

The Millennial Generation and Personal Accountability: Spiritual and Classroom Implications

JANICE A. BLACK
Coastal Carolina University
janblack@coastal.edu

YVONNE S. SMITH
University of La Verne
ysmith@laverne.edu

J. KAY KEELS
Coastal Carolina University
jkeels@coastal.edu

ABSTRACT: A majority of students who currently populate university classrooms represent an age group that has been labeled “The Millennial Generation,” a generation widely believed to lack personal accountability. This paper discusses accountability in relation to Scripture and proposes that it is a personal quality that is important to an individual and to God. We then apply these ideas to characteristics of the Millennial Generation. Throughout the paper, we also introduce classroom techniques that are intended to teach accountability and are designed to appeal to Millennials.

INTRODUCTION

There is a surprising conundrum regarding the so-called Millennial generation (hereinafter called Millennials) in the United States. This generation, born between 1980 and roughly 2005 (Alsop, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007), strongly values community (Twenge & Campbell, 2003) and its members largely prefer to work in groups (Akhras, 2012; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Piper, 2012). However, there is considerable evidence, from both the university classroom and the workplace, that individuals in this generation rarely conduct themselves as effective team members (i.e., Del Monte, 2000; Leggat, 2007; Mumford, Van Iddekinge, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008; Opdecam & Evaraert, 2012; Sweet & Pelton-Sweet, 2008; Twenge, 2010). Nor are many

Millennials willing to commit to a community, such as a church (Twenge, 2010).

This counterintuitive assessment suggests that important characteristics of this age group need to be better understood by those who teach them in higher education settings or manage them in the workforce. However, analyzing the full set of traits said to characterize Millennials is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, we chose to focus this discussion on the single attribute of *personal accountability* — a fundamental characteristic that underlies most successful university and workplace accomplishments and is also critical for a robust spiritual life (Cornell, Eining & Hu, 2011; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Shore & Tashchain, 2002). The central argument of this paper consists of three interrelated points: (1) Millennials as a group do not have a well-developed sense of personal accountabil-

ity; (2) this shortcoming harms them spiritually as well as in the classroom and in the workplace; and (3) appropriate interventions from Christian professors are both necessary and critical in order to help these students grow and develop spiritually, academically, socially, and professionally.

In an effort to be practical, we will include description and references to application in the following pages. First we will introduce academic literature to support the assertions about the traits of Millennials that were just made and then consider these points in relation to Scripture and to spiritual life. We will begin by discussing personal accountability, followed by a review of characteristics of Millennials that directly relate to personal accountability. When appropriate and relevant to the discussion, we will suggest classroom techniques or interventions that we have found to be useful in helping students achieve a more spiritual attitude in these matters. These recommended techniques and exercises are fully explained and detailed in the addendum.

ACCOUNTABILITY: WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

In the introduction, we suggested that accountability was a key to a successful academic experience, a rewarding career, and a meaningful spiritual life. Some of the evidence supporting that assertion follows. If the university is a place where students learn skills and attitudes that benefit them for the rest of their lives, then it is important for professors who have *agape* love for their students to include an emphasis on the development of personal accountability in their teaching programs.

Definition of Accountability

Accountability

Accountability is the requirement and ability of one party to justify his/her action, belief or feeling to another party (Cornell, Eining, & Hu, 2011; Shore & Tashchain, 2002) where there is a consequence to the justifying party based on the quality of the justification (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). The more the justifying party values the judgment of the person to whom he/she is offering justification, and the stronger the consequences involved, the more important accountability becomes (Sweet & Pelton-Sweet, 2008). It should be noted that, although the extrinsic and intrinsic orientations to accountability are presented as discrete concepts when defined, they are not as neatly divided as the definition implies. For example, an intrinsic motivation is often involved when someone has a hero or other role model

whom he/she chooses to emulate. Yet, this revered person can also be used as an extrinsic motivating force by others in positions of influence (The “What Would Jesus Do?” character development campaign is an example.). So, when the Millennial admires someone, it may be easier for that Millennial to assign value to the judgment of the admired person to whom the justification is being presented.

Furthermore, the person or persons who require this justification must have the right or authority to make a judgment about the justifier’s effort and result. This right to sanction may be based on formal hierarchical position (French & Raven, 1959) or on a mutually agreed-upon arrangement (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003) such as a professor/student relationship. It can also be based on a conscious or unconscious willingness to allow the opinion of “the other” to affect the person who is required to present justification (Leggatt-Cook & Chamberlain, 2012). Recall the earlier comment about how admiration can impact someone. The point is that the person being called upon for justification must consent to, and recognize the right of, the other person to call for accountability. For example, if an employee is being called upon to justify an action, he/she must recognize that the boss has the right to call for that justification as well as the authority to judge what the employee has done.

Justification is typically based on some kind of expertise or authority (McCormick, 2009). However when Millennials are called to accountability, they tend to prefer and respond to peer judgment rather than expertise or hierarchical authority (Fredrick, 2008). Such tendencies can be puzzling and cause confusion for professors and managers who are members of other generations.

On a spiritual level, the human race owes accountability to God. As Creator and Redeemer, God’s authority to judge is stated clearly in Scripture. As Creator, God will ultimately judge all creation, including all creatures, human beings and the earth itself (i.e., I Sam. 2:10; Psalm 98:9; John 5:22-29; Jude 15). As Redeemer, God will pass judgment on Christians, as they are accountable to God by virtue of being God’s children. Christians are accountable for doing the work that God calls them to do (I Cor. 3:12), for their personal motivations (John 7:24; Romans 14:12), and for every word they speak (Psalm 19:14). The Church, as a body, is also accountable to God (I Cor. 6:1-11).

Personal Accountability

Personal accountability occurs when an individual accepts responsibility for his/her actions (Andrews, 2001). This construct refers to reflective accountability where an individual’s beliefs and actions are knowingly aligned with

his/her values (McCormick, 2009), and that person accepts the reactions of the other as a consequence of this alignment (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Said differently, the personally accountable individual makes commitments to or for something based on his/her value system, honors those commitments, and accepts the consequences for failure to deliver on the promises made. For example, the personally accountable person pays his/her credit debts as a matter of honor.

Personal accountability relates closely to issues of trust and trustworthiness. Many researchers have noted the placement of high importance on individual trustworthiness in work environments (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2006; Rusman, van Bruggen, Sloep, & Koper, 2010; Piper, 2012). We posit that personal accountability — where beliefs, values and actions align — is an internal component of trustworthiness. Thus, accountability at the individual level can be defined as the conscious choice to accept responsibility for one's own choices and actions as well as the consequences of those choices and actions. In essence, when a commitment is made to do something, and a person follows through and fulfills that commitment, we can say that the person was exhibiting personal accountability.

This understanding of personal accountability goes beyond simply being reliable and completing the commitment; it is a matter of having the integrity to accomplish the work well, within the timeframe promised, and under the conditions specified. It is often suggested that personal accountability includes an internal individual monitor of good and evil, namely the conscience (i.e., Cornwall, Lucas, & Pasteur, 2000). Considering how important one's personal accountability is to God, this suggestion makes intuitive sense. We speculate that when a person accepts personal accountability, it is part of the acknowledgement of the eternal grace of God, a grace offered to all.

Accountability: a Key to Successful Teamwork

Teamwork is important in the university classroom and in the workplace. About 30 years ago, K-12 schools in the United States moved to using work teams (Smith, Johnson, & Johnson, 1982), followed a decade later by universities, including business schools (Chad, 2012; Opdecam & Everaert, 2012). Teamwork is currently an important component of education at all levels.

Teams are also important in the work environment. Many businesses utilize self-directed teams (Andert, 2011; Kauffeld, 2006) as a means of increasing competitive advantage, innovation, or efficiencies (Gibson, Tesone, & Blackwell, 2003; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003).

The academic team literature suggests that personal accountability is vital to the success of work teams, as is sug-

gested in this definition of a work team as “a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach *for which they hold themselves mutually accountable* [emphasis added]” (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003). Research addressing various components of accountability and teamwork can be found in accounting (Gardner, 2012), health care (Piper, 2012), information technology (Dubinsky, Yaeli, & Kofman, 2010), virtual teams (Rusman, van Bruggen, Sloep, & Koper, 2010), K-12 education (McCormick, 2009), banking (Stapleton & Hargie, 2011), and non-profit organizations (Wenjue & Brower, 2010).

Accountability in teamwork makes intuitive sense. Achieving top results from work teams requires each team member to be accountable at both personal and team levels (Marx & Squintani, 2009). A team member must contribute his/her fair share of the work (Leggat, 2007; Wilkinson, 1997) and also accept responsibility for the team's collective result (Gardner, 2012; Dubinsky, Yaeli, & Kofman, 2010). Such accountability in teams includes the willingness of team members to confront other members regarding dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors (Lencioni, 2002).

Accountability: Important to Employers

In addition to being a key component of success in work teams, personal accountability has been found to be important within a variety of functions in the workplace (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Shore & Tashchain, 2002; Stapleton & Hargie, 2011), and in both for-profit and non-profit organizations (Wenjue & Brower, 2010). It is not surprising then that employers look for evidence of personal accountability as they screen applicants for hiring.

For example, reliability and integrity, which are key components of personal accountability (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; McCormick, 2009), are two of the top three qualities desired in new hires (English, Manton, Pan, Schirru & Bhowmik, 2012). Personal accountability also relates closely to issues of trust and trustworthiness, and indeed, many researchers have noted that employers place high value on individual trustworthiness in work environments (Dose, 2012; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2006; Lynn, 2006; Perkins, 2011; Rusman, van Bruggen, Sloep, & Koper, 2010; Piper, 2012).

The preference for hiring personally accountable people persists. A recent survey of the 150 largest employers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas (English, Manton, Pan, Schirru, & Bhowmik, 2012) indicated that the six most important qualities for all new hires were 1) integrity/honesty, 2) the ability to work well with others, 3) a good work ethic, 4) a positive work attitude, 5) listening skills, and 6) self-motivation. This was echoed by a 2011 sampling of

200+ college-graduate entry-level management and professional job announcements from key population centers in the Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and the Pacific Northwest (Black, Keels, Domke-Damonte, & Ritter, 2011).

Personal accountability relates closely to Christian virtues. Trustworthiness and honesty, consistent requirements of one who strives to be a Godly person (e.g. Job 31:6, Ps. 84:11; II Cor. 6:7), help to enforce claims of reaching organizational goals. Personal accountability also involves self-discipline or self-control (Prov. 12:1; Gal 6:22) and often leads to having the ability to interact effectively with others (I Cor. 13). Employers who desire these qualities often seek to hire students from Christian colleges and universities. Unfortunately, as will be discussed later, even those students educated at Christian schools are not immune from the traits that characterize their generation.

Accountability: Important for Spiritual Growth

Personal accountability is a requirement for many facets of personal spiritual growth. In this paper, we will limit the discussion to two of those facets that are, arguably, the main spiritual accountabilities that an individual must possess in order to grow spiritually. The first facet is that of personal sin and each person's accountability to God (i.e., *vertical accountability*). When an individual receives forgiveness for personal sin, his/her spirit is awakened and thus his/her growth is enabled. The second facet is that of *agape* love and each Christian's accountability to fellow believers and to those outside the church (i.e., *horizontal accountability*). Love is, arguably, the main driver of personal spiritual growth (John 15: 9-17; I Cor. 13), and also stands as clear evidence of such spiritual growth (Gal 5: 22; I John 2). Below we discuss each of these accountabilities in more detail.

Accountability and Personal Sin

The Bible stresses that one of the most basic human accountabilities is that which requires each person to give an account to God for his/her sins, for falling short of God's glory (Romans 3:19). Unfortunately, when God demands such accountability, a human is unable to achieve self-justification and is, as a consequence, under condemnation to death (Rom 3:23; Col. 1:13-21). Consequently, under the burden of sin, the human spirit is dead, and, therefore, spiritual growth is impossible.

Some people react to their accountability failures by making excuses and placing blame. Such reactions began early in the human story as is illustrated by Adam's reaction when he said to God in Eden, "This woman that *you* put here with me, *she* gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it [emphasis added]" (Gen 3:12). Others try to obey God's

rules, but they often fail (Rom. 3, 7; Gal. 2: 15-16). Still others submit themselves to God's mercy. Because humanity was unable to justify itself for sinning, Christ died to satisfy God's intended penalty (Ephesians 1:4). Those who accept this gift by faith (Rom. 8: 1-4) are extended the justification of Christ's atonement. At this point, their spirits become alive (Rom. 8:1-17), and thus they are able to grow spiritually (Eph. 2:1-10).

Accountability to Other Humans

Once a person becomes a Christian and is spiritually alive, God expects accountability at both a personal and a corporate church level. Recognizing this expectation helps the person to grow spiritually (John 15). At the personal level, Christians are commanded to live holy lives because account must be given to God for one's personal actions (Eph. 2:1-10; I Pet. 4:5). At the corporate level, each Christian is a member of the body of Christ and is enjoined to live up to his/her calling with diligence for the benefit of the spiritual growth of the entire group (see Rom. 12; I Cor. 12). The clearly stated goal is "...so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity...in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature..." (Eph. 4:12). Leaders in the church, such as elders and pastors are to guard the church because they will be required to give an account of their stewardship (Heb. 13:17). Accountability is to God, our service as members of the body of Christ, will be judged by God (I Cor. 14: 26). Christians are also expected to live and act with *agape* love inside and outside the church (I Cor. 13).

In the following section, characteristics of Millennials that relate closely to personal accountability are described. In the third section, lessons are drawn about these Millennial characteristics, personal accountability, and Scriptural accountability.

KEY MILLENNIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Millennial generation is defined as "persons who were born between 1980 and 2005" (Alsop, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2007); therefore, people on the leading edge of this generation are currently entering their thirties. This paper focuses only on Millennials born in the U.S. While much of this paper might be appropriately applied to Millennials in other countries, there are many indications that these characteristics are exhibited most strongly in the U.S.

Millennials currently make up about 25 percent of the U.S. workforce (Piper, 2012) and are growing as a percentage of all U.S. workers (Twenge, 2010). A large portion of the undergraduate and MBA students in U.S. universities

are also Millennials; however, many people who are just entering the workforce and universities in 2013 represent the end of this generation. The work environment in the U.S. has been challenged and struggling for a number of years, and consequently, the economic effects of this situation have affected Millennials significantly.

In this section, we will discuss key characteristics of Millennials. In the section to follow, we discuss in detail how those characteristics do, or do not, encourage personal accountability, and then point out the Scriptural relevance.

Millennials, as a generational group, have many positive characteristics (Howe & Nadler, 2010). However, a number of researchers have suggested that workplace and classroom tensions have increased because of the perceived undesirable characteristics of Millennials (Adams, 2012; Alsop, 2008; Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Ng et al., 2010). Millennials are characterized as being lazy, having a sense of entitlement, lacking commitment (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Twenge, 2010), and tending to demand a disproportionate amount of professors' or managers' time (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Given productivity pressures in a continually difficult economic climate, these characteristics — especially in combination — represent a conflict between employers' preferences and their perceptions of Millennials.

In fairness however, we note that every generation has both positive and negative characteristics, and that members of each generation tend to condemn the ones that follow. Furthermore, some of the perceived generational characteristics of Millennials might simply be artifacts of their life stage. It is not uncommon for people in their 20s to be perceived as lazy and uncommitted by older generations (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). Finally, it needs to be stressed that the traits discussed below are generalizations that pertain to the entire generation. Individual Millennials may, or may not, exhibit these characteristics.

Characteristics of the Millennial Generation

Comfortable with Multiculturalism

Millennials are comfortable with multiculturalism. Typically, they do not mind working with people of different ethnicities (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010) and have few concerns about interracial dating and marriage (Twenge et al., 2010). They are also comfortable with fluid gender roles and with women in leadership (Sweet & Pelton-Sweet, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2003) — though there is evidence that male Millennials are more conservative regarding gender roles in the family than women (Twenge et al., 2010). In a global world, and in a diverse classroom, such attitudes tend to serve Millennials well.

Comfortable with Technology

Many observers have noted that Millennials are quite comfortable with technology (e.g., Deal et. al., 2010; Twenge & Campblee, 2003) to the extent that some in this generation consider texting to be “rich communication” (Cao, Smith, & Hong, 2013; Twenge, 2010; Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2011). This perception may be received as good news for some universities as they endeavour to increase efficiency by moving classes and programs online; however, it may tend to exacerbate those very characteristics that educators are trying to temper.

It is also good news for professors who embrace flexible ways of teaching and connecting with students. For the first time in generations, it has been deemed acceptable for professors not be the main transmitters of content. Instead they can make use of the kinds of external media sources with which students are familiar and comfortable in order to deliver course content. Professors then have the freedom to “flip” the classroom and use class time to help students apply information and learn higher level skills (Cao et al., 2013). Khan Academy (khanacademy.org) and YouTube (Youtube.com/subject area), for example, offer content for students that professors may use later for exercises and discussion in the classroom.

However, even though Millennials have spent much of their lives online — or perhaps because they do so — this generation is prone to accept any online source as legitimate (Cao et al., 2013). Consequently, it is important for professors to remind students constantly and consistently of the need for accuracy and reliability in the sources they use and to challenge them to demonstrate the validity of any chosen online source (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Critical thinking and analytical evaluation of online sources is a major shortcoming of this generation.

Work-Life Balance

Millennials are frequently characterized as lazy, but they are willing to put forth extraordinary effort for those projects they strongly believe in or have great interest in doing (Ng et al., 2010; Twenge et al., 2010). However, one of their main generational values is work-life balance (Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Twenge et al., 2010; Westerman et al., 2012). Millennials tend to be unwilling to expend any effort for work they deem to be unnecessary or distasteful.

Such disdain often results in conflicts with workplace norms. For example, Millennials want to learn and progress personally as well as professionally — in fact, they assume that they will — but they desire to achieve such progress and success with minimal personal effort (Piper, 2012). Millennials are not willing to invest into a job or a class the

amount of time and level of effort that their parents tended to expend. Since this age group desires to realize personal and professional progress while protecting and preserving their personal time, they place high value on mentors and a nurturing workplace or classroom environment. Not surprisingly, they especially appreciate supportive coworkers and supervisors, and they tend to prefer benefits such as tuition reimbursements over pension plans (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Also, as a group, they are not responsive to authority or routine. They prefer to have the prerogative to choose in which activities they will participate as well as the times that they will work on them. Choosing “what to do and when to do it has been part of their classroom and personal life for many years” (Twenge, 2010, p. 132). In this sense, flexibility is an integral part of the Millennial DNA.

Another result of the value placed on work-life balance by Millennial workers is that they are largely unapologetic about leaving one position for another that they view as offering better opportunities for personal advancement or that have a perceived better quality of work life in such things as relationships with coworkers, more flexible schedules, and less stressful work conditions (Piper, 2012). Other generations interpret such a tendency as Millennials seeking to benefit only themselves while having little concern about the effect it will have on others, such as parents, employers, or professors (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Accountability to others (i.e., horizontal accountability) is not a strength of this generation.

Flexibility Versus Ambiguity

This generational emphasis on work-life balance leads to an interesting contradiction that has been noted by many professors and managers. In the classroom or the workplace, Millennials want to be allowed the flexibility to decide when and where their work gets done (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010), but they also want very precise instructions as to what to do, how to do it, and how it will be evaluated or graded (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Millennials distrust ambiguity in process or outcome (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). They tend to view ambiguity in a professor or an employer as biased and unfair (Twenge, 2010). They do not hesitate to demand that professors or employers provide very specific and exact steps to “success.” In this sense, Millennials seem to understand accountability in terms of their expectation that others should be accountable to them. We speculate that some of this expectation is driven by the work-life balance desire of the Millennial to get through the work quickly and superficially so that he/she can move on to personal interests. Other parts of this trait might be driven by self-esteem values, as will be discussed below.

Millennials’ distrust of ambiguity also becomes a problem when innovation is desired because ambiguity and risk are major determinants of innovation (Drucker, 1985; Schumpeter, 1951; Baron, 2008). In the classroom, it is difficult to convince Millennials to accept the freedom to explore and be creative, and in the workplace they are often not creative thinkers about the work — unless their interest happens to be piqued by some facet of the assignment.

One way that professors can utilize Millennials’ taste for flexibility and clarity is to post rubrics that show the *key* processes required for an assignment and the reward for each (grade, number of points). Counterintuitively, we have found that such rubrics can help Millennials develop a tolerance for ambiguity. Being given the key processes forces students to decide the steps required to implement the process. Thus, they are given the desired flexibility but no excuse for missing the outcomes. The right kind of rubric can be an excellent pedagogical tool for Millennials.

Team-Oriented

This paper began with the anomaly that Millennials, though they have worked in teams since kindergarten, are not individually good teammates. We speculate that many members of this generation have learned to regard teams merely as mechanisms to get others to do the work so the Millennial can have time to do as he/she desires (evidence of the desire for work-life balance). Obviously such an attitude becomes a major problem when everyone on a team has the same intent to exploit the team.

As professors, we have found that staggered group peer evaluations sometimes improve individual group behavior. One well-regarded way to obtain team accountability in the workplace is through peer evaluations (Compton, 2007; Cannon & Witherspoon, 2005), where each member of the team is asked to evaluate the other members based on criteria such as quality of work and willingness to do one’s share of work (Kim, Baek, & Kim, 2011; Sigel-Jacobs & Yates, 1996). Such peer evaluations are used in self-directed work teams to justify the process used in the work group or the results obtained (Cestone, Levine, & Lane, 2008; Cornell, Eining, & Hu, 2011).

As noted, Millennials like to work in teams, they like to know exactly what they need to do to succeed, and they like to maintain self-esteem. A simple modification to the standard peer evaluation technique can accommodate such tastes and potentially improve team performance. Rather than requiring peer evaluations only at the end of the semester, we have begun requiring an interim peer evaluation after the first third of the semester (did/did not do), followed by a grade-heavy peer evaluation at the end of the semester. We

couple this with posted online tutorials on group processes. See Appendix A. (This exercise is in the testing stage; any professor who would like to join us in the test is welcome to contact the authors.)

Self-Esteem and Narcissism

Self-esteem is an individual's overall emotional evaluation of his/her own worth (Schimmel, 1997). As is frequently noted, high self-esteem is probably the major defining characteristic of Millennials (Berman et al., 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Twenge et al., 2010; Westerman et al., 2012).

This self-esteem characteristic should not be an unexpected surprise. As a generation, Millennials have been instilled with a sense of high self-esteem since they were born. All their lives, their parents and teachers have drummed this trait into them, from the frequent "All About Me" projects in school to the emphasis at home, through entertainment, and in the classroom that "You are special...and so are you. Everyone is special" (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Twenge, 2010). Seldom — and certainly not in recent history -- has a generation been so thoroughly schooled in self-worship and pride. As a result, Millennials definitely do exhibit high self-esteem, putting themselves first in most lists of priorities and people (Berman et al., 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Westerman et al., 2012). Accountability and self-accountability rank very low on their list of prized qualities.

Narcissism, a "disproportionate sense of self-worth" (Kelley, 2009) is exaggerated self-esteem and, not surprisingly, a number of researchers have found that this generation has an unusually high number of narcissists (Berman et al., 2012; Twenge, 2010; Westerman et al., 2012). Unfortunately, as with other forms of pride, narcissism can lead to antisocial behavior at work and in one's personal life. For example, narcissists tend to place blame on others for any kind of difficulties that may arise. They tend to display inappropriate aggressive responses when their egos are threatened or their desires are thwarted (Schimmel, 1997; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). They feel entitled to claim success for themselves at the expense of others (Berman et al., 2010). Such individuals do not work well with colleagues or in teams. We will discuss this narcissist phenomenon more fully in the following section.

Business students have been found to have higher instances of narcissistic behavior than psychology students (Westerman et al., 2012). If such observations represent a common trend, the business school — even the Christian business school — may currently have a high percentage of students who do not feel compelled to change personal

behaviors, who will become aggressive if challenged, and who will blame others for any problems that may arise. Such exhibitions of narcissism are challenges that Christian business professors must understand and with which they must be prepared to cope.

Entitlement

Millennials have a reputation for behaving as if they are "entitled" (Twenge, 2010) — that is, for feeling that they have a right to various benefits. Such a feeling is a by-product of high self-esteem, and it reflects a flaw in this generation's achievement-reward-causality understanding (Ng et al., 2010). Many Millennials assume that minimal effort should result in maximum benefit. They have been conditioned to expect rewards, such as high grades and praise, while exerting only minimum effort (Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Such an entitlement mentality conflicts directly with self-accountability.

Many researchers, professors, and employers have noted that there appears to be a divide between that to which Millennials feel entitled and their actual skill set (i.e., Berman et al., 2010; Westerman et al., 2012). For example, according to the national ACT organization, 60% of the students taking the ACT® test are not ready to enter college nor to be gainfully employed (Adams, 2012). Only 25 percent of these students demonstrate preparedness in the four areas being examined (English, math, reading, science). Such a capability gap is typical of those who have an elevated sense of entitlement, but it causes major problems in the workplace as these disgruntled and bitter employees leave firms for "greener pastures" (Piper, 2012). The gap also leads to disillusionment, anxiety, and depression when people with an elevated sense of entitlement experience the jarring awakening that they are less special than they had assumed and had been taught they were by everyone they trusted (Schimmel, 1997).

MILLENNIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN RELATION TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND TO GOD

A major characteristic of Millennials is self-esteem, as was noted previously. High self-esteem is only a small step away from pride, which is defined as exaggerated "personal worth and power and feeling superior to others" (Schimmel, 1997, p. 29). The ramifications of high self-esteem, pride and narcissism tend to overshadow the positive characteristics of this generation, and these challenging characteristics lead to such concerns as entitlement mentalities, demands that others be accountable to them, the strong desire for

fixed outcomes, and the tendency to discount the effects of their actions on others.

Sadly, the Millennial generation seems to be full of people who are unhappy and even miserable (Deal et al., 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Twenge, 2010; Westerman et al., 2012). This sad outcome is likely a result of inappropriate self-esteem. There are also significant spiritual ramifications that emerge from this unfortunate characteristic.

Emotional Distress

Narcissism, pride, and indeed high self-esteem lead to many undesirable qualities, and these, in turn, can cause significant emotional distress. As Taylor (1883) says, "Pride is always affronted or despised." Being persistently offended or outraged is emotionally taxing. That, combined with the desire of other people to avoid such persons, creates an unhappy life.

Preoccupation with oneself leads to neurotic disorders, such as hypersensitivity to criticism (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Such self-centeredness can result in indecision and over-cautiousness in unexpected situations because self-absorbed persons have an incessant need to preserve their self-worth (Schimmel, 1997). When Millennials are confronted with evidence of being less bright or competent than assumed, they can easily become bitter over the situation or resentful of trusted others who had previously assured them repeatedly that they were special (Schimmel, 1997; Twenge, 2012).

Narcissism, pride, and extreme self-centeredness can also lead to a discordant atmosphere. Self-interested behaviors at work or in workgroups tend to engender anger in others (Berman et al., 2012). Because individuals with high self-esteem and/or pride tend to blame others for any difficulties that may arise, quarrels often result (Sweet & Pelton-Sweet, 2008). When narcissists' egos are threatened or their desires are thwarted, they exhibit aggressive responses, such as inappropriate assertiveness and blame (Schimmel, 1997; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Such behavior also tends to elicit unfavorable responses from others. The Bible echoes this theme: pride leads to quarrels (Pr. 13:8), violence (Ps. 73:6), and disgrace (Prov. 11:2; Is. 2:11).

Earlier we suggested that accountability was related to many of the skills that employers desired most. Such an observation is understandable since accountability encourages qualities such as self-discipline, honesty, and trust, and it is also a major ingredient in successfully working with teams in the workplace as well as in classes. However, as was also observed earlier, inappropriate self-esteem tends to resist personal accountability. Further, teams populated primarily by narcissistic people who want others to do the

work are unlikely to be productive. This outcome leads to displeased employers and disgruntled coworkers and also creates an unpleasant atmosphere at work.

Professors must be aware of these issues. Proud or narcissistic people tend to react negatively, and sometimes violently, toward those who challenge their delusional self-images. Anecdotally, "nasty notes" from students to professors seem to be on the rise as well as bullying attempts in the classroom. Another, more subtle issue should also be considered. According to Scripture, the proud will persecute the Godly (Ps 86:14; Ps. 119:51). One application of this Scripture could be that overly proud students may tend to persecute Godly professors or fellow students, even in Christian colleges and universities.

Spiritual Distress

In addition, as a group, Millennials have been implicitly taught to disregard one of the hardest challenges faced by all Christians — namely submitting oneself to God. God holds humanity in high regard (Gen. 1:31; John 3:16), and God assumes that human beings will, in turn, respect themselves; indeed Christ's "golden rule" — to do to others as you would have them do to you — is predicated upon it (Matt 19:19). However, a person's refusal to submit to God which is based in pride can be the root of many other sins. Consequently, pride has traditionally been considered the worst of the deadly sins (Schimmel, 1997).

That God despises pride is well documented in Scripture (II Sam 24: 10-17; Ps 31:18; Prov. 18:1; Amos 6:8). God regards inappropriate self-esteem to be self-worship, the establishment of oneself as an idol (Ps 10:4; Is. 2:11). According to Scripture, the proud are an abomination to God (Prov. 16:5; Jer. 15:13), and God resists them and punishes them (Job 140:12; James 4:6; I Pet. 5:5). If, on one hand, accountability leads to spiritual growth, then on the other hand, pride leads to spiritual destruction.

In summary, although healthy self-esteem is encouraged in Scripture, pride is certainly not. Every Christian must learn to submit his/her will to God and to genuinely love and serve others (Eph.5:21), but Millennials might find this requirement unusually difficult. Much prayerfully guided care is necessary for those who are called to serve this generation and be accountable for them.

CLASSROOM INTERVENTIONS

As many educators have noted, the transition to college life requires almost a complete reversal of the amount of time spent on task than that which students had experienced

in high school (Fischer & Lehman, 2005). Furthermore, college is significantly less structured than high school with many professors expecting the student to spend two hours outside of class on class materials for each hour in class (Fischer & Lehman, 2005). At the same time, it is recognized that many attitudes, values, and preferences are formed early in life and are difficult to change (Meredith & Schewe, 1994). Furthermore, business school freshmen appear to be less familiar even with moral perspectives much less biblical principles than non-business freshmen (Luthy, Padgett, Toner, 2009). There are many possible classroom interventions that may be used by those professors who wish to help Millennials submit to God.

We offer here a peak into our tool box of spiritual interventions and classroom accommodations to help address this gap between Millennials' expectations, attitudes and skills versus the employer's preferred skills. Specifically, we recommend a few classroom techniques, a couple of devotionals, and a short case. These are, of course, only a small sampling of what could possibly be done to accommodate Millennials, so we offer these only as seeds of ideas for fellow pilgrims who journey along this path. We hasten to suggest that each reader ask the Holy Spirit for insight into what might work best for the specific group of Millennials with whom he/she works.

Spiritual Interventions

Given that today's student is, on the whole, less prepared for college than those of a cohort from 40 years ago (Nonis et al., 2005), it is important to begin this spiritual intervention early in the Christian business student's college career. Such an intervention is particularly important if we recognize some of the possible accountability lessons that some of our courses afford. For example, upper division courses often have complex assignments that involve producing on-time quality work that correctly recognizes the contributions of others. Thus, we recommend that a series of devotionals focused on the topic of accountability be included in the freshmen orientation to business classes or, at a minimum, in the class which serves as an overall orientation to the university. We provide examples of two such devotionals in Appendix B to this paper. The first one focuses on the foundation of how God established and modeled accountability in the beginning. The second one is an example of how the devotion can proceed to include New Testament teachings by linking "Law and Grace" and examining these ideas from an accountability perspective.

Because Millennials enjoy working with others and respond well to experiential learning (aka, learning by doing), assigning teams to develop and provide these devo-

tionals after the first few weeks (with some quality checks) may help them to become more engaged. Experiential learning (Kolb, 1985) is a four-step process. Step 1 focuses on learning from concrete experiences (i.e., the instructor provides the devotional and leads the devotional discussion). Step 2 requires the students to interact further with the content of the learning via reflections that allow them to link those in-class experiences to earlier experiences (by keeping devotional journals or blogs where they may find examples in their everyday life that were discussed during the week). Step 3 enables students to construct their own naïve understandings of abstract concepts (i.e., how this concept can be generalized to the workplace). This experience is labeled naïve because students have not yet tested their understandings. Step 4 is where students test their understanding (they are now able to provide a devotion following the same patterns as those that have been observed).

Although this section on spiritual interventions was centered only on devotionals, we also linked it to experiential learning which is a powerful tool for learning for Millennials when done correctly. Thus, even though we have separated the two orientations into spiritual and classroom, they can be effectively combined.

Classroom Interventions

We now look at three more classroom-based interventions that require us, as instructors, to alter our ways of interacting with the students. Such an alteration does not require that we weaken our expectations but that we change our processes while continuing to hold our standards high. The three interventions that we include here involve the use of rubrics.

Use of Rubrics

One of the first areas where faculty may effectively engender change is in the use of rubrics for grading. A rubric is a categorical effort to combine different aspects of an assignment into independent quality categories. It provides the student with specific information on how they are to be held accountable (Okoro, 2011). Thus, posting rubrics for important assignments is a way to accommodate the preference of Millennials for precision and unambiguous evaluation. Such rubrics should reflect the outcomes and key processes for the assignment, along with the reward (grade, number of points) possible for each.

The creation of rubrics presses a professor to fully delineate the results he or she expects from an assignment and the processes that are important. Such rubrics are not always easy for the inexperienced to create, but once the time to create them has been invested, they are very effective in increasing the efficiency with which grading can be

completed. For best results, we recommend beginning with a single rubric for one major assignment in one class. Once the process has been practiced and understood, it can be adapted to other assignments and classes.

Counter-intuitively, rubrics can also help Millennials develop a tolerance for ambiguity. A rubric which clearly delineates desired outcomes encourages students to determine the steps required to reach that outcome, thus pressing them to make the necessary process decisions. Used well, rubrics can be an excellent pedagogical tool.

Use a Developmental Approach to Peer Evaluations in Teamwork

One well-regarded way to obtain team accountability in the workplace is through peer evaluations (Compton, 2007; Cannon & Witherspoon, 2005) that require each member of the team to evaluate the others based on such criteria as quality of work and willingness to do one's share of work (Kim, Baek, & Kim, 2011). Strong team accountability measures are extrinsic motivational tools commonly used in business (Sigel-Jacobs & Yates, 1996; Compton, 2007), and they are also used in self-directed work teams to justify the process used by the work group or to validate the results obtained (Cestone, Levine, & Lane, 2008; Cornell, Eining, & Hu, 2011).

Millennial students like to work in teams, they like to know exactly what they need to do to succeed, and they like to maintain self-esteem. A simple modification to the standard peer evaluation technique can accommodate all of these preferences. This proposed modification requires the classroom workgroup to complete peer evaluations based on specific criteria, such as quality of work (high/med/low), twice during a work period or semester. The details for preparing and administering such peer evaluations are explained in Appendix A.

The required steps are outlined as follows: 1) Teams practice doing the peer evaluation and learning how to receive the feedback about one-third of the way into a team project/exercise. 2) Online remedial training is provided as needed. 3) Teams complete an end-of-the-assignment peer evaluation the outcome of which has high stakes in terms of individual grades. This multi-step experience provides students with an opportunity to fail, learn from failure, and then recover. Such an approach to documenting accountability also introduces them to the realization that perhaps they are not as special as they have been coached to think they are.

Use Short In-Class Cases that Make Accountability Concepts Practical

The use of several short cases throughout a term (especially when employed across the years in various classes) enables students to think about accountability both at the

personal level and at the spiritual level. By using short scenarios and requiring students to think through both the personal and spiritual consequences, we are giving them opportunities to internalize precepts and orientations of personal accountability and hopefully enabling them to transfer this newly acquired understanding of personal accountability out of the classroom, into their broader college experience, and then ideally into the workplace. See Appendix C.

CONCLUSION

Those who love Millennials do not want them to experience God's displeasure. Nor do they want these students to be unhappy people.

Some have argued that some of the high self-esteem attributed to Millennials is an artifact of their life stage (Deal et al., 2010). This speculation may be correct; however, it is of interest to note that when we looked up the words "self-esteem" and "entitlement" in a 1967 American Collegiate Dictionary, they were not found. Nor were these words included in a 1985 Dictionary of Psychology. We suggest that even if Deal and colleagues were correct, the excessive level of high self-esteem exhibited by Millennials can easily lead to disproportionate self-perceptions of pride, narcissism and entitlement, and such behavioral flaws will tend to inhibit both their personal and spiritual lives.

Millennials are accountable to God, and God will ultimately judge this generation as certainly as God will judge every other generation. Those of us who teach Millennials are also accountable to God (James 3:1). Possibly one of the most important things a Christian professor can do for Millennials is to lovingly show them that they are not primarily accountable to themselves but to God.

All of us need to continue to pray for all — Millennials and those of us who are called to teach them and to love them.

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APPENDIX A: STAGGERED PEER EVALUATIONS FOR WORKGROUPS

These are the steps.

1. Develop a standard form to guide peer evaluations, and provide this form to all students. Require each student to submit peer evaluations of all his/her teammates after the

first third of the work period (within an academic semester, that is typically about week #4 or #5), granting a small reward for completing the evaluation (e.g., participation points), but not imposing any grade consequences for the evaluations received by each student. This first evaluation should be presented to the team in aggregate to preserve anonymity and should be made available so that each student can see how other team members assessed him or her on each criterion. We suggest that an easy way to do this is to post the peer evaluation form on a website.

2. Provide some self-directed remedial training in team dynamics through the website.
3. Require a second evaluation, based on the same criteria, at the end of the work period (approximately week #15 in an academic semester) with significant grade impact for those being evaluated.

After the first evaluation, those students who receive low peer assessments on the assigned criteria will have various reactions. Some will maintain their inflated sense of pride and disregard the evaluations. However, some team members will be highly motivated to receive a good grade at the end of the semester, or else they will be driven by their desire to have other group members like them better. Both of these incentives are helpful in maintaining self-esteem. Having an early peer evaluation will help students to be aware of the level of success they need to achieve in order to receive the reward they desire. Self-directed training in team dynamics, possibly using a website format, will help to inform those who have forgotten, or ignored, proper team etiquette and will provide students with the steps needed to achieve the level of peer approval and academic achievement they desire. Having an early evaluation will allow students who are so motivated to make the necessary corrections.

APPENDIX B: TWO DEVOTIONALS ON ACCOUNTABILITY

Devotional 1: God Models Accountability.

Genesis 2:4: "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens."

God established and modeled accountability at the very beginning. Every human is accountable to God (Rom 3:19) by God's right as Creator (Rom. 9:21; Col. 1: 13-21). But God also models accountability by giving a detailed summary of the creation. Each of the major sections in Genesis 1-3 is introduced by the declaration that it

is an accounting, a detailing of the key events of the beginning (NIV Bible, 1984). God takes on the responsibility of publicly documenting the actions and key events in what occurred in this area of responsibility to anyone who reads this account.

Extension: Our Creator allows us to act as we desire, but holds us accountable to and will reward us based on our actions. According to Proverbs 24:12, “If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?”

This implies two things: 1) Each individual records activities in the heart. It is not necessary to record these events for everyone to see, as God did in Genesis. God already knows what is in our hearts. 2) Because God made us, God has not only the ability but also the right to judge us. If God is able to weigh our hearts and motivations, then God knows us to our deepest parts. This truth was evident even before we were made (Jer. 1: 4-5).

God has standards, but these are not ambiguous; they are clearly stated in Scripture. God has the right, as Creator, to grant praise and mete out punishment as each person’s internal account measures up to the standards. However, we admit that we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s standard (Rom. 3:23). None of us are so “special” and perfect that we are immune to sin. Fortunately, we do not have to rely on ourselves alone to measure up to the standard. Thanks be to God that we have a redeemer, Jesus Christ, who intervenes and offers up his heart in place of ours for the final accounting. We can rely on Romans 3: 23-24: “There is no difference, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Devotional 2: Law and Grace

Romans 3:19: “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God.”

In order to be held accountable in the first place, an individual needs an authority, freedom to act, and guidelines to follow. The laws or guidelines given by God in Scripture are public. They can be clearly seen, should be discussed, but above all must be followed.

How do we know that God is the one who gave the law? We find confirmation in Isaiah 33:22: “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King, it is he who will save us.”

The first law of God is, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Think about this. No matter how

filled we are with self-esteem, we are not the ultimate authority. God is that authority. God gives us the laws that are there to show us what God wants us to do with our freedom. God then holds us accountable for the actions we take within the bounds of that freedom that has been granted to us.

We have been provided rules by which to live; these are delivered in the form of God’s Word. God also provides us with God’s self, to live within, to interpret the rules (Luke 12:12; John 14:26). Having such resources available means two things: 1) We can clearly understand what God wants. 2) We can, justly, be held accountable to obey God’s law.

Extension: Does God’s law apply in the church age? If we were made by God, we belong to God and live under God’s authority. Furthermore, if anyone has accepted Jesus as his/her Savior, then that one has been adopted into God’s family. “In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance to his pleasure and will” (Eph. 1:5). Thus, we are doubly God’s creation when we are Christians: God’s own and Christ’s own. God is our Lord and God gives us the rubric by which to live. God has the right to demand an accounting of our actions.

APPENDIX C: A SHORT CASE ON ACCOUNTABILITY

Case: John is a steady B student entering his junior year. He has a girlfriend, is engaged in an internship, and has just learned that his mother has cancer. In one of his classes this semester, he is participating in a team project with two other people, Clair and Lee, who are both A students. All three of these students are Christians. John knows that he is supposed to “do unto others,” but he also knows that even if he does no work on the project, he will still get an A because Clair and Lee will do his share of the work. What should he do?

Teaching Notes: If John does not do his share of the work, or does it badly, he is directly violating Christ’s commandment to “do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:21). Also, because he would be exploiting his teammates, he would be violating Christ’s command to “love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Disobeying any of Christ’s commandments is sin. Further, John might not be the only hurting member of the group; he does not know the burdens Clair and Lee bear. John should talk to his teammates about his situation but not expect that they will do his work. Possibly they can help him; possibly he needs to be ready to help them. If he cannot do his fair share of the work because of time, he either needs to drop the class or reorder his priorities.