



### **Episode 047: The Millennial Factor: Embracing the Potential of a New Generation Part 1 - Emma Brewster**

Emma Brewster serves as an advisor to SIM International and lives in Cape Town, South Africa. She is the Ministry Point Person for Engaging Universities Globally. Emma is passionate about taking the gospel to all parts of the university community – students, academics and support staff.

***Tell us a little bit about yourself and your work to engage universities.***

- I've been involved in engaging university since I was in university. Our greatest desire is to go where the church is not, in the context of the university context. This involves working in lots of different capacities such as student ministries, running a coffee shop, teaching ESL or placing Christian lecturers into a university context.
- It's exciting and at times quite awe inspiring. It's important to think of the whole university.

***Today we want to focus on engaging millennials. Some of us are concerned and interested and hoping to do an excellent job of welcoming a new generation of workers into global missions. Part of that is understanding young people. Can we start by defining or describing what we mean when we say millennials?***

- There are lots of different definitions but the most popular is anyone born between 1984 and 2002 – we're looking at people mostly in their twenties but also teenagers and young thirties.
- A key characteristic is that they are very relational beings – they are a group where technology is their bread and butter – it isn't learnt, it's just there.
- Being relational, they're a group that want to do things together – there's little sense of wanting to be on their own. They want to be involved with others.
- They want to be involved in something that brings impact, purpose and significance.

***Do you find this to be a gracious generality around the world or how does the characterization of millennials differ around the globe?***

- Yes, I think it's accurate across the board. What it looks like or how it's expressed might differ and the pressures might differ based on their background.



- There's a lot written on millennials from a Western perspective and I'd like to see more written from other perspectives.
- But we do live in a global village – because of technology they are similar.

***Let's talk about four different aspect of millennials in missions:***

***Finances – How do Millennials think about finances?***

- It's always the first question they ask because it is an important one. Many millennials have a lot of debt coming out of university and college. How they're going to survive in our more expensive world is forefront in their minds.
- We need to be creative in how to address finances in missions so that it isn't hindering them from going.

***Training – How does training a millennial differ from other generations?***

- We can often feel like millennials think they have all the answers, but really, they are hungry for training. They want to be invested in and given opportunities to try out their skills.
- They want to be equipped for all the different aspects they'll encounter overseas.
- A millennial is training for life – for them they want to be learning and growing and training for life but not necessarily in the classroom. They want hands-on training.
- They admit that they don't know it all, but they *want* to know it all.

***Inclusive-ism – How does this factor into how they work and see the world?***

- They want to include everybody – they don't want anyone to feel excluded or undervalued.
- We need to think through what it looks like to have a diverse group that values everyone equally and gives everyone the opportunity to grow and learn.
- They are very multi-cultural.

***Oxymoron – What contradictions do other generations see in millennials?***

- I think there are a lot of contradictions when it comes to millennials.
- They want independence but they want support.
- They want to be individuals while still working as a part of a team.
- They want instant gratification and thus they might give up at the first sign of struggle but they also want security.
- They are hungry for a life balance whereas the generation that comes ahead of them might be too focused on the work. Life balance is very important for millennials – they want to excel at work, at family and at friendships.



***Our producer is a millennial – Rebecca, do you feel like what we're talking about here is on track?***

- Yes. I think it's helpful to give voice to those characteristics. Many of them are positive and it's helpful to be able to better understand how we, as millennials, view the world is helpful for both us and for the other generations we work with.

***As Christ followers, we are called to be disciple makers regardless of our generation. Are there particular aspects of cross cultural ministry that you see appealing to the millennial generation?***

- Being relational is very important as well as the desire to be on a team. To be able to go with a group of friends is important.
- What they do in cross-cultural ministry – they need to know the why. They aren't going to do it just because it needs to be done.
- I think this is why they are more drawn to compassion ministries and justice and reconciliation.
- I feel an optimism for millennials in missions – these things you're describing compliment the ministry that is being done. We need relationship to take the gospel to the world.
- I think there are a lot of common characteristics that are valued by all generations – it's the how that differs – they type of support, the ways they go about building relationships, their passion for technology, etc.

***Are there aspects of how agencies and churches are working today that creates friction with millennials?***

- I think sometimes for mission agencies, there is a sense of boxes that we must tick and whether it's what work they are going to be doing or in terms of skill sets we're looking for, we can be too 'in the box' whereas for them it's broader than that. They are thinking in lots of different areas and they're thinking outside the box. They want to be creative and bring their ideas to the floor.
- I think millennials wince when they see long 'to-do lists.' They want to be part of the brainstorming process, rather than just manual labor.
- They aren't task-oriented or task-driven.
- Sometimes we need to be patient in listening to all their ideas – often they just want to brainstorm and some of those ideas might be unrealistic, but as you begin to explore and unpack, it becomes clearer for them which ideas we should run with.

***Are there any other friction points worthy of noting?***

- There are different struggles that millennials have with opposition to change and to organizations and ideas of how to do ministry being traditional. Their creative ideas get stunted and this causes them to quickly drop out of a ministry.
- Another area is the role of short term versus long term. Non-millennials can view short term as non-committal and you're only properly in ministry if you invest for the long term. As far as millennials are concerned, they only think about six months down the road but this doesn't mean that they won't do cross cultural ministry for six months and end up staying for six years. Or it might mean that they move onto something else – it's not a lack of commitment, it's just how millennials function.



- Finances is a big thing – often if you're going off to be a missionary you must raise money to go but for many the actual debt that many millennials are carrying currently can inhibit them from being able to go with current agencies.

***Tune into Part 2 in two weeks!***

