

Bridging a Generation

hyphen

// They demand authenticity — at home, in the stores, at work, and in politics...

They insist on seeing the big picture in news stories and ads. This is already influencing the marketplace and public life. Because Cultural Creatives are not yet aware of themselves as a collective body, they do not recognize how powerful their voices could be. And if the rest of us are blind to the paradoxical gifts that their awakening brings, then we may well be left wonder where all the changes are coming from".

The aforementioned quote didn't come from a trendy theology that we all might be talking about (authentic does not belong to theology) or the latest pop psychology magazine. The quote derived from the research findings of two researchers after 13 years of research of 100,000 Americans. In 2000, Dr. Paul Ray and Dr. Sherry Anderson wrote the book, "The Cultural Creatives"i. They foretold of a generation that is coming of age and how they are unique. If I were to list some of the characteristics mentioned in their work it would dumfound you. It would dumfound you because if you are over the age of 40 you have probably made the same observations about the Young Adults in their 20's in your church. That's right, in your church...not just your city. Cultural shifts are not a new thing, but every generation struggles with the transition. And we are wading through the waters of transition. The United Pentecostal Church is experiencing a young generation that is coming of age and we must pause to consider if we are preparing them to lead the Apostolic message for their day.

Our youth ministries are doing a very good job of equipping, connecting, and empowering the 12-18 ages demographic within our ranks. But, after 18 there is an entire generation of people that seem to have no place to go. There are some cultural reasons for this reality. They are running from "tradi-

tional singles ministry" like the plague. These gifted people assist our local ministries but are hesitant to take on responsibility that is needed in this age. They have little support for their questions, for their questions seem similar the previous generations but with a rugged twist. They are searching for meaning, but are not finding it in institutions as similar generations did. Therefore, there are entire generations within our churches that are teetering between cultural Pentecostalism and a form of godliness without power. While, some of our local Pastors look over their congregation with the pain of a concerned shepherd knowing that something must be done but is not sure what to do.

To understand the generation we must understand the circumstances. Our Young Adults are staying at home longer; adolescence seems to be getting longer.

They are marrying later (the average for men — 27, women — 25)ii. Their parents have taught them that security is the most important asset. They have been taught that they can do anything. Which is not true, for when you say yes to one thing, you say no to 100 other things. So, they are taking longer to make life choices hoping to still get the "everything out of life" that mom and dad promised. They have been taught that positional authority is less important than relational authority. They have seen a generation before them put pragmatic materialism above honesty, and are disgusted by it. They have been taught in our schools that truth is subjective and the responsibility of the individual to question. These descriptors are not meant to scare us, they are meant to inform us. It happens to be the pond that a generation is situated in. It isn't all negative either. This generation is much more likely to take on a great sacrifice if they can believe in the cause. You will see the Young Adult population take on world issues much faster than their parents. They are educated, will make time, and will sacrifice for a cause that is greater than themselves. They need a

Bridging a Generation...continued

The logo for Hyphen, featuring the word "hyphen" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters are colored: 'h' is blue, 'y' is green, 'p' is red, 'h' is blue, 'e' is green, and 'n' is red. The logo is set against a dark grey rounded rectangular background.

mission, a purpose, and resources. Someone needs to bridge the gap.

This is why we need Hyphen. Hyphen is the new ministry of the United Pentecostal Church International that focuses on connecting Young Adults between the age of 18-29 to ministry, purpose, mission, and resources. We know that effective ministry happens on the grass roots level. So the goal of Hyphen is not to replace the work of the local church. We have a two-year goal to launch Hyphen that will accomplish four things:

- 1. Raise Awareness for Young Adult Ministry** This will inspire and equip the local church to focus on this need.
- 2. Build Connections with Other UPCI Young Adults Through Events** Building events that are specific to young adults will facilitate a network of Apostolic support.
- 3. Build a depository on the young adult web site of local young adult ministry ideas and resources that are available for all to use and provide.** We think there is great young adult ministry happening all over our country and we want to have a place to share resources for young adults and churches in need.
- 4. Empower Young Adults for Ministry** It is a key priority that in the next 5 years we see 18-29 year taking a substantial role in leading the Apostolic Church, whether it be helping a church plant, starting a church plant, becoming involved in Apostolic academic ministry, or leading a grass roots movement in their church.

We are going to make every effort to inspire, equip, and empower young adults to do so.

Obviously this is an ambitious endeavor to launch a new ministry in two years from beginning to ending. If we are to accomplish this great task among such great opportunity we are going to need more hyphens. By hyphens I mean people that will bridge an amazing generation. We will need Young Adults who will listen to the call to bridge the gap, churches to begin new Young Adult efforts to bridge the gap, and districts to unify and organize Young Adult strategies. So we ask, "Will you be a hyphen?" ★

— **Nathaniel Binion**
Hyphen Director

i Ray, Paul H., Sherry Ruth Anderson, "The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People are Changing the World", Three Rivers Press: New York, 2000.

ii <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/fertility/mar-fert-slides.html>.