

# 8 Disruptive Church Trends That Will Rule 2021

The Rise of the Post-Pandemic Church



# Introduction

- Having been through a year like no other, what can we expect in 2021?
- In all likelihood, this year will lead the church into the post-pandemic world.
- IT WILL NOT BE THE LIGHT SWITCH WE HOPE FOR – AND SUDDENLY WE’RE ALL BACK!
- Instead...
  - Gradual emergence into whatever normalized might look like

# Introduction

- The question is – What kind of new reality will emerge?
  - NO “back to normal”
  - NO “new steady state” – NOT coming
  - Normal is emergent, uncertain, diverse. NOT controllable.
  
- It will be a different world, for sure.

# Trend #1

- The Majority of Attenders May No Longer Be In the Room

# Trend #1

- Physical church attendance in decline for years
- Covid accelerated the decline
- Average church has re-open attendance at 36% of previous levels
- How do you handle anyone who engages the message or mission outside the facility?

# Trend #1

- People who are engaging from home or other places count just as much as those attending in a facility.
- The # of people participating in the mission who are not in the building on Sunday will surpass the number of people participating in the building.

# Trend #1

- If you can be good with the fact that micro-gatherings, distributed gatherings, and people watching from home, then you can mobilize those people in the same way you would people who are in your building.

## Trend #2

- **Growing Churches Will Shift Their Focus From Gathering to Connecting**

# Trend #2

- Historically, the church has wagered almost everything on gathering people in a building.
- This year, however, growing churches will focus less on gathering and much more on connecting.
- Connecting people who are engaging from home both with the church and with one another will become an essential skill for all church leaders.
- **If coming to Christ means coming to your church in a set location and a set hour, you need a new strategy. Growing churches will focus less on gathering and much more on connecting.**

# Trend #2

- The easiest way to think about this is the same way church leaders have thought about small groups for the last 25 years.
- Almost no church leader today feels threatened by the fact that hundreds or thousands of people will be meeting in their homes to connect with other people. The church facilitates groups but doesn't host them in a centralized facility.
- Instead, leaders simply connect people who want to be connected and engage them in the mission.

# Trend #2

- This is where the potential for Sunday morning starts to move it to the new direction.
- Small groups by nature tend to be closed and intimate. Gathering in peoples' homes and outside the building on Sunday morning (or off Sunday) would consist of micro-churches that are outward focused. Think of groups, but with an evangelism thrust.
- The good news is that this scales in a way that gathered worship doesn't. It costs less and produces far more.

# Trend #2

- **Gathering people on Sunday mornings will be as important as ever. It just won't all happen in a building owned by the church.**

## Trend #3

- Some Pastors Will Try to Fill Auditoriums While Others Focus on Fulfilling The Mission

# Trend #3

- Some Pastors Will Try To Fill Auditoriums Whole Others Focus on Fulfilling The Mission
- As a result, the natural tendency is to ignore Trends 1 and 2 and focus on filling up auditoriums again once everything is fully open.
- That might create a short term win but result in a longer term loss and missed opportunity. After all, for most leaders filling rooms was getting harder long before the pandemic.

## Trend #3

- So, what's underneath the obsession about filling auditoriums?
- Often, arguments include things like, "Christians can't forsake getting together" or "we have to gather in community." That's deeply true.

# Trend #3

- I've seen that in my feed, too. I also haven't seen it mentioned that in the same poll, low income earners, young adults and single people fared better than others. No one mentioned political findings, either.
- **At stake here is a full room versus a fulfilled mission.**
- **In the future, leaders who only focus on filling a room will miss the biggest opportunity they have to fulfill their mission.**
- If the size of your vision shrinks to the size of a room you can fill, you've missed the church's mission.

# Trend #3

- **As much as they make for great pics and make you feel better about yourself, full rooms do not guarantee a fulfilled mission.**
- What's under all this? Let me quote a text a friend sent to me recently:
- *It would be interesting to know whether pastors value in-person attendance more than distributed attendance or online attendance.*
- *My feed had a lot of pastors quoting the stat that showed only people who attend in person saw improved mental health in 2020.*
- *Personally, I saw that as very self-serving and a bit dangerous as in "see, you need to come back to the building like I said you should..."*

## Trend #4

- **Growing Churches Will See the Internet and Their Buildings Differently**

# Trend #4

- So, what do you do with your building? Great question!
- You use it to equip people, not just gather them. Yes, people will gather in your building. And that's awesome.
- For too many years, pastors have been focused on one thing: Getting the greatest number of people in the room at the same time.
- Sometimes that's about ministry. Sometimes (honestly) it's about ego. Most pastors will confess to both.

# Trend #4

- The church facilities of the future will be places where people assemble to be equipped to do ministry during the 8
- The difference is most of the people you're equipping won't be in the room. You may be speaking to them from the room, but they'll be in their homes, in their cars, at work and in the community.
- Right now, most pastors are using church online to get people into the building. In the future, most pastors will use the building to reach people online.

## Trend #4

- Just because they're not attending doesn't mean they aren't engaged or in community. They can and will gather outside a church building.
- **In the future, churches that equip Christians will eclipse churches that gather them.**

## Trend #5

- Content Alone Won't Cut It. Community and Connectivity Will.

# Trend #5

- Rush in 2020 was to get content online.
  - What do we mean by content?
  - Was this completely natural and appropriate?
    - Why?

# Trend #5

- Some people are feeling “Zoomed out” or “Screened out”
  - Why?
  - Has the spike in screen time been a shock to your system?
  - Do you feel personally screened out?

# Trend #5

If you think people are screened out, run your theory by TikTok or Instagram. Apparently, people aren't nearly as done with screens as church leaders think.

## Trend #5

Does content matter?

# Trend #5

YES!  
WHY?

## Trend #5

Because sharing the  
Word of God  
matters...immensely.

## Trend #5:

- However, many Christians now realize they can watch or listen to their favorite preachers, content creators, and voices in the world any time for free. So, they do.

Trend #5

And what happens?

## Trend #5

We try to equal or match the exceptionally gifted and skilled communicators out there. Not a winning strategy because you won't be able to compete.

## Trend #5

GROWING CHURCHES WILL REALIZE  
THAT CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY  
WILL WIN OUT OVER CONTENT IN THE  
END.

## Trend #5

**NOBODY SHOULD BE ABLE TO OUT-  
CONNECTION OR OUT-COMMUNITY  
THE LOCAL CHURCH.**

## Trend #5

- Absolutely the best content you can, but make the goal connecting people.
- When you provide connection, it will provide a loyalty and sense of tribe that people can't get elsewhere.

## Trend #5

**THEREFORE, MAKE THE GOAL  
OF DIGITAL CONTENT  
CONNECTION AND NOT  
CONSUMPTION**

## Trend #6:

- Generational Differences Will Become Clearer Than Ever.

## Trend #6:

- 71% of Boomers preferred physical worship
- 41% of Gen Z preferred physical worship

## Trend #6:

Everyone other than Boomers had a preference for hybrid or digital gatherings.

## Trend #6:

- Are attitudes about worship, racial justice, sexuality, economics, and even things like climate change morphing?

## Trend #6:

- Does it change core Christian theology?

Trend #6:

**NO!**

**Then what does it  
mean?**

Trend #6:

**WISE LEADERS WILL THINK  
ABOUT THEIR TONE AND  
APPROACH**

## Trend #6:

If you want to get a sense of how dialogue is changing, read “UnChristian” by Kinnaman & Lyon or “Faith For Exiles: 5 Ways for A New Generation to Follow Jesus” by Kinnaman & Matlock

# Which Generation Are You?

Generation Name	Births Start	Births End	Youngest Age Today*	Oldest Age Today*
The Lost Generation The Generation of 1914	1890	1915	106	131
The Interbellum Generation	1901	1913	108	120
The Greatest Generation	1910	1924	97	111
The Silent Generation	1925	1945	76	96
Baby Boomer Generation	1946	1964	57	76
Generation X (Baby Bust)	1965	1979	42	56
Xennials	1975	1985	36	46
Millennials, Generation Y, Gen Next	1980	1994	27	41
iGen/Gen Z	1995	2012	9	26
Gen Alpha	2013	2025	1	8

(\*age if still alive today)

## Trend #6:

**LEADERS TODAY MUST  
UNDERSTAND THE EMERGING  
CULTURE, ITS LANGUAGE AND  
ITS VALUES**

<b>FIVE ERAS OF CHURCH GROWTH 1940-2020</b>	
	<b>Wartime Revival (1940-1960)</b>
<b>Church Identity</b>	Teaching center with promotion of national ideals is a community institution
<b>Ministry Philosophy</b>	More is more
<b>Attraction Driver</b>	Prominent option
<b>Rally Cry</b>	We are the best church in town
<b>Evangelism Paradigm</b>	Disciple as audience
<b>Worship Promise</b>	Provide unity
<b>Connection Vehicle</b>	Fraternal organization
<b>Retention Method</b>	Community service
<b>Maturity Model</b>	Christian citizen

From: "Future Church" by Will Mancini and Cory Hartman"

<b>FIVE ERAS OF CHURCH GROWTH 1940-2020</b>		
	<b>Wartime Revival (1940-1960)</b>	<b>Golden Era of Denominationalism (1960-1980)</b>
<b>Church Identity</b>	Teaching center with promotion of national ideals is a community institution	<b>Teaching center with doctrinal legitimacy and membership in a familiar faith family</b>
<b>Ministry Philosophy</b>	More is more	<b>More is more</b>
<b>Attraction Driver</b>	Prominent option	<b>Heritage option</b>
<b>Rally Cry</b>	We are the best church in town	<b>We are the best church in the tribe</b>
<b>Evangelism Paradigm</b>	Disciple as audience	<b>Disciple as representative</b>
<b>Worship Promise</b>	Provide unity	<b>Provide liturgy</b>
<b>Connection Vehicle</b>	Fraternal organization	<b>Sunday school</b>
<b>Retention Method</b>	Community service	<b>Full service</b>
<b>Maturity Model</b>	Christian citizen	<b>Program activity</b>

From: "Future Church" by Will Mancini and Cory Hartman"

<b>FIVE ERAS OF CHURCH GROWTH 1940-2020</b>			
	<b>Wartime Revival (1940-1960)</b>	<b>Golden Era of Denominationalism (1960-1980)</b>	<b>New Permission Era (1980-2000)</b>
<b>Church Identity</b>	Teaching center with promotion of national ideals is a community institution	Teaching center with doctrinal legitimacy and membership in a familiar faith family	Teaching center with applicable truth and ministry involvement at church
<b>Ministry Philosophy</b>	More is more	More is more	Less is more
<b>Attraction Driver</b>	Prominent option	Heritage option	Relevant option
<b>Rally Cry</b>	We are the best church in town	We are the best church in the tribe	We are the best church for the times
<b>Evangelism Paradigm</b>	Disciple as audience	Disciple as representative	Disciple as inviter
<b>Worship Promise</b>	Provide unity	Provide liturgy	Provide relevance
<b>Connection Vehicle</b>	Fraternal organization	Sunday school	Small group
<b>Retention Method</b>	Community service	Full service	Customer service
<b>Maturity Model</b>	Christian citizen	Program activity	Assimilation funnel

From: "Future Church" by Will Mancini and Cory Hartman"

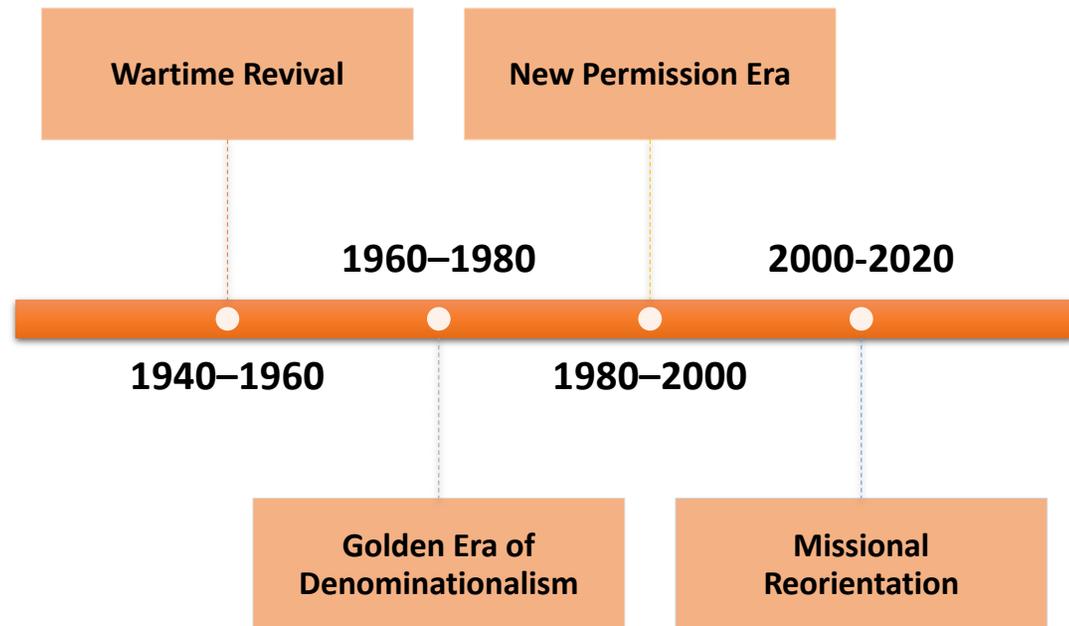
<b>FIVE ERAS OF CHURCH GROWTH 1940-2020</b>				
	<b>Wartime Revival (1940-1960)</b>	<b>Golden Era of Denominationalism (1960-1980)</b>	<b>New Permission Era (1980-2000)</b>	<b>Missional Reorientation (2000-2020)</b>
<b>Church Identity</b>	Teaching center with promotion of national ideals is a community institution	Teaching center with doctrinal legitimacy and membership in a familiar faith family	Teaching center with applicable truth and ministry involvement at church	Teaching center with mindset shift to be the church not just go to church
<b>Ministry Philosophy</b>	More is more	More is more	Less is more	Out is more
<b>Attraction Driver</b>	Prominent option	Heritage option	Relevant option	Community Option
<b>Rally Cry</b>	We are the best church in town	We are the best church in the tribe	We are the best church for the times	We are the best church for the city
<b>Evangelism Paradigm</b>	Disciple as audience	Disciple as representative	Disciple as inviter	Disciple as missionary
<b>Worship Promise</b>	Provide unity	Provide liturgy	Provide relevance	Provide encounter
<b>Connection Vehicle</b>	Fraternal organization	Sunday school	Small group	Missional community
<b>Retention Method</b>	Community service	Full service	Customer service	City service
<b>Maturity Model</b>	Christian citizen	Program activity	Assimilation funnel	Living sent

From: "Future Church" by Will Mancini and Cory Hartman"

<b>FIVE ERAS OF CHURCH GROWTH 1940-2020</b>					
	<b>Wartime Revival (1940-1960)</b>	<b>Golden Era of Denominationalism (1960-1980)</b>	<b>New Permission Era (1980-2000)</b>	<b>Missional Reorientation (2000-2020)</b>	<b>Future Church (2020-2040)</b>
<b>Church Identity</b>	Teaching center with promotion of national ideals is a community institution	Teaching center with doctrinal legitimacy and membership in a familiar faith family	Teaching center with applicable truth and ministry involvement at church	Teaching center with mindset shift to be the church not just go to church	Training center where disciple making is expected of everyone
<b>Ministry Philosophy</b>	More is more	More is more	Less is more	Out is more	To be is more
<b>Attraction Driver</b>	Prominent option	Heritage option	Relevant option	Community Option	Training Option
<b>Rally Cry</b>	We are the best church in town	We are the best church in the tribe	We are the best church for the times	We are the best church for the city	We are the best church for your calling
<b>Evangelism Paradigm</b>	Disciple as audience	Disciple as representative	Disciple as inviter	Disciple as missionary	Disciple as reproducer
<b>Worship Promise</b>	Provide unity	Provide liturgy	Provide relevance	Provide encounter	Provide integration
<b>Connection Vehicle</b>	Fraternal organization	Sunday school	Small group	Missional community	Microgroup
<b>Retention Method</b>	Community service	Full service	Customer service	City service	Vocational service
<b>Maturity Model</b>	Christian citizen	Program activity	Assimilation funnel	Living sent	Multiplying practice

From: "Future Church" by Will Mancini and Cory Hartman"

Eighty years



## Trend #7:

- The Political And Ideological Churches Will Lose Influence With The Unchurched

## Trend #7:

- During 2020 some churches have become political and ideological

## Trend #7:

- Sometimes, like-minded people become angry and self-righteous [both are characteristics of the political right and left].

Trend #7:

**UNCHURCHED PEOPLE AREN'T  
LOOKING FOR AN ECHO OF THE  
CULTURE, THEY'RE SEEKING AN  
ALTERNATIVE TO IT.**

## Trend #7:

- **UNCHURCHED PEOPLE AREN'T LOOKING FOR POLITICS OR IDEOLOGY. THEY'RE LOOKING FOR CHRIST.**

## Trend #8:

- Spiritual Entrepreneurs Will Thrive

## Trend #8:

- Leaders who see **opportunities** instead of **obstacles** will thrive.

## Trend #8:

- Leaders who see **opportunities** instead of **obstacles** will thrive.

# **The Disturbing Prayer**

**Disturb us, O Lord,**

**When we are too well pleased  
with ourselves**

**When our dreams have come true  
Because we have dreamed too  
little;**

**When we arrived in safety  
Because we sailed too close to  
shore.**

**Disturb us, O Lord,**

**When with the abundance of things we possess**

**We have our thirst for the water of life**

**When having fallen in love with time**

**We have ceased in our efforts to build the New  
Earth**

**We have allowed our vision of the New Heaven  
to grow dim.**

# **The Disturbing Prayer**

**Stir us, O Lord,**

**To dare more boldly,**

**To venture on wider seas**

**Where storms shall show Thy  
mastery.**

**Where we lose sight of land**

**We shall find shore.**



**In the Name of Him...**

**Who pushed back the horizons of our hopes  
And invited the brave to follow Him.**

**Amen.**

## Trend #8:

- What's missing in most churches?

## Trend #8:

- Spiritual  
Entrepreneurship.
- ???????

## Trend #8:

- In the New Testament, this is called Apostleship.
- We look to the Apostle Paul for:
  - Radical determination, innovation, and fierceness

## Trend #8: Spiritual Entrepreneurs Will Thrive

Radical determination,  
innovation, and fierceness

Does the above describe most  
people inside churches today?

## Trend #8:

- The church today is filled with shepherds. Perhaps even over-represented.
- More spiritual entrepreneurs – less shepherds.

## Trend #8:

- What we need is a new generation of Apostle Pauls who forge out in new directions...who experiment boldly...who dare gently.

## Trend #8:

**SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEURS ARE THE KIND OF LEADERS WHO WILL FIND TOMORROW'S SOLUTIONS WHEN MOST LEADERS CAN ONLY SEE TODAY'S PROBLEMS.**

## Trend #8:

- We need leaders who will take their God-given talents and energy and throw them full-time behind the mission of the church.

## Trend #8:

**SOME OF THE IDEAS THAT WILL  
EVENTUALLY BECOME EMBRACED  
FIVE YEARS INTO THE FUTURE ARE  
BEING BIRTHED RIGHT NOW.**

## Trend #8:

A LOT OF THE IDEAS FOR CHURCH  
YOU'LL SEE IN 2021 WILL BE  
DENOUNCED AND DISMISSED... UNTIL  
THEY'RE NOT.

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 1. THINK BIG

- Too many churches die of small thinking: *We don't have enough, it won't happen, stop dreaming, who will pay for it, that's plenty for now.*
- *Spiritual Entrepreneurs think big. They dream of what could be, not of what is and they see opportunity in every obstacle.*
- **LEADERS WHO SERVE AN INFINITE GOD SHOULDN'T HAVE THEIR IMAGINATIONS DEADENED BY SMALL THINKING!**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 2. BELIEVE GOD CAN

- Spiritual Entrepreneurs would agree with Henry Ford who said, "Whether you believe you can or whether you believe you can't, you're right."
- Before you dismiss this as positive thinking, remember Jesus couldn't perform many miracles in His hometown because of people's lack of faith. Then, He walked on water and fed 5,000 because people in these communities had faith.
- *Spiritual Entrepreneurs believe God can. And they see Him do it.*
- **GOD CREATED AMAZING THINGS OUT OF NOTHING. WHY DO WE THINK HE WON'T DO THE SAME FOR HIS CHURCH?**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 3. SEE ABUNDANCE. NOT SCARCITY

- Give a dying church \$10,000 and they'll think they're broke and need to conserve it
- Give \$10,000 to a spiritual entrepreneur and they'll see it as seed money to start something big
- *To a dying church, having only 5 leaders is defeat. To a spiritual entrepreneur, it's a start.*
- **SAME FACTS. DIFFERENT MINDSET. ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING.**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 4. THINK VISION FIRST. RESOURCES SECOND.

- So, what comes first? Vision or resources?
- *Spiritual entrepreneurs are very comfortable with the reality that vision precedes resources.*
- *Casting a big vision (a solid, on-mission vision) will often lead to significant resources down the road.*
- **WAITING FOR BIG RESOURCES SO YOU CAN HAVE A VISION IS A RECIPE FOR DEATH.**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 5. INVEST IN PERSONAL AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT

- Spiritual entrepreneurs aren't crazy spenders, but they see a key distinction between an expense and an investment.
- *They realize that going to conferences, networking with other leaders, buying books, and doing whatever it takes to make themselves and their team better is an investment.*
- *Sure, there are limits, but smart spiritual entrepreneurs will often spend a minimum of 10% of all the money they receive making themselves and their team better.*
- **SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEURS SEE PERSONAL AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT AS INVESTMENTS, NOT EXPENSES**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 6. BELIEVE THIS IS BIGGER THAN YOU

- Spiritual entrepreneurs aren't crazy spenders, but they see a key distinction between an expense and an investment.
- *Of all the criticisms levied at spiritual entrepreneurs, the most common is often that they have big egos and it's all about them.*
- *Sometimes that's true. But most often it's not.*
- **BIG VISION DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY EQUAL A BIG EGO**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 7. SHIP FIRST, IMPROVE LATER

- Perfectionists make terrible entrepreneurs.
- If you haven't shipped on your vision yet because you're waiting for ideal conditions or the perfect result, you'll wait forever.
- *Big churches never started big. They usually started very humbly. But because they are led by spiritual entrepreneurs, those entrepreneurs at every stage made the most of whatever they had.*
- **SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEURS CAN LAUNCH A GROWING CHURCH IN A DYING BUILDING WITH LITTLE MONEY. THEN THEY MAKE ALL THE IMPROVEMENTS LATER AS FACILITIES AND RESOURCES GROW.**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 8. ARE FINE WITH AMBIGUITY

- Ask a spiritual entrepreneur how they're going to do it, and the #1 answer is "I don't know. We're just going to do it."
  - There's something powerful in that.
  - **IF YOU HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT BEFORE YOU LAUNCH IT, YOUR VISION ISN'T BIG ENOUGH.**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 9. WILL RISK IT ALL WITHOUT GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS

- Too many leaders hope for some kind of guarantee.
- Spiritual entrepreneurs are okay with that.
- Most spiritual entrepreneurs want to die trying. Usually, they don't die trying, but the fact that they're willing to is crucial.
- Ironically, if a spiritual entrepreneur has a solid plan that's on mission, they usually don't fail.
- **RISK BRINGS NO GUARANTEES BECAUSE IT'S RISK. YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO FAIL TO TRULY SUCCEED.**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 10. NEVER WAIT FOR CONSENSUS

- Too many churches will only move forward if there is consensus. That's a critical mistake.
- Consensus kills courage. By the time you have consensus, ideas are so watered down they aren't worthy of the committee that put them together
- Spiritual entrepreneurs rarely act alone (at least the smart ones don't).
- **THEY'RE READY TO MOVE AHEAD WITH A GROUP OF EARLY ADOPTERS KNOWING MOST WILL EVENTUALLY BUY INTO WHATEVER IS BEING PROPOSED ONCE THEY SEE IT WORKING.**

## 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

### 11. LET THE CRITICS TALK WHILE YOU ACT

- The critics will always talk. Spiritual entrepreneurs know this.
- They don't get weighed down by critics who criticize what others do and do little themselves.
- How do you respond to the critics? By acting.
- **JUST ACT WHILE THE CRITICS TALK. YOU'LL ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING. THEY WON'T.**

# 12 SIGNS YOU'RE A SPIRITUAL ENTREPRENEUR

## 12. BREAK RULES

- Quite obviously, you should never break biblical rules. And the great spiritual entrepreneurs never do. Their character is solid.
- But you're going to absolutely need to break some human rules if you're going to disrupt the status quo.
- Innovation always breaks rules. Why?
- **INNOVATION NEVER ASKS FOR PERMISSION. IT JUST INNOVATES.**

Trend #8: Spiritual Entrepreneurs Will Thrive

**MOST NEW APPROACHES  
WILL GET MORE CRITICISM  
THAN PRAISE.**

## Trend #8: Spiritual Entrepreneurs Will Thrive

So, be open. A lot of good, messy, untested, might-not-work initiatives are going to launch. It is out of that the future is always born.

From Last Week

We talked about generational differences and decision-making and how it differs from one generation to the next.

From Last Week

We talked about generational differences and decision-making and how it varies from one generation to the next.

From Last Week

The same holds true when scheduling/considering Bible studies.

From Last Week

Silent Generation = Be the Expert  
Baby Boomer = Be the friendly Expert  
Gen X = Be the Guide, not the Expert  
Millennials = Be the collaborative  
Guide.