

Issue Date: Kids Prayer

Coffee Is Still Coffee

Twelve years ago, while living just outside of Seattle, Washington, I was introduced to the reality of latté stands on every street corner and drive-thru coffee stands for traffic bound drivers. (I'm still not sure how smart combining double espressos or grandé cappuccinos with traffic is). Well, it's taken a decade, but Starbucks has finally made it to St. Louis...and in a big way. Now, I am being introduced to an emerging culture of latté stands and drive-thru coffee places in the Midwest. Believe it or not, it is already having an impact on the middle school kids I teach each Sunday and on the youth group in general. Case in point, we now have a Starbucks stand in our fellowship hall that is open before service—I'm hoping it will generate extra energy for worship...but that's another subject all together.

Has Starbucks had an impact in any way on your community? Thinking back, did you ever think you would gladly spend \$4 on a low-fat, sugar-free, double-shot, decaf, caramel mocha latté grandé? (Whew!) What's changed? Can you believe you even know what I'm talking about?

COFFEE . . .IS STILL COFFEE

One hundred and twenty five years ago cowboys sipped coffee from their tin mugs around a campfire to get warmth and energy. Fifty years later **coffee was still around**, but it was sipped piping hot from chipped mugs and made in "sock pots", sustaining a generation through the great depression and the second world war.

Fifty years later, after percolators had come and gone and Mr. Coffee had made his appearance in just about every home in America, "designer coffee" hit the scene much to the delight of the yuppie crowd. **But it was still coffee.**

Today, designer coffee is "normal" and the youngest among us can order it to personal taste without thinking twice. We can even get our coffee on ice! Gone are the tin cups, ceramic mugs, and Styrofoam of yesteryear...today we're using paper. And can you believe that grown-ups are using "Sippie Lids?" What would that old cowboy think about that!

THE EMERGING GENERATION

Now that you're scheming a way to get your next cuppa java, let me wrap up this little illustration for you. You're probably way ahead of me at this point, but humour me. The way we do ministry and the way we do "church" is in a constant state of change—to deny it, fight it or ignore it means getting left in the dust. It's like refusing to let go of that triple knit outfit from the 70's.

The emerging generation, particularly the millenials, bring with it challenges, but blessings too if we can learn to let them contribute. As with the coffee, they are going to make improvements on how we have done things "forever" if given half the chance. I predict that they will even do away with old methods that are no longer relevant, replacing them with new methods that will impact their generation...thus making their elders uneasy.

What can we do? Strap in and hang on for the ride? Confession? Just thinking about that makes me sweat a little, oesn't it you? So, here's the plan. It's a simple two-step plan. We must start immediately to provide:

- a solid core of *spiritual* training for them, building a kind of spiritual "muscle memory"(values and doctrine).
- a stable core of relationship, community and experience. They value and *want* our influence—I know, it's crazy, but *it's what they want!* (Listen for the word "mentor.")

If we can do this, if we can focus this much, we will have done our job well. To be clear, our job is not to raise up the church of tomorrow, it is to fully integrate them into the Body today.

ONE MORE THING...

Starbucks...it isn't about the coffee anymore. It's about the "experience." And to this generation church isn't about church anymore...it's about their "experience."