

Generational Characteristics

Anyone involved in mission work knows that understanding the culture of the people we are trying to reach is crucial. Crude as they are (none of us fit in nice neat boxes!) generational characteristics give some useful insights into how those of different generations think and act.

This is particularly relevant today. Changes that might have taken three generations now take place in one - and the faster the change the more acute the differences between the generations. Two leading experts in this area write:

**We are currently experiencing the biggest
generation gap in history, between Boomers and
Xers.**

Mind the Gap, Codrington & Grant-Marshall

Over the page is an overview of generational characteristics. These give rise to very different questions and concerns for people of different generations. Below are the core questions I believe people from different generations are asking about faith and church:

Over 65's:

Faith: Is it what I've been brought up to believe?

Church: How can I help?

50 - 65's

Faith: Is it true? Is it reasonable?

Church: Will I be able to help reshape it?

30's & 40's

Faith: Does it work? Will it make a positive difference to my life?

Church: Will I be welcomed & involved & feel part of things? Can I really trust the people there?

Teens & 20's

Faith: Will it build a better world where all are affirmed and supported?

Church: Are all affirmed and supported - and will I be?

Questions for Mission

Predominantly, those under 50 tend to have a much more pragmatic approach to faith and church than previous generations. They want to know if it **works!** For them, truth is subjective and tradition at best neutral. Will it make a difference to me in the relationships I have with my friends and family or in the way I feel about myself? Does it make a positive contribution to the world? If the answer is "yes" then will consider what is being shared.

Interestingly, those over 50 are affected by the questions those younger than them are asking, much more than the other way round.

This material suggests that there are two key things for Mission: Building an inclusive community and Promoting faith as something that makes a positive difference to life.