

## Discipleship and the Digital Native

Barry Hill of Bright Salt Media Labs, taught this class. He defined the younger generations (at least, younger than this Baby Boomer!) according to when they were born. Generation X was born from 1969 through 1976, Generation Y was born from 1977 through 1994, and Generation Z was born from 1995 through 2012. These generations will be referred to as “GenXYZers.”

In John 10:10, it says that sheep recognize Jesus’ voice. Whose voice are GenXYZers listening to? These youth spend an average of 9 hours each day with media and only 6 – 7 hours sleeping each day. Marketers are well aware of the habits, wishes, wants and perceived needs of these generations and are catering to them through digital media. Snap Chat and You Tube are used more than any other digital media. This group has an average of an 8-second attention span, likes storytelling and visual displays. The brain function is actually changing, as seen in these youth. A magazine is seen as an iPad that is broken. We watched a video clip of a one-year old using an iPad and then a magazine. The youngster touched the magazine pictures, swiped them, and when nothing happened, swept the magazine aside.

What are we as churches to do with this information? Studying the analytics on social media sites, such as Facebook, will give us insight. Use the information gleaned from the analytics to see what is being seen and to do more of what is working. This may look like less programming, but more “programs” in formats that are being viewed by GenXYZers the most. This could be a virtual Bible study on the church website or a video with a Biblical message on You Tube. Utilizing the subject line of emails to dispense information or encouraging “likes” and “shares” on Facebook gets the posts out to friends and family exponentially.

Churches need to do more of what is speaking to GenXYZers, like marketers are doing. Digital formats and social media are speaking to GenXYZers, and they are listening. We (the church) can do that too!