



Gen Z – finding identity in Christ

Every generation from the past four decades has played a significant role in their season.

A generation refers to all of the people born and living at about the same time (usually, but not always, a period of about 18 to 20 years), regarded collectively.

The Baby Boomers were born between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s. This generation is called the Baby Boomers because of the significant increase in the number of births in this era after World War II. Also known as Gen X, Generation X refers to the generation born between the mid-1960s and the early 1980s. Gen Xers were the first generation to grow up with widespread access to personal computers and the internet. Many Millennials, born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990, are highly educated and have been exposed to a wide range of ideas and perspectives. Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, iGen, or Zoomers, refers to the generation born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s.

If you ask any young person a question they are unable to answer, their most likely response will be, "Why do you not just search for the answer on Google?" Gone are the days of going to the closest library or consulting the wiser among us for answers.

Who are Gen Zers?

They are the younger generation born between 1997-2015, often referred to as the Zoomers or Gen Z. These young people can effortlessly assist any person on their digital devices with a simple swipe on a screen.

How much do we know about Gen Z?

- They currently make up 26% of the global population, or approximately 2 billion.
- Nearly 99% of this generation owns a smartphone or has access to one.
- They were born and are growing up with technology, making them the first digitally native generation.

The giants

Which giants are our youth facing today?

When the Philistine (the giant) looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was only a youth... (1 Samuel 7:42).

Religion

Forty-six percent of Gen Z say they have committed their lives to Jesus, which looks good on the surface. Yet, only one-eighth are practicing Christians, according to an American Bible Society (ABS) study.

The ABS study also reveals Gen Z faces unprecedented levels of stress and a mental health crisis, with stress, anxiety and depression far beyond the norm.

About 53% of Gen Z say they are curious to know more about Jesus. Of these, three out of four indicate some level of curiosity about the Bible or Jesus.

Family relationships

Compared to previous generations, Gen Zers are far more likely to have been raised in single-parent households.

Refugee crisis

At the end of 2021, 89.3 million people were forcibly displaced globally and of these an estimated 36.5 million (41%) were children below 18 years of age.

The influence of the church

The role of the church in establishing the identity of the next generation.

Then David said to the Philistine (the giant), "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel..."
(1 Samuel 17:45)

Like any previous generation's youth, there will be the lifting of the eyebrow by the older generations. Or the common phrase, "Oh the youth of today..." accompanied with a sigh and the shaking of the head. Yet, we can all testify of the valuable input of the older folk when we were young and vibrant – whether from teachers, parents, grandparents or the neighbour down the road.

If we want to reach the next generation for Jesus and help them grow in their faith, we need to:

1. Pray for them

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11).

Pray for love, knowledge and discernment to abound

Lord, may the love, knowledge and discernment of Gen Zers increase. May they approve and delight in that which is excellent according to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Grant them discernment to know the purity of Your love (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13).

Pray for sincerity of heart

Lord, we ask for them to know Your will and understand what is right because of Your law. May they not follow the ways of the world; copying its behaviour and customs but be changed inwardly into a new person through renewed thoughts. May they come to know and yearn to follow and obey Your will for their lives (Romans 12:2).

Pray for a pure and blameless life

We fervently ask You, Lord, for them to remain firm in their faith, staying pure and blameless for the day of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:8, Philippians 1:6).

Pray for the fruit of righteousness

Lord, we pray for them to come to know You as the True Vine. May they abide in You and may Your Word be written on the tablets of their hearts. We ask for them to be like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in season and whose leaves do not wither. Let them delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. (Psalm 1, Psalm 119:11, John 15:4-6). Lord, may their lives bring honour to Your name. May love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control flow out of their lives as Your Spirit works within (Galatians 5:22-23).

2. Present the truth about Jesus accurately and without compromise

Generation Z children ask tough questions about difficult issues. The Church must be prepared to present the truth accurately and to effectively explain the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

Pray that churches and ministries will find ways to engage with members of Gen Z who are seeking and curious about Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).

Pray for the Gospel and Scripture to be shared in a way that is relevant to the challenges of Gen Z. Pray for teachers of God's Word to help them apply God's Word to everyday life.

3. Reveal God's love to them

If we want young people to come to know Jesus, we need to build and maintain strong relationships with them. They will observe how you teach and model biblical truth in your daily conduct.

Walking in continued victory

How can our youth slay and overcome their giants, and pass the gospel to the next generation?

*The Lord does not save with sword and spear; for **the battle is the Lord's**, and He will give you into our hands.* (1 Samuel 17:47).

Faith

Faith can be passed from the older generation to the younger through the people we are in a relationship with (2 Timothy 1:5).

Leadership

Gen Z can follow those from the older generation who are godly and faithful (2 Timothy 3:10).

The older generation should lead the younger, leading by example daily in all circumstances and Bible instruction (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Younger adults can, and where fitting should, lead (be examples for) older adults (1 Timothy 4:12).

We should not only think about receiving the gospel from the generation ahead of us, but also of passing it on to the generation after us — and in such a way that they are equipped to pass it on to another generation who will pass it on to another (2 Timothy 2:2).

Sources:

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