

Learning From Every Generation

By Mike and Laurie Sheffield, Agape Marriage Ministry, Lake Oswego, OR

Therefore if anyone is in

Christ

he is a

New Creation

The old things have passed away

Behold

ALL Things

have

Become New!

2Corinthians 5:17



The marriage you have today does not need to define the marriage you could have tomorrow !

Over the past 50 years – from the Silent Generation’s (b.1928 to 1945) young adulthood to that of Millennials (b.1981-1996) today – the United States has undergone enormous cultural and societal shift.

Currently, it seems Millennials get a bad rap about everything. Every generation always bemoans the current one, but Millennials seem to have gotten some extra moaning.

We’re big fans of the millennial generation. Millennials not only make up the largest part of the U.S. population, they desire to change the world they inherited.

We, The Church, needs this generation, and we need to be willing to see their perspective and learn from them as much as they are willing to learn from us. Both good and bad. Now that the youngest Millennials are adults, even though they have proven to be better educated than their grandparents, according to Pew Research, very few have witnessed firsthand what a healthy marriage looks like. Which could be why they’re

cautious in forming their own households and seem to be delaying or foregoing marriage.

They are walking away from the church and simply want “community”. Millennials don’t want their homes to look anything like the ones they grew up in. That’s where Re|engage comes in...

Unlike the previous generations, what we see is that Millennials long for experiences instead of stuff. The top eight priorities for millennials:

1. Being a good parent
2. Having a successful marriage
3. Helping others in need
4. Owning a home
5. Living a very religious life
6. Having a high-paying career
7. Having lots of free time
8. Being famous

Millennials desire authentic and transparent relationships.

We have greater opportunity than ever before to change the trajectory of these marriages in our churches, through Re|engage, but we must invite them in, and let

them know that we hear their frustration and we're willing to work out *with* them how to improve their marriages, and in turn change the legacy that they will leave. This isn't going to happen by *telling* them what to do and how to do it.

Something we do at Re|Engage at Lake Bible Church is pair couples with mentor couples to "do life with". When we spend time together getting to know them and living life out *with* them, they will not only see couples modeling healthy relationships and showing them what a godly marriage can look like, they will also see where they have struggled and come out on the other side.

We firmly believe that life-change happens most effectively in the context of these small groups with other married couples whose age or stage of life does not matter.

We never want to be unnecessarily strategic about creating experiences for married couples, but we do desire to create a solid bridge for millennials or any generation, to walk back into the church, or maybe walk in for the first time. A huge invitation through "the back door" of the church is to invite them in to work on their marriage through Re|engage!

So, what does this mean for the church?

It's great news for us as church leaders.

When we invite couples into the church to help them build their marriages stronger through Re|engage, we have an opportunity to truly live out what a healthy, strong marriage looks like when it is built upon a firm foundation in Christ.

While we can't erase the past, nor do we want to, we can impact their futures! We let them know our stories, the successes and the failures.

At Re|engage we share with transparency and vulnerability about our missteps and let other's see how Jesus has redeemed our messes and that He is the hero of our stories, it encourages others to believe that they too are worthy of His love and forgiveness.

We live out our relationship with Jesus and remind all the couples attending Re|engage that even with Christ we are not immune to the temptation of sin, but we have the power and strength to overcome it.

Creating a connection for married couples, when we share life together in this way, through Re|engage helps couples recognize that even though they may think whatever they are going through is unique to them...it isn't. Discovering that they're not alone struggling through marriage gives these couples hope.

Knowing that there is someone else who has walked where they have walked, and change is possible.

At Re|engage we talk a lot about being made in God's image, and this free's us to know that it's not a prerequisite to make the same mistakes or sins of our parents. We are no longer destined to follow in the footsteps of a philandering father or an abusive mother. We are free in Him.

Living out strong, faith based, vibrant marriages, centered on the truth of God's Word, connects people to the local church, and more importantly draws them to Jesus. Bottom line: when a church leverages millennials' love of experiences and invites them to partner with other couples that desire to change their marriage in the church through Re|engage...powerful things can happen.

We're not just talking about increasing millennials' marital satisfaction. We're saying YOU as church leaders will be leveraging marriage to draw people to church, and ultimately Jesus—something no statistics or Pew Research can ever describe.

We are living for an eternal kingdom. And when we turn to him, He makes all things new. So, whether you're a millennial, or you're the Silent Generation, we'd love to get to know you and grow together in our relationships through Re|engage with each other and with Jesus!

You can tune into our radio show on 93.9 KPDQ every Monday at 2:00 and Thursday at 2:30pm and Saturday and Sunday on True Talk 800 or join us for our next 20 week session of Re|engage starting in the Fall. Go to agapemarriage.org for more info.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).



Authors Mike and Laurie Sheffield are Marriage Directors at Lake Bible Church in Lake Oswego, OR. Mike is a full time Gastroenterologist with The Oregon

Clinic, and Laurie works writing and editing their radio program, and marriage ministry curriculum, as well as speaks at women's and marriage conferences across the country . Mike and Laurie have been married for 36 years and have 3 grown children and 2 sons by marriage and one precious granddaughter! Together they have been building healthy marriages through Agape Marriage Ministry.