

# Ten Qualities Found in Congregations Who Appeal to Millennials

By  
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Frank Powell wrote an article posted to [www.Faithit.com](http://www.Faithit.com) entitled [10 Things You Won't Find in a Church That Attracts Millennials](#). It is subtitled *What differentiates a church culture that attracts Millennials from one that repels them?* Read his blog and learn about him at <http://frankpowell.me/>.

This is a really big issue for thousands of congregations. I took Frank's ten points which are written in the negative, and turned them around as positive issues for congregations to address to become appealing to Millennials. I urge you to read Frank's work in addition to reading my spin on them. I placed them in my own spiritual and strategic framework.

Here we go. These are the ten qualities in congregations that appeal to Millennials. Read and ponder each one of these. Then rate your congregation on each one using a scale of one to ten. One means your congregation is nothing like this. Ten means your congregation is exactly like this. Numbers two to nine can be used to say how little or how much your congregation is like this. Be honest about where along the scale your congregation is today.

Total your score, find at least two other people—or a team of people—to talk with about your overall score and your answers to each one of the qualities. You can even average the individual scores for each quality and the total scores to come up with an overall picture of where your congregation sees itself. Remember this is for dialogue. The scores are about the perceived truthful information within your congregation.

Have fun. Be serious. Be prayerful. Then begin to talk about next steps for your congregation.

## 1. \_\_\_\_: There is a positive commitment to continual innovation and change.

Congregations who desire to continually be vital and vibrant, and relevant to the next generation or new households desiring to connect with them, have a non-negotiable commitment to continual innovation and change. They are not changing the substance of the gospel as they understand it. They are changing strategy, structure, and style to keep the congregation fresh and inviting.

Fresh because they do not want their congregation to fall into a habitual rut of going through the motions of being a church. They desire to uniquely experience God and engage in the mission of God—*Missio Dei*—with energy, excitement, and spiritual passion.

Inviting because they want many open doors where new people can find connections for their own spiritual journey that is centered in the Triune God, and not boxed by a non-negotiable church culture.

## 2. \_\_\_\_: The congregation is captured by God's empowering vision.

Congregations who are captured by God's empowering vision for their future ministry are more appealing to Millennials and many other demographics of people. It is essential for congregations to know who they are under God, what they value and believe, where they are headed, and how they are getting there.

Aimless congregations have little appeal, and Millennials and others will not choose to invest in them. Millennials want congregations who dream big and want to change the world.

**3. \_\_\_\_\_: Excellence is the standard for everything. Good enough is never good enough.**

Mediocrity is a turn off for Millennials. Excellence is appreciated and embraced. Whatever congregations do, they need to do well. Millennials can sniff out a commitment to good enough is good enough in a heartbeat.

It is important to Millennials to be part of movements who are making a difference in the lives of people. Congregations with a view toward small impacts will not appeal to people who want to make a significant difference through whatever they do. Everything the congregation does must be of the highest possible quality and focused on significantly impacting congregational participants.

**4. \_\_\_\_\_: Millennials are seen as people of positive spiritual passion.**

Millennials, as with all of God's created people, see themselves as persons of worth created in the image of God to live and to love. If they choose to connect with a Christian congregation, it is because they desire to express their positive spiritual passion about a God-led future for their lives. They want their passion to be recognized and accepted.

Even if Millennials are not specifically familiar with the Bible verse—"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe." (1 Timothy 4:12 NASB)—that is what they are feeling.

**5. \_\_\_\_\_: There is an inviting attitude of full inclusion of new people.**

Millennials enter a congregational culture not only ready to serve and make a difference, but to be recognized as leaders from day one. Too many hoops to jump through, and waiting periods to endure, are a turn off.

A permission-giving attitude in a congregation for involving people quickly as ministry leaders is an appealing factor. Millennials often are self-organizing of opportunities they see around them, and do not recognize or wait for formal structures to respond to their desire to get involved.

At the same time, Millennials may not embrace multiple year roles, as they want the flexibility to move from passion to passion.

**6. \_\_\_\_\_: Transparency and authenticity are core values.**

Millennials are not looking for perfect people. Therefore, a *holier than thou* attitude among some congregational participants does not appeal to them. They know everyone is human, can at times be weak, can at times fail, and can even at times (here comes the word) sin.

They desire to hear stories from people connected with a congregation of where they soared with faith and where they struggled with life. Just be real. Just be humble. If you feel the need to be pious, do not expect Millennials who connect with you to stay around long. They may find their preChristian or postChristian friends more transparent and authentic than people they meet at church.

**7. \_\_\_\_\_: The congregation has a proactive coaching culture.**

Millennials are learners. They even want to learn from the life experiences of generations older than them. They want to learn from people in an adult-to-adult transactional relationship. Coaching is a good motif for their learning mode.

Storytelling is also important to them. They want to hear the stories of people who have gone before them and what they learned along the way. Personal storytelling is very different than a lecture on what I learned that you better learn too.

Common experiences—with authentic people who are willing to coach them in life—are also important. That is why hands on missions projects and various experiences across generational lines is a good way to create cross-generational community.

**8. \_\_\_\_\_: The congregation is committed to engaging the culture.**

Millennials desire to engage the culture. They will not always have the same set of values as the congregation with which they connect. They do, however, want to be accepted as they are because that is the same courtesy they offer to anyone else who has that same spirit of openness.

Culture is to be enjoyed. Community is to be enjoyed. The geographic and cultural context in which a congregation's facilities are located—or the affinity and target groups with which they connect—are enjoyed and celebrated.

Millennials are attracted to congregations who do not take refuge in the church culture, but use it as a place of huddling, community, and respite to prepare for the next round of seeing the Jesus potential in the lives of people in the cultural context.

**9. \_\_\_\_\_: Good community is highly valued.**

Millennials seek community. They can accept the theological, sociological, racial-ethnic, occupational, socio-economic and others forms of diversity if the relationships in community are genuine. Even worship that does not always appeal to their style will be forgiven if there is true community within a congregation.

They want people who care about their life challenges, and are also willing to care about the life challenges of others. Millennials see congregations as community. They want a safe place to be themselves, and even to express their spiritual doubts to people who care without calling them heathen.

**10. \_\_\_\_\_: The congregation is united in mission.**

Millennials connect best with nice people and not mean people. They want people of strong convictions, but they also want those same people to believe in the cause of Christ—in the case of a congregation.

Division is not a core value, but distinctives are. Unhealthy conflict is not a core value, but healthy energizing conflict is. Uniformity is not a core value, but unity is.

Above all, Millennials desire a united mission that expresses a great depth of positive spiritual passion about the future toward which God is leading the congregation, and about all who are on the journey together.

**Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**But, what if . . .** the Millennials you encounter are not like the Millennials described in these ten qualities? Congratulations! You have the opportunity to understand the uniqueness and diversity of the Millennial generation. No ten points—no matter how well thought through—can define everyone in a demographic generation.

So what does this mean? It means you must engage Millennials in dialogue that is real and transparent, cares about their life journey, and develops a relationship with them out of which you can talk with them about your spiritual journey and their spiritual journey.

It can be scary as you may not have thought about your own spiritual journey with enough depth that you can meaningfully share your story with a Millennial. But relax. Be yourself. Be genuine. Express what you feel and know, and acknowledge what you have forgotten and what you have never figured out. It could be a great experience both for you and the Millennials with whom you are having a dialogue.