ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A PROJECT TO DISCOVER WHY BLACK MILLENNIALS ATTEND OR

DO NOT ATTEND CHURCH

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BY

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DEDICATION

To the now and the next generation;

go and take the baton and lead

and serve the Church unto the glory of God

APPROVAL PAGE

Accepted by the faculty and the final demonstration examining committee

of Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio, in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to discover why some Black Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio go to church and why some do not. The design of the project was a five-point Likert scale survey that was administered electronically through Survey Monkey.

The participants of the survey were Black graduate students; as well as Black Millennials who accessed my personal Facebook. The survey indicated a strong need for preaching, teaching, and fellowship being critical to why the participants either did or did not go to church.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

Our family was new to Ohio. We lived in Kent, Ohio for more than a year and still had not settled at any particular church in our community. My husband had somehow stumbled into the history of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church and had become deeply moved and drawn to their history and how they came into existence. He expressed an interest in visiting the AME church in our community which was just one of two black churches in Kent. Our family of three, and one on the way, went to church on a summer Sunday morning to find this small congregation of people. The entire congregation could not have been more than fifteen to twenty people. Other than one young married couple with four kids, we were the youngest people in the building.

I remember being surprised, curious, and intrigued by this church. How old is this church? Where are the other black people? Where are the college students? I wonder what this church was like in her 'hay-day'? How is it surviving? We were a part of that small church community for about 18 months before we got connected to a church in our community we had moved to in Canton, Ohio. It was our brief time being with, serving with, and worshipping with this church family that started me on my journey of research on Black Millennials in the black church. This small and dying AME church was in a college town community that doubles in size when school is in session, yet, there were no

college students who attended the church. The church culture and atmosphere felt old.

I began to wonder: why don't any of the college students attend this or any of the other churches in this town? Where do they go and why? What is it that draws them there and not here? This church will not be around much longer if something about the way they "do" church does not change. Are they raising up a younger generation of leaders to pass the baton off to? Are they making church and ministry relevant to a younger generation? These questions resonated deeply within me and spurred on my passion and interest to research this area, but to also be a change agent for other churches. It was this season that we were involved in the AME church which opened my heart and curiosity to Black Millennials and their engagement in the black church. Eventually it led to my doctoral project and research which was to discover why some Black Millennials from a large State University in Northeastern Ohio go to church and why some do not.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of my project is to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not. My research is seeking to answer the question: Why do some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio go to church and why do some not?

Overview

I sought to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio go to church; and yet some do not go to church. Millennials are defined as individuals who are born between 1981- 1996 (Pew Research Center 2019). It was with this goal insight, I sought to discover where our young Black Millennials are in our churches; as well as what is attracting them to the church and what is pushing them away. I hope to understand how our churches can be reaching Black Millennials better and be effectively ministering to this forgotten group.

I surveyed students through Survey Monkey. Students from the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio were invited to participate in the survey. The Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) was selected because it has been identified as a specific group on the campus that has a primary Black Millennial population. My original goal was to obtain a minimum of 30 participants from this student group and another student organization, the Voices of Testimony. Initially, I was able to capture the voices of both student groups, but there were three significant issues: 1.)The sample group from those two groups combined was a total of ten; 2.) There was a mistake in the categorization of the ages listed. Some were not in the Millennial range; and 3.) Three of the ten participants were either not a millennial or not black. As a result of these three issues, I re-administered the survey. Upon attempting to re-administer the survey, I was only able to get in contact with students from the BGSA. Seven participants came from that group. In an effort

to bolster a low sample, I invited Black Millennials through my Facebook page to participate in my research by taking my survey. From that effort, I acquired fifty-three more participants. All participants took a 5- point Likert Scale survey. Black Millennials who took this survey on Survey Monkey were to opt into one of two surveys: Those who attend church and those who do not attend church. To attend church was defined as attending church one time per month or more. Each survey consisted of the following sections: Section I: demographics; Section II: Questions were designed for those who attend church and for those who do not attend church; and Section III: an evaluation of the study. After the survey was administered, I collected the data, and analyzed the data.

Foundation

As someone who had not been rooted in a church for a season in my life, I noticed a distinction between the churches that were filled and the churches that were empty. There was a pattern of similarity between the people, ministry, and leadership. Those congregations that were either on the decline or just working to remain, often times lacked either: a substantial youth/young adult population, youthful leadership, and/or vision. There was a missing key to drawing new people to that congregation. As I moved to Ohio in 2015, I began to be surrounded by this repeated experience. This moved me to seriously ponder and be filled with curiosity regarding this issue and how it is connected to the black church. It has also allowed me to reflect on some remedies, otherwise the black church is in trouble and so is our next generation of black leaders.

There are four categories/themes that provide the foundational arguments for this project. The categories of inclusion, relevance, value, and evolution are all interwoven into the foundational blocks of this project, being: biblical, theological, and historical. What arises from the research in these three areas is the reverberation of the importance of inclusion, relevance, value, and evolution among and for Black Millennials, specifically as it relates to their participation/engagement with the black church. These four categories are ones that I have personally deduced from both the literature and quantitative research that was conducted.

Inclusion addresses the question: How has this generation, the Millennial generation, been included within the church, or are they more of an afterthought? The theme of inclusion seeks to understand two things: How has the black church done and is doing at creating a place where this generation can authentically be welcomed in, be a part of, and be a contributing force. Secondly, the inclusion of Black Millennials into the life of the black church is critical for them to be meaningfully engaged. The theme of inclusion strongly shows up in biblical, theological, and historical foundations. Biblically, the notion of inclusion cannot be missed by the pursuit of the shepherd towards the lost sheep found in Luke's parable, Luke 15: 1-7. The notion of inclusion is addressed theologically because that is key to a theology of liberation. Given the context, being Black Millennials as those who have been marginalized and oppressed in the context of the Black church, a theological position of Black liberation addresses the mandate that this group would be included, valued and a

part of the flock. Lastly, the historical foundation is addressed through this theme because the black church has historically not highly lifted up the younger generation to be included or valued well.

Value addresses the question: To what extent does the church truly value the Millennial generation and see value in this generation? This notion is addressed by critiquing how well the black church has affirmed and valued this generation as significant entities of the church. To value this generation would mean to hear their voice, ideas, and needs, and work to inculcate them into the culture of the church. To value the Millennial generation would be to train them in places of leadership, encourage them to lead and to do so from their context and vantage point. To show authentic value rather than cheap tokenism, would only strengthen the notion of inclusion. This theme of value is strongly addressed in the biblical section of this project by addressing our passage, Luke 15: 1-7. The parable of the Lost Sheep helps to create a strong biblical foundation for those who are lost; and a biblical example for being found and welcomed back into the fold.

Relevance addresses the need for the black church to be relevant to the culture and generation of today. This specifically pertains to the black church addressing, being a part of the conversation, and working towards possible solutions in regards to issues that currently affect the generation of today. These issues range from police brutality, the school-to-prison pipeline, food deserts, genderism in the church, the new civil rights movement, just to name a few.

A church (institution) that is seen as silent from the pulpit or in the community about such matters as these and more, may potentially be viewed as irrelevant and out of date. I can recall my husband and I had endured the news of another shooting and killing of an unarmed black man. I believe it was Philando Castile. We were angry. We were hurt. We were exhausted. In preparation for that Sunday, we collectively pondered, "Where do we go to church?" Our hearts hurt. We wanted to be comforted, consoled, and encouraged. We wanted to be in a place where there was unity, allegiance, and solidarity felt. I wanted to hear what God had to say about these continued realities in our community. I wanted to go someplace where the situation would be addressed, more than just acknowledged. We felt we could not go to a white church, and have the hope that any of these matters would in some way be adequately addressed; and we struggled to think of a black church that we knew that would adequately give voice to any of our feelings. We ended up in the small AME church in Kent. Unfortunately, it was only briefly and barely mentioned, and service proceeded on with her "normal program". I recall feeling disappointed; yet I was not surprised.

Lastly, evolution addresses the need for the black church to continue to grow, change, evolve, or else, die. Evolution challenges us to continue to think forward, move forward, and resist becoming stuck and stagnant. This relates to our way of thinking, doing, and relating. The world around us is ever evolving. The culture is continuing to evolve. Technology is continuing to grow, and the black church must continue as well, otherwise, it will risk the reality of extinction.

Evolution of the church suggests that she must envelope a younger generation into the heart of the church; allowing them to bring their ideas, leadership, and needs to the table so that the church can embrace them and their creativity. This has been a personal observation of mine as I have visited a variety of black churches in the last several years, most of them are stagnant at best or declining numerically at worst. I see churches that are stuck in the past and have not evolved in a myriad of ways. The churches often times lack an evolution in their vision, in their preaching, their approach to ministry and community, their approach to the next generation, etc. Church is done and feels the same way as it did twenty, thirty and forty years ago. This has been a consistent personal finding of mine and it is supported in the research as to why that creates an issue.

I went into this project with a certain set of thoughts about why Black Millennials go to church and why some are either turned off, or do not go to certain types of churches. As a result of my research, some of my inclinations were correct, but there was so much more that I learned. I initially viewed the challenge with Black Millennial church attendance as a result of an older generation not passing a baton to a younger generation; and/or a younger generation not being groomed for leadership within the church by an older generation. Or, churches rooted in traditionalism and the ways/methods of the past. These two assumptions connect to the themes of evolution, relevance, and inclusion. What the research opened my eyes to was the connections to the historical link to the black church and youth; and how that historically speaks to a

lack of value that has been placed on our youth over time. As well, the reality that the black church has not always progressed well with the change of times; whether that is in regards to ideology, technology, or methodology. As such, the church is left behind while there is another generation growing up in the midst of all these matters culturally. In addition, I learned that historically the focus of the black church has been Pastor and sermon centered; which often times places the focus of youth on the back burner, to be passed off to someone else and approached as an afterthought. Not only does this speak to a weaker foundation that may have been laid, it also may result in an ideological impression made in the hearts and minds of a younger generation of the value that they had within the church. With the focus of a generation of youth being more secondary or tertiary, a generation of youth may have felt the impact of not being valued well and question their own involvement in the black church as they grow into adult years.

Context

The context for my project is couched in the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio. This is a student organization with 50 members on its email list currently. I chose this context because when I began this process, I lived in the community of this University. I was attending a black AME church and I was trying to understand why students from this University did not go to church in the community. Additionally, at the start of this project my husband was a campus minister at the University, working with student athletes. We had meaningful ties and connections to the

community, and student population. The large State University in Northeastern Ohio has over 30,000 students enrolled in the main campus when school is in session; yet the churches in the community do not have a thriving college ministry. This fact was striking to me and raised the question, where do the college students go, and why do so many of them not go to church in the community. This context was relevant to my life and family's context of ministry at the time of the start of my project.

Project Goals

The purpose of my project is to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not.

1. To evaluate the secondary literature on the subject matter.

2. To discover why the Black Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not.

3. To evaluate the study.

Design, Procedure, and Assessment

This project seeks to discover why some Black Millennials go to church and why some do not. This was a discovery project and the context of the research was the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio. In order to address goal #1 of my project, I first started viewing bibliographies of other projects similar to mine. I documented those sources and began to review them for myself. I also did searches through

Amazon looking for books that have been written about Black Millennials and the black church. Lastly, I made several trips to various seminary libraries in my surrounding community to research scholarly articles, journal entries, and commentaries related to my subject and biblical passage. I did research at both Howard Divinity's library and Wesley Theological Seminary's library.

Further, to address goal #2, I began reviewing any surveys that had been developed for projects of similar nature to my own. After finding one, I reviewed it and adapted that survey in such a way that made sense for my project, objectives, and context.

Lastly, to address goal #3, I collected the data from the surveys that had been taken through Survey Monkey. I evaluated all the data analyzing the results and organizing the data into tables and charts that help to summarize the results.

Personal Goals

This project is meaningful because I have worked with this generation for much of my life. I have invested in them my entire professional career and I deeply care about them and the church as a whole. From my personal experience as a young adult, I have had many seasons of searching for a "new church." I have experienced a shift in the church and those who fill the pews. I have seen the pattern of churches that once were thriving with a youth and young adult population now no longer; while the older saints of the church are still remaining.

This has caused me to question, "Where are our young people?"; "Why are they going to this church, but not that church?"; "Are we training up another generation?", etc. This topic is dear to me because I wholeheartedly believe we must address it if we want to see the black church remain and thrive. We must continue reaching a younger generation so that there is a baton to be passed to for the future generation. My personal goals are:

1.   To better understand the culture and needs of Black Millennials in order to be a more effective pastor to them.

2.   To become a better consultant to assist the black church to meet the needs of Black Millennials.

Plan of the Paper

This chapter has given an overview of the need and driving motivation behind this research and work. The following chapters will include biblical, historical, and theological foundations (Chapter Two); a review of contemporary literature (Chapter Three); a detailed description of the method, procedures, and design of the project (Chapter Four); and results (Chapter Five). A final chapter will reflect on the findings as it applies to ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Chapter Two provides the biblical, historical and theological foundation for my project which is to discover why the Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Association and the Gospel Choir at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio do and do not go to church. The Biblical Foundation section will set the biblical framework for this project. The passage that grounds this research and project is Luke 15:1-7, the parable of the Lost Sheep. The parable is expounded upon and connected to the lostness of the Black Millennial generation. Not only does the parable set our framework, it also helps determine our path towards helping Black Millennials be found.

Chapter Two explores traditional commentaries such as The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke, Luke an Introduction and Commentary, The Good News According to Luke, The Gospel of Luke: a commentary on the Greek text, and the New Interpreter's Bible Commentary in Twelve Volumes. The non-traditional commentaries that have informed this work are True to Our Native Land, the Women's Bible Commentary, and the South Asia Bible Commentary: A One Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible. The Theological Foundation section addresses a theology of Black Liberation as its foundation. Within this context, a framework for Black Liberation theology is outlined and is critical and connected to the liberation of a marginalized group of color, in this case, Black Millennials.

It is this framework that helps to give construct to how Black Millennials can be better served, engaged, and ministered to within the Black Church. Lastly, the Historical Foundation section gives an historical overview of the Black Church and youth. This section provided the framework for how the Black Church has operated in the past in regards to youth and how that has shaped the present.

Biblical Foundation

My project is grounded in the passage of Luke 15: 1-7. Historically, the tradition has attributed the author of the Gospel of Luke, as Luke, who is also attributed with writing the book of Acts. The Gospel is believed to have been written in the early sixties of the first century (Wilcock 1979, 15). Through study we are able to conclude that Luke was a doctor, an evangelist, and a travel companion of Paul's (Wilcock 1979, 16). History tells us that Luke was not a Jew, but a Gentile. Wilcock argues that "his Greek name might indicate this, although Greek names might be borne by Jews (by Andrew and Philip for example, among the twelve apostles, rubbing shoulders with two Jacobs, two Simeons, two Judahs, and a Levi!). His command of the Greek language was excellent; although that also might have been true of many an educated Jew" (Wilcock 1979, 16). Many scholars heavily consider the Colossians 4 passage as an indicator of Luke's Gentile heritage. Although this conclusion is not agreed upon by all, "what cannot be denied is that this Gospel is thoroughly Gentile in its spirit and outlook" (Wilcock 1979, 16). It is said that one of the aspects of the Gospel of Luke's Gentile outlook is its humanity. The Gospel of Luke centers

around a perspective of what some may call universalism. This simply means Luke embodies a message that communicates there is no kind of person the gospel cannot reach; nor boundary it cannot cross.

> Luke is saying not that everyone will be saved, but anyone can be saved, and his view corresponds to Paul's vision of the final abolishing of barriers: in the Christian church 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. This is one respect in which the gospel is for all. (Wilcock 1979, 17)

Part of the uniqueness of Luke's Gospel is the way he embodies the message of salvation and healing being available for all. Luke communicates a gospel message that has a focus on the least, the last, and the lost; not excluding those who may be ostracized, but we find them highlighted in a special way in Luke's Gospel.

Luke 15:1-7, the parable of the Lost Sheep, was the central passage for this project. The entire 15th chapter of Luke is the stringing together of three "lost" parables. There is the Parable of the Lost Sheep; the Parable of the Lost Coin; and the Parable of the Lost Son. Morris, who offers a traditional perspective notes, "this is one of the best-known and best-loved chapters in the whole Bible. Three parables bring out the joy of God when the lost sinner is found. The fact that the first two depict people who actively seek what is lost may well put emphasis on the truth that God does not wait passively for sinners to come to him, but actively seeks them out" (Morris 1988, 255). The joy of God and heart to rejoice over those who once were lost is undeniable. "The book of Luke is noted for prominent themes of "Jesus' ministry to the outcasts, the religiously unfit, the poor and women; this emphasis paves the wave for his

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treatment of the Gentile mission in volume two, the book of Acts" (Keener 1993,

220). Our parable that Jesus tells of a sheep becoming lost from the flock and

the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine to find the one is a powerful illustration of

the love the father has for his children. Marshall brings a traditional view of the

cluster of three parables found in chapter 15 by stating:

> There can be no doubt that chapter 15 forms one self-contained and
> artistically constructed unit with a single theme. The theme is announced
> at the outset: Jesus is criticized for welcoming sinners and having
> fellowship with them, and he gives parabolic teaching to justify his attitude.
> The introduction (15:1–3) is followed by two short, similarly constructed
> parables (15:4–7, 8–10) and one longer parable (15:11–32) which all
> make the same point: the joy which is experienced by a person who
> recovers what he has lost. The applications of the first two parables make
> it quite explicit that such joy is a reflection of the joy felt by God when he
> recovers what he has lost (cf. E. Rasco*). (Marshall 1978, 597)

Marshall links the connection of these three parables to a response of Jesus

demonstrating his communication of his attitude to the criticism he was receiving.

What becomes quite obvious and clear through the examination of this cluster of

parables is that he has a deep love for the outcasts of society and the poor.

Marshall illuminates this posture of Jesus by stating, "The section has obvious

thematic links with the surrounding material. The thoughts of God's love,

demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus, for the outcasts of society and the poor

has been a frequent topic in the Gospel already, and came to expression in

14:15-24" (Marshall 1978, 597). This parable is critical for consideration in light

of this project because we connect Black Millennials to this parable as the lost

sheep. The shepherd in the parable is representative of Pastors. It is important

to consider how the shepherd loves and welcomes back the lost sheep of this

generation, being Black Millennials. The shepherd of the parable embodies love,

grace, and intentionality. This is a model for each Christ follower and especially each Pastor who will be looked to engage and welcome back those who have gone astray.

As well, not only is a profound love demonstrated, but an attentiveness to one who goes astray, and the significance that can be found in a community and the return to a community. This Lukan passage shows us the immense joy in finding that which was lost or estranged. This parable of the lost sheep is clustered with two other parables of things being lost and then found. This allows for the themes of joy and celebration to be all the more apparent. Schweizer provides a traditional view of the parable of the Lost Sheep and argues that the message of joy is the point of the lost sheep narrative (Schweizer 1984, 243).

While I can understand the theme of joy as paramount to this narrative, I do not find it to be the exclusive point. While Schweizer's perspective highlights the focal point as joy, Allen raises a different focal perspective, suggesting that Luke approaches salvation from a broad understanding of the Christ/church event, and salvation is shaped by a view of history (Allen 2009, 332). Allen writes, "for Luke, salvation is reversal of the status quo. Thus, salvation is social, not simply spiritual. It is less something that happens to an individual and more the overturning of social structures that keep some downtrodden while others lead a life of privilege and advantage" (Allen 2009, 332- 333).

There is great distinction between these two analyses. Schweizer simply highlights the reality of deep joy being found and realized. This is communicated as the main message of the parable. Allen contrarily highlights a much deeper

notion, that true restoration happens when oppressive systems are dismantled. Schweizer brings an awareness of the theme of joy; yet Allen brings a correlation to the reader of the social implications of salvation; that is when true forgiveness and restoration happens, those who are lost, become found, and they are returned to the community.

I believe that in part, what this interpretation gives us is great reason to rejoice and have JOY! I cannot help but to see the dire importance placed on even one person among an entire group. The Shepherd finds value in the one among a large flock. I do not believe the importance in going after the one can be negated. While the story of the Lost Sheep is one of three lost and found stories, these three parables tell us that in the "divine economy the repentance of sinners is grounds for celebration" (Green 1997, 569).

Furthermore, these parables give us theological insight into God's disposition. God demonstrates His deep care, concern, and love for those who have strayed away, even if just one. God shows us his attention to detail to notice the one who has left the flock and His great love is demonstrated by his willingness to leave the ninety-nine and go after one. God's disposition shows us that not only is His love far reaching; but there is great joy that accompanies the return of the lost. This perspective is quite important in the examination of those, particularly Black Millennials who are not a part of the flock. Green draws an interesting interpretive perspective when he suggests that one may be able to understand this parable as an echoing of Ezekiel 34 (Green 1997, 574). This interpretive perspective suggests because of the unfaithfulness of Israel's

leaders to those whom they had been given charge to, it was YHWH himself who would seek out the sheep, rescue them, and care for them (Green 1997, 574-575). This analysis challenges one to consider the role of the church/ leaders in their investment into our millennial generation.

How have our Shepherds and leaders worked to address and meet the needs of an upcoming generation? Have the leaders in the body of Christ been mindful of this part of the flock? We must faithfully seek to reach and minister to those at each stage of life and maturation. The Ezekiel passage that Green references is a challenge to the leaders of Israel in that regard. In the same way, it would be fruitful for us to consider how we are ministering to the Black Millennials within our congregation and community, or do we find they are being left out and overlooked.

Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder contributes a non-traditional, African-American perspective to the exploration into the Lost and Founds parables that is helpful. We are reminded through Crowder's exploration that "God even goes to the dry, deserted places to redeem one human being" (Crowder 2007, 174). The wilderness is often a place of physical isolation and spiritual maturation (Crowder 2007, 175). Our straying is never out of the reach of God's hand. Crowder's insights help give purpose to our journey through difficult times and desert land. One may draw from her explanation that although we may stray and wander, we are never out of the reach of God and His grasp for us. This too is good and assuring news for those who may not find themselves in the care of the church or in search of God outside of the local assembly. Moreover, as we draw a parallel

between the sheep that was lost and the shepherd that went in search for it to that of Black Millennials engagement with faith and the Black Church, Crowder's interpretation is poignant to embrace because this speaks to the Shepherds heart and actions to reach those who have gone astray and/or are lost. The interpretative posture allows us to draw encouragement that even for our Black Millennials who may not be a part of the flock of the Black Church, they are not too far gone or away from the hand and touch of the Father.

There is another consideration to address within our Lukan passage, and that is the sheep's return to the community. Not only is there great importance to the Shepherd for one sheep, there is also great importance in the return of that one sheep. The Shepherd which is an illustration of Jesus, who is our true Shepherd, leave the flock for the one sheep and return the sheep back to the community or flock. This is a picture of what is availed to us, those who become lost. There is a returning to our community, that which have either strayed from or become lost from. The model becomes, those who were once lost and separated from the flock or community for one reason or another, do not remain ostracized, but they are welcomed back, and the family rejoices upon their return.

Allen writes, "For Luke, it signified forgiveness of sins, a reversal of social systems of exclusion and inclusion, a finding of the lost in which the lost are brought back into community" (Allen 2009, 332). The returning to the community is a sign of forgiveness, inclusion, and salvation. The same can be attributed to the way we handle and work with our Black Millennials who have become lost from the community of the Black Church. Not only are we attentive enough and

mindful enough to go after them, recognize their "lostness", assess their need, but do we welcome them back to the community with joy and celebration. I believe this is a critical consideration that the Black Church must ponder, and particularly as it relates to the Black Millennials found in their local assemblies.

Has a generation of young people been welcomed back into the bosom of the church? As well, is there a community to welcome them back to or is the "community" made up of a flock of individuals who are entirely of a different generation? In the Luke 15 passage, we not only find prevalent themes of joy, but a strong message of belonging and attentiveness for those who have been marginalized, lost, or gone astray and have returned. This picture of salvation is the reversal quo making salvation more than spiritual, but social too. It is the beautiful picture that there is a place for you to belong within the community. There is a place for you to be welcomed, accepted, and loved as you are being restored. There is a powerful illustration of the attentive eye of the Lord to notice even one who has gone astray. The church needs to look within, do an inventory check, and an analysis of its own culture to assess whether or not they welcome those who have been overlooked and marginalized back in with openness, love, and joy.

Theological Foundation

My project is grounded in Black Liberation Theology. Black theology is Christian theology because it centers on Jesus Christ (Cone 2010, 5). Black theology arises from the need of blacks to liberate themselves from white

oppressors; and is a theology of liberation because it arises from an identification with the oppressed blacks of America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in light of the black condition (Cone 2010, 5). James Cone tells us that there are six sources of black theology: Black Experience, Black History, Black Culture, Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition (Cone 2010, 24-34). "There can be no black theology which does not take seriously the black experience-a life of humiliation and suffering" (Cone 2010, 24). Black theology is deeply tied to the black experience because our theology is developed out of our experiences. Black theology is shaped as a result of the black experience.

Our blackness shapes our experiences, and our experiences shape our theology. Consequently, the black experience shapes our identity. Our identity then impacts the way we view the world, God, and others. Cone tells us, "being black is a beautiful experience. It is the sane way of living in an insane environment. Whites do not understand it; they can only catch glimpses of it in sociological reports and historical studies. The black experience is possible only for black persons" (Cone 2010, 26). This mode of theological thought is pertinent to my project because it is for the black Millennial who has been left out, forgotten, and not valued.

A theology of Black Liberation seeks to address the needs of Black Millennials and to affirm for us how the Christian faith addresses our current plight and gives hope for the future. This source will be important to examine in further detail as it relates to the journey of the black millennial.

A theology of Black Liberation acknowledges this group as valuable, important, and necessary. For centuries, African American people have been overlooked and ignored. Their identity has been dismantled and attempted to be invalidated and erased. While that is part of history, it also is a part of our now story. White Christianity still chooses to ignore blacks as a people and the specific needs that are present for our community. We must be responsible for our own needs being met and our own liberation being lived out. What is being done to proactively reach the next generation, the Millennial age group, let alone our Black Millennials. If we are not intentional about our outreach and ministry towards them, we cannot wait or expect anyone else to do the work. We must care for our people enough to go after them in the sharing and proclaiming of the Gospel of Jesus, the discipleship, and in the empowering of them to do the same. A theology of Black Liberation allows us to address these needs and affirms how the Christian faith is relevant to these matters.

Moreover, Cone writes, "It is therefore the task of black theology to make theology relevant to the black reality, asking, "What does Jesus Christ mean for the oppressed blacks of the land?" (Cone 1990, 116). I think this question that Cone poses is pertinent to this project and discussion of Black Millennials and the Black Church. I believe we can ascertain that within the culture of the Black Church, the group of individuals, Black Millennials, have been a specific group that has been left out, marginalized, and/or overlooked. They have not been fully valued for who and what they are and offer, nor have they always been included at the table. To view this group in this light, within the context of the Black

Church, one can say they have been oppressed. Oppression in this sense is referring to the marginalization of Black Millennials within the specific context of the Black Church and Christian life. I believe it can be deduced that as a result of a lack of value to their voice, opinions, cares, or cultural norms, often times Black Millennials have been overlooked and dismissed. The Black Church has become less and less relevant to our Black Millennials, failing to speak their language or appropriately connecting faith and life to the current realities of their life and culture.

In this context, I am suggesting that this is a form of oppression. Given that, what does Jesus Christ mean to the Black Millennials of the land? As well, what does the Black Church mean to Black Millennials? It is in this question that our conversation abounds of a Black Liberation theology in the context of Black Millennials and the Black Church. Does our Millennial generation find a need for a Jesus? What relevance does Jesus have to them? What relevance is the Black Church to Black Millennials? Bolden shares in the BLAC Detroit Magazine, "The church, prior to millennials, got so caught up in wealth and prosperity and success and all these wonderful things, that we stopped telling the story of the significance of the black church in history. I believe we live in a time where the black church has to recapture its role in society" (Bolden, 2018). Boldens' reflections suggest that there became a season in the life of the Black Church that she failed to fully show up and perhaps got distracted by matters uncentered from the Gospel of Jesus. In doing so, the generation coming behind (i.e.

Millennials) lost the impartation of a piece of the history of the Black Church, its significance, and its larger role within the community.

Furthermore, we have a generation that is communicating to the church and its elders that they are craving relationships. A Millennial generation is looking for their faith and Jesus in the midst of growing deeper in relationships. Makesha Jones, a Black Millennial in her 20's shares,

> in almost all cases, the Black Church has seemed anomalous, drifting further from its intended purpose- connecting people to something greater than themselves. Coming from a Pentecostal background, I was never a fan of traditions. People my age and going into a little younger, we were on the cusp of the information age. We're more of the "why" generation: Why do we do it this way? What does that mean for me? It's not that I don't believe in God, but the religion kind of gets in the way, the legalism gets in the way more than anything else. (Jones, 2018)

It is a theology of liberation that not only gives us a perspective and mindset to understand our Black Millennial, but it also pushes us to understand and move towards solutions to meet their needs. It should be the goal of the Black Church to liberate those who are oppressed and to understand the system that is oppressing or marginalizing a people or group; and seeking the Jesus who is the true and ultimate deliverer to deliver. I believe if we turn our ear to this generation, we will hear how and why they feel marginalized, oppressed, and /or on the outskirts. Then in turn we can turn our responsibility to seeking and being the solution for the matters that are affecting our people. Black liberation theology is relevant to this conversation. It gives us a framework to be able to approach the challenge some Black Churches are facing with the lack of engagement of Black Millennials. A theology of liberation can help the church

gain an understanding where Black Millennials may be under an oppressive

situation; and how the Black Church may be contributors to that, or contrarily, this

lens can also shine light where the Black Church is supporting and nurturing the

Black Millennial well.

Some Black Millennials are considering two questions: What is the

relevance of Jesus? What is the relevance of the Black Church? Given the

many questions this generation asks, it is not foreign for a generation of young

people to question the need or relevance of God, Jesus, or the Church. Many

Millennials find more identity in an obtuse spirituality, rather than faith that has

been grounded for centuries. For some, the Black Church has lost its relevance

within the black community and as a result, the argument can be made that there

is no need for a Jesus to our world or situation. What is His relevance?

Secondly, the Millennial generation and the one that follows, Generation Z

are more and more a part of an individualistic and you must 'prove it for me to

believe it' generation, that the belief can often linger on the side of 'what need do

I have for that? I can do it myself'. Besheer Mohamed, a PEW senior

researcher, said "African American young adults stand out from others in their

age group as well as their racial group. Black millennials are sort of at the

intersection of two broad patterns of American religiosity. Black millennials on

average are more religious and also more spiritual than other millennials and less

religious and less spiritual than other blacks" (Mohamed, 2018). Banks of the

Washington Post continues by saying, "While fewer than 4 in 10 African

American millennials say they attend services weekly, far more- 61 percent say

religion is very important to them. Six in 10 of them also say they pray daily and "feel spiritual peace and well-being at least weekly. More than a third meditate at least once a week" (Banks, 2018). The relevance of this article viewed through the lens of a theology of black liberation is immense. It is not that they do not need or want, or even see, the need for a higher being, being present within their lives. What Banks raises is the interpretation of their spirituality. While Black Millennials may not be "going to church" as much, they are still practicing a spirituality or relationship with a god. For the Black Millennial who has been left behind or overlooked, it is the church's responsibility to see the disconnect and that in turn becomes the place of liberation.

Teddy Reeves, an ordained minister in the Progressive National Baptist says, "Some disengagement may come from frustrations that traditional Black Churches are not sufficiently addressing justice issues that are a priority for many of these young adults- LGBTQ rights, violence in urban African American communities, and inclusion of women's ordination and leadership" (Reeves, 2018). A black theology that liberates the Black Millennials is one that first has liberated the Black Church from her pasts, traditions, and an old mindset of "that's how it's always been done". A black theology that liberates Black Millennials is one that can read the times and respond to them in such a way that allows the voice of the Church to flow, yet express its self in a manner that does not exclude a generation, rather it includes them.

There are six sources that Cone discusses are the formative factors and the criterion that give shape to what we know as Black Theology. Let us explore each of these.

Black Experience

There is no Black Theology without the true consideration of the black experience. The black experience has been one that is filled with humiliation and suffering. "This means that black theology realizes that it is human beings who speak of God, and when those human beings are black, they speak of God only in light of the black experience. It is not that black theology denies the importance of God's revelation in Christ, but blacks want to know what Jesus Christ means when they are confronted with the brutality of white racism" (Cone 2010, 24-25). It is Black Theology that welcomes the exploration of our human experience and the intersection of faith. It is this view that not only gives space, but validates the examination of what does my faith and my God have to say about the treatment of black people, the systematic racism of our society, or the experience of my race? The understanding and exploration of our black experience is critical to the adaptation of a Black Theology. It is Black Theology that helps me make sense of the past and current plights and struggles that affect black people. It is a Black Theology that liberates and allows one to make sense of and find hope in the midst of countless senseless killings of unarmed black men by white police officers. It is a Black Theology of liberation that allows me to apply my Christian faith to a legalized system that profits off of the mass

incarceration system that locks up black and brown men and women at disproportionate rates. It is a Black Theology of liberation that allows me to find a glimmer of hope within this world that allows little brown children to suffer and be separated from their families as they seek safety by crossing our borders.

Black History

"Black history refers to the way blacks were brought to this land and the way they have been treated in this land" (Cone, 2010, 27). Black history is not only knowing and understanding what whites did to blacks; it is also about black persons saying no to every act of white brutality. The inclusion of black history as a source of black theology is imperative for our lens of looking at and understanding God- it is evaluated through our history, our past. To carry our history with us as black people and view it through a lens of theology and liberation allows us to grow from our past in an effort to not repeat it, but learn and grown from it.

Black Culture

Black culture is closely tied to black history and the black experience. While black history can be thought of as the record of joy and pain; and black experience as "black soul", the pain and joy of reacting to whiteness and affirming blackness (Cone, 2010, 28). "Black culture consists of creative forms of expression as one reflects on history, endures pain, and experiences joy" (Cone, 2010, 28). It is the voice that comes through from the people in many different

forms. The cultural expression sounds like music, poetry, prose, and other art forms. When the church listens to the cultural expression emanating from the black community, they will then be able to hear the heart and need of the community. This will allow for the application of our (black) theology to be appropriately applied to the needs of our community and to speak relevantly to the black condition.

Revelation

Cone tells us, "For black theology, revelation is not just a past event or a contemporary event in which it is difficult to recognize the activity of God. Revelation is a black event-it is what blacks are doing about their liberation" (Cone, 2010, 31). For revelation to be a black event, it pushes us to consider the question, what is God's revelation right now as the black community participates in the struggle for liberation? We are always looking at our situations both past and present and asking where is God? What is God showing us? What is God saying about this? What is God calling us to do? How is God calling us to respond? This is revelation as a black event.

Scripture

"Black theology is biblical theology. There can be no theology of the Christian gospel which does not consider the biblical witness. It is true that the bible is not the revelation of God; only Jesus. But it is an indispensable witness to God's revelation and is thus a primary source for Christian thinking about God"

(Cone, 2010, 32). It is the Holy Scriptures that give us the foundation on which we stand for a Black Liberation Theology. It is the model that we follow for God's heart for justice, truth, and freedom. It is the accounts through the Word of God that we know that we are free, God's desire for freedom, and by which we know and find our value.

Tradition

Cone tells us that "tradition refers to the theological reflection of the church upon the nature of Christianity from the time of the early church to the present day" (Cone, 2010, 34). The source of tradition allows us to consider and evaluate the intersections of black Christianity, the Gospel of Jesus, and white western Christianity. These six sources that have been fleshed out are all relevant and directly interconnected to the black experience.

Our experiences as Christians who are African- American directly influences the way one hears the Scriptures, engages the Scriptures, acts upon the Scriptures, understands Jesus, and His mission. Our identity, culture, tradition, revelation, history, and biblical understanding are foundational to the person and soul of an individual. Black Millennials are impacted by all these influences too. It goes without saying that the millennial generation is one that has and does experience culture differently because of the culture they have naturally grown up in. While the culture of the world has changed, our church culture has not always evolved in a way that would continue to be relevant and meet the needs of an upcoming generation of young people. While some black

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millennials have an understanding of their identity, culture, and heritage, many do not, for they did not have to grow up in the same struggles and plights of our forefathers. Those who have taken on the struggle and made the fight their own are doing so in a way that demonstrates a new era of social justice and civil rights. Examples of some of the issues this Millennial generation are taking on are: the school to prison pipeline, the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people, the for-profit prison industry, the continued police brutality in the African American community, systemic racism, and income inequality, just to name a few. It can be seen that a generation is missing from the church, perhaps because the churches are missing the cultural shift that has happened within a new generation. As well, perhaps we have not continued in the education of a new generation about who we are, where we come from, who brought us over, and why that is important.

Historical Foundation

My project is set in the history of the evolution of the role of youth in the Black Church. It goes without saying that youth have played a significant role in the Black Church over the centuries. A church without a younger generation is soon to be a dead church. The Black Church has a rich and beautiful history as a prominent institution within the black family. The black family and the Black Church have been considered "enduring institutions" in black communities. As a result of that, there has always existed a historical tradition of special caring for young children (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 310).

The African-American family is one that has endured strain and stress. Due to the existence of slavery and the continual racial oppression thereafter, young children have been put into precarious positions. Lincoln and Mamiya write, "since young children were often taken away from their mothers and sold as slaves, an informal system of adoption for children and a system of 'fictive kinship' were developed among black extended families" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 311). The only communal institution in most black urban and rural communities was that of the Black Church. It was intimately involved in the complex network of black extended families (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 311). The writers are telling us that in a very special way, the Black Church could be found as the epicenter of family life for the black family.

Not only would it be at the center, it would be a central support system for families, and especially children. Families were the cornerstone for black churches and the church was the glue for families and the community.

> Parents often times brought their children to church, sometimes even forcing them to go, because they deeply believed that the church would provide a dose of moral education for the children and open up the spiritual dimensions of their lives. Churches also provided Sunday school for children and adults, and for many black people for a long period of time the church was the place where they first began to learn rudimentary reading skills." (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 312)

The nature of the Black family and the role of the Black Church cannot be understood properly without the recognition of the historical context in which the black family has been birthed. Hill writes:

> To fully understand the relationship between church and family, one simply needs to probe the historical experience of African American family life. The black family in America has never been the prototypical model

based on Eurocentric standards. Since slavery the black family has taken on many forms. More often than not the black family has been characterized by relationships built on trust and interdependency and not necessarily on the commonly idealistic nuclear family unit of two heterosexual parents with children. On the contrary, black families have been defined by, and have lived by, the basis of their functionality. (Hill 2007, 3)

Hill is reflecting some distinct differences that are found among the African American family versus a European family much due to the historical context the African American family birthed from. As a result of the battles and realities of slavery, the nucleus make-up of the African American family is not solely based off of the heterosexual parents. Often the nucleus of the family is grandparents, aunts and uncles. This set up for others would be considered an extension. This understanding is important because in order for the church to be relevant, remain relevant and do effective ministry, it first must be clear on who it is serving. The Black Church must understand the makeup of the family in order to execute her mission with excellence to her body. From the beginning, the Black Church has operated quite differently than the Eurocentric model. The church must remain anchored in being a solid voice and presence for the black community. "The church is more than a social institution, but divinely inspired and directed, dictates the need for a sound theological position regarding the nature and mission of the church. Ministry to black families must be located in a theological framework that reflects the Christian gospel" (Hill 2007, 3).

While the Black Church has been a cornerstone within the black family and for the black community, one must examine the role of youth within the Black Church. Youth were often involved in the life of the black church through the

Children's choir, Sunday school, "Children's Day"/ "junior church", etc. Additionally, the church served as a place for young people to meet older adults who could serve as role models for them. This was a valuable asset to our community. There is great power in children seeing adults "living the life they speak about" and observing, evaluating, and emulating behaviors and values of others. While much of a church service was oriented towards adults, these few areas provided valuable outlets for young people to grow and experience the God they heard about in their homes.

While there have been a few outlets traditionally for young people in our churches, we have continued to see young adults leave the church. Lincoln and Mamiya write, "If any age group tends to be missing in many black churches, it is likely to be the young adult group (ages seventeen to thirty-five)" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 325). Because it is customary in our Black Churches that the focal point of the church and the Pastors' effort/attention is invested in the sermon, the attention towards the young people of the church has been neglected.

> Nevertheless, a major problem for many contemporary black churches is the disproportionate focus on their programs and efforts on adults. Black youth, especially young children, became a kind of afterthought in the church's schedule of significant ministry. While Sunday Schools continue as a traditional part of the typical black church, many perform functions more akin to babysitting than education and socialization. Too many pastors do not concern themselves with this aspect of ministry, but tend to delegate the religious education of their youth to someone else. For the vast majority of black pastors, preaching was still seen as their major task. (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 316)

This analysis from Lincoln and Mamiya is very insightful. Their perspective is critical to an understanding of why many of our congregations are missing young adults. It would also naturally be deduced that this has also directly impacted the commitment of Black Millennials of today. Why would Black Millennials be attending church today if they were overlooked in opportunities of investment, education, and discipleship as a child? Even though they may not be attending a church service, they still may be walking with the Lord. As that may be true, the church must be willing to examine the hard truth of its ownership in leaving a generation behind, and perhaps putting more energy in preaching a sermon than in raising up a new generation for Jesus Christ. Our history plays an integral part into the plight we face today. Because of the information we know about the history, this ought to inform our actions moving forward.

While the examination of the Black Church and black youth helps to lay a foundation for this analysis, it is pertinent to take a look at the Millennial group specifically, both African American Millennials and Millennials at-large. There has been much more written examining this topic broadly and less work looking at these shifts and trends through the sole lens of the African American community and the Black Church. David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, and author of unchristian and You Lost Me has done significant research engaging Millennials and the church from a research vantage point. It is unclear truly how diverse Kinnaman's research is; however, his research suggests that there are three major categories of people who leave the Church: nomads,

prodigals, and exiles (Kinnaman 2011, 25). Kinnaman writes, "We discovered in

our research that there are three broad ways of being lost:

- Nomads walk away from church engagement, but still consider themselves Christians.

- Prodigals lose their faith, describing themselves as "no longer Christian"

- Exiles are still invested in their Christian faith but feel stuck (or lost) between culture and the church." (Kinnaman 2011, 25)

You Lost Me, draws us to consider the cultural changes in our society and

how the church has adjusted, adapted, and pushed through these further

progressions. There is the challenge to examine how Christians are passing on

their faith to another generation. Whether we are specifically looking at the Black

Church, White Church, Latino Church or other, that assertion is fair no matter

what ethnic group we are considering. The reality is from generation to

generation our culture continues to change and evolve, but we must consider has

the Church, the Body of Christ done the same? The cultural norms of today are

certainly not the cultural norms of yesteryear, yet the vitality and relevancy of the

church is unable to speak into today, see into tomorrow, and speak into

tomorrow. We have a generation of who I believe either find the church out of

date or unsafe. The church either holds "old", "antiquated" ideologies or is

considered an unsafe place to bring doubts, questions, or oppositions.

Kinnaman goes on to share the discoveries of his research by sharing the six

major identified places of disconnection between the Millennial generation and

the church: Overprotective, Shallow, Anti-science, Repressive, Exclusive, and Doubtless.

Allow me to briefly summarize each of these. It is suggested that the church has a reputation for being overprotective. In this case that means it is a killer of creativity and the freedom for people to express themselves and pursue things that are imaginative and out of the box. Shallow is in reference to the common perception of the church being boring, inapplicable to life, and full of catchy slogans lacking gravity and power. Anti-science is the notion that faith and science are in opposition to one another. This generation sees a life application to science daily through medicine, personal technology, travel, and more. Repressive refers to the religious rules, especially sexual ones. Exclusive, is the claim that Christianity is the way, yet this culture has an openness, tolerance, and acceptance to perceived outsiders. Lastly, doubtless, is in reference to the church being an unsafe place to express doubts and admitting faith does not always makes sense. While these six categories are helpful, I do think they maybe culturally contextual to the majority culture, being white. I think one needs to consider each of these categories and the predominance of them among different culture and ethnic groups. I think that there is relevance to the African American community and the Black Church specifically when considering the listed categories of: shallow, repressive, exclusive, and doubtless.

I would like to present a perspective exclusively from the African American context and specifically related to the Black Church, as it relates to Black

Millennials. Frank Thomas writes in Introduction to the Practice of African

American Preaching that there are four tension points between the Black Church

and the new (civil rights) movement. Thomas writes:

> Even though black Millennials are still coming, there are serious tensions between the black church and the new movement Millennials. Heretofore the church has been the center of black American's struggle for civil rights. At the center of the black church has been traditional values, hierarchical male leadership, doctrinal opposition to the LGBTQ community, the politics of accommodation and respectability, and nonviolence and reconciliation. These traditional values are significant subjects that we must engage with real depth and honesty in order to find the truth. What is at stake in the church's response is if the black church is, or will ever be again, the main institution of black life and relevant to the needs and concerns of this new movement. (Thomas 2016, 144)

The "new movement" that Thomas is referring to is the re-emergence of the

mass social justice movement. Today, we recognize this as what is most

understood as Black Lives Matter, but is also joined with many other coalitions

and organizations such as, Dream Defenders, Coalition Against Police Violence,

Black Youth Project 100, Tribe X, and Lost Voices (Thomas 2016,137). Thomas

refers to the tension points as critical places that need examining if the Black

Church is going to remain relevant to today and today's generation. It can be

seen that Thomas' list is similar in some ways, yet drastically different in other

ways to Kinnaman's list. While Thomas' list is not suggestive of reasons for

Millennials leaving the church, he is suggesting that these are matters that need

to be addressed, a generation is looking for a voice/ the church to speak towards.

If the church is silent, the repercussions will be detrimental. Thomas' list

addresses the Black Church's ability and willingness to speak to matters of social

justice; as well as matters that are considered oppressive. Kinnaman's list does

not include anything justice related, other than perhaps what is considered the restrictiveness of the church's traditional stance on LGBTQ matters.

Given the resources that have been covered in this section, it suggests that there are several factors that can be attributed the current status of our youth within the Black Church. Not only must we consider the attention and efforts given to our youth as children from the church in their development, the Black church must also consider the changes in the culture over generations. As the culture has continued to evolve, society and its ways have evolved, so has our next generation evolved as they have been bathed, nurtured and normalized within this ever-evolving culture. Today's culture is completely dependent and immersed within technology, and so is our Millennial generation and the one coming behind them (Generation Z). I believe our resources suggest that the culture is playing a tremendous role in the way "church" is viewed and experienced. The question for consideration is, how well has the Black Church read the times, adapted to the times, and responded to the times?

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It was the purpose of this project to discover why some Black Millennials were going to church and why some were not. Data from PEW research found that Black Millennials (those born between 1981-1996) are "less religious than their elders and are leaving traditional religious spaces- yet still remaining the most spiritual among their U.S. peers" (Jordan, 2019). Besheer Mohamed, senior researcher at Pew research states:

> From our data, we know that young people tend to be less religious than older adults, by a variety of measures, whether you're looking at attendance of religious services or affiliation with a religion. But then, black Americans are more religious than other people of other races and black millennials or young blacks, more generally fall in between these two patterns and a lot of them feel a sort of conflict there. They don't quite line up with their peers and they don't quite line up with their elders. They're a distinctive community. (Mohamed 2019)

The research for this project has brought me into a wide scope of research which has included: Millennials, Black Millennials, Generation Z, the "churched", the "unchurched", the history of the Black Church, the approach to youth within the Black Church, and various theological approaches to our focal passage, Luke 15: 1-7. I have not found an overwhelming amount of research that specifically engages Black Millennials and their engagement in the black church. Much of the research around Millennials is done from an either exclusively or predominately white lens. As a result of this, I have had to use my own cultural experience and knowledge to interpret some of the research specifically through

a lens and approach that is reflective of the community I am seeking to understand more. Conclusive from my research I have found four dominate themes arise that address the question at hand, which is, why do some Black Millennials go to church and why do some not. The themes that rise to the surface from my research are: Inclusion, Value, Relevance, and Evolution. Throughout this Literature Review I will address how these dominant themes speak to the issue of Black Millennial engagement within the church.

Inclusion

The theme of inclusion has arisen as a prevalent theme throughout this research. A significant question that arises from multiple sources is how has this generation, the Millennial generation been included within the church, or are they more of an afterthought? Put another way, perhaps the church has not done a great job with including the Millennial generation within the church, and as a result it has pushed the Millennial generation away. Lincoln and Mamiya have written concisely in The Black Church in the African American Experience of the historical experiences of the Black Church and the engagement of youth. Lincoln and Mamiya write:

> Nevertheless, a major problem for many contemporary black churches is the disproportionate focus of their programs and efforts on adults. Black youth, especially young children, became a kind of afterthought in the church's schedule of significant ministry. While Sunday Schools continue as a traditional part of the typical black church, many perform functions more akin to babysitting than education and socialization. Too many black pastors do not concern themselves with this aspect of ministry, but tend to delegate the religious education of their youth to someone else. (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 316)

This excerpt strengthens the argument of inclusion as a theme and provides insights to experiences of our black youth. This information from Lincoln and Mamiya helps us understand how black youth have traditionally been excluded and that may very well be a shaping factor into their young adult years. This glimpse into the historical context and realities of the approach to our black youth by the Black Church, at large, helps paint a picture and give an understanding of how often times the Black Church has approached the discipleship of our youth. I believe this information allows us to understand that if the investment, particularly as it relates to the faith development/Christian education of our youth from an early age was a secondary focus, youth may grow into questioning the investment of the church into them. Why would a Black Millennial want to continue with that local body or the Black Church at large if she/he felt not fully included or embraced during their youth?

Additionally, as we explore the theme of inclusion, we must consider how the church has adapted to the change in cultural ideologies. James White, author of Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World writes, "In our world, increasing numbers of people lead their lives without any sense of needing to look to a higher power, to something outside of themselves. Leaders of science and commerce, education and politics- regardless of their personal views- do not tend to operate with any reference to a transcendent truth, much less a God" (White 2017, 20). White goes on to write,

> The heart of secularism is a functional atheism. Rather than rejecting the idea of God, our culture simply ignores him. Or as Cathy Lynn Grossman,

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the co-researcher of the famed 2008 American Religious Identification Survey documenting the rise of the nones, concluded, people today 'aren't [merely] secularized. They're not thinking about religion and rejecting it; they're not thinking about it at all. (White 2017, 20-21)

White is writing about one of the major shifts that is impacting our culture here in the West and this present generation. Faith, Christianity, is no longer at the forefront of our world or identity. It is no longer woven into the fabric of our families, ethos, communities, or values, by in-large. While there is still a presence of course, it is not what it used to be. We have a Generation Y (Millennials) and a Generation Z (those born approximately between 1995-2010) (White 2017, 38) who are a part of a generational upbringing that is not being taught about prayer, infused with the great stories of the Bible, sown into with the stories of faith passed down by their grandparents, or given a foundation of Jesus Christ. They are growing up with little to no knowledge, influence, or impartation of the faith. I believe the reality of change in our ideologies is because of the secularization of culture and world; that have led to barriers and canyons between the generations that are growing up in this culture as normative and the church. The church certainly lives and moves by (at least is supposed to) a different ethos and the message of the church is to be counter-cultural to that of the world. While the church is to have a message that is countercultural, it still must be relevant and in-tuned to those who are amongst the culture to have the aptitude to reach them for the cause of Jesus Christ.

The research of White certainly strengthens the assessment that inclusion is a critical place to focus and at the helm of understanding the canyon that

separates young people and the body of Christ. David Kinnaman, author of You

Lost Me, suggests that "We need architects to design interconnected approaches

to faith transference" (Kinnaman 2011,13). The church needs to innovatively

figure out how to bridge the gap between an older generation and a younger

generation as it relates to our method and mode of discipleship. Kinnaman

suggests:

> The story- the great struggle- of this emerging generation is learning how
> to live faithfully in a new context, to be in the world but not of the world.
> This phrase, "in but not of the world," comes from Jesus's prayer for his
> followers, recorded in John 17. For the next generation, the lines between
> right and wrong, between truth and error, between Christian influence and
> cultural accommodation are increasingly blurred. While these are
> certainly challenges for every generation, this cultural moment is at once a
> singular opportunity and a unique threat to the spiritual formation of
> tomorrow's church. Many young adults are living out the tension of in-but-
> not-of in ways that ought to be corrected or applauded, yet instead are
> often criticized or rejected. (Kinnaman 2011, 11-12)

Another subtheme that fits into the theme of inclusion is the examination

of those who have wandered or strayed away from the community, now being

welcomed back to the community. In other words, when a generation has

walked away, gotten lost or left behind and later come to themselves, are found

by the Shepherd, are they received back into the flock? Are they welcomed back

in with open arms and open hearts? Does the community rejoice in their return?

Does the Shepherd celebrate their return and recognize their "found-ness"? How

one is received when they return back to a place they once were a part of, but

have been gone for a time, could very well impact whether or not they stay

amongst that tribe of people. This notion of inclusion also speaks to how

individuals are included when they return from being "lost".

Our foundational biblical passage for this project is Luke 15: 1-7, the parable of the Lost Sheep. This passage connects the lost-ness of sheep, a part of a flock and a Shepherd who recognizes one is lost and goes after even one while leaving the ninety-nine. Our mission of research is understanding the "lost-ness" of a generation, and their return back to the flock. Our Luke passage shows us that there is a picture of not only being noticed when one has left and become "lost", but there is the embrace when he/or she returns. When one has left a community for whatever the reason is, there is a sense and reality of being disconnected. That disconnection can result in ostracism, classism, and isolation. When the Shepherd rescues me, one must observe and assess, am I welcomed back with gladness or with reservation? Allen suggests about this passage:

> That forgiveness of sins plays such an important role suggests that readers should not overemphasize the social nature of Luke's understanding of salvation to the point of excluding the individual, spiritual character of salvation. On the other hand, for Luke, forgiveness of sins is not without social implications. Sinners are forgiven and repentance is invited, so that that which is lost is found and returned to the community. (Allen 2009, 335)

Jesus welcomed those who are lost and those who are sinners back into the community, but do we, have we? I believe the church at times has exuded such a spiritual elitism that we have looked down upon others because of their past, their lost-ness, and their lost state. When they have come to themselves and are found in the Father's arms, we have not embraced them to be a part of the community; yet ostracized them due to their past, rather than celebrating their present. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons further support this notion as they

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offer suggestions and next steps to help the discipleship process of the church

for those who are Un-Christian. They write:

> I believe part of the reason Christians are known as un-Christian is because the church has lost its ability and willingness to love and accept people who are not part of the "insider" club. This failure is draining the vigor from our faith. We say we love outsiders, but in many cases we show love only if it is on our terms, if they are interested in coming to our church, or if they respect our way of life. (Kinnaman and Lyons 2007, 217)

Kinnaman and Lyons suggest that there is an exclusiveness about the Church

that turns outsiders off. There is a lack of flexibility to bend and meet people

where they are, and that inability to do so results in a generation of people who

may feel condemned or judged as an outsider or not good enough to enter in as

they are. The inability to be more flexible and engaging results in a division that

does not have to be so. This research from Kinnaman and Lyons further

supports and upholds the reality of inclusion within the church as a need and an

important indicator as to why the Black Millennial generation may not be

attending church.

Included in this category of inclusion is research that suggests the building

of genuine community is a critical strategy for the engagement of millennials.

Churches that intentionally find a way to help foster authentic community will in

turn speak to the millennial generation, helping to fulfill a need and speak the

language of that generation. The Lewis Center for Church Leadership shares an

excerpt from Joshua Mitchell's Black Millennials and the Church sharing five

strategies to effectively engage black Millennials. Mitchell's five strategies he

engages are: Genuine Community, Community Engagement, Evangelism and Promotion, Effective Christian Education, and The Word Still Works.

The first strategy Mitchell lists is genuine community. Mitchell states, "Millennials are a hyper-relationally driven generation. The importance of building genuine and loving communities cannot be overstated. In an age of Facebook facades and fickle friendships, it is refreshing for Millennials to find church communities where they are accepted and cared for" (Mitchell, 2018). It is implied that churches that are doing well attracting and serving the Millennial population are establishing inclusive environments that are developing and fostering a safe and authentic community for Millennials to be vulnerable, grow spiritually, and develop holistically. For a previous generation, this safe space may have been Wednesday night bible study; authentic community looks differently for this generation of young people. Authentic community could look like a small group meeting weekly; or a single mom's group of women who meet without their kids and study the bible, or a pickup game of basketball every Thursday night. Discipleship has a different face to it these days, yet with the same end goal in mind. Inclusion in the context of the Black Church and Black Millennials is one that is willing to go beyond what has been perceived as the norms and work to bring others into the family. A culture and atmosphere of inclusion embraces a willingness to do church differently, do outreach differently, do sermons differently do discipleship differently than how it's been done before because it demonstrates a care for the person more than a connection to a tradition. A spirit of inclusion values people over tradition. A church's openness

to invest in genuine and authentic community is a church that is open to embracing a generation where they are even if it breaks tradition.

Dr. Brianna Parker illuminates a similar point as Mitchell as she concludes the findings of her research in her work, What Google Can't Give: The Relevancy of the Church for Black Millennials in the Tech Age. Parker states, "Relationship with millennials can be built through an adjustment in pastoral care. We can begin to support the positive moments in millennials' lives. Being present in unexpected moments are a great step toward a healthy relationship. Building valuable relationships will mean valuing the essence of personhood and practice beyond agreement" (Parker 2018, 126). Parker is highlighting two main findings from her research, that being relationship and reach. From her research, this is the conclusion that Google cannot give and therefore is the key gateway to meaningful engagement with Black Millennials. This sense of relationship she is referencing speaks to a purposeful and open-minded inclusion of Black Millennials in such a way that fosters heartfelt connection, personal engagement and solidarity during life matters, and a genuine/authentic care for the individual rather than a tokenism. This type of inclusion with the Millennial generation allows for a relationship with the church that has an open two-way flow of both mentor and mentee with no regard to age (Parker 2018, 126).

Parker's second main takeaway engages with outreach. Parker states, "Black churches are complaining about the millennial generation, wondering why they will not acquiesce to the traditions both relevant and irrelevant and participate in the church in the ways that previous generations have been

involved" (Parker 2018, 127-128). Parker suggests that the focus of the Black

church is in the wrong place as they are upset about a generation that is pushing

back against traditions. Rather, she dreams of Church that embraces the

"possibility of accepting the unchurched as they are, extremely open, less

judgmental, marching to the beat of their own drums to add richness and texture

to the existing church as the basis of a successful future of Christianity" (Parker

2018, 128). She further says, "But it begins with understanding the basics of

Black millennials and hearing from Black millennial believers so that the

environment is primed for complex gifts, pains, and people who need to enter the

church as a place of restoration" (Parker 2018, 128). Parker illuminates the

theme of inclusion by pushing the Black Church to set aside a fight over

traditions, but to consider being a place of freedom, refugee, openness, and

restoration. In order to foster that type of community and space, the Church

must be open to having the unchurched amongst them, leaving their judgments

at home allowing a generation to truly, "come as you are".

Value

The next theme to address is value. The research for this project has

raised this theme in the midst of the changes and challenges of reaching this

young adult generation. Does the church truly value the Millennial generation?

Does the church see value in this generation? Parker offers great insight and

affirmation to the struggle the Black Church has had in adequately affirming and

valuing the Millennial generation as significant and valuable entities of the

church; rather than after thoughts. Parker writes, "To be honest, if the current

institutions cannot capture the attention of and develop millennial leadership-

finding voice and value within them-Black churches as we know them will expire"

(Parker 2018, 26).

Parker goes on to give the illustration of tokenism in the Black Church

toward young adults by saying:

> Unfortunately, while there are young adults in the pew, you rarely see a
> response to this call, strangely enough, even from young adults who were
> raised in church. It's not because they don't want to help but because
> they know tokenism when they see it. And with any of those who have
> given it a try, they know that serving does not inherently lead to the
> utilization of their gifts but most times busy work that will never end in a
> leadership position. And when they find themselves in a position of
> leadership, it is rare that they have authority and agency. (Parker 2018,
> 32-33)

Tokenism is a form of mis-valuing one. It is the attempt to use someone in a way

that would benefit one party for superficial reasons, but with no real care for the

individual being used. To treat someone as a token, however intentional or

unintentional, is nevertheless demonstrating a lack of value for that individual.

Parker's point illustrates the issue of placing the appropriate value on a

generation, rather she suggests churches attempt to utilize young adults for a

good "photo op". Consequently, this generation sees that and understands that

for what it is and declines the "photo opportunity". Parker's research would

suggest that part of what is contributing to a lack of Millennial engagement is a

misplaced value toward them, a sense of tokenism and that is recognized by this

generation and refused. This point strengthens my argument illustrating the

disconnect between the Black Church and the Black Millennial population. A lack

of value towards Millennials directly connects with a lack of Millennial engagement.

The strong theme of value that shows up through the research strengthens my assertion that we have a generation that has been left behind, forgotten, and overlooked and that has directly impacted our current Millennial engagement in the Black Church. We can deduce that the opposite of tokenism is authentic engagement. Moreover, Parker argues,

> If the Black Church is unable to reach millennials in a way that is both genuine and generous, it will cease to exist as it is currently known. Oprah's "The Life You Want" weekends and the likes of it will replace church conferences; "Super Soul Sundays" will replace Sunday worship; and reality show Christians will substitute the rights of passage in the Black church, which is commonly referred to as church drama." (Parker 2018, 35)

The Black church must value the Black Millennial in such a way that tokenism is replaced by authentic care, concern, pursuit, and relationship.

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya further affirm the notion that there has been a lack of value placed toward youth within the Black Church. Lincoln and Mamiya write, "Nevertheless, a major problem for many contemporary black churches is the disproportionate focus of their programs and efforts on adults. Black youth, especially young children, became a kind of afterthought in the church's schedule of significant ministry" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 316). The research from Lincoln and Mamiya strengthens the rising theme that there has been a lack of value toward our black youth in the Black Church.

Lastly, in regards to the theme of value, the research alludes to the significance in the notion of community. Our focal Scripture passage for this

project is Luke 15: 1-7. This parable of the Lost Sheep addresses one sheep

that has gone astray and has been sought out and found by the Shepherd and

returned to the community of sheep. One of the powerful illustrations found in

this parable is that the sheep that went astray is welcomed back into the fold,

back into the community upon being found by the Shepherd. The sheep was not

ostracized, shunned, or rejected, but returned to the community it belonged to

and embraced by the other sheep. This illustration is made by Allen in the

Theological Bible Commentary about the Luke 15 passage when stated, "On the

other hand, for Luke, forgiveness of sins is not without social implications.

Sinners are forgiven and repentance is invited, so that that which is lost is and

returned to the community" (Allen 2009, 335). There is a sense of welcome and

value placed on those who have gone astray, yet returned. I believe this affirms

our argument of value.

Relevance

The next theme from my research that I want to address is that of

relevance. It has arisen from the research that there is a correlation to the

relevance of the Black Church and the engagement of Black Millennials. The

research raises to the surface the evolution of our culture, a younger generation

and the issues that plague the world and our community. There is a strong

assertion that if the Black Church fails to preach about, address, acknowledge, or

even be at the "think tank table of solutions" to the matters salient to our

community; then an exodus of young black millennials will occur-or perhaps has

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already occurred. Cornelius Fortune wrote an article, "Will Millennials be the Saviors of the Black Church- or its Crucifiers?". Robert Bolden (a Black millennial), a native Detroiter says, "The church prior to millennials, got so caught up in wealth and prosperity and success and all these wonderful things, that we stopped telling the story of the significance of the black church in history. I believe we live in a time where the black church has to recapture its role in society" (Bolden, 2018). Bolden's comment alludes to the fact that the church has the task at hand to remain relevant. Bolden is giving voice to the heartbeat of many black millennials which is yearning for and calling the Black church to remain grounded, centered and plugged in to the world that surrounds it and the needs that are present. In other words, a church that is remaining connected and plugged in to the realities of today is remaining relevant.

Teddy Reeves, an ordained minister of the Progressive National Black Convention sights, "Some disengagement may come from frustrations that traditional black churches are not sufficiently addressing justice issues that are a priority for many of these young adults- LGBTQ rights, violence in urban African American communities, and inclusion of women's ordination and leadership. Moving forward, I wonder what that means for our traditional religious spaces" (Reeves, 2018). Reeves' observation illuminates a critical juxtaposition that the Black Church must critique from within, how will we remain relevant to this generation?

The Rev. Beverly Frazier, senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania and Pastor of Morning Star Church in New York's Harlem neighborhood told the

participants of the gOD-Talk: A Black Millennials and Faith Conversation " that

her church recently put up colored lights and held a concert for several hours.

Frazier said, "That was the largest service we've had since I've been at the

church. For four hours, people just coming and going. Why? Because you meet

the needs. You have to be relevant" (Frazier, 2018). Rev. Frazier demonstrates

for us that the relevance of the church is not doing what has always been done,

but to figure out how to meet the needs of the people right where they are. The

inability to move and operate differently than our past traditions, will undoubtedly

keep the church stuck, stagnant, and dying. The Black Church must work to

understand the needs of a growing generation and reach them with the same

message, but a different methodology. Morning Star Church is a great example

of being relevant and conducting ministry differently.

We live in a generation today, where we are seeing the second civil rights

movement in motion. As well, this generation of young Black Millennials has

responded to the call to be involved, engaged, and awake to the cause.

Because we have a generation that has chosen to get involved and is a part of

the movement, they are also in need of a refuge. Millennials are not only seeking

a church (local), but church (body) who has aligned themselves with the Gospel

mission and is fighting to improve and eradicate injustices. They are looking for a

safe space to be from the frontlines of battle. Black Millennials are looking for a

safe space where they do not have to always educate and defend. Where they

do not always have to fight, but can just be. Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker, curator of

Black Millennial Café writes in the Huffington Post:

> Millennials seek spaces of refuge, and that is why there is still hope for the black church. Millennials have remained, at least on the fringes, in a way white millennials have not because white believers have never had nor needed the same spaces of refuge that people of color have come to rely. There is still a place for the relevant black church, and while it may not be as easy as it were in prior generations to retain the participation of black millennials, it is indeed possible to enlist the partnership of black millennials. (Parker 2017)

Parker addresses why the Black Church is still needed for black people. She suggests that due to the climate of today's culture and world, our Black Millennials need a safe place to be in ways that white millennials do not need. Her conclusion is that the Black Church can be that and should be that. The Black Church has relevance in this day and age, but must work to culturally have relevance and in turn engage millennials.

The question that has arisen from the research is where is the voice of the Black Church? Where is the prophetic preaching of the Black Church? Where is the activism of the Black Church? Professor of Religion and Chair of the Center for African American Studies at Princeton University, Dr. Eddie Glaude, Jr, wrote an essay that has gained much attention, "The Black Church is Dead". He made three main assertions that garnered much critique and chatter: a). Black churches have always been complicated spaces; b). African American communities are much more differentiated; c). we have witnessed the routinization of the black prophetic witness (Glaude, 2010). Glaude suggests there has been a shift in the place and value of the Black church. "But the idea of this venerable institution as central to black life and as a repository for the social and moral conscience of the nation has all but disappeared" (Glaude, 2010). In regards to the routinization of (the church's) black prophetic witness,

Glaude says, "Too often the prophetic energies of black churches are represented as something inherent to the institution, and we need only point to past deeds for evidence of this fact" (Glaude, 2010). He goes on to say, "Sentences like, 'The black church has always stood for….' 'The black church was our rock…' 'Without the black church, we would not have….' In each instance, a backward glance defines the content of the church's stance in the present-justifying its continued relevance and authorizing its voice" (Glaude, 2010). Glaude's point is that often times the Black Church has become set and stuck in the past. The references of our "glory days" are of the past, not allowing the Black Church to fully and relevantly stand in our present, nor look towards our future. In part he calls the Black Church on the carpet as having lost its power and the currency of the church becomes the past memories of what it used to do and be about.

The question becomes, "what will be the role of the prophetic black churches on the national stage under these conditions? Any church as an institution ought to call us to be our best selves-not to be slaves to doctrine or mere puppets for profit. Within its walls, our faith should be renewed and refreshed. We should be open to experiencing God's revelation anew" (Glaude, 2010). Dr. Glaude is calling for the Black Church to rise up now. He is calling for the voices of today to speak to today and tomorrow. He is challenging the Black church to not make the focal point, the prophetic energy of the past, but for the church to find its present voice and speak prophetically into tomorrow. Dr. Glaude notes that unless the Black Church is rallying around a financial

empowerment conference or Megafest, that as a collective body, it is rarely

pressing around issues of education or public reform. Glaude states:

> Rare are those occasions when black churches mobilize in public and together to call attention to the pressing issues of today. We see organization and protests against same-sex marriage and abortion; even billboards in Atlanta to make the anti-abortion case. But where are the press conferences and impassioned efforts around black children living in poverty, and commercials and organizing around jobs and healthcare reform? (Glaude, 2010)

Dr. Glaude suggests that the Black Church has plenty of areas that are needed

for the church's voice to rise up and be present. He is speaking to the relevancy

of the Black Church in the climate of today. The church has a reputation for its

prophetic voice, but there is something that has been missing. That missing link

not only speaks to the church's place within the Black community, but also how

the Black Millennial population is engaging with the Black Church. Black

Millennials are looking for the Black Church to speak up and speak out to these

real-life concerns and matters.

There is another voice to add to this research that addresses the

relevancy of the Black Church to the black community and as well, the salient

issues of today. Educational consultant Jawanza Kunjufu tackles the two

subjects of: Black men and the Black Church. While his research does not

address Black Millennials, and rather, Black men, some of the themes that arise

from his research overlap with our themes and speak to the larger narrative of

the Black Church. Specifically, what I want to raise from the research of Kunjufu

is the notion of the Black Church being irrelevant. Kunjufu gathered over 75

Black Men for a retreat in which they took a questionnaire and discussed at

length 21 primary reasons Black Men do not go to church from that

questionnaire. Reason number six was irrelevance. Kunjufu writes:

> Recent studies indicate that the major problems in the African American community are crime, drugs, teen pregnancy, lack of recreational opportunities, unemployment, and single parenting. The criticism was that the church was not addressing those problems. It's only open on Sunday and all they do is holler and clap from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. How are you going to address the problems with that schedule and entertainment agenda? Many brothers said that the King James version of the Bible just doesn't provide solutions to problems of drugs, crime, teen pregnancy, unemployment, or recreational opportunities. Many brothers said they receive more satisfaction going to hear Farrakhan or Jackson or attending an African conference or workshops that speak differently to the issues. (Kunjufu 1994, 60)

What these Black men echo is of the same frequency of that which has

been echoed from other research. While it is not every single church, there is a

presence and a perception that the Black Church collectively is not speaking into

the needs that specifically stricken the Black community. These Black men are

looking to the Black church and questioning beyond a shout, holler or wave of

emotionalism, what is the Church doing? What is it offering? Kunjufu later

shares in his "Solutions" chapter:

> I would agree that those churches that are entertainment and containment, which are only open on Sunday, only shout and holler, are exclusively concerned about Heaven but don't teach people to enjoy life on Earth, that are more concerned about "monster" than "ministry", are irrelevant. The church is not monolithic. There are numerous liberation churches, and I believe there is a liberation church in every city. (Kunjufu 1994, 86)

Kunjufu's response offers a both/and consideration. The Black church can be

both relevant and irrelevant. There are some who are motivated by a narrow

scope of ministry and theology, and there are also some who carry a liberation

theology based upon Luke 4:18-19, "The Lord has appointed me to preach the

gospel to the poor". To heal the brokenhearted and to bring sight to the blind.

They're based on Isaiah 58, where we are challenged to feed the hungry and

clothe the naked. A church based on James 2:26, for as the body without spirit is

dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Kunjufu 1994, 86-87).

The prophetic voice of the Black Church is also addressed by Frank

Thomas, professor of Homiletics at Christian Theological Seminary. Thomas

addresses this concern in Introduction to the Practice of African American

Preaching by saying,

> If the African American church does not address race and economics, or
> is not thoughtful and skilled in addressing these issues, Millennials will
> consider the church not relevant to their lives, needs, and struggles. Will
> the relevance of twenty-first century sermons and churches be obvious
> and empowering to the burgeoning mass social justice movements of
> today? Will the church and its preaching be relevant to Millennials?
> (Thomas 2016,136)

Thomas raises relevant concerns and realities that I suspect are already directly

affecting our churches. His position suggests that the Black Church must plug in

to the cries and issues of today in a way that is meaningful, practical, and

applicable to this generation, and is a salient reverberation. The theme of

relevance speaks to the purpose of my project in discovering the reasons Black

Millennials are and are not going to church. Thomas strengthens the argument

that a reason Black Millennials may be missing from the Black Church, is the

Black Church's disconnection from the issues plaguing the black community. Put

another way, he suggests that if the Black Church is not addressing matters of

economic disparity, mass incarceration, police brutality, food deserts, to name a

few; Black Millennials will connect their silence about these matters to the Black Church as the Black Church having nothing to say.

Young Black Millennials may not be showing up to church because to them, the church is not saying anything. Rather, this generation is speaking up, responding by saying that there is a desire for the church to come out of silence, come out of complicity, and come out of hiding. Thomas says, "the new movement is speaking prophetically and challenging the black church, pointing toward its silence on issues such as mass incarceration, urban gun violence, health and food deserts, and disparities of services in low income neighborhoods" (Thomas 2016, 149). He goes on to say,

> Factually, there are numerous churches that support the new movement, however only a small number of churches are engaged in direct protest of issues of social justice. The same was true in the 1950s and 1960s. Then, only a small minority adopted the civil rights movement agenda. The new movement speaks prophetically and challenges the church's lack of response to organized, structural, and systemic racial inequity in black neighborhoods. Many churches, if they address the issues at all, play it safe. (Thomas 2016, 149-150)

The theme of relevance is truly significant to understanding the engagement the Black Millennial generation has with the Black Church. In an effort to remain current, relevant, and relatable to this generation, the church must not lose sight of the kind of battles Jesus fought when He was on earth. Jesus fought for the least, the last, and the lost. He advocated and fought for the poor, those on the margins of society, those who were treated unjustly, and those who were silenced by the elite. To be followers and disciples of Jesus, requires us to do the same. We must look at our current world and world situations and draw the

parallels and continue the fight today. We must not shy away from those who

are ostracized, marginalized, or overlooked; yet we must proactively with the

love, compassion, and grace embrace and pursue these individuals and

systemically oppressive situations.

We currently have a generation that is thoughtfully engaging with the real

life battles of today. We have a generation today that is being plagued by

injustices. We have a generation today that desires to see change come about

and be a part of a world changing revolution, and they are looking for the Body of

Christ to show up. They are looking for the Black Church to show up. They are

waiting to see if the Black Church finds her voice or actively uses her voice in the

midst of difficult times. How does the church make faith in Jesus relevant to the

issues and injustices of today? How is the Black Church fighting to be an

advocate for justice and attempt to develop some solutions, any solutions to the

issues that daily affect our community? It is this vein that we see a generation

rising up. It is in this vein that we see a movement continuing. It is in this vein

that we see a generation of young people looking to see what a previous

generation is saying or doing. This lane and research affirms the understanding

that the church must be and remain relevant in order to not only be effective to

our society, but speak to the heartbeat of so many within our Black Millennial

generation. Parker states it like this:

> A secure future is not solidified or enhanced by ignoring harsh realities but
> by acknowledging this as familiar biblically and historically. The goal is
> strategizing for change-not building funds for fellowship halls and
> basketball courts that the average person in the community cannot
> access. For Black millennials, relevant ministry is to resist and correct
> immoral policies and practices in overpoliced neighborhoods; it's to

challenge police forces that lacking diversity; to agitate policies set out to destroy them and to bring discomfort to people who refuse to see their humanity. Pulpits that are devoid of faith and politics will result in pews devoid of Black millennials. (Parker 2018, 92)

We must find the courage and boldness to speak to the issues of our world and community, fight for injustices, advocate for those who are amongst the least, the last, and the lost, and be present. Our participation in this Gospel mission will also strike the cord to a generation who is desiring and looking for the church to show up and put faith to action.

Lincoln and Mamiya disagree with the assertion that a large number of black young adults have left the church. As well, their research suggests that the Black Church has taken a progressive approach to ministry and meeting the needs of the black community. Lincoln and Mamiya list various examples that range from churches and ministries in New York, Detroit, Washington, DC, Chicago and more. These various examples range from: community ministry outreaches specifically for black males, helping boys from the poverty- stricken neighborhood, Shaw in Washington, DC; and even Summer Fun projects that includes the combination of educational, recreational, spiritual, and creative activities (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 337-340). Lincoln and Mamiya also suggest, "There is no evidence that large numbers of middle-class, black young adults have left their churches. But the possibility is there since higher education, especially the scientific and liberal arts education of most American colleges, tends to encourage skepticism and doubt particularly where religion is concerned" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 343). The information presented from

Lincoln and Mamiya present an opposing view to the research I have presented in regards to the relevance of the Black Church to present/ current situations. The perspective presented above gives us a positive, upward perspective to the state of the Black Church and black community.

I do not discredit this information, but it is significant to note that this source is almost twenty years old. This information pre-dates the tragedies of Travyon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Rekia Boyd, Sandra Bland, and the many, many, more who have incited our current second wave of social justice, civil rights movement of today. While the research was present to that day, I do believe in this respect it is outdated and becomes null and void to the current themes that have arisen from more recent research.

Evolution

The last theme that has arisen from my research to be addressed is the one of evolution. The research suggests to us that the church must evolve, or it will die. If we do not embrace change, we will die. Kinnaman argues, "the Christian community needs a new mind-a new way of thinking, a new way of relating, a new vision of our role in the world- to pass on the faith to this and future generations" (Kinnaman 2011, 202). Kinnaman's point is well stated and salient. The church must continue to move forward in its demonstration embodying the Gospel of Jesus Christ and doing so in a way that welcomes fresh and new ideas. The church must envelope a younger generation into the think tank and create a process for their body or members; in order to continue to

evolve her ministry, presentation, and demonstration. In order to embody new ways, new thinking, a new vision, and a new way of relating, she must welcome the thoughts, energy, and creativity of a youthful and new generation. This in part helps to foster the evolution of the ministry and church. It is the newness that allows for freshness to be birthed. In order to embrace a posture of evolution, the church must be willing to divorce itself from parts of tradition that may not hold any weight or value for this current generation and at the end of the day be a deterrent or barrier for a younger generation embracing God, pursuing relationship and/or pursuing the local church.

While Dr. Eddie Glaude brings into question whether the Black Church has died or is dying in his essay, The Black Church is Dead, he suggests, "The death of the black church as we have known it occasions an opportunity to breathe new life into what it means to be black and Christian. Black churches and preachers must find their prophetic voices in this momentous present" (Glaude, 2010). His point speaks to the very necessity and unavoidable reality for a rebirthing to happen for the Black Church. He suggests that the Black Church as it's been known is dead, but there is plenty opportunity for new life, new ideas, fresh vision, new direction to be birthed. That is the type of evolution that is needed and attractive to this current Millennial generation. We must change, in order to not die. It's not that the message of Jesus needs to change, but the modalities that we speak His message to His people, must evolve. The modalities by which we approach a hurting world, must evolve and become relevant to the cries of this generation.

Andre' Butler, a Gen Xer, and son of Keith Butler, pastor of mega church

Word of Faith Int'l Christian Center in Southfield, MI speaks of the kind of

experience they work to have in order to attract Millennials. Butler says:

> We simply want to cause people to experience God without having to jump through a lot of religious hoops. I can't make anyone fall in love with Jesus but I can set up dates. That's all we're doing is setting up dates….the way we run our service, the way we dress, the way we communicate- even our designs- is geared towards black millennials who are far from God. Faith Xperience Church meets every Sunday at the Music Hall. There's no dress code to speak of, and that's a welcome truth for some. What we've found is that (Sunday best dress) is an impediment to keep people from coming to church. They feel like I don't have anything to wear, or I don't have anything to wear on par (with others). It just represents tradition and things they view as a negative. We want people to come to church. We're going to have a relaxed dress code. I'll wear gym shoes, T-shirts, sweaters. Moving beyond fashion, with a congregation that is already skewing more millennial, Butler hopes to attract even more by keeping the message tight and that message is, 'Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship'. It's about an experience with God. I think that's the big issue. We've been peddling religion. If we give people an opportunity to experience Him, that will change their life. (Millennials are) still looking (for God), they're just looking in different places than their parents did. (Butler 2018)

Pastor Butler has communicated and demonstrated the direction of evolution he

has taken their congregation, Faith Xperience Church, in order to not only be

relevant, but attractive and engaging to the Black Millennial population. There is

a demonstrated understanding that things have changed within the culture, and

that the church needs to evolve with those changes in order to remain relevant.

Butler clearly communicates that the church is working to evolve its methodology

while keeping its message tight. The focus is on a relationship with Jesus, not

towards a religion of rules. That is the evolutional shift that must occur for the

Black Church. The Black Church must be willing to adjust, change, and evolve in

its methodologies, all while retaining the same message of Jesus Christ. The

church must learn how to shift how it does ministry, how it does outreach, how it

builds and fosters community within the church, all while not compromising on

the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. An evolution of methods are a must

because younger generations are growing up in a different world, a different

culture and are being exposed to different things than we were or our

grandparents. The process to evolve allows the Black Church to remain relevant

and not be antiquated.

I believe through the themes of inclusion, value, and relevance, evolution

is birthed. To embrace and embody inclusion, value, and relevance is to evolve

in the approach and execution of ministry and each of these themes that have

arisen from the research work in tandem to one another. Parker writes:

> The one thing Google cannot give is relationship and outreach. The Black
> church has an opportunity to lead with its strengths, but there is a lot of
> work to be done. While it is easy to focus on the beauty of relationship, it
> is easy to recall the painful stories as well. It is important moving forward
> that the Black church participate in house cleaning and training so that we
> learn to eliminate negative engagement and negative verbal and
> nonverbal communication. Instead we should saturate the experience
> with the love of Christ and respect for humanity. (Parker 2018, 125)

The evolution that Parker is sharing about is that the church's relevancy shows

up today through relationships and outreach. The church must re-evaluate its

approach to both and understand that the technological advances of this age

cannot offer those two entities in a way that truly reach the heart, soul, and needs

of our Black Millennial generation. To be a church that evolves is to embrace this

reality and seek to meet persons right where they are and their needs.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESIGN, PROCEDURE, AND ASSESSMENT

This chapter will describe the design and procedures utilized to complete this project. It will discuss the detailed steps taken from start to finish. It will also discuss context, participants, procedure, assessment, overview and goals.

Purpose

The purpose of my project is to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not.

Context

My project will focused on the Black Millennials from one student organization on the campus of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio, the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA). The University was founded in September of 1910. It was created by the Lowery Normal School of Bill. "Formal instruction began at Kent in May 1913. Forty-seven students showed up for the first summer term, and two of the school's most venerable traditions began the very next day" (Kent State University, 2019). In 2019, the University boasts eight Ohio campuses with six other U.S. and four worldwide locations. The main campus resides in Northeast Ohio on a 950-acre campus. The entire University system has more than 37,000 students. The primary campus alone has enrolled

more than 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students combined. Sixteen percent of the campus undergraduate students are minority students. Almost nine percent of those students are identified as African American. Within the main campus, specifically there are more than 400 hundred student organizations. The Black Graduate Student Association is just one of 400 student organizations that exist on campus.

The Black Graduate Student Association is an organization that exists to meet the academic, professional, and social needs of Black graduate students. The organization recognizes that graduating with a Master's degree or Ph.D. is a top priority. Subsequently, this organization is dedicated to the promotion of academic excellence, mentoring, professional guidance, and social support that will enhance the scholarship of Black graduate students at the University. Most importantly, they plan to use these tools to empower their community and assist with opening doors to higher education to more individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds. It is the hope of the student organization to provide a place of refuge where Black students are encouraged to share ideas, concepts, and frustrations. The BGSA meets once every other month and is comprised of approximately fifty (50) graduate students. The earliest records of the student organization's establishment dates back to the 1970s.

Participants

The sixty participants of the survey were students from a large State University in Northeastern Ohio students and Black Millennials who were my

Facebook friends. The students who participated in the survey were members of

BGSA organization. All who were on the communication lists of that organization

were invited to participate. No one was singled out for any reason. All were

allowed and invited to participate. These students were asked to participate

because they were thought to fall into the needed race and age category. These

students were all pursuing a graduate degree. Seven students from the

University's BGSA participated in the survey. I also solicited participation from

my Facebook friends, specifically asking Black Millennials born between 1981-

1996 to take my three-minute electronic survey. Fifty-three of the participants

were gathered through Facebook and seven through the BGSA.

Design

I consulted with other resources for the development of my survey. I used

other surveys that were assessing something similar as a reference/ guidepost in

the development of my survey. After the approval of my survey, I organized it

within the Survey Monkey tool. Survey Monkey is an online survey tool that

allows individuals to create free surveys, polls, and analyzes your results.

Survey Monkey is a tool that allows individuals to capture the voices and

opinions of others. It is a free resource that offers 24/7 customer support. I

designed two separate surveys. Each individual would decide which survey was

most accurate to their current situation. There was a survey designed for those

who attend church and a separate survey designed for those who do not attend

church. Those who attend church was defined as going to church one or more

times per month. Those who do not attend church was defined as going to church less frequently than one time per month. The instructions explained each definition and instructed the individuals to choose which best describes them, and then take the fourteen-question survey.

The BGSA was emailed by their leader with both surveys attached and instructions. The participants of the group had the opportunity to decide whether or not to take the survey. For those who I reached out to through the medium of Facebook, I created a post that would be seen by all who are my personal friends. The post contained the nature of research I was doing, who I was looking for, and how long the survey would take. I also asked individuals to share this survey, asking others they may know to take it as well. Additionally, I reached out to other individuals, personally sharing with them what I am doing, and asking if they would participate in this brief survey. I targeted those who I know are Black Millennials.

Surveys

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire with three sections was used during the completion of the project. A five-point Likert scale is "used to allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement. A Likert scale assumes that the strength/intensity of an attitude is linear, i.e. on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and makes the assumption that attitudes can be measured" (McLeod 2019). Section One of the questionnaire determined the demographics of the participants: age, gender,

and ethnicity. Section Two was designated for participants who either attend or

do not attend church. This section contained nine (9) questions on a Likert scale

that determined reasons that individuals either did or did not attend church; and

one comment section for participants to write in one or two reasons that were not

listed. Section Three of the questionnaire evaluated the study. The

questionnaire was offered to fifty participants from the BGSA organization at the

University and those who are my Facebook friends. Upon receipt of the

completed surveys from the participants, I calculated the data. The data was

compiled and analyzed from each of the three sections of the questionnaire. The

data provides useful information concerning the attitudes of Black Millennials

about reasons why some Black Millennials attend and others do not attend

church.

Assessment

To evaluate the study, a five-point Likert scale with four questions was

included in Section Three of the questionnaire. In Section Three, participants

were asked to evaluate the study and to provide numerical ratings for each of the

questions contained within this Section.

Overview

I sought to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate

Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to

church and some are not going to church. Millennials are defined as individuals

who are born between 1981- 1996 (Google, "Defining generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z begins"). It is with this goal insight I sought to discover where our young Black Millennials are in our churches; as well as what is attracting them to the church and what is pushing them away. It was my hope to understand how our churches can reach Black Millennials better and effectively minister to this forgotten group.

I surveyed the participants through Survey Monkey. Students from the Black Graduate Student Association were all invited to participate in the survey. This group was selected because they were a specific group on the campus of the University that I had identified with a primary Black Millennial population. At the start of my project, I secured the help of two student organizations at the University. Upon the start of my research, I relocated from Northeast, Ohio to Southern Maryland. Due to my relocation, a couple of faulty participants who did not meet the criteria, and an error in my questionnaire, I had to completely start over with my research. Upon reaching out to two contact people at the University to ask them to help me re-administer a corrected survey, only one responded to me. Due to time constraints and deadlines, I had to proceed forward with just one student organization. This provided me with a context for my research, but it was still an insufficient amount of people. Seven people from the Black Graduate Student Association completed my electronic survey.

As a result, I supplemented the amount by reaching out to people I know through Facebook. Most of the participants of the survey came from Black Millennials who I personally know and invited to take the survey through

Facebook. Reaching out to Black Millennials on Facebook helped me to have a fuller picture and more substantial sample to be able to evaluate. In order to reach these participants through Facebook, I made a post that would be seen by all of my Facebook friends. I stated what I was doing, specifically who I was looking for (Black Millennials born between 1981- 1996), and that I had a three-minute survey for them to take. I also asked individuals to share my survey on their Facebook page, inviting others to take this as well. A few people did share it. Within seven days of that, I also reached out to men and women privately through Facebook asking them to take this brief survey. These methods allowed me to exceed my goal of completed surveys, which was thirty (30) participants. I received sixty (60) surveys, fifty-three (53) from Facebook and seven (7) from the BGSA.

All were invited to participate in a five-point Likert Scale survey. The survey consisted of the following sections: demographics, a section for those who attend church, a section for those who do not attend church, and an evaluation of the study. After the survey was administered, I collected the data, collated the data, and lastly analyzed the data. The goals of this project are as follows:

1. To evaluate the secondary literature on the subject matter.

2. To discover why the Black Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not.

3. To evaluate the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

REPORTING THE RESULTS

The black church is one of the oldest and enduring institutions. It has been a place for emotional support and hope for the African American community. Not only has the black church historically been the bedrock of the community, it has been a critical place of socialization, molding, and education for our children. The black church has been foundational in building the spiritual foundation for our youth; infusing them with purpose, calling, affirmation, cultural heritage and pride, and spiritual experiences and expressions. As this has been our history, culture continues to shape us as we progress and evolve forward. The presence and engagement of a younger generation has dwindled in our churches, even the black church. The vitality of our black churches are not what they once were. This has become a personal concern and focus of mine, as I have observed among many dying churches, the lack of the Millennial population. This concern has driven my project and my research.

The purpose of my project is to discover why some of the Black Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not. This process was done by examining three goals: to evaluate the secondary literature; to discover why some Black Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio attend church and why some do not; and to evaluate the study. To begin this process, I designed two five-point Likert-scale questionnaires with three sections. Section one contained the demographics of

each participant; section two contained nine discovery questions and one open-ended question for participants who attend church or do not attend church; and section three contained the evaluation of the study.

The five-point Likert-scale was used for the purpose of discovering why some Black Millennials from a large State University in Northeastern Ohio attend and others do not attend. The five-point Likert-scale was used to compile the averages of the participants' responses to the aforementioned three sections. There were sixty (60) participants total of this study: Fifteen (15) Black Millennials participated in the do not attend survey. Out of the fifteen (15) participants, eight (8) were female and seven (7) were male. All were African American. For the do attend survey, forty-five (45) people participated. Thirty-one (31) were female and fourteen (14), male. Out of the forty-five (45) participants, two participants were not African American. Given the way the electronic survey produces the results, I am unable to determine the ethnicity of these two participants. Likewise, there were seven (7) participants who were not Millennials. They selected the 39 and older option. Each participants' scores were calculated to determine the ratings and averages. From the averages that were compiled by the five-point Likert-scale, I was able to identify reasons and recommendations why some Black Millennials attend and others do not attend church. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings from the questionnaire and the evaluation of my project.

Goal #1: To Evaluate the Secondary Literature

The purpose of this goal was to gain insight into the lack of engagement among Black Millennials and the role or response of the black church. Historically, our youth have not been a priority or focus for the black church. They have often been overlooked and undervalued. Through secondary literature I was able to gain an understanding of not only the history of the Black Church, but some pervasive themes that arise as critical components for the engagement of Black Millennials. The four themes that arose from the secondary literature were: inclusion, value, relevance, and evolution.

Sources that illuminated the theme of inclusion were: The Black Church in the African American Experience by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, (1990), Meet Generation Z by James White, (2017), You Lost Me by David Kinnaman, (2011), "Luke" in Theological Bible Commentary by O. Wesley Allen Jr, (2009), and What Google Can't Give: The Relevancy of the Church for Millennials in the Tech Age by Brianna Parker, (2018). Lincoln and Mamiya helped me to understand the historical context, role, and relationship between the black church and our black youth. Kinnaman and White shined light to the current perspectives of Millennials towards the church, religion, and faith. These resources painted a picture of the importance, need, and at times the lack of inclusion that exists within the black church.

Sources that illuminated the theme of value were: What Google Can't Give: The Relevancy of the Church for Millennials in the Tech Age by Brianna Parker, (2018), The Black Church in the African American Experience by C. Eric

Lincoln and Lawrence H Mamiya, (1990), A Black Theology of Liberation by

James Cone, (2010), and "Luke" in Theological Bible Commentary by Wesley

Allen Jr., (2009). Allen's analysis of the Luke 15 parable, "The Lost Sheep",

helped me gain a better understanding of the theme, value, to God's beloved.

Lincoln and Mamiya provided a historical landscape of the relationship between

the black church and African American children that illuminated the value the

church places on a younger generation and helped to give perspective to why we

may be where we are with today's generation.

Sources that shed light on the theme of relevance were: An Introduction to

the Practice of African American Preaching by Frank Thomas, (2016), Eddie

Glaude's essay, The Black Church is Dead, (2010), Adam! Where Are You?:

Why Most Black Men Don't Go to Church by Jawanza Kunjufu, (1994), One Size

Does Not Fit All: Black Millennials Demand More from Church by Brianna Parker,

(2017). Thomas' book was instrumental in communicating the imperative need

that lies before the black church to tap into the pulse of this generation and

engage with the issues of this generation. Thomas suggests that if the black

church fails to address such salient issues from the pulpit, it will be regarded as

irrelevant to this generation.

Lastly, the theme of evolution arose from the research. Sources that

illuminated this theme were: You Lost Me by David Kinnaman, (2011), Eddie

Glaude's essay, The Black Church is Dead, (2010), and What Google Can't

Give: The Relevancy of the Church for Millennials in the Tech Age by Brianna

Parker, (2018). Each of these authors succinctly articulated the change in the

culture of today from our grandparents' generation. As a result, this generation

of Millennials sees, does, and wants things differently, and the church must adapt

to this in order to speak to their needs.

Goal #2: To Discover Why Black Millennials are Going to Church and Why Some are not.

The second goal of this project was to discover why Black Millennials from

a large State University in Northeastern Ohio attended and did not attend church.

Section One of the survey contained the demographics of each participant. A

breakdown of the participants by age for the do attend survey revealed the

following: out of the forty-five (45) participants, thirty-one (31) were women and

fourteen (14) were men. For the age group of *23-29 years old*, there were

twenty-three (23) participants or fifty-one percent (51%) of the total participants;

for the age group of *30-35 years old*, there were twelve (12) participants or

twenty-seven percent (27%) of the total participants; for the age group of *36-38

years old,* there were three (3) participants or seven percent (7%) of the total

participants; and for the age group of *39 years old and older*, there were seven

(7) participants or fifteen percent (15%) of the total participants.

When asked the question, "What is your ethnicity?", forty-three (43) or

ninety-five percent (95%) participants responded Black or African American.

One (1) or two percent (2%) selected American Indian or Alaskan Native. Two

(2) participants or four (4%) percent selected Hispanic or Latino. Three (3)

participants or seven (7%) chose White/Caucasian. Participants were allowed to

select as many ethnicities that applied to them. Because of that one participant

may have selected more than one ethnicity to communicate themselves. Because of this survey being distributed electronically, I was not in full control of who participated, even though it was clearly communicated that the survey was for Black Millennials. It is clear from the data that we did not have forty-five (45) Black Millennials to take this survey, even though we most likely did have some bi/multi- racial individuals participate.

A breakdown of the participants by age for the do not attend survey revealed the following: out of the fifteen (15) participants, eight (8) were women and seven (7), were men. For the age group of *23-29 years old*, there were eleven (11) participants or seventy-three percent (73%) of the total participants; for the age group of *30-35 years old*, there was one (1) participant or seven percent (7%) of the total participants; for the age group of *36-38 years old*, there were three (3) participants or twenty percent (20%) of the total participants; and for the age group of *39 years old and older*, there were zero (0) participants or zero percent (0%) of the total participants. When asked the question, "What is your ethnicity?", all fifteen (15) participants or one-hundred percent (100%) chose Black or African American. One (1) participant also selected American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Section II: Do Attend Church

Section Two of the questionnaire consisted of nine questions using a five-point Likert scale which was designed to discover specific reasons why Black Millennials are attending church.

Table 1 illustrates the average rating and percentage of participants whose responses ranged from agree to strongly agree in the attend section of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Agreement-Attend (Goal #2)

Questions	Average Rating	Percentage of Participants (Agree-Strongly Agree)
1- I am an active member.	4.13	78%
4- I attend because of the ministries	4.02	76%
9- I attend because of the teaching.	3.97	73%
2- I attend because my emotional needs are met.	3.91	78%
5- I attend because of the preaching.	3.88	71%
6- I attend because of the music.	3.68	62%
3- I attend because of my physical needs are met.	3.44	51%
7- I attend because my children' needs are met.	3.24	45%

Note: The scores are averages based on a total of 45 participants. They responded using a Likert scale of 1-5 (5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=not sure; 2=disagree; and 1=strongly disagree).

On question number 1, "I am an active member", the average rating was 4.13 out of a possible 5.0 and seventy-eight percent (78%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that they are an active member of a church. Clearly a majority of respondents (78%) indicate they are active attenders of a church. On question number 4, "I attend church because of the ministries", the average rating was 4.02 out of a possible 5.0 and seventy-six percent (76%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that they attend church because of the ministries. This is striking. A significant portion of the polled participants communicated the reason they attend church is because of the ministries that are offered. A possible observation may be for the respondents selecting

strongly agree to agree is the importance of serving, being a part of change, and connectedness to community that is held within the Millennial generation.

On question number 9, "I attend church because the teaching meets my needs", the average rating was 3.97 out of a possible 5.0 and seventy-three percent (73%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that they attend church because of the teaching. This is not surprising that a significant portion of those polled find teaching to be an important factor. Black Millennials are seeking to grow spiritually.

On question number 2, "I attend church because my emotional needs are met" the average rating was 3.91 out of a possible 5.0 and seventy-eight percent (78%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that they attend church because of emotional uplifting. A possible observation to this question may be the safe haven the black church is to the black community. The black church has the ability to culturally relate to those living out the black experience and specifically minister to those needs, hurts, and experiences.

On question number 5, "I attend church because of the preaching", the average rating was 3.88 out of a possible 5.0 and seventy-one percent (71%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that they attend church because of the preaching. A possible observation as to such a strong response may be due to the historical role and significance black preaching as played within the black church.

On question 6, "I attend church because of the music", the average rating was 3.68 out of a possible 5.0 and sixty-two percent (62%) of the participants

agree to strongly agree that they attend church because of the music ministry. However, twenty-two percent (22%) responded not sure and sixteen percent (16%) strongly disagree to disagree. This is surprising. Given the role music historically has played within the African American culture and continues to play, this is interesting. Just more than a third of the participants were either not sure or disagreed with music being an influencing factor to their church attendance. An observation is that the role and importance of teaching and community have greater weight than the quality of music for these participants as it relates to their church attendance. This requires further examination.

On question 3, "I attend church because my physical needs are met", the average rating was 3.44 out of a possible 5.0 and fifty-one percent (51%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that they attend because their physical needs are met. However, twenty-seven percent (27%) of the participants are unsure and twenty-two percent (22%) of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed. A possible observation for such a low response among those who agree or strongly agree and a predominate portion of participants choosing either not sure or disagree/strongly disagree could suggest a generation of young adults who do not look to the church to be involved in that aspect of their life. It is possible that there is little to no expectation that the church be serving them in that particular way or that it is even their role to do so. This requires further examination.

`   On question 7, "I attend church because of my children' needs are met", the average rating was 3.24 out of a possible 5.0 and forty-five percent (45%) of

the participants agree to strongly agree that they attend church for the needs of their children. However, thirty-one percent (31%) of the participants responded not sure and twenty-four percent (24%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree. I find these results striking. With more than fifty percent (50%) of the polled participants unsure or disagree/strongly disagree, one possible explanation is that many of these participants do not have children.

Table 2. Disagreement-Attend (Goal #2)

Questions	Average Rating	Percentage of Participants (Disagree-Strongly Disagree)
8- I attend because my financial needs are met.	2.97	40%

Note: The scores are averages scores based on a total of 45 participants. They responded using a Likert scale of 1-5 (5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=not sure; 2=disagree; and 1=strongly disagree).

On question 8, "I attend church because it financially meets my needs", the average rating was 2.97 out of a possible 5.0 and forty percent (40%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree. Many things could be deduced from this data. Perhaps, the data suggests this generation is not looking to the church for a financial handout. Rather, they are looking for the church to deliver in terms of spiritual food, connection, and opportunities to serve/make a difference.

Table 3. Other Reasons for Attending Church (Open-Ended Question Responses)

Category of Reason for Attendance	Percentage Listing each Category
Social Reasons (1,3,5,7,9,14,15,16,17,20,21,22,23,25,26,28)	57%
Spiritual Reasons (1,2,3,7,8,9,10,14,15,16,17,18,23,24,27)	54%
Tradition, Responsibility, Duty (4,10,11,13,28)	18%
Personal Health (6,11,19,22)	14%
Other (12)	4%

Note: Twenty eight (28) of the participants gave responses to the open-ended questions. The total of the percentages exceed 100% because most the of participants gave more than one response. (See Appendix Three).

The content analysis of the open-ended questions for those who attend provide an interesting summation. Numbers in parentheses below each category correspond to the item number on the responses to the open-end question. Social reasons was among the greatest reason as to why the participants went to church with fifty-seven percent (57%) of the open-ended answers having to do with that. Next was spiritual reasons, which accounted for fifty-four percent (54%) of answers given. Open-ended answers related to tradition, duty, or responsibility accounted for eighteen percent (18%). Answers related to personal health accounted for fourteen percent (14%). Lastly, one answer that falls into the "other" category is four percent (4%) of answers. Clearly above all else reasons associated it with social and spiritual resound the most. It becomes

apparent that the key factors and/or influencers are the connection/ desire for spiritual growth/ a spiritual encounter and the fellowship and community the participants have found. In essence, the social can be seen as a sense of belonging within that community or church family.

Section II: Do Not Attend Church

The goal of this project was and continues to be to discover why Black Millennials from a large State University in Northeastern Ohio do and do not attend church. This survey addressed those who do not attend church. Section One of the survey contained the demographics of each participant. A breakdown of the participants by age for the do not attend survey revealed the following: out of the fifteen (15) participants, eight (8) were women and seven (7), were men. For the age group of *23-29 years old*, there were eleven (11) participants or seventy-three percent (73%) of the total participants; for the age group of *30-35 years old*, there was one (1) participant or seven percent (7%) of the total participants; for the age group of *36-38 years old*, there were three (3) participants or twenty percent (20%) of the total participants; and for the age group of *39 years old and older*, there were zero (0) participants or zero percent (0%) of the total participants.

Section Two of the questionnaire consisted of nine questions using a five-point Likert scale which was designed to discover specific reasons why Black Millennials are not attending church.

Table 3 below illustrates the average rating and percentage of participants whose responses ranged from disagree to strongly disagree on the questionnaire.

Table 4. Disagreement- Do Not Attend (Goal #2)

Questions	Average Rating	Percentage of Participants (Disagree-Strongly Disagree)
3- My physical needs are not being met.	1.93	73%
6- The music does not meet my needs.	2.00	87%
8- My financial needs are not being met.	2.13	80%
7- My children's needs are not being met.	2.33	60%
2- My emotional needs are not being met.	2.53	53%
4-The ministries do not meet my needs.	2.60	60%
5- The preaching does not meet my needs.	2.86	47%
9- The teaching does not meet my needs.	2.93	47%

Note: The scores were average scores based on a total of 15 participants. They responded using a Likert scale of 1-5 (5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = not sure; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree).

On question number 3, "My physical needs are not being met", the average rating was 1.93 out of a possible 5.0 and seventy-three percent (73%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree that they do not attend church because their physical needs are not being met. A possible observation is that the polled participants feel that their physical needs are met by the church.

On question number 6, "The music does not meet my needs", the average rating was 2 out of a possible 5.0 and eighty-seven percent (87%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree that they do not attend church because the music does not meet their needs. The respondents who disagreed to strongly disagreed that they do not attend church because the music does not

meet their needs suggest that music is not an influencing factor to their lack of attendance.

On question number 8, "My financial needs are not being met", the average rating was 2.13 out of a possible 5.0. Eighty percent (80%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree that they do not attend church because their financial needs are not being met. Perhaps, this shows that the church being an assistance to them financially is by in-large not a dominant factor to their lack of church attendance.

On question number 7, "My children's needs are not being met", the average rating was 2.33 out of a possible 5.0 and sixty percent (60%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree that they do not attend church because the preaching does not meet their needs. However, twenty-seven percent (27%) of the participants responded not sure. Again, this would suggest that the needs of their children are not an influencing factor regarding their lack of church attendance. A possible observation to these results is that either the ministry towards children is strong in the churches they've attended or it is not an important factor to sixty percent (60%) of the participants. Further examination is required.

On question number 2, "My emotional needs are not being met", the average rating was 2.53 out of a possible 5.0 and fifty-three percent (53%) of the participants strongly disagree to disagree that they do not attend church because their emotional needs are not being met. However, twenty-seven percent (27%) of the participants responded agree to strongly agree. While a predominate

portion of the participants strongly disagree to disagree that their emotional needs are not being met, twenty-seven percent (27%) strongly agree to agree and twenty percent (20%) are not sure. A possible explanation to these results may be that just more than half find some sort of emotional support, comfort, and/or uplifting when attending church, yet twenty-seven percent (27%) of others may not, and possibly twenty percent (20%) may have found ambiguity with the question. Further examination is needed.

On question number 4, "The ministries do not meet my needs", the average rating was 2.6 out of a possible 5.0 and sixty percent (60%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree that they do not attend church because the ministries does not meet their needs. However, thirty-three percent (33%) of the participants responded agree to strongly agree. One observation is that the ministries of the church are not a significant factor as to why these participants do not attend church.

On question number 5, "The preaching does not meet my needs", the average rating was 2.86 out of a possible 5.0 and forty-seven percent (47%) of the participants disagree to strongly disagree that they do not attend church because the preaching does not meet their needs. However, thirty-three percent (33%) of the participants responded agree to strongly agree. The respondents who strongly disagree to disagree is almost half of the polled participants, suggesting the preaching is acceptable to them; whereas a third of the participants agree that the preaching does not meet their needs. An observation about these results is that for almost half, the preaching is not a deterrent for

whether or not they attend church, it is something else. Further examination is

required.

On question number 9, "The teaching does not meet my needs", the

average rating was 2.93 out of a possible 5.0 and forty-seven percent (47%) of

the participants disagree to strongly disagree that they do not attend church

because the teaching does not meet their needs. However, 47% of the

participants responded agree to strongly agree. It is surprising that some of the

participants responded at the rate that they agree to strongly agree. Perhaps, the

respondents who strongly agree to agree may not be hearing the type of

teaching that agrees with their personal code of living or moral ethics. Another

possible observation is that for these respondents, the preaching may lack

relevance to them and/or the matters of their lives. Contrarily for the other 47%

who strongly disagree to disagree that the teaching does not meet their need, it

would suggest that they find the teaching acceptable.

Table 5. Agreement-Do Not Attend (Goal #2)

Questions	Average Rating	Percentage of Participants (Agree-Strongly Agree)
1- I am not an active member of a church.	4.33	93%

Note: The scores were average scores based on a total of 15 participants. They
responded using a Likert scale of 1-5 (5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = not sure;
2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree).

On question number 1, "I am not an active member of any church", the average rating was 4.33 out of a possible 5.0 and 93% of the participants agree to strongly agree that they are not a member of any church.

Open-Ended Question: Two open-ended questions were posed to the participants who do not attend church and the following table emerged from their responses.

Table 6. Other Reasons for Not Attending Church (Open-Ended Question Responses) (Goal #2)

Category of Reason for Non- Attendance	Percentage Listing each Category
Environment/ Atmosphere (Judgmental, Legalistic, Unfriendly) (1,2,4,6,8,9,10,12,)	66%
Time Constraint/ Effort Required (1,5,7,11)	33%
Other (3)	8%

Note: Twelve (12) of the participants gave responses to the open-ended questions asking about other reasons for not attending church. The total of the percentages exceed 100% because most the of participants gave more than one response. (See Appendix Three).

The content analysis for the do not attend open-ended answers provides critical insights. Numbers in parentheses below each category correspond to the item number on the responses to the open-end question. Among the strongest reasoning that the participants who answered was an unfriendly environment or atmosphere. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the answers given had to do with an environment that felt judgmental, unfriendly, or legalistic. The next strongest

responses were related to time/ time constraints. Thirty-three percent (33%)

communicated the responses related to not having a lot of time, or going to

church taking a lot of time as reasons why they do not attend. Lastly, one

question stood by itself as "other", accounting for eight percent (8%). This

content analysis helps to provide a valuable summation of thoughts, feelings, and

perspectives. It allows the perspective of the environment to arise to the surface

as something to be further considered.

Goal #3: To evaluate the study

To complete my third goal, Section three of the questionnaire was

designed to evaluate the study. It consisted of four questions using a five-point

Likert scale to determine the participants' evaluation of the study. Table seven

illustrates the average rating and percentage of participants whose responses

ranged from agree to strongly agree in the evaluation of the study section on the

questionnaire.

Table 7. Evaluate the Study (Goal #3)

Questions	Average Rating	Percentage of Participants (Agree-Strongly Agree)
1- It allowed me to express my honest opinions.	4.18	87%
4- It will help churches reach and keep Black Millennials	3.73	63%
3- It will help meet the needs of Black Millennials.	3.56	50%
2- It will help attract and retain Black Millennials within the Church.	3.56	48%

Note: The scores were average scores based on a total of 60 participants. They responded using a Likert scale of 1-5 (5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = not sure; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree).

On question number 1, "This study allowed me to express my honest opinions", the average rating was 4.18 out of 5.0 and eighty-seven percent (87%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that the study allowed them to express their honest opinions. This suggests that a large portion of the participants felt that the survey was conducive to them expressing their honest opinions.

On question number 4, "This study has the potential to help other churches who have difficulty reaching and keeping Black Millennials", the average rating was 3.73 out of 5.0 and sixty-three percent (63%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that the study will help other churches to retain Black Millennials. However, 30% of the respondents were not sure and 7% disagree to strongly disagree. Perhaps there was some cynicism about the churches' ability to make necessary changes to attract and retain Black Millennials. Change is hard work and while it is often talked about, it is to a lesser degree often executed. The doubtfulness and disagreement that was

communicated through these respondents could have been a possible reflection of that attitude.

On question number 3, "This study will help meet the needs of Black Millennials", the average rating was 3.56 out of 5.0 and fifty percent (50%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that the study will help meet the needs of Black Millennials. Whereas, forty-two percent (42%) of the respondents were not sure and seven percent (7%) disagree to strongly disagree. Again, while fifty percent (50%) of the respondents are hopeful, the other fifty percent (50%) are doubtful or plainly disagree. This too could speak to a hesitancy to believe people and/or institutions will take necessary steps toward change.

On question number 2, "This study will be helpful in attracting and retaining Black Millennials", the average rating was 3.56 out of 5.0 and forty-eight percent (48%) of the participants agree to strongly agree that the study will help attract and retain Black Millennials within the Church. However, forty-five percent (45%) of the respondents were not sure and seven percent (7%) disagree to strongly disagree. Perhaps there was some hesitancy in the value of this information to help strengthen the efforts of reaching and keeping Black Millennials engaged within the Church.

In conclusion, the study was a valuable instrument in allowing participants to honestly express their opinions. Respondents did not strongly believe that this survey could or would help lead to change within black church or in the attraction or retention of Millennials to the black church. I also believe the study may have been more helpful with a different selection of questions. I received feedback

from some individuals personally around the ambiguity of some of the survey questions.

Final Summary of Results

The major findings from Table 1 communicate a strong importance in the emotional needs, teaching, preaching, and the presence of ministries.   These factors seem to be the most critical in garnering church attendance from those who attend regularly. Contrarily, Table 4 which addresses those who do not go to church regularly, results are more ambiguous. The results communicate needs that are not being met by just more than half of those polled in the areas of preaching and teaching. Those two areas of need stand out the greatest. The survey results would conclude amongst both groups, an overlap worth noting in the significance of preaching and teaching. From the open-ended questions it is drawn out from both surveys the need and desire to be in community and fellowship with other people. It is evident that the finding of community at church plays a significant role in one's attendance or the lack of community found through church plays a significant role in why one does not attend. The evaluation concludes that many believe this survey can help churches reach and keep Black Millennials.

Summary

In summary, I presented results from questionnaires given to sixty (60) Black Millennials. The purpose of the questionnaire was to discover why some

Black Millennials attend, yet others do not attend church, as well as, to evaluate

the study. Based on the respondents' responses to the questionnaire, the three

goals have been met.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS

The purpose of my project was to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not. My project goals were: 1. To evaluate the secondary literature on the subject matter; 2. To discover why some of the Black Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not; and 3. To evaluate the study. Each goal will be analyzed, beginning with the goal that had the most prominent findings, followed by the remainder of the goals in descending order of prominence.

Project Goals

Goal Number 1
To Discover Evaluate the Secondary Literature

Goal number one of this project was to evaluate the secondary literature. What I learned from this research project affirmed some of my suspicions and brought new insights beyond my initial thoughts. The literature on this subject matter illuminates four predominate categories: inclusion, value, relevance, and evolution. These four themes arose as critical factors that affect and influence the engagement of Black Millennials in going to church. When I had my initial opinions about this question, I generally thought in individual terms such as: too

traditional, was not prepared/groomed to assume leadership roles, a church service that has not changed from my grandparents "way of doing church", etc. The research has affirmed there to be truth in at least two out of the three of those thoughts. The books, nor the surveying of Black Millennials, raised the notion of a lack of training or grooming to take the baton of ministerial leadership. Yet, the other two, have proven to have truth. My research has brought to light four significant factors that are important to this generation when it comes to engagement in church.

The first theme that arose is inclusion. Black Millennials want to be a part of a fellowship or congregation. They want to feel included and actually be included; not in a patronizing or tokenism way, but genuinely and authentically. Churches need to evaluate how they have created space for this generation to BE. This means to be in their own right and own way; not how should they be by "co-existing" with the rest of the church. Black Millennials are looking for a space to be able to express themselves, bring their ideas, ingenuity, and style to the table. They are looking for ministry opportunities to lead and participate in where they can give leadership, and speak into and shape the vision. They are looking for ministry and leadership that speaks to the needs of their generation; not simply be an afterthought, or no thought at all. Inclusion also speaks to the graciousness of the faith community in welcoming Black Millennials back into the fold after they may have been away for a season. It means showing grace for one's past, and having grace for the future. Inclusion speaks to not being ostracized, but loved back into the fold of believers.

Value was another theme that emerged through the research. The research suggests that the Black Millennial generation wants to know they are valued and not just a second thought. A lack of value of the Black Millennial generation from the black church can leave this generation feeling left out, not wanted, or forgotten. Consequently, the church may see the lack of Millennials as part of or engaged within their ministry; and rather than truly meeting them where they are, attempt quick "fix-it" gimmicks to gather the Millennial group, and as a result 'tokenizing' them. A church that does not value this generation will be less willing to hear their ideas, bring them to the table of leadership, meet them at their place of need, develop them in their weakness and immaturity, or think outside the box in ministry approaches. They will be seen as a place of issue, rather than an opportunity for everyone to grow. Where Millennials are not valued, they do not show up.

Relevance emerged as another theme from the research, as well. Black Millennials are looking for the church to be relevant, plugged in, aware of, and speaking to the matters that are going on today. Black Millennials are looking for the black church to show up in the move of the second civil rights movement. Black Millennials are looking for the church to not be silent, but to be prophetic. The black church remains to have a place that is needed for this generation because they have the opportunity to be a safe haven from the violence, white terrorism, and the exhaustion that is often required of simply being black in America. While there is a need for the black church, and only what she can provide; there is also a need for the church to speak up, speak out, and be at the

table of ideas and solutions. The black church must not only remain relevant within the culture and social times, she must be relevant to the culture of this generation, understanding the needs and struggles of this generation, therefore propelling the church to effectively minister to this generation. A church that is relevant will be addressing issues of mental health, fatherlessness, questions about sexuality/LGBTQIA, financial stewardship, life and God, police brutality, racism, the school-to-prison pipeline, and more.

Relevance speaks to the ability and willingness of the black church to read the signs of the times and minister to the people who are living in those times. The reality is there are youth and young adults who are growing up in the midst of such issues and cultural norms and do not know what to think about such matters; do not know how God fits into such matters; do not know what the Bible says about these issues; and are just living in the world, but do not know how to not be of the world. My experience and the experiences of many Black Millennials I have spoken to affirms a perspective that the black church can often lack the cultural relevance needed to effectively minister to today's generation. Lastly, the research drew out the theme of evolution. Evolution speaks to the reality that any living organism must grow over time. If one does not grow, the organism eventually dies. To grow in this case means to embrace new ideas, new methodologies, new models, new vision and to grow as our world and technology grows. To evolve means to embrace the ingenuity that a younger generation brings to the table. To evolve means that leadership is willing to embrace doing things differently than they are used to and continuing to push a

congregation forward. It is out-of-the-box thinking. It is creativity. To not evolve

means to fall behind with the ever evolving world and culture. To not evolve is to

leave behind a generation of youth and young adults who were raised in a

different context and culture than their parents and grandparents. It has been my

personal experience from visiting various black churches, the feeling is that many

churches are stuck in the life of the church from twenty or more years ago. As a

consequence, they are not addressing many, if any of the issues and matters of

today. Many of our churches have not evolved in their methodology, praxis, or

demonstration of ministry, consequently leaving themselves irrelevant to a 'now'

generation. To not evolve over time is to in turn become irrelevant over time.

Goal Number 2
To Discover Why Some Black Millennials, Do and Do Not Go to Church.

Goal number two of my project was to discover why some of the Black

Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio go to church and why

some do not. The data from the research suggests three most critical areas

Black Millennials find important that drives whether or not they attend church.

Those areas are: preaching, teaching, and emotional. Out of the forty-five

participants who took the do attend church survey, 78% agree- strongly agree

that they attend church because it meets their emotional needs; 76% agree-

strongly agree they attend church because of the ministries; 73% agree-strongly

agree that they attend church because of the teaching; and 71% agree-strongly

agree they attend church because of the preaching. This data suggests that

what is important is learning/growing, being emotionally supported or uplifted, and the opportunity to serve or be a part of a group that is serving.

Out of the fifteen participants who took the do not attend church survey, 47% disagree- strongly disagree that they do not go to church because the preaching and teaching does not meet their needs. This means that for almost half (47%) of the participants', preaching was not a deterrent for whether or not they attend. Both sets of participants provided short answers to the open-ended question giving them the opportunity to share any other reasons they either attend or do not attend church. A common thread from participants was the need and importance of community/fellowship. It was clear that the Black Millennials surveyed either attended church because of a deep sense of community that they experienced, or that they did not attend church because they had not found a place to call home, or a place to be/feel accepted. The need, role, and desire for community, fellowship and belonging was important and a critical factor. In a day and age where there is no much accessibility, there is a tremendous lack of touch. While people have the ability to connect, be involved, and be engaged with one another with the touch of a button, we as people and a society deeply lack the personal touch from others and the reality of being known. Technology avails to us many benefits, but it does not bring forth the same type of community that is created in midst of being with one another. Black Millennials are in search of being known by others, being in fellowship with one another, being in community with other people who are walking through life like they are. This factor is critical.

Goal Number 3
To Evaluate the Study

The evaluation of the study measured how effective the study was according to the sixty participants in the following areas: expressing their honest opinion, helping churches reach and keep Black Millennials, helping to meet the needs of Black Millennials, and helping to attract and retain Black Millennials. The data shows that more than half of the participants believe this survey will help churches reach Black Millennials; yet there was less strength in the assurance of this survey being beneficial in meeting the needs of Black Millennials, nor being beneficial in attracting and retaining Black Millennials in the black church. This data suggests that the answers that come from this survey are believed to have the potential to help churches; yet there seems to be reservation to whether the churches will take heed of the information that would allow for change to happen. Perhaps there is reservation about how beneficial this survey will be to Black Millennials and its ability to help the black church because respondents may not believe that a mere questionnaire by itself is sufficient in meeting the needs, attracting more Millennials, and/or retaining Millennials. This is just one possibility.

Application

This project and its findings will personally inform me in two ways. This research and data will allow me to formally begin to consult with black churches who are having difficulty effectively reaching and sustaining Black Millennials. I

plan to begin a consulting firm that will in part seek to educate and help the black church strengthen her Black Millennial engagement. I believe this research provides information that is needed, relevant, and practical for churches who are struggling with their young adult population. I believe acquiring a doctorate and having research and data to present will allow me to offer this information to churches that may be disconnected from a younger generation and their culture.

Additionally, I plan to utilize this information and findings in my own church plant. As a current church planter who is in the early stages of developing the life, ethos, and congregation of people, this research is highly useful to me. Our church has a focus of reaching Millennials and their kids. This information is extremely pertinent and relevant to me and my current ministry pursuits.

The four categories that I extract from the research can be used as guideposts for others who are seeking learn more, understand greater, and self - examine their own worshipping bodies and ministry practices The categories of inclusion, value, relevance, and evolution are critical guideposts of us as a church plant, and are can be helpful beginning points for others to explore and consider.

Further Study

There is not a lot of written materials or research that has been done on Black Millennials specifically. There is more work done on Millennials and the church, however, the focus is on white millennials and the white church. There is much room for growth and development for researching the area of Black

Millennials and the black church. For example, research in the area of examining those who never attended church versus those who used to attend church but no longer could add valuable insight to this conversation. Additionally, a study could be valuable to understand leading factors for black millennials who attend predominantly black churches as compared to leading factors for black millennials who attend predominately white churches.

Personal Goals

For the last two years, I have been on a journey that has had me turning a corner professionally. I have had a shift in my professional/ministerial pursuits and through this journey I have come to discover gifts, calling, and an anointing about myself that others have seen, but I have been blind to. For the last two years, I have been discovering my embedded pastoral gifts and apostolic calling. I have discovered a spiritual gifting, an anointing and a heart burden to see others live free in every area of their life. I have discovered a special call to help set others free. As I have discovered these truths about myself, I have found the Lord divinely orchestrate this next season and ministry assignment in my life in such a way that all these matters would align. As I am in the midst of planting a church that is specifically geared to intentionally reaching Millennials and youth, my heart's burden for the movement is centered around freedom for the whole person. This project speaks to my heart, and it also has the potential to liberate the church where it is bound, so that our now generation and next generation may be free, found, and full in Christ Jesus.

Personal Goal Number One
To Understand the Culture and Needs of Black Millennials

This research, both through the literature and the survey data, has expanded my knowledge in this area. From the onset, I had suspicions and educated guesses around my research question. While what I was thinking was true, I discovered so much more. My knowledge and understanding has increased tremendously of not only the issues, but the possible remedies. The pursuit of this work has given me an historical understanding that I did not formally have before, as well as a more concrete grasp of the cultural shifts that have happened and have shaped the here and now. As a result of this all, I personally have a greater understanding of the challenges many of our Black Millennials are encountering and the challenges they have with the black church. This project has concretely helped to inform the way we are building our church plant, as well as how to communicate with churches that are having difficulty reaching this age group.

Personal Goal Number Two
To Become a Consultant

The pursuit of this project has equipped me to speak about, assist, and educate others about Black Millennials, the culture, the role and necessity of the black church, and how these two can better engage one another. I now have substantiated data and research that lends insights into the culture, perceived

challenges, and possible solutions. Not only do I personally have a greater understanding in this area, but I am able to help others understand too.

Conclusion

This project is a valid work and research done in an area where research lacks. The research that was done adds to the work and provides helpful insights to the Black Millennial generation and their attitudes towards the black church. The five-point Likert scale survey captured the attitudes of the participants and the addition of open-ended answers was very helpful as well. All of this data is helpful in the gathering of information and the gaining of an understanding of this now generation and how churches could effectively reach and engage them. As well, the literature that is available is helpful too. Some of it must be re-interpreted through an African- American lens in order to make it culturally relevant. This project has taught me discipline, focus, and has further brought out a trait in myself that I am just coming into an awareness of- the fear of failing. I pursued the research and writing phase of my project for the last year with such focus, determination, and fervency out of a fear of failing. I feared that if I lost focus, energy, motivation, and momentum, that the process to "get back on the bandwagon" would be too much in the midst of an already full life. I feared not finishing this process, so much that it pushed to be get it done in a year. This process and project has taught me about me.

APPENDIX ONE: PROPOSAL

ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DISCOVER WHY BLACK MILLENIALS ATTEND OR DO NOT ATTEND CHURCH.

A PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

KATHY Y. KINZER-DOWNS

ASHLAND, OHIO

April 13, 2019

The Proposal

A project to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not.

Purpose

The purpose of my project is to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association at a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not.

Overview

I will seek to discover why some Black Millennials of the Black Graduate Student Association a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and some are not going to church. Millennials are defined as individuals who are born between 1981- 1996 (Google, "Defining generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z begins"). It is with this goal insight I seek to discover where our young Black Millennials are in our churches, as well; what is attracting them to the Church and what is pushing them away. I hope to understand how our churches can be reaching Black Millennials better and be effectively ministering to this forgotten group.

I will survey the students through Survey Monkey. Students from the Black Graduate Student Association and Voices of Testimony will all be invited to participate in the survey. These groups have been selected because they have been specific groups on the campus of the University that I have identified with a primary Black

Millennial population. My goal is to obtain a minimum of 30 participants from these two

student groups. All students will be invited to participate in this 5- point Likert Scale

survey. The survey will consist of the following sections: demographics, a section for

those who attend church, a section for those who do not attend church, and an

evaluation of the study. After the survey has been administered, I will collect the data,

collate the data, and lastly analyze the data.

Foundations

This project is meaningful because I have worked with this generation for much

of my life, I have invested in them my entire professional career and I deeply care about

them and the Church as a whole. From my personal experience as a young adult, I

have had many seasons of searching for a "new church." I have experienced a shift in

the church and those who fill the pews. I have seen the pattern of churches that once

were thriving with a youth and young adult population now no longer; while the older

saints of the church are still remaining. This has caused me to question, *"Where are*

*our young people?"; "Why are they going to **this** church, but not **that** church?"; "Are we*

training up another generation?", etc. This topic is dear to me because I wholeheartedly

believe we must address it if we want to see the Black Church remain and thrive. We

must continue reaching a younger generation so that there is a baton to be passed to

for the future generation.

Biblical Foundation

My project is grounded in Luke 15:1-7. This Lukan passage shows us the

immense joy in finding that which was lost or estranged. This parable of the lost sheep

is clustered with two other parables of things being lost and then found. This allows for the themes of joy and celebration to be all the more apparent. Schweizer provides a traditional view of the parable of the Lost Sheep and suggests that the message of joy is the point of the lost sheep narrative (Schweizer 1984, 243). While I can understand the theme of joy as paramount to this narrative, I do not find it to be the exclusive point. I cannot help but to see the dire importance placed on *even one person* among an entire group. The Shepherd finds value in the *one* among a large flock. I do not believe that point and its importance can be negated. While the story of the Lost Sheep is one of three *lost and found* stories, these three parables tell us that in the "divine economy the repentance of sinners is grounds for celebration" (Green 1997, 569). Furthermore, these parables give us theological insight into God's disposition. This perspective is quite important in the examination of those, particularly Black millennials who are not a part of the flock. Green draws an interesting interpretive perspective when he suggests that one may be able to understand this parable as an echoing of Ezekiel 34 (Green 1997, 574). This interpretive perspective suggests because of the unfaithfulness of Israel's leaders to those whom they had been given charge to, it was YHWH himself who would seek out the sheep, rescue them, and care for them. (Green 1997, 574-575). This analysis challenges one to consider the role of the Church/ leaders in their investment into our millennial generation. How have our Shepherds and leaders worked to address and meet the needs of an upcoming generation? Have the leaders in the Body of Christ been mindful of this part of the flock? We must faithfully seek to reach and minister to those at each stage of life and maturation. The Ezekiel passage that Green references is a challenge to the leaders of Israel in that regard. In the same

way, it would be fruitful for us to consider how we are ministering to the Black millennials within our congregation and community, or do we find they are being left out and overlooked.

Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder contributes a non-traditional African- American perspective to the exploration into the Lost and Founds parables that is helpful. We are reminded through Crowder's exploration that "God even goes to the dry, deserted places to redeem one human being" (Crowder 2007, 174). The wilderness is often a place of physical isolation and spiritual maturation (Crowder 2007, 175). Our straying is never out of the reach of God's hand. Crowder's insights help give purpose to our journey through difficult times and desert land. One may draw from her explanation that although we may stray and wander, we are never out of the reach of God and His grasp for us. This too is good and assuring news for those who may not find themselves in the care of the Church or in search of God outside of the local assembly.

Theological Foundation

My project is grounded in Black Liberation Theology. Black theology is Christian theology and is so because it centers on Jesus Christ (Cone 2010, 5). Black theology arises from the need of Blacks to liberate themselves from white oppressors and is a theology of liberation because it arises from an identification with the oppressed blacks of America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in light of the black condition (Cone 2010, 5). James Cone tells us that there are six sources of black theology: *Black Experience, Black History, Black Culture, Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition* (Cone 2010, 24-34). "There can be no black theology which does not take seriously the black experience- a life of humiliation and suffering" (Cone 2010, 24). Black theology is

deeply tied to the black experience because our theology is developed out of our experiences. Our theology is shaped as a result of our experiences. Our blackness shapes our experiences, and our experiences shape our theology. Consequently, the black experience shapes our identity. Our identity then impacts the way we view the world, God, and others. Cone tells us, "Being black is a beautiful experience. It is the sane way of living in an insane environment. Whites do not understand it; they can only catch glimpses of it in sociological reports and historical studies. The black experience is possible only for black persons" (Cone 2010, 26). This mode of theological thought is pertinent to my project because it is for the Black Millennial who has been left out, forgotten, and not valued. A theology of Black Liberation will seek to discover the missing Black millennial in our local churches by seeing where they are and why. This source will be important to examine in further detail and as it relates to the journey of the Black millennial. Black millennials may or may not identify within the Black experience as Cone describes which may shape where our Black millennials are going and where they are not in regards to the local church. Depending on how a Black millennial personally identifies culturally or in regards to their ethnicity, this may impact/ influence the value or importance they place on going to a Black church. While this may not speak to everyone's decision, it certainly may be an influencing factor to some. Focus has been given to the millennial group at large, little focus has been given to our Black millennials. This is an area that is in need of attention and address. A theology of Black Liberation acknowledges this group as valuable, important, and necessary. For centuries, we as a people have been overlooked and ignored. Our identity has been dismantled and attempted to be invalidated and erased. While that is part of history, it

also is a part of our now story. White Christianity still chooses to ignore us as a people

and the specific needs that are present for our community. We must be responsible for

our own needs being met and our own liberation being lived out. What is being done to

proactively reach the next generation, the Millennial age group, let alone our Black

Millennials. If we are not intentional about our outreach and ministry toward them, we

cannot wait or expect anyone else to be. We must care for our people enough to go

after them in the sharing and proclaiming of the Gospel of Jesus, the discipleship, and

in the empowering of them to do the same. A theology of Black Liberation allows us to

address these needs and affirms the reasons why we ought to.

The six sources that Cone discusses are the formative factors and the criterion

that give shape to what we know as *black theology*. Let us explore each of these.

Black Experience. There is no black theology without the true consideration of the black

experience. The black experience has been one that is filled with humiliation and

suffering. "This means that black theology realizes that it is human beings who speak of

God, and when those human beings are black, they speak of God only in light of the black

experience. It is not that black theology denies the importance of God's revelation in

Christ, but blacks want to know what Jesus Christ means when they are confronted with

the brutality of white racism" (Cone, 2010, 24-25). It is black theology that welcomes the

exploration of our human experience and the intersection of faith. It is this view that not

only gives space, but validates the examination of *what does my faith and my God have*

to say about the treatment of black people, the systematic racism of our society, or the

experience of my race? The understanding and exploration of our black experience is

critical to the adaptation of a black theology.

Black History. "Black history refers to the way blacks were brought to this land and the way they have been treated in this land" (Cone, 2010, 27). Black history is not only knowing and understanding what whites did to blacks; it is also about black persons saying no to every act of white brutality. The inclusion of black history as a source of black theology is imperative for our lens of looking at and understanding God- it is evaluated through our history, our past.

Black Culture. Black culture is closely tied to **black history and black experience.** While black history can be thought of as the record of joy and pain; and black experience as "black soul", the pain and joy of reacting to whiteness and affirming blackness (Cone, 2010, 28). "Black culture consists of creative forms of expression as one reflects on history, endures pain, and experiences joy" (Cone, 2010, 28). It is the *voice* that comes through, from the people in many different forms. The cultural expressions sounds like music, poetry, prose, and other art forms. When the church listens to the cultural expression emanating from the black community, they will then be able to hear the heart and need of the community. This will allow for the application of our (black) theology to be appropriately applied to the needs of our community and to speak relevantly to the black condition.

Revelation. Cone tells us, "For black theology, revelation is not just a past event or a contemporary event in which it is difficult to recognize the activity of God. Revelation is a black event- it is what blacks are doing about their liberation" (Cone, 2010, 31). For revelation to be a black event, it pushes us consider the question, *what is God's revelation right now as the black community participates in the struggle for liberation?* We are always looking at our situations both past and present and asking *where is*

God? What is God showing us? What is God saying about this? What is God calling

us to do? How is God calling us to respond? This is revelation as a black event.

Scripture. "Black theology is biblical theology. There can be no theology of the

Christian gospel which does not take into account the biblical witness. It is true that the

Bible is not the revelation of God; only Jesus is. But it is an indispensable witness to

God's revelation and is thus a primary source for Christian thinking about God" (Cone,

2010, 32). It is the Holy Scriptures that give us the foundation on which we stand for a

Black Liberation Theology. It is the model that we follow for God's heart for justice,

Truth, and freedom. It is the accounts through the Word of God that we know that we

are free, God's desire for freedom, and by which we know and find our value.

*Tradition. "*Cone tells us that *tradition* refers to the theological reflection of the church

upon the nature of Christianity from the time of the early church to the present day"

(Cone, 2010, 34). The source of tradition allows us to consider and evaluate the

intersections of Black Christianity, the Gospel of Jesus, and white western Christianity.

These six sources that have been fleshed out are all relevant and directly

interconnected to the black experience. Our experiences as a Christian who is African-

American directly influence the way one hears the Scriptures, engages the Scriptures,

acts upon the Scriptures, understands Jesus, and His mission. Our identity, culture,

tradition, revelation, history, and biblical understanding are a foundation to the person

and soul of an individual. Black millennials are impacted by all these influencers too. It

goes without saying that the millennial generation is one that has and does experience

culture differently because of the culture they have naturally grown up in. While the

culture of the world has changed, our church culture has not always evolved in a way

that would continue to be relevant and meet the needs of an upcoming generation of young people. While some black millennials have an understanding of their identity, culture, and heritage, many do not for they did not have to grow up in the same struggles and plights of our forefathers. Those who have taken on the struggle and made the fight their own are doing so in a way that demonstrates a new era of social justice and civil rights. It can be seen that a generation is missing from the church, perhaps because of churches missing the culture shift that has happened within a new generation. As well, perhaps we have not continued in the education of a new generation about who we are, where we come from, who brought us over, and why that is important.

<div align="center">Historical Foundation</div>

My project is set in the history of the evolution of the role of youth in the Black Church. It goes without saying that youth have played a significant role in the Black church over the centuries. A church without a younger generation is soon to be a dead church. The Black Church has a rich and beautiful history as a prominent institution within the Black family. The Black family and the Black Church have been considered "enduring institutions" in black communities. As a result of that, there has always existed a historical tradition of special caring for young children (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 310). The family unit for the African-American family is one that has endured strain and stress. Due to the existence of slavery and the continual racial oppression thereafter, young children have been put into precarious positions. Lincoln and Mamiya write, "Since young children were often taken away from their mothers and sold as slaves, an informal system of adoption for children and a system of 'fictive kinship' were

developed among black extended families" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 311). The only communal institution in most black urban and rural communities was that of the black church. It was intimately involved in the complex network of black extended families (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 311). The writers are telling us that in a very unique way, the Black church could be found as the epicenter of the family life for the Black family. Not only would it be at the center, it would be a central support system for families, and uniquely children. Families were the cornerstone for black churches and the church was the glue for families and the community. "Parents often times brought their children to church, sometimes even forcing them to go, because they deeply believed that the church would provide a dose of moral education for the children and open up the spiritual dimensions of their lives. Churches also provided Sunday school for children and adults, and for many black people for a long period of time the church was the place where they first began to learn rudimentary reading skills" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 312).

While the Black Church has been a cornerstone within the black family and for the Black community, one must examine the role of youth within the Black Church. Youth were often involved in the life of the black church through the Children's choir, Sunday school, "Children's Day"/ "junior church", etc. Additionally, the church served as a place for young people to meet older adults who could serve as role models for them. This was a valuable asset to our community. There is great power in children seeing adults "living the life they speak about" and observing, evaluating, and emulating behaviors and values of others. While much of a church service was oriented towards

adults, these few areas provided valuable outlets for young people to grow and experience the God they heard about in their homes.

While there have been a few outlets traditionally for young people in our churches, we have continued to see young adults leave the church. Lincoln and Mamiya write, "If any age group tends to be missing in many black churches, it is likely to be the young adult group (ages seventeen to thirty-five)" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 325). Because it is customary in our Black Churches that focal point of the church and the Pastors' effort/attention is invested in the sermon, the attention towards the young people of the church has been neglected.

> Nevertheless, a major problem for many contemporary black churches is the disproportionate focus on their programs and efforts on adults. Black youth, especially young children, became a kind of afterthought in the church's schedule of significant ministry. While Sunday Schools continue as a traditional part of the typical black church, many perform functions more akin to babysitting than education and socialization. Too many pastors do not concern themselves with this aspect of ministry, but tend to delegate the religious education of their youth to someone else. For the vast majority of black pastors, preaching was still seen as their major task. (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 316)

This analysis from Lincoln and Mamiya is very insightful. Their perspective is critical to an understanding of why many of our congregations are missing young adults. It would also naturally be deduced that this has also directly impacted the commitment of Black Millennials of today. Why would Black Millennials be attending church today if they were overlooked in opportunities of investment, education, and discipleship as a child? Even though they may not be attending a church service, they still may be walking with the Lord. As that may be true, the Church must be willing to examine the hard truth of its ownership in leaving a generation behind, and perhaps putting more

energy in preaching a sermon than in raising up a new generation for Jesus Christ. Our history plays an integral part into the plight we face today. Because of the information we know about the history, this ought to inform our actions moving forward.

Context

My project will focus on the Black Millennials from two student organizations on the campus of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio: The Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) and the Voices of Testimony. The Black Graduate Student Association is a student organization that exists to meet the academic, professional, and social needs of Black graduate students. The organization recognizes that graduating with a Master's degree or Ph.D is a top priority. Subsequently, this organization is dedicated to the promotion of academic excellence, mentoring, professional guidance, and social support that will enhance the scholarship of Black graduate students. Most importantly, they plan to use these tools to empower their community and assist with opening doors to higher education to more individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds. It is the hope of the student organization to provide a place of refuge where Black students are encouraged to share ideas, concepts, and frustrations. The BGSA meets once every other month and is comprised of approximately 60 graduate students. The earliest records of the student organization's establishment dates back to the 1970's.

The Voices of Testimony is a gospel choir on campus that seeks to encourage individuals to come together through song. Their mission is to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, while supporting each other spiritually, emotionally, and academically. The Voices of Testimony is made up of undergraduate African American students.

There are twelve students a part of this ministry on campus, two men and ten women. The Voices of Testimony began in 1996 by a student Brydon Glass. Glass began the gospel choir because there was an interest from other students on campus for a ministry like this to exist. The ministry is currently connected to Pastor Glass' current ministry/church, SPAN (Shepherd's Pasture for All Nations church) which is based in the Cleveland Metro area. There are no specific requirements for students to be a part of The Voices of Testimony, except that they are a student of the University. The group meets every Tuesday evening on campus. These two organizations are two of hundreds of student organizations on the campus.

Project Goals

1. To evaluate the secondary literature on the subject matter.
2. To discover why the Black Millennials of a large State University in Northeastern Ohio are going to church and why some are not
3. To evaluate the study

Design, Procedure, and Assessment

1. Design a five-point Likert scale survey.
2. Administer a five point Likert scale survey.
3. Distribute electronically through survey monkey.
4. Collect responses.
5. Evaluate
6. Analyze responses

Assessment will consist of a 5-pt Likert scale survey. The survey will consist of the following sections: demographics, a section for those who attend church, a section for

those who do not attend church, and an evaluation of the study. After the survey has

been administered, I will collect the data, collate the data, and lastly analyze the data.

Personal Goals

1. To understand the culture and needs of Black Millennials in order to be a more effective pastor to them.

2. To become a consultant to assist the Black Church to meet the needs of Black Millennials.

Calendar

1. Proposal: March 2019

2. Begin research: April 2019

3. Administer survey: April 2019

4. Submit Chapters 2 & 3:   May 4, 2019

5. Submit Chapter 4 & 5:   June 2019

6. Final submission of chapters 2-5:   August 2019

7. Submit Chapters 1& 6 for review: October 2019

8. Final submission of Chapters 1 & 6:   November 2019

9. Defend project: March 2020

10. Graduation: May 2020

Core Team

Advisor: William H. Myers, Ph.D

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Director of Doctor of Ministry in Black Church Studies, Ashland Theological Seminary

Academic Consultant:

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Field Consultant:

Rev. Mary L. Buckley, DMin, Ed.D

Resource Person:

Rev. Avery Danage, DMin, Rev. Bryan K. Fleet, DMin, Rev. Shaun Marshall

Support Team

1. Lamont Downs
2. Rev. Dr. Avery Danage
3. Rev. Dr. Marc de Jeu

Life Management

In order to focus on my project, I will direct my attention to only this and church planting. I am currently not working. If at all possible, I will continue to not work, and focus on my writing and church planting. I will work to check in with my team periodically to help me stay balanced, yet focused.

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APPENDIX TWO: ASSESSMENT TOOL

ASSESSMENT

SECTION I: DEMOGRAPHICS

Male _____ Female _____

Age Group: 23-29   _____

                    30-35   _____

                    36-38   _____

                    39 and older   _____

What is your ethnicity (check all that apply):

American Indian or Alaskan Native_____

Asian or Pacific Islander_____

Black or African American_____

Hispanic or Latino_____

White/Caucasian_____

Prefer not to answer_____

Other (please specify)_____

SECTION II: ATTEND CHURCH (ONLY)

1. I am an active member of my church

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

2. I attend church because my emotional needs are being met.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

3. I attend church because my physical needs are being met.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

4. I attend church because I like the ministries.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

5. I attend church because the preaching meets my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

6. I attend church because the music meets my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

7. I attend church because the needs of my children are being met.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

8. I attend church because it financially meets my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

9. I attend church because the teaching meets my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

10. (If applicable) List 2 or 3 reasons why you attend church that are not listed above.

_____

_____

SECTION III: DO NOT ATTEND CHURCH (ONLY)

1. I am not an active member of any church

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

2. I do not attend church because my emotional needs are not being met.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

3. I do not attend church because my physical needs are not being met.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

4. I do not attend church because I do not like the ministries.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

5. I do not attend church because the preaching does not meet my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

6. I do not attend church because the music does not meet my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

7. I do not attend church because the needs of my children are not being met.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

8. I do not attend church because it financially does not meet my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

9. I do not attend church because the teaching does not meet my needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

10. (If applicable) List 2 or 3 reasons why you do not attend church that are not listed above.

SECTION III: EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

1. This study allowed me to freely express all of my opinions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

2. This study will be helpful in attracting and retaining Black Millennials within the Church..

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

3. This study will be helpful to meet the needs of Black Millennials.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

4. This study has the potential to help other churches who have difficulty reaching and keeping Black Millennials.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX THREE: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Open-Ended Question: The open-ended question requested the participants to list any reason why they attend church that is not found in the Likert-scale questions. (All are single answers)

I attend church because…..:

1. "I love God and I see value in gathering together with other believers"

2. "Social and spiritual gathering"

3. "To worship and pray for myself and others. Family, friends, and loved ones. Knowing that God provides and deliver at all times".

4. "I was born in this church."

5. "The is Family, My Pastor is Personable, The Ministries are relevant.".

6. "It helps me mentally."

7. "I attend church because I want to grow in my relationship with Christ and a part of doing that is fellowshipping with other believers."

8. "I attend church because I know that I NEED to be in the presence of other believers."

9. "I love the fellowship with members and the sistership that it creates in my life. I also attend church because it keeps me spiritually grounded and focused."

10. "Because of my responsibilities at the ministry and my devotion to God."

11. "Because it's important to my well-being and culture."

12. "I don't regularly attend church."

13. "To help change the community."

14. "They are friendly mans it's more at home."

15. "Fellowship with others."

16. "Peers"

17. "Friendships, Cultural Affinity"

18. "To be in the Lord's house and hear his word."

19. "I'm lost without it."

20. "Supportive community, volunteer opportunities, ability to invest in the next generation and other relationships."

21. "I attend church for the fellowship and positive interactions."

22. "A caring pastor and First Lady, the freedom to be yourself."

23. "I attend church to better understand the word of God and to fellowship with other believers."

24. "Part of my purpose and to serve the Lord."

25. "Assist family, serve, fellowship with others."

26. "My church family is important to me. I enjoy being involved and working for the Lord!"

27. "I attend because my spiritual needs are met, and because I am a licensed minister."

28. "Tradition, familiarity, networking."

SURVEY RESULTS FOR OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

I do not attend church because…..:

1. "I do not attend church because of time, feeling comfortable that there are people like me, the attire expected and the expectation of knowing words to songs/prayers."

2. "The people within different churches are very judgmental and hypocritical with their own actions."

3. "I discovered that I did not want to be Christian anymore."

4. "I watch service online. I do not attend a physical church where I live now for school because I have yet to find a church that feels like home/ feel connected and want to attend."

5. "I don't have the time. There are no good Black Churches near me."
6. "Too clique-ish"

7. "Finding a church home in a new city and actually getting up to go."

8. "Many times the reasons people attend church have nothing to do with the word and the atmosphere takes away from the reason I wish to attend."

9. "I am not interested in the cultural expectations associated with attending church."

10. "Commercialism"

11. "Time to go and length of services and obligations."

12. "Religion is more rule based than faith based; that deters a lot of young adults. My religious needs require a more spiritual approach."

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