

# A GENERATION IN CRISIS

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“This is the most un-reached generation in the history of America, yet the most reachable.”

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*Some of these are a collection of Articles that refer to Young Adults and statistics from various reliable sources.*



*“We have a generation who has lost its ability to discern right from wrong because it has lost the truth about the person, character, and nature of God because of post modernism.”*

# THE PURPOSE

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*"Americans in their twenties are significantly less likely than any other age group to attend church."*

## **Why are young people leaving the church?**

86% of the young people in the evangelical church leave at age 18 and never come back. This figure sounds incredibly high to me but even if it is in actuality, only a fraction of that amount it still shows there is a real problem in the Church today.

Not only are twenty-something's, being out-attended by older generations, but also those who have grown up in the church are leaving. Between the ages of 18 and 29, more than half abandon the church.

A potential reason for this mass exit, Kinnaman says, is an overwhelming feeling among young adults that they are being overlooked by the church. Other deterrents include busyness, skepticism of church, a lack of commitment and an aversion to traditional methods.

*"These statistics suggest that the church is heading toward **extinction**."*

To counter this alarming trend, churches are seeking new ways to reclaim this faltering generation. Hoping to attract and engage young adults, many churches are creating alternative services where the music is hip, the teaching is relevant and the community is consistent.

Kinnaman reports young adults are less likely than any other age group to donate to churches, commit to Christianity, read the Bible or serve in the church. This is AN EXTREMELY poor record of accomplishment for those next in line to lead the church.

Perhaps the most striking reality of twenty something's faith is their relative absence from Christian churches. Only 3 out of 10 twenty something's (31%) attend church in a typical week, compared to 4 out of 10 of those in their 30s (42%) and nearly half of all adults age 40 and older (49%).

The low level of twenty something church attendance is not just due to the "college years," when many young adults may not have easy access to a church. The research shows that church attendance bottoms out during the late 20s when the vast majority of students have transitioned

from education to the workforce. Just 22% of those ages 25 to 29 attended church in the last week.

Many twenty-something's are reversing course after having been active church attendees during their teenage years. As teenagers, more than half attended church each week and more than 4 out of 5 (81%) had ever gone to a Christian church. That means that from high school graduation to age 25 there is a 42% drop in weekly church attendance and a 58% decline from age 18 to age 29. That represents about 8,000,000 twenty something's alive today who were active churchgoers as teenagers but who will no longer be active in a church by their 30th birthday.

Kinnaman pushed for a realistic view of the research implications. "Christianity is not going to wither away among twenty-something's – more than 10 million are active church-goers and very committed to the Christian faith. However, the real issue is how churches will respond to the faith-quakes that are reverberating through our nation's young adults. The notion that these people will return to the church when they get older or once they become parents is only true in a minority of cases. More importantly, that reasoning ignores the real issue: millions of twenty-something's are crystallizing their views of life without the input of church leaders, the Bible, or other mature Christians. If we simply wait for them to come back to church later in adulthood, not only will most of those people never return, but also we would miss the chance to alter their life trajectory during a critical phase. And, besides, what church couldn't use the infusion of energy, ideas, and leadership that young adults can bring to the table?"

Kinnaman said. "Their disenchantment has raised questions for churches related to relevance, discipleship, authenticity, the use of art and technology in ministry, relationships, music, learning styles and teaching, teamwork, leadership hierarchy, stewardship, and much more. On the other side of the coin, young adults – many who have grown up in unhealthy families – struggle with character issues, with relational isolation brought on by their hyper-individualism, with Bible familiarity, and with being over-critical of their elders. Consequently, many of the legitimate questions young leaders ask get lost in the jumble of generational warfare." Together we can make a difference, include this vast population in our event, and reach them with a message that is relevant, inclusive, non-judgmental, and full of Grace and truth.

# THE CAUSE

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In our nation's cities, small towns and urban communities, we are facing an escalating crisis with the continued growth of a generation of young people who often feel misunderstood and neglected. Many of these kids are being raised in environments where self-worth and hope for the future are destroyed. Their value system is developed by the polluted ethics, with little impact from positive adult relationships. Assist in constructing a path for to growth in their individual relationship with Christ, by providing an accepting non-judgmental atmosphere where clear and rational path in the midst of confusion can to serve them. This truly allows us to assist them in gaining the skills, assets and attitudes they will need to reach their God-given potential in life. If churches do not "modify the approaches they use to influence the faith development" of this group, teens who grow up to be young adults will be "the least churchd generation."

The "Invisible Generation" of tomorrow, will be the driving forces in our society will look much as they do today, only magnified. We will live in a secular, materialistic, relativistic and self-absorbed culture. Many will be "third-generation un-churched." Christianity will be an alien world to them, and they won't know much about the Bible's story or message. At home, kids will have shallow, fragmented and often abusive primary relationships. The wealthy and the elderly will control most of our resources and power, making young people a vulnerable "fringe group." Life will grow even more complex, fast-paced, desperate and violent. Because of this, the transition from childhood to adulthood will be longer, more treacherous and full of risk. If you do not give kids a road map to help them find their way in life, someone else will. In addition, there is a good Chance that "someone else" will not lead kids "in the way".

# THE ANSWER

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We want to be this "Invisible Generation" outpost of hope, encouragement and place where the can come as they are not having to change who they are to fit into the structured church environment. Your partnership with us is going to provide God an avenue to the most un-reached generation. We together can make an impact in our next generation.

Life after high school is quite different. Gone are the security and protection that comes from being underage and dependent upon others. Decisions and challenges take on new

importance. In addition to undertaking numerous other life tasks, young adults in late adolescence and beyond search to find a faith that they can call their own.

In many ways, they are alone in this endeavor for maybe the first time in their lives. Often their “searching faith” moves them away from the church of their birth. Many are wary of institutional religion as they grapple with questions about the purpose of life and what it means to be a Christian.

In whatever way this searching manifests itself - be it introspective reexaminations of traditional beliefs, intentional religious education, rejection of organized religion, or functional atheism - young adults need to know that the Church is there for them even though they may not be there for the Church. They need to know there is a place where they are welcome, where their doubts and questions are welcome, where they can find the support and fellowship of their peers.

While acknowledging there are significant differences between the faith journeys of those in late adolescence and those in their late twenties and thirties, ministry to young adults should always be respectful of these differences and directed towards inclusion. There are no better mentors, for those searching for a place to belong than those who have come through the doubts and questions into ownership of their Christ-Like identity and a growing maturity in the Christian faith.

Young Adult's is one of the fastest growing groups in our community today. Many have recognized the need to reach out to people in their 20's and 30's, both married and single. With the need being so great and few options existing for people to find the answers.

Providing “opportunities for young adults...to integrate their faith in their lives and through their life transitions,” developing “young adult leadership through resources and training programs that empower young adults and strengthen their commitment to the Christ,” supporting “ministries with young adults in higher education,” supporting “involvement of young adults from all racial/ethnic groups,” working “to ensure fair and adequate representation by young adults throughout the life of the Christ,” nurturing “adult leaders of young adult ministries,” and “fully embracing young adults...addressing their needs and issues through evangelism and a spirit of Christian fellowship, renewing and supporting the growth of the body of Christ.”

The place where we can together invite young adults in our churches and communities is Christ on the Mall on July forth. At the mall they can receive the message of the good News and hear relevant testimonies from other Young adults from their communities

# TESTIMONY

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Young adults are visually stimulated and respond to short chunks of information. That means a church that gathers young adults must be highly visual, fast-flowing, and savvy about using communication tools that are familiar to them. Moreover, who should be doing the communicating? Well, the young people, of course! They are the best missionaries to their peers because they know the culture better than anyone does.

In youth culture, community and friendship trump everything else especially those from dysfunctional homes, value their friendships over their families. That is why we focus on building a strong community of friends that strongly welcomes young people who have little or no connection to the church. We continually remind our young people that the church must remain outward-focused or it will wither. We use our Groups meetings as an outreach tool, not simply a discipling strategy. Our Groups are the basic building blocks for reaping and keeping our young people. We tear down the cultural hurdles that scare away young people who are seeking Christ. If our goal is to introduce young people to Jesus, it is so important that we show them him, not an elaborate set of religious conditions. We must not ask these young people to culturally emigrate in order to follow Jesus. There are many dark places in youth culture. Nevertheless, it should be our goal to redeem people who gravitate to those dark places, not avoid them like the plague. Darkness needs light. This generation of young people is crying out for Jesus. He is the only one who can truly fill the void that modern-day marketers promise to fill with products. We must clear away the fog that obscures the real truth-Jesus.

# APPENDIX

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## GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

<i>Boomers</i> 1943- 60	<i>Xers (Busters)</i> 1961-81
Me generation	We generation
Live to work	Work to live
Enlightenment worldview	Post-modern worldview
Institutions	Relationships
Propositional truth	Relational truth
Excellence	Authenticity
Growth	Community
Lonely	Alone
Success	Wholeness
Aggressive	Passive
Hopeful	Cynical
Judeo—Christian background	Moral, philosophical, relativism

Good jobs

McJobs

Easy rider

Information super highway

Question authority

Ignore authority

Possessions are valuable

Integrity is valuable

—*Adapted from articles by Kevin Ford,*

*"My Generation," InterVarsity,*

*Winter 94-95, 3-7; and by Dieter Zander,*

*"The Gospel for Generation X,"*

*Leadership, Spring 1995, 37-42*

## NEW RULES AND CHALLENGES FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

- Personal relationships count; institutions don't.
- One person can make a difference in the world, but not much.
- Each individual must assume responsibility for his or her own world
- Enjoying people and life opportunities is more important than productivity, profitability, or achievement.
- You can't always count on your family to be there for you, but it is your best hope for emotional support.
- Diversity among people is aggressively pursued
- Change is good.
- Development of character is more crucial than achievement. Whenever necessary, gain control and use it wisely.
- Don't waste time searching for absolutes; there are none.
- Life is hard and then you die; but because its the only life we've got, we may as well endure it, enhance it, and enjoy it as best we can.
- Spiritual truth may take many forms.
- Technology is our natural ally.

Express your rage.

—*George Barna,*

Generation Next:

New Rules, New Challenges

(*Regal, 1995, 107-116*)

In the context of the *quarter-life crisis*, however, they occur shortly after a young person – usually an educated professional, in this context – enters the "real world". After the initial excitement of adult life and its responsibilities wears off, some individuals find themselves in a world of career stagnation and extreme insecurity.

Characteristics of this crisis are:

- confusion of identity
- insecurity regarding the near future
- insecurity regarding present accomplishments
- re-evaluation of close interpersonal relationships
- disappointment with one's job
- nostalgia for [college](#) life
- tendency to hold stronger opinions
- boredom with social interactions
- financially-rooted stress
- loneliness

These emotions and insecurities are not uncommon at this age, nor at any age in adult life.

As the emotional ups-and-downs of adolescence and college life subside, many in the quarter-life crisis experience a "graying" of emotion. While emotional interactions may be intense in a high school or college environment – where everyone is roughly the same age and [hormones](#) are highly active – these interactions become subtler and more private in adult life.

Furthermore, a contributing factor to this crisis may be the difficulty in adapting to a workplace environment. In college, professors' expectations are clearly given and students receive frequent feedback on their performance in their courses. By contrast, in a workplace environment, a person may be, for some time, completely unaware of a boss's displeasure with his performance, or of his colleagues' dislike for his personality. Office [politics](#) require interpersonal skills that are largely unnecessary for success in an educational setting. Emerging adults eventually learn these social skills, but this process – sometimes compared to learning another language – is often highly stressful.

Music

- Peers are the most common source of teenagers' information about CD copying (32%) as well as about music downloading (28%). Other sources of information related to CD copying included teachers (13%), parents (11%), newscasters (9%), other people on TV (4%), siblings (2%), TV commercials (1%), radio DJs (1%), MTV (1%), newspapers (1%), and the police (1%).
- The sources of information for the morality of downloading music are: peers (28%), teachers (13%), parents (11%), newscasters (9%), musician/artist (8%), other people on TV (4%), TV commercials (3%), pastor (3%), newspapers (2%), youth pastors (2%), siblings (1%), and radio DJs (1%).
- 86% of teens believes that music piracy – including copying a CD for a friend or downloading non-promotional music online for free – either is morally acceptable or is not even a moral issue. 8% claim that such activities are morally wrong. (2004)
- 21% of teens said that both CD burning and downloading are morally okay. (2004)
- 65% of teenagers believe music piracy is not a moral issue. (2004)
- Just 10% of Christian teens believe that copying CDs for friends and unauthorized music downloading are morally wrong, compared to 6% of non-born agians (the four-point difference barely qualified as statistically significant). (2004)
- 64% of born again Christian teens believe that copying CDs for friends and unauthorized music is not a moral issue, compared with 66% of non-Christians. (2004)
- 4 out of every 5 teenagers (80%) have engaged in some type of music piracy in the past six months – including making copies of CDs for other people, downloading free music (other than promotions or giveaways), or uploading their own music files to the Internet to share with others. (2004)
- Active church attenders (78%) were just as likely as non-attenders (81%) to engage in piracy; born again Christians (77%) were just as likely as non-born again Christians (81%). (2004)
- 84% of teenagers said they had purchased a CD or cassette from a music store in the past six months. (2004)
- Only 48% of teenagers have ever heard anyone discuss the morality of music downloading. (2004)

### Family

- 57% of teens live in the same home with both of their natural parents. (1999)
- 43% talk to family or friends about religious matters in a typical day. (1998)
- 41% talk to family or friends about politics in a typical day. (1998)

- 70% of teens have daily conversations with their mothers about an important issue in their life, compared to the 53% of teens who have a similar type of conversation with their fathers. (1998)

### Adults and Teens

- Teens describe themselves as “happy” (92%); “responsible” (91%); “self reliant” (86%); “optimistic about my future” (82%); “trusting of other people” (80%); “very intelligent” (79%); and “physically attractive” (74%). (1998)
- Teens believe adults would describe young people as "lazy" (84%); "rude" (91%); "sloppy" (70%); "dishonest" (65%); and violent (57%). "Friendly" (63%) and "intelligent" (58%) also were chosen by a majority of teens. (1998)
- 47% say their parents have the greatest influence on their spiritual development; 16% listed their church; 8% named peers; 4% said relatives (1998)
- 85% say their parents approve of all or most of their close friends (1998)
- 82% say their parents have been good role models of how to be a person of strong and meaningful faith. (2000)

### The Future

Desires teens hold for their future: (1998)

- having a college degree (88%)
- having a comfortable lifestyle (83%)
- having one marriage partner for life (82%)
- having close personal friendships (84%)
- having good physical health (87%)
- having a clear purpose for living (77%)
- living with a high degree of integrity (71%)
- having a close relationship with God (66%)
- influencing other people's lives (56%)
- making a difference in the world (56%)
- having a satisfying sex life with their marriage partner (55%)
- working in a high paying job (55%)
- having children (54%)
- being deeply committed to the Christian faith (50%)
- living close to family and relatives (49%)

- being personally active in a church (43%)
- owning a large home (28%)
- owning the latest household technology and electronic equipment (27%)
- achieving fame or public recognition (18%)

### Spirituality

- One-third of all teenagers (34%) as born again – unchanged in several years. (2000)
- The most common church affiliations among teenagers were Catholic (22%), Baptist (16%), and mainline Protestant (19%). Only 4% usually attend a charismatic or Pentecostal church. (2000)
- In 1997, 88% of teens say they are Christian. This number dropped to 82% in 1999.
- Of those who call themselves Christians, 26% said they are “absolutely committed” and 57% said that they were “moderately committed” to the Christian faith. (1999)
- Almost two-thirds of teens (62%) believe that the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings. (2000)
- Almost two-thirds describe themselves as “religious” (64%). (1999)
- Three out of every five call themselves “spiritual” (60%). (1999)
- Three out of five say they are “committed Christians” (60%). (1999)
- One out of every three teens (33%) is born again. (1999)
- Only 4% of U.S. teens are evangelicals (1999)
- 28% of teens feel a personal responsibility to tell others about their religious beliefs (56% of born again Christian teens feel this way). (1999)
- 56% of teens feel that their religious faith is very important in their life. (1999)
- Two out of three teens (65%) say that the devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil. (2000)
- Three out of five teens (61%) agree that “if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in Heaven. (2000)
- Slightly more than half (53%) say that Jesus committed sins while He was on earth. (2000)
- 30% of teens believe that all religions are really praying to the same God, they are just using different names for God. (1999)
- In total, 83% of teens maintain that moral truth depends on the circumstances, and only 6% believe that moral truth is absolute. (2001)
- When it comes to believing in absolute truth, only 9% of born again teens believe in moral absolutes and just 4% of the non-born again teens believe that there are moral

absolutes. (2001) *(For more information about the held perspectives on moral truth, see the February 12, 2002 Press Release article titled "Americans Are Most Likely to Base Truth on Feelings." You can access this article on this site, by clicking the respective link on the right-hand side of this page.)*

### Religious Activities

- Nearly 9 out of 10 (89%) teens pray weekly. (1999)
- Over half of teens (56%) attend church on a given Sunday. (1999)
- 38% of teens donate some of their own money to a church in a given week. (1999)
- 35% of teens attend Sunday school in a given week. (1999)
- 35% of teens read the Bible each week, not including when they are in church. (1999)
- More than seven out of ten teens are engaged in some church-related effort in a typical week: attending worship services, Sunday school, a church youth group or a small group. (1999)
- 32% of teens attend youth group, other than a small group or Sunday school, each week. (1999)
- 29% of teens attend a small group each week that meets regularly for Bible study, prayer or Christian fellowship, not including Sunday school or a 12-step group. (1999)
- 18% read from a sacred text other than the Bible in a given week. (1999)

***"Americans in their twenties are significantly less likely than any other age group to attend church."***