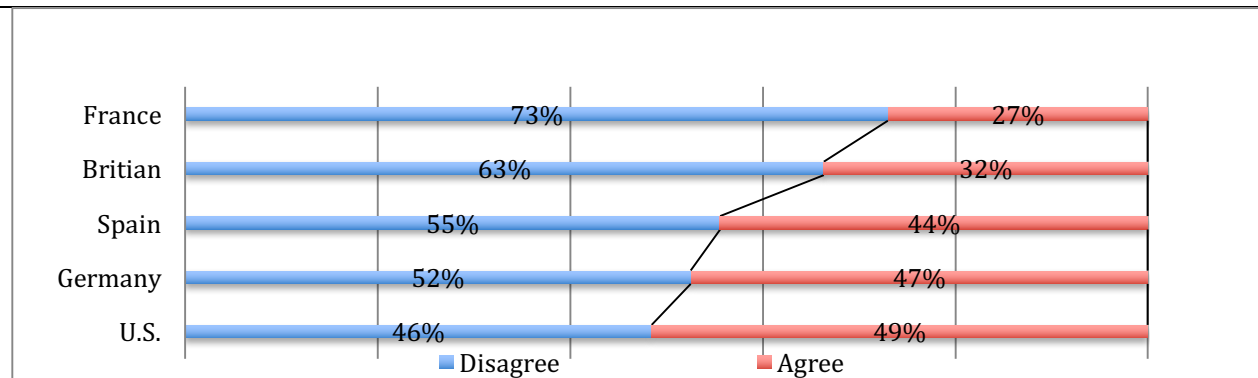
Source from Pew Research: Global Attitudes Project, The American-Western European Values Gap, February 29, 2012, http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/#religious-vs-national-identity

LIFESTYLE

At the end of their careers, the Greatest Generation was more likely to retire and sit down for the long haul, to grow grey and feeble. Most spent enough of time over seas during the war that they are content to stay at home. They did not seem to mind getting old, or being called "granny" or "gramps."

If there was ever a time to be born, Baby Boomers were born at the right time. Jobs were plentiful and incomes were high. Their salaries they made afforded them many essentials as well as extra luxuries in life such as second homes, boats, country club and YMCA memberships, etc. As an added bonus, most of the Boomers jobs' included retirement programs such as Social Security and other benefits that allowed some to retire early. In fact by the time many had become 50, their wealth and success led them to increase their consumerism of frivolous items, which began to be referred to as having a "midlife" crisis.[57]

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57 Wikipedia, "Baby Boomers," April 2, 2014, April 10, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_boomers

This generation fought for what they believed. In 2011 when Boomers were reaching retirement age, our nation experienced an economic crisis, the greatest since the Depression. As a result of the crisis, many Boomers lost value in investments, are delaying their retirement, and some may never be able to retire.

Despite many of the recent economic struggles of America, Boomers have not given up on life and being active. They have an attitude; "you're only as old as you feel." After retirement, some have even gone back to school to learn new things – the things they never had time for before such as crafts, writing, computer skills, etc. This has led some to take on second jobs/careers.
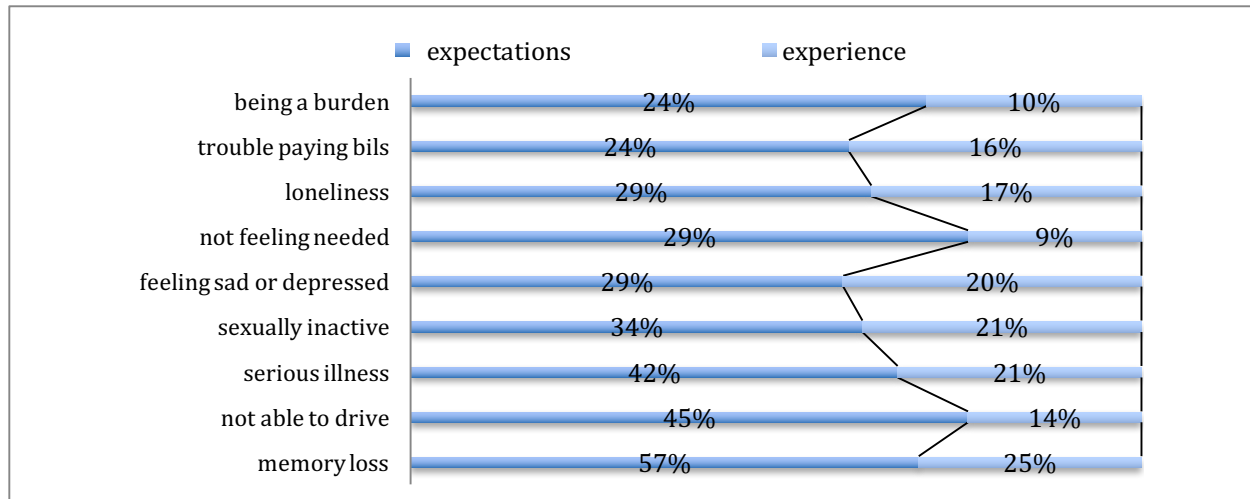
STRUGGLES

In 2009, Pew researchers interviewed almost 3,000 seniors. Their findings revealed that aging may or may not be what it is perceived to be**.** There are challenges and struggles that accompany aging. Senior adults, however, report that they experience these challenges at a much lower rate than expected (TABLE 5). [58] This is not to say that life is easy. In fact, many of the benefits they had looked forward to never happened, (TABLE 6). [59]

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58 Pew Research: Social & Demographic Trends, "Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality," June 29, 2009, accessed March 28, 2014, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/06/29/growing-old-in-america-expectations-vs-reality/
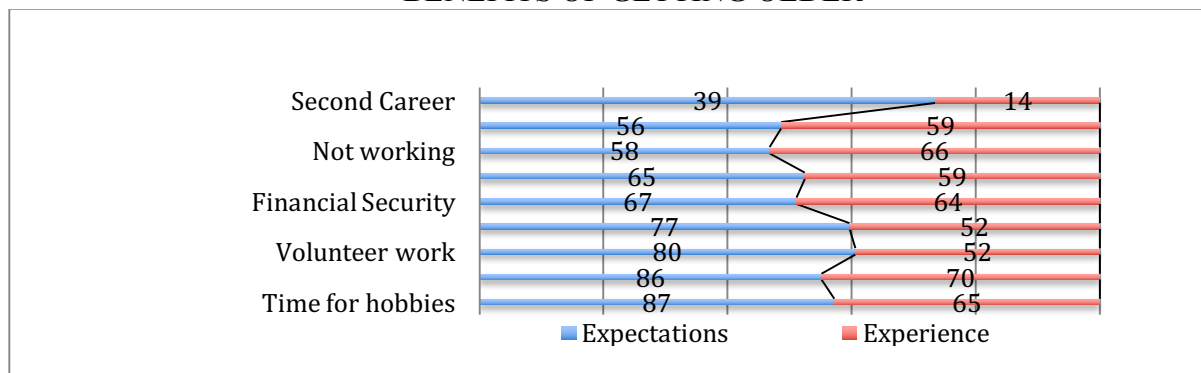
59 Pew Research: Social & Demographic Trends, "Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality,"

TABLE 5

CHALLENGES OF AGING: EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPERIENCE

	expectations	experience
being a burden	24%	10%
trouble paying bils	24%	16%
loneliness	29%	17%
not feeling needed	29%	9%
feeling sad or depressed	29%	20%
sexually inactive	34%	21%
serious illness	42%	21%
not able to drive	45%	14%
memory loss	57%	25%

Source: Pew Research: Social & Demographic Trends, "Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality,"
http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/06/29/growing-old-in-america-expectations-vs-reality/

TABLE 6

BENEFITS OF GETTING OLDER

	Expectations	Experience
Second Career	39	14
	56	59
Not working	58	66
	65	59
Financial Security	67	64
	77	52
Volunteer work	80	52
	86	70
Time for hobbies	87	65

Pew Research: Social & Demographic Trends, Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality,
http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/06/29/growing-old-in-america-expectations-vs-reality/

While many senior adults 65+ are healthy, vibrant, strong, and independent, some need extra services to help them live a quality life. However, this is not the case for all. Today's seniors are reaping the consequences of lifestyle choices. Diabetes, high cholesterol, overweight, heart and lung disease are among the health risk of older adults.

In North Carolina alone there are over 14,000[60] senior adults who are on a waiting list to receive extra services. Unfortunately, fifty percent of this group will need long-term care. Needing care for normal aging is one thing. Senior Adults, however, seem to be most concerned with getting Alzheimer's disease. The number of those 65+ with Alzheimer's disease in NC has increased 31% in the past 10 years, and is expected to increase 69% over the next 20 years.[61]

Another issue that senior adults are facing is elder abuse. Elder abuse refers to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or person that causes harm or risk to vulnerable adults. Abuse includes: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, emotional abuse, abandonment, or self-neglect.[62] Other struggles include family challenges of either caring for their aging parents and/or the challenges of supporting their adult children or raising their grandchildren, and/or estate planning and issues.

Lastly, loneliness can be a concern. It has been said that all seniors are interested in, is someone to sit on their front porch and listen to their problems and complaints. In reality, what

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60 North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry: NCBAM, "Aging Adults," 2009-2014, assessed March 13, 2014, (http://www.ncbam.org/aging/main

61 North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry: NCBAM, "6 Statistics to Know: The Changing Face of America," 2009-2014, accessed March 28, 2014, http://www.ncbam.org/promos/6_statistics_to_know

62 U.S. Administration on Aging, "What is Elder Abuse?" http://www.aoa.gov/AoA_programs/Elder_Rights/EA_Prevention/whatIsEA.aspx

seniors want is someone to listen to them as they share their feelings and thoughts concerning their fears and to remind them of God's promises.[63]

PRACTICES

Just as perceptions about aging does not always hold true, neither do the perceived benefits and practices (Table 4). When Boomers and Builders were asked how they spend their day, many responded that most of their day is spent talking with family and friends, reading, and taking medicine (Chart 4).[64] In a nutshell, the older seniors get, the less active they become. Research has shown that when seniors reach 70+ their activity begins to decrease.

TABLE 4

DAILY ACTIVITIES OF OLDER ADULTS
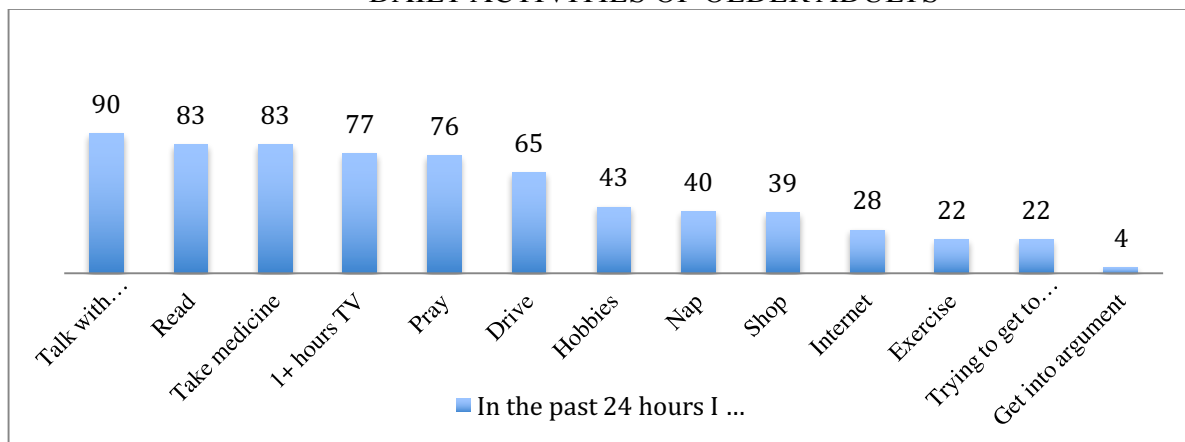
Pew Research: Social & Demographic Trends, Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality, (June 29,2009), http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/06/29/growing-old-in-america-expectations-vs-reality/ (March 28,2014)

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63 Wendy Minton Edwards, "Call for Christian Caregiving," January 2, 2013, February 25, 2014, http://www.ncbam.org/spirit/entry/call_for_christian_caregiving, (accessed February 25, 2014).

64 Pew Research: Social & Demographic Trends, Growing Old in America: Expectations vs. Reality, June 29, 2009, March 28, 2014, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/06/29/growing-old-in-america-expectations-vs-reality/

Conclusion

Despite 1500 churches being planted each year, and the new Christians gained, Christians have failed to substantially increase the Church. The reason for this is that previous generations have not understood basic church growth principles and therefore have not worked to implement them in their church. As a result, churches are dying and the rate at which Christianity grows is not proportionate to the global population growth.

For the Church to move from keeping up with the population growth to increasing their percentage of the population, the church must move past practicing passive and unorthodox Christianity. Leaders must become intentional in making disciples, specifically in senior adults/Boomers. Nothing would be more powerful than for a generation of senior adults to become honest and transparent about the messy reality of life, culture, and faith.

Creating, much less, implementing a strategy to disciple senior adults in church growth principles will not be easy, but is a necessity if the church wants to best influence future generations. For this to viably take place, church leaders must decide that senior adults are still valuable to the church and choose to prioritize this group in their discipleship efforts. Implementing a senior adult church growth discipleship strategy and plan, however, will begin to reverse decades of unchristian living and the decreasing Christian influence in the World.

Making Disciples – A Three Year Plan

There is no time limit on discipleship. Discipleship is something that one aspires to do for the rest of his/her life. This plan is merely a start to the process. It is specifically designed to assist pastors/leaders in a systemic way to create an effective church growth mindset in their leaders.

The reason most adults do not disciple others is simply because they have never been part of a discipleship process. As a result, they do not know how to disciple. This is a resource that will serve to be a guide to help leaders disciple today' senior adults most effectively in the area of church growth.

Like most things, becoming a mature disciple is a process. It will not happen overnight. Jesus spent three years teaching and mentoring his disciples. My proposed plan involves a three-year process of church growth discipleship training that can be used by pastors and/or any leader who works with senior adults.

CHURCH GROWTH DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

YEAR 1 GOAL: FOR THE SENIOR ADULTS TO KNOW THE STATE OF THE CHURCH, THEIR ROLE IN THE CHURCH, AND BIBLICAL CHURCH PRINCIPLES.

1. Objective: To know the state of the church.

    a. Examine global statistics.

    b. Examine national statistics.

    c. Examine state statistics.

    d. Examine association / county statistics (associational office/minutes).

    e. Examine unique church (church minutes/ pastor).

2. Objective: To know who seniors are and their roles in the Church.

    a. Complete personality tests.

        i. Complete MBTI types, explain and discuss the results.

        ii. Complete Disc assessment, explain and discuss the results.

    b. Take the Basic Values Questionnaire to examine their interpersonal relations.[65]

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65 Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers. *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 29-33.

    c. Take a spiritual gifts inventory.

        i. Explain the difference in talents and spiritual gifts.

        ii. Discuss the use of your gifts.

3. Objective: Read, *I Am a Church Member*, by Thom S. Rainer. Answer and discuss the questions at the end of each chapter. (6 weeks)

    a. I will be a Functioning Member.

    b. I will be a Unifying Church Member.

    c. I will Not Let my Church be About my Preferences and Desires

    d. I will Pray for my Church Leaders.

    e. I will lead my Family to be Healthy Church Members.

    f. I will Treasure Church Membership as a Gift.

4. Objective: Read, *Biblical Church Growth*, by Gary McIntosh. Answer and discuss questions at the end of each chapter. (12 weeks)

    a. Introduction and A Faithful Church

    b. The Life Giving Church.

    c. The Right Premise: God's Word

    d. The Right Priority: Glorifying God

    e. The Right Process: Discipleship

    f. The Right Power: The Holy Spirit

    g. The Right Pastor: A Faithful…

    h. The Right People: Effective Ministers

    i. The Right Philosophy: Cultural Relevance

    j. The Right Plan: Target Focused

      k.   The Right Procedure: Simple Structure

      l.   Mix it Right: A Growing Church

5.   Objective: Read Optional Books

      a.   Kinnaman, David. *UnChristian; what a new generation really thinks about Christianity…and why it matters.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

      b.   McIntosh, Gary L. *One Size Doesn't Fit All*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, ISBN 0-8007-5699-1

      c.   Barna, George. *What Americans Believe*. Ventura: Regal Books, 1991.

      d.   Rainer, Thom. *Breakout Churches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 0-310-25745X

YEAR 2 GOAL: FOR SENIOR ADULTS TO UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL STRATEGIES FOR RENEWING DECLINING CHURCHES AND REVITALIZING CHURCHES.

1.   Objective: To understand the missional strategies for renewing declining churches. Read and discuss, *Comeback Churches*, by Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson. (13 weeks)

      a.   Why Consider Becoming a Comeback Church?

      b.   Rising with leadership.

      c.   Three Faith Factors.

      d.   Worship and Preaching Matters.

      e.   Intentional and Strategic Church Evangelism.

      f.   Connecting People to Spiritual Maturity.

      g.   Motivating and mobilizing people out of the pews.

      h.   Connecting People Through Small Groups.

      i.   Other Comeback Churches.

      j.   Comeback Change Agents: New or Renewed Leaders.

    k. Top Ten Most Common Transformations for Comeback Churches.

    l. Making a Comeback – Top Factors and Biggest Challenges.

    m. Comeback Conclusions.

2. Objective: To understand the spiritual strategies for revitalizing established churches. Read and discuss chapters from, *Extreme Church Make-Over,* by Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander (12 weeks)

    a. Protected for the evil one.

    b. Christ-centered ministries.

    c. Balance of power.

    d. Situational Leadership.

    e. Servant Leadership.

    f. The Church in Communion.

    g. Looking at your Church's Strengths and Weaknesses.

    h. Dealing with the Power of Memories.

    i. Dealing with Corporate Sins.

    j. Defeating Satan's Attacks.

    k. The Prayer Action Plan.

    l. A Leadership Strategy.

3. Objective 3: Optional Books

    a. McIntosh, Gary L. *Taking Your Church to the Next Level: What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009).

    b. Borden, Paul. *Assaulting the Gates: Aiming All God's People at the Mission Field*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2009, 176 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4267-0220-4

    c. Gray, Stephen and Franklin Dummond. *Legacy Churches*. St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2009, 107 pages. ISBN: 978-1-889638-78-2

  d. Piper, John. *Let The Nations Be Glad: the supremacy of god in missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993. ISBN 0-8010-7124-0

YEAR 3 GOAL: TO UNDERSTAND NEW MODELS OF CHURCH MINISTRY AND HOW

TO REACH AND EVANGELIZE TODAY'S SENIOR ADULTS.

1. Objective: To understand models of ministry in the 21st century. Read and discuss, *A New Kind of Church*: Understanding Models of Ministry, by Aubrey Malphurs. (10 weeks)

  a. Who is changing? Churches are changing

  b. Why are churches changing?

  c. Should churches change? Argument against new-model churches

  d. Doing Church: Interpreting the Biblical Passages.

  e. The Changing Church: Developing a theology of change

  f. The Connecting Church: Developing a theology of culture

  g. Defining Church: Developing a definition of the local church

  h. The Serving Church: The biblical concept of servanthood.

  i. The Thinking Church: Evaluating church models

  j. The Strategizing Church: Developing a New-Model Church

2. Objective: To reach and evangelize today's senior adults. Read and discuss, Introduction and part 2 of *White Unto Harvest*, by Charles Arn. (11 weeks)

  a. Part 1: Introduction

    i. The Mandate: "Go and Make Disciples."

    ii. The Context: America's Aging Population

    iii. The Religious Landscape of America Today.

    iv. Why a Strategy for Reaching Older Adults

b. Part 2: Introduction

    i. Target Group Evangelism

    ii. Toward a Strategy for Reaching Senior Adults

    iii. Step 1: Clarify the Goals of Your Evangelistic Endeavor (Senior Adult Ministry

    iv. Step 2: Develop a Potential Disciple List

    v. Step 3: Build Bridges to the Extended Community

    vi. Step 4: Be Sensitive to Windows of Receptivity

    vii. Step 5: Train Seniors to Share their Faith

    viii. Step 6: Equip Seniors to be Effective Disciple Makers

    ix. Step 7: Create a Place for Newcomers

    x. Conclusion:

3. Objective: Optional Books

a. Anderson, Neil. *Discipleship Counseling*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003).

b. McIntosh, Gary L. *Make Room for Boom or Bust,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming Revell, 1997)

c. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers. *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

d. Mancini, Will. *Church Unique: how missional leaders cast vision, capture culture, and create movement*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008. OSBN 978-0-7879-9683-3