

Reaching the 20Somethings

Quick: Who are you trying to reach?

Please don't say "everyone." If you are crafting a strategy to reach "everyone," you are virtually guaranteed to reach "no one." Think of light. Light that is diffused does very little in terms of penetration. Focus it through a magnifying glass and you can set something on fire. Focus it into a laser and you can cut through sheet metal.

So let's get focused on who we are trying to reach for maximum impact.

First, if we really are talking about outreach, then you are not after the already convinced. So let's rule them out. Let's rule out the de-churched, too. Sure, they should be in a church, but they are already believers.

Let's be hardcore.

Which means we're talking about the unchurched unbeliever. The raw meat for evangelism. The testosterone for the mission. The person far from God. The one who doesn't give much thought, if any, to Jesus, to heaven and hell, and certainly not to a church.

But we're still not done.

Who is the average person in this category?

A 26-year-old. Yes, 26. Right now in the United States, 26-year-olds are the largest single cohort, numbering 4.8 million. And just in case you want to know, 25-, 27- and 24-year-olds follow close behind (in that order).

They live on the cusp of many of life's most defining moments: choosing a career, buying a house and having children.

But there is a challenge.

They need remedial education in... well... almost everything. Take a cue from the marketplace, which is, as usual, ahead of the church on such matters. As reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, "The Scotts Miracle-Gro Co. has started offering gardening lessons for young homeowners that cover basic tips – really, really basic – like making sure sunlight can reach plants."

Jim King, senior vice president of corporate affairs for Scotts, said: "These are simple things we wouldn't have really thought to do or needed to do 15 to 20 years ago. But this is a group who may not have grown up putting their hands in the dirt growing their vegetable garden in mom and dad's backyard."

This shouldn't be a surprise for a generation with "over-scheduled childhoods, tech-dependent

lifestyles and delayed adulthood." They are so different, in fact, "that companies are developing new products, overhauling marketing and launching educational programs—all with the goal of luring the archetypal 26-year-old."

So companies such as Scotts, Home Depot Inc., Proctor & Gamble Co., Williams-Sonoma Inc's West Elm and the Sherwin-Williams Co. "are hosting classes and online tutorials to teach such basic skills as how to mow the lawn, use a tape measure, mop a floor, hammer a nail and pick a paint color."

In other words, they need the education before they can even begin to consider a purchasing decision.

Or even a purchasing need.

I hope you smell the application coming.

If you want to reach a 26-year-old unchurched unbeliever, you will need to go remedial. The heart of evangelism, and the apologetics that softens the ground for evangelism, will have to pay fresh attention to explanation.

For example, we did a series titled, "How to Bible." As in, how to read it, how to apply it and how to believe it. Right now we are in a series called "[Thru the Bible in 7 Weeks](#)." It's an overview of all the big themes and ideas of the Bible, including introductions to all 66 books. In today's climate, it's critical to offer the most basic of introductions to the identity and nature of Jesus, Trinity, grace, prayer and sin. Beyond theology, when it comes to a relationship with God, there needs to be practical attention paid to such practices as prayer, worship and community.

Remember, you are trying to reach a 26-year-old who needs remedial education on all things in life, and this includes the spiritual.

Give it to them.

And then watch how your newly focused outreach to the unchurched actually starts reaching them.

> [Read more from James Emery White](#).
