Evangelism Research

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

FULLER SEMINARY

BARNA REPORT

ALPHA

HARVARD U./IND. U

LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES

THE TEMPLETON AND PINETOP FOUNDATIONS

The Challenge or The Opportunity

- Over 1 million youths at least nominally in church today will choose to leave each year for the next three decades. That is 35 million youth raised in families that call themselves Christians will say that they are not by 2050!
- If we return our retention rates back to Generation X rates, one generation ago, we will see over 16 million youth that would otherwise not know Jesus have a life with Him.

- Best case scenario: Christian percentage of population would drop from 73% now to 59% in 2050. A total of 50 million unaffiliated. (nearly double as a percentage of the U. S. Population, from 17% today to 30% by 2050.)

Why?

- Delayed Marriage
- Fertility Rates are Falling
- Secularization of Society
- Relativism
- Pluralism
- Offensive Faith or Scandals within Christianity
- Never heard of concept of the Great Commission



The Challenge

- Rico Tice says, “Culturally, we’re such a long way from biblical Christianity that people don’t object to faith having engaged with it; they simply dismiss it. Jesus simply isn’t on the agenda; he isn’t even an option to be considered. People hardly ever think about why they don’t agree with your beliefs; and if they ever do, they put it in the “it’s fine for you, but it’s not for me” box in their head. The culture is teaching people not to consider Christianity even when life goes wrong, or when there seems no point to anything, or when a loved one dies.”

The Opportunity

- Christians feel misunderstood (65%); persecuted (60%); silenced (46%); marginalized (48%); afraid to speak up (47%). But we are in similar situation as early church!!!
- “We have not the right to despair because despair is a sin, and finally we have not the reason to despair quite simply because Christ is risen.” Richard Neuhaus

The Opportunity Continues

- Rom. 10:14 “How can they believe in Him (Jesus) if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?” I Peter 3:15-16 “But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”

World Statistics

- Atheists, agnostics, and others not affiliated with any religion are increasing in countries such as the U. S. and France; but making up a declining share of the World's Total Population because of growth of the Church in the East and South.
- 2010 -2050: 2.18 billion to 2.92 Christians; 1.6 billion to 2.76 Muslims

World Statistics

- While the unaffiliated are projected to increase by more than 100 million world-wide, this share of the global population is projected to decrease as a result of the faster growth in world population.
- 2010 1.1 billion (16% of G.P.); 2050 1.2 billion (13% of G.P.)

Proposed Solutions

1. Reaching New Audiences Digitally & Relationally

- 47% of Millennial Practicing Christians say it is wrong to evangelize; to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith or no faith in hopes that they will one day share your same faith. 27% of Gen X; 19% Boomers; 17% Elders.

1. Reaching New Audiences…….

- 66% of Millennials believe being a witness about Jesus is part of their faith. Those who had at least one conversation about faith came away more confident and eager to talk with others. 86%. And 70% report being more eager to share again.
- The top quality non-Christians look for in a person with whom to talk about faith are “listens without judgment (62%), and doesn’t force a conclusions 50%).

1. Reaching New Audiences…..

- “The Happy Life is social rather than solitary and conversationally deep rather than superficial.” (Psychological Science)
- Millennials are longing for conversation and community and meaning. Evangelism in the screen age can focus on hospitality. To make space for others is highly prized; to welcome others into your life and home is the very definition of generosity. So that others can see that Christianity is not only true but good for our lives and world.

1. Reaching New Audiences…..

- Nearly 50% of Millennials agree that “I experience a general sense of emptiness.”
- 2 Cor. 4:5. “For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake.” Non-Christians like Christians much more than perceived Christianity.

2. Care For the Wounded and Hurting Least/Last/Lost

- The majority of unaffiliated believe the church is of no benefit to society. Millennials and Gen Z have a higher interest in social entrepreneurship and justice issues than previous generations.

2. Care For the Wounded and Hurting Least/Last/Lost

- “Any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial”

Martin Luther King Jr.

3. Mission for Youth & Adults

- Churches thrive and grow when youth and adults go on missions.
- Most people are leaving the faith due to boredom…
- “If you wish your children to be Christians, you must really take the trouble to be Christian yourselves. Those are the only terms upon which the home will work the gracious miracle.”

3. Mission for Youth & Adults

- The more liberal mainline churches are hemorrhaging members the most. Between 5-7.5 million members in the last 10 years or so.

3. Mission for Youth & Adults

- Harvard/Indiana University based research found that “evangelicals are not on the decline” but grew from 1972 when they were 19 % of the pop to a steady level of about 28 % from the late 1980’s to Now. Over the same time, the liberal mainline churches declined from 35% to 12%.

3. Mission for Youth & Adults

- Kenda Creasy Dean in The God Bearing Life says "Youth look for the church to show them something, someone, capable of turning their lives inside out and upside down. Most of the time we have offered them pizza."

4. Start New Churches

- The American Church needs to plant more than 215,000 churches in the next 30 years to maintain status quo; and to meet the need of the unaffiliated, an additional 60,000 churches is needed.
- New Church plants on average are more effective at reaching the lost than long established churches. They get to 250 ave. attendance in 4 yrs with 48% previously unaffiliated.

4. Start New Churches

- 340,000 churches in America today (315,000 Protestant; 25,000 Catholic & Eastern Orthodox)
- 4000 new Protestant Churches are planted each year; but 3700 churches also close each year. (The average church in America gathers 186 on Sunday; Median is 75 people.)

4. Start New Churches

- The Churches that are growing overwhelmingly are high expectation churches that focus on Evangelism, discipleship, formation, and mission.
- Churches that maintain historic orthodoxy and a missional posture are the ones more likely to grow and to retain their youth.

4. Start New Churches

- Youth are least impacted faith-wise by a teen's peers. It is the adults in their lives that have the most impact.
- If each child has 3-5 adult mentors, wow.

5. Leadership Succession & a clear emphasis on the life of the Mind.

Build Leadership for Long Term

- Currently 2-5% of Tenured Professors at the Top 40 Universities self-identity as actively Christian. We've abandoned the life of the mind….
- Reformation and Roman Empire examples.

6. Count the Cost



….In time



….In talent



…In treasure

6. Count the Cost

- You: The Art of Neighboring by Pathak and Runyon
- Mentoring/Volunteering
- Carmen LaBerge on September 19
- MDPC can have another great ***season***…

Comments & Questions