

ARE WE THE PRODUCT OF OUR ENVIRONMENT? WHAT DEFINES WHO WE ARE?

We have labels and stereotypes for everything, or so it seems. There are even classification designations for when people were born. These include the GI generation (pre 1926), the Silent generation (1927-1945), the Baby Boomers (1946-1964), and Gen X, Y, and Z which covers 1965-1980, 1981-2000, and 2001 and beyond. Each generation has some distinctive characteristics that are indicative of the general cultural norms of those time periods (the descriptions of which can be found in various references).

It is not my intent to focus on the specifics of these distinctions but want to consider whether or not these characteristics are really definitive for us as followers of Christ. It is appropriate for a Christian to state “I am (for example) a Baby Boomer and that explains the way I think, the way I interact with people and my general outlook on life?” Is such a statement a practical denial of Paul’s assertion in 2 Cor 5:17? This states: “So that if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old state of things has passed away; a new state of things has come into existence.”

The descriptions that are associated with the six recognized “generations” are (were) accepted cultural (worldly) normative attitudes and behaviors. Some of these attitudes and behaviors can be thought of as positive and some as neutral or even negative. Whatever the evaluations, these are representative of the world into which each of us was born. These “norms” (good, bad or otherwise) served to imprint our behaviors and to greatly influence our “world view.” In some sense these things “defined” who we were prior to our salvation experience. The question that each of us (as “born from above” Christians) needs to address is “do these norms still define who I am, or am I being transformed into that ‘new creation’ which is in the image of Christ?”