

Understanding Gen Z: See Their Perspective

Born between 1995 and 2012, at 72.8 million strong, Gen Zers are making their presence known. It is the generation that is now collectively under the age of 25. They're radically different from the Millennials, yet no one seems to have been talking much about them until recently.

While there has been a great deal of conversation about "fixing" the Millennial generation, we are in danger of missing the next generation as they step into the workplace - and leadership roles at our churches.

As a group, on one hand they have been notorious about dropping out from your church. On the other hand, they make up a significant part of both your ministry participants and prospects.

They are also beginning to step into very visible leadership roles in your church.

So what does Gen Z look like, and what does that mean for your church?

The Quick Summary - James Emery White, [Meet Generation Z](#)

Move over Boomers, Xers, and Millennials; there's a new generation--making up more than 25 percent of the US population--that represents a seismic cultural shift. Born approximately between 1993 and 2012, Generation Z is the first truly post-Christian generation, and they are poised to challenge every church to rethink its role in light of a rapidly changing culture.

From the award-winning author of *The Rise of the Nones* comes this enlightening introduction to the youngest generation. James Emery White explains who this generation is, how it came to be, and the impact it is likely to have on the nation and the faith. Then he reintroduces us to the ancient countercultural model of the early church, arguing that this is the model Christian leaders must adopt and adapt if we are to reach members of Generation Z with the gospel. He helps readers rethink evangelistic and apologetic methods, cultivate a culture of invitation, and communicate with this connected generation where they are.

Pastors, ministry leaders, youth workers, and parents will find this an essential and hopeful resource.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

Research from various sources confirms that younger generations, especially Gen Z, are interested in spiritual matters – it's just religion they are rejecting.

In beautiful and surprising ways, Gen Zers are searching for God on earth, not some trendy program your church has to offer. In effect, your challenge is not just to reach a younger generation, but instead to create a more fuller expression of Jesus lived out in your church.

The most defining characteristic of Generation Z is that it is arguably the first generation in the West (certainly in the U.S.) that will have been raised in a post-Christian context. As a result, it is the first post-Christian generation.

Perhaps the most defining mark of members of Generation Z, in terms of their spiritual lives, is their spiritual illiteracy. This is, of course, the defining mark of the post-Christian world. They do not know what the Bible says. They do not know the basics of Christian belief or theology. They do not know what the cross is about. They do not know what it means to worship. But their spiritual illiteracy is deeper than that. They are more than post-Christian. They don't even have a memory of the gospel.

We have to become cultural missionaries and act according to that identity. I think we all know what a good missionary would do if dropped into the darkest recesses of the Amazon basin to reach an unreached people group. They would learn the language, try to understand the customs and rituals, and work to translate the Scriptures, particularly the message of the gospel, into the indigenous language. When it comes to worship, they would incorporate the musical styles and instruments of the people. They might even attempt to dress more like them. In short, they would try to build every cultural bridge they could into the world of that unreached people group in order to bring Christ to bear.

James Emery White, [Meet Generation Z](#)

A NEXT STEP

Author James Emery White poses some excellent questions for you to consider as you contemplate reaching Gen Z. Take time in your next team meeting to review the questions below.

Why is it that what would be so natural, so obvious, so clear to do so in the missiological setting described above is so resisted in the West?

Do you or does your church approach your community with a truly missiological mindset, the same way you would if you were in a new country?

What's the average age of staff members and attenders at your church? Are you comfortable with that? If not, what can you do this year to start changing that?

We live in a world that is more open than ever to spiritual things. Not defined religion, but spirituality in general. How do you see this manifested in the world? What might it mean for the church and its mission to reach people?

Every generation must translate the gospel into its unique setting without transforming the message itself. If an average non-attender from Generation Z were to sit in your service this Sunday, would the experience make any sense to them? If not, how can you work to translate

elements of the service so that the service connects with them without compromising the truth it contains?

When it comes to outreach in your church, are you honestly willing to do whatever it takes to reach the next generation? Are you willing to lose those who can't see that it's not about them?

Excerpt taken from SUMS Remix 70-2, released July 2017.

*This is part of a weekly series posting content from one of the most innovative content sources in the church world: **SUMS Remix** Book Summaries for church leaders.*

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