



# The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation

*Thom S. Rainer , Jess W. Rainer , Ray Porter (Narrator)*

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At more than 78 million strong, the Millennials—those born between 1980 and 2000—have surpassed the Boomers as the larger and more influential generation in America. Now, as its members begin to reach adulthood, where the traits of a generation really take shape, best-selling research author Thom Rainer (Simple Church) and his son Art (a Millennial born in 1985) present the first major investigative work on Millennials from a Christian worldview perspective.

Sure to interest even the secularists who study this group, *The Millennials* is based on 1200 interviews with its namesakes that aim to better understand them personally, professionally, and spiritually. Chapters report intriguing how-and-why findings on family matters (they are closer-knit than previous generations), their desire for diversity (consider the wave of mixed race and ethnic adoptions), Millennials and the new workplace, their attitude toward money, the media, the environment, and perhaps most tellingly, religion.

The authors close with a thoughtful response to how the church can engage and minister to what is now in fact the largest generation in America's history.

## The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation Details

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## From Reader Review The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation for online ebook

### Sarah says

The father and son duo of Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer offer their unique perspectives in the book, *The Millennials*— Thom as the Baby Boomer father of Millennials and boss to Millennials at Lifeway Resources and Jess as well, the actual Millennial.

The repeated notion that was told throughout the book *The Millennials* by Thom and Jess Rainer was that the Millennial generation wants to be a force for positive change in the world. Although I'm really encouraged by this positive take from my generation, I do have a gentle one-word question— how? I ask this as a Millennial who was mainly brought up in the public school system where the teachers would have vague, moral neutral pep talks, encouraging us to “change the world!”

Again, I love the optimism that a generation can infuse a positive change, but I'm concerned my generation doesn't have the proper grounding in their minds to fulfill these efforts. After all, Hitler wanted to become a world changer, and well, he did become one.

Overall the book *The Millennials* by Thom and Jess Rainer had a positive view of the generation from the study and was genuinely an interesting read. If you enjoy sociology, current events, history, are a Millennial yourself, or even if you simply care about the Millennial generation, I think you'll enjoy the book and have some lasting takeaways.

One area that took me aback some was the area in which the book, *The Millennials* from Thom and Jess Rainer delved into feedback from Millennials. According to their study and as Thom's experience as a CEO and President at Lifeway Resources, Millennials not only engage with feedback, they feel they need feedback— both positive and negative. This may surprise some given the stigma that Millennials are touchy and thin-skinned.

The one area that both Thom and Jess were alarmed about was the high aversion towards the Christian faith which they address sprinkled throughout the book and then in a chapter of its own called “Their Strange Religious Views.” If you care at all about the future of faith in America and about why the Millennial generation has such a distrust towards Christianity, the chapter alone would be beneficial for you, even if you don't plan on reading the book in its entirety.

One critique I do have of the book, *The Millennials* by Thom and Jess Rainer comes down to the continual comparing and contrasting of the Millennials to the Baby Boomers. Yes, I enjoy the contrasting beliefs and thoughts between the generations and seeing some of their similarities, but I would love to see some of the contrasting elements with the GenXers, “The Greatest Generation,” and others as well. I do think as well that the Baby Boomers may be critical of the book since the book's authors largely elevated the Millennial generation and had a number of criticisms towards the Baby Boomers. But all in all, the book was still a refreshing read with some interesting takeaways for almost anyone. You can read more here:  
<http://bit.ly/ALookAtMillennials>

I received this book for free from B&H and the opinions I have expressed are my own.

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### **Su says**

It is not the fault of the authors that things change fast and a lot of their info is already outdated (a thing they freely admit in the course of the book--that this book would have a short shelf life). The point of the book is to provide insights into this generation for church leaders, which is a good idea, and quite frankly I'm glad people writing for churches have learned from the mistakes of the past (i.e., churches spending years treating Gen X members like a less interesting version of the Baby Boom and then wondering where all the Xers went) and are attempting to give church leaders the tools they need to reach a generation that is unlike them.

However, this book reads like a first-year college essay for the first several chapters. Even after it got better, my irritation lingered. Add the repetition and needless explanation that made the book a lot longer than necessary, and you have the reason I kept this as a bus read only--I could only take small doses. It was interesting enough that I didn't give up altogether, but not one I could recommend or not re-read.

The survey results they provide and the quotes from interviewees were the high points. As a cranky late Gen Xer, I have a lot in common with early Millennials, and could agree with many points made. But I can't help feeling this project would have been better as a blog than as a book, and perhaps the feedback the authors would have received from readers would have helped them to shape the data and their voice into something more readable and helpful for their target audience.

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### **kmm1985 says**

Fascinating look at the Millennial generation through the lens of faith. Would be a helpful book for anyone in ministry.

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### **Jazminne says**

Overall an interesting read, but there is limited numerical survey data provided. At times the book delved too much into religion and Christianity for my taste considering this a book about demographics and not about the positives or negatives of millennials going or not going to church.

I found The Boomer generation to be portrayed in a very negative light with sweeping generalities.

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### **Jeff Elliott says**

Most of Rainer's books are too packed with numbers to be enjoyed. This time, perhaps because of his son's co-writing, he has written a much more readable book. In general, I was positive about the description of the Millennials. The Rainers paint them as a mostly positive generation, convinced they can make a difference, passionately committed to social causes. The downside is they are less religious and so therefore have limited Biblical understanding. What I have noticed is they believe in equality, justice and fairness by their standards rather than God's.

Some quotes:

p. 3-The Millennials are on track to become America's most educated generation. In 2007...30 percent had attained a college degree. That is the highest rate ever recorded for that age group

About 65% percent of young adults cohabit at least once prior to marriage...

p. 18-Millennials will become the greatest adopting generation our nation has known. Children are valued. Hope is instilled in them

The Millennials tend to be upbeat, positive and happy. But they are realists as well. They know that not all is well with the world. The Boomer Generation knew that and protested it. The Gen X Generation knew that and was depressed about it. And the Millennials know that, but they believe they can have a role in changing it.

p. 31-Millennials have traditional attitudes about family. More than 80 percent of Millennials believe they will marry only once.

p. 56 Eighty-seven percent of Millennials view their parents as a positive source of influence.

p. 60-More than nine out of ten Millennials have great respect for older generations.

p. 74-The most important aspect in life for the Millennials is family. Sixty-one percent of the Millennial generation stated family was really important in life

p. 137-Nearly nine out of ten Millennials told us that the ability to have fun on the job was a significant factor in choosing a job or staying with a current employer. Amazingly, 41 percent of this generation said that fun on the job was "extremely important" to them.

p. 164-...the key issue for the Millennials is working together. They see the blame game as having no value. To the contrary, for them it is wasted energy that takes our focus off what really needs to be done.

p. 229-First a Millennial is more likely than not to have a syncretistic belief system. He or she tends to take portions of belief from various faiths and nonfaiths and blend them into a unique spiritual system. Second, a Millennial is likely to care less about religious or spiritual matters than his or her predecessor generations.

p. 233-More than one-fourth (26 percent) said they believe they will go to heaven when they die because they have accepted Christ as their Savior. Remember, 65 percent of this generation expressed a broadly Christian religious preference, but no more than 20 percent has a biblical understanding of Jesus and matters of salvation. Apparently some Millennials who are Christians in name only believe the label is sufficient to get them to heaven.

p. 250 A Millennial named Leslie who grew up in a Christian home..."I'm not anti-church but so much of what takes place in my parents' church is just keeping the doors open. Pay the staff. Keep the building nice. And give 10 percent or more of the church's income for someone else to do missions...But that's plodding Christianity. It has no urgency about it. It's more concerned about the people in the church than those outside the church. It breaks my heart that people are going to hell each day while so many churches have members who argue about Roberts Rules of Order or which members will serve on the personnel committee. We just don't have time for such foolishness."

p. 255-Millennial Christians are not content with business-as-usual churches. To the contrary, they will connect with churches only if those churches are willing to sell out for the sake of the gospel. The Millennial

Christians abhor churches that focus inwardly, and they are more concerned about meeting their own needs than those of the community and the nations.

The Millennial Christians will commit themselves to churches. But those churches cannot look like and act like most American churches today. The Millennial church will be a radically committed church.

p. 261-Millennial Christians will reject churches that tend to view the community as little more than a population pool from which growth in attendance and budget can come. But they will embrace churches that teach members to love the community.

p. 267-Rebecca, a 26 year old Millennial... "The boomers give money to the church, but it comes right back to them to keep them content. They hire the staff to do the ministry they won't do. The money goes to make the building more comfortable for them. And then churches begin all kinds of ministries for boomers and their families to keep them happy. Most churches today suffer from Baby Boomer reflux". We didn't have to ask Rebecca if she would attend that kind of church. "I'll never go to that kind of church," she responded without a question. "That's not New Testament Christianity. That's a religious social club."

In summary

- They are more educated
  - They get married later
  - 96% think they can make a difference in the world
  - They have a great respect for older generations.
  - They are highly relational
  - They are hopeful
  - They are learners
  - They are looking less to religion
  - They want a connected family
  - They are passionate about community and making a difference
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## Shaun Marksbury says

As someone considered to be an older Millennial by this book, I was interested to see what Rainer's research had to say about this generation. And I was surprised. I expected a (sometimes-deserved) dour outlook, but the optimism of this book was refreshing. The values of Millennials seem to parallel those of the "Greatest Generation" in many ways. For instance, the view on family is surprisingly strong, as Millennials have grown weary of the effect of divorce upon their lives. They are also surprisingly pro-life. They are perhaps the least racist and most ethnically-diverse generation. Sure, some left-leaning tendencies are high, such as environmentalism and a questioning of capitalistic economics, but not as high as one might suspect. They are also more positive about the future than their parents' generation, and more eager to get involved personally to affect change.

Of course, there are still real concerns from a Christian perspective. Religion ranks low in Millennial priorities, and Rainer estimates that perhaps 15% of Millennials are actually Christian. Church is largely irrelevant. But, where church is relevant, it's because members seem to genuinely believe their faith and are not seeking to sell them a bill of goods (contra the Christian country club mentality or the seeker-sensitive models plaguing Gen X churches). There are certain lessons we can take to heart as we seek to win Millennial souls to Christ.

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### **Andrew Bondurant says**

Much has changed in the 7 years since this book was released. However, I believe many of the values and themes unpacked throughout the book have only continued to develop even more. It would be interesting to have an updated edition with many of the survey respondents being revisited.

I fall right in the middle of the Millennial Generation, which forced me to do much reflecting and evaluating as I went. As a pastor, I am extremely challenged to tap into and equip my generation to see the value of family they already have through the lens of God's plan for the world. I am also encouraged by my generations strong commitment to love and serve their neighbor and the nations.

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### **Matthew says**

A helpful book. Filled with stories from actual millennials, along with Rainer's penchant for numbers, numbers, numbers, this helped those of us outside the millennial age range to understand this better.

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### **Kelsey says**

As part of the "largest generation" called "The Millennials" (born 1980-2000), I was mostly surprised by the research and perspectives shared in this book, which were largely positive (shared by a Baby Boomer and his son, a Millennial). If you take a good look, you'll see a generation that is tired of superficiality, materialism, and self-centeredness. This generation believes they can contribute and make a significant difference, and families and relationships are of utmost importance to them. Many are distrusting of government and disillusioned by churches, which they tend to see as religious social clubs that are more inwardly focused and self-serving than outwardly focused. They value honesty, integrity, and transparency. Millennials often get a bad rap, so if you're tired of hearing the negative, this is a good book to read. However, this book does tend to have its own biases toward Millennials, and the views are almost entirely favorable which leads me to believe that the authors are not completely objective. The Millennial Generation is only ever viewed favorably, highlighting many of the strengths and disregarding any drawbacks.

In sum, this book does a good job of sharing the positive aspects of the Millennial Generation but tends to stay quiet about any flaws. A good read, but with what appear to be biased, generalized, and one-sided perspectives.

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### **Maarten De vries says**

Een jaar geleden geluisterd als audioboek. Het staat vol met aansprekende voorbeelden, en maar weinig ruwe data. Dat moet ook wel als audioboek. Toch is het niet alleen een boek vol anekdotes, ik merk dat sommige inzichten me bij zijn gebleven. Zeker ook als sociologie niet je hobby is, geeft dit boek een leuk inkijkje in hoe verschillende leeftijdsgroepen in het westen hun leven vorm geven. En dat is weer belangrijk voor de kerk in de westerse wereld.

### **Steve says**

Overall, this was an interesting and somewhat enlightening read (well, audiobook), but suffered from a few flaws. As a book, its strengths include the anecdotal stories and ease with which the authors present the results of their survey. However, there is quite a bit of unnecessary repetition which could have been left out, thus streamlining the book.

As far as interpreting the survey data, it will take some time to see how the results bear out, and there is difficulty in harmonizing the survey results regarding ambition, lack of racial divides, and concern for others with the stories that seem to make the news. I find this to be especially the case when it comes to the survey results showing high ambition and the growing social issue of "boys who shave". Perhaps it is only the anecdotal stories that make the news; time will tell. Another limitation is that it is difficult to make comparisons to other generations given the lack of similar data from those generations when they were at the same age of the responders to this survey. Were data of that type available, the reader would have a better idea of how much predictive power this survey data has. Unfortunately that is not the case.

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### **Philippe Jean says**

Found this quick eye opening. Though I do think that their data sample was quite small and does not fully embrace all that we millennials believe, value and think, I did find this work quite impressive.

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### **Scott Paulson says**

This was an intriguing book. I learned the Millennial generation is, at over 70 million strong, larger than the Baby Boomer generation, and is influential because of it. As this book and study defines them, the Millennials are born between 1980 and 2000. The authors attempt to be objective in their study and the reporting of results, and they were interested in understanding the relationships and views of this generation. Their particular and transparent bias is of Evangelical American Christians, yet they structured their questions for the respondents broadly, with somewhat wider application.

On the whole, it is an enlightening book, providing insights into the habits, priorities, and views of the world of this group of Americans. The questions the survey team asked were probing at times in an effort to clarify understanding of views of Christianity, of technology, of education, of family, of priorities and more.

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### **Louise says**

This book presents some interesting information, but not having the survey instrument, the actual data, the demographics on the 1200 member study sample or even an index erodes the book's value. There is a lot of "filler", such as more than 10 pages devoted to a description/history of various media. There are a lot of negative references to the Baby Boomers.

If you know the Millennials, many of the conclusions seem to have validity. Millennials and older "Xes" that I know, as well as those depicted in popular culture, socialize and consult with their parents, are skeptical of institutional religion, accept diversity, etc. The authors give some statistics for these and other conclusions, but without more complete data on the method and the subject pool, the conclusions are diminished.

One area I'm skeptical about is in the section on money. It is well documented that the Millennials have significant college debt and this is not even hinted at, suggesting that the 1200 member study group is skewed to either an upper middle class that has not had to borrow for an education and/or to those who have not had much education beyond high school. I'd be interested not only the demographics of the sample, but also the survey questions and if they really help define the Millennials on this topic.

The authors take continuous swipes at the Baby Boomers. For instance, the Boomers anti-authoritarian streak is negatively contrasted with the respect of the Millennials' respect for authority. It should be noted that the Boomers had reason to challenge authority. Authority structures were replete with institutional, de facto, legal and cultural racism and sexism. In the 60's and early 70's it was impossible for all but valedictorian Blacks and women to even consider medical or law school, to say nothing of the job markets they faced. The boomers made it possible for Millennials to face fairer authority structures. The Rainers say "The reality is that many of the leaders, Martin Luther King for example... was born well before the first boomer.." (p. 97) as though Silent Generation and the GI's were the ones who accomplished this.

A lot of their conclusions have intuitive validity if you know many Millennials, and the authors, being evangelical Christians, have no reason to skew their data since what they present it shows the Millennials trending away from the church; however, the lack of documentation, or even an index, and the unnecessary comments on the Boomers mitigate the value and authority of this book and its conclusions.

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## **David says**

Great helpful book on ministering to the Millennials. This book is co-authored by his son, who is a millennial. Good and important read for any church that desires to reach its community and continue to grow. It's not hopeless, they can be reached.

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