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BA BY BOO MERS TION X
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M ILL EN TION X
GE NERA TION X
GEN ALP HA Z

Next Gen Conference

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Dr. Shelly Melia

TELL TO THE COMING
GENERATION
The Glorious Deeds
OF THE LORD
AND HIS
MIGHT & THE
WONDERS
HE HAS DONE
SO THAT THEY SHOULD
SET THEIR *Hope* IN
GOD
PSALM 78:4.7

nextgen



nextgen

Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.

- George Orwell

Gentelligence

The Revolutionary Approach
to Leading an
Intergenerational Workforce



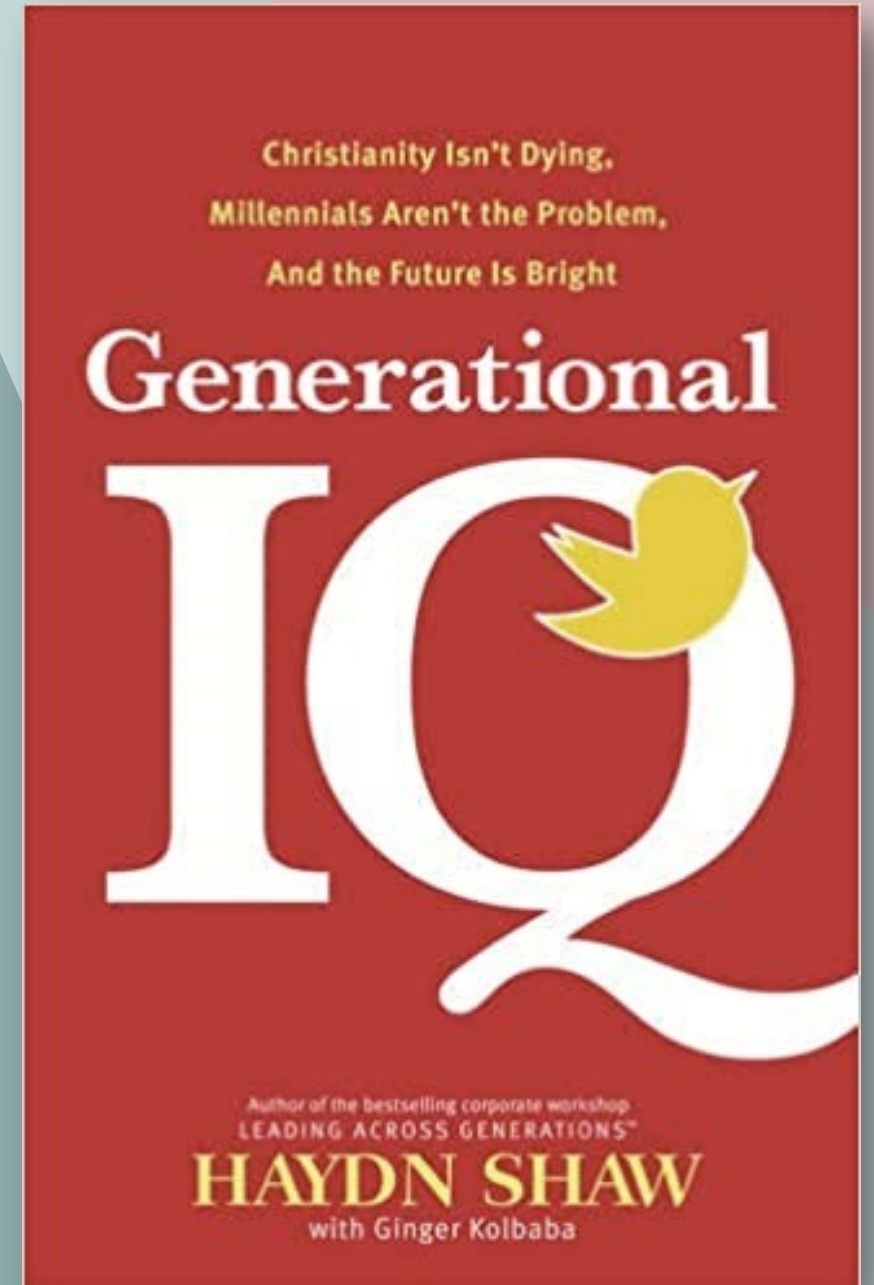
Megan Gerhardt, PhD,
Josephine Nachemson-Ekwall,
and Brandon Fogel

A new breed of American worker is about to attack everything you hold sacred: from giving orders, to your starched white shirt and tie. They are called, among other things, “millennials”

Morley Safer, 60 Minutes (2007)

From Generation to Generation

- **Generational differences are the largest challenges that churches face.**
- **Generational experiences influence what people emphasize in Scripture, and what they put into practice.**
- **Generational intelligence is understanding the basic facts about each generation so you can take those into account when you plan for church.**



The Real Differences Between
Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X,
Boomers, and Silents—
and What They Mean
for America's Future

generations

JEAN M. TWENGE, PHD

author of *iGen*

The Great Dechurching

Who's Leaving, Why Are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?



Jim Davis and
Michael Graham

with Ryan P. Burge

Foreword by Collin Hansen

The Anxious Generation

How the Great Rewiring of
Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic
of Mental Illness



Jonathan Haidt

Coauthor of *The Coddling of the American Mind*

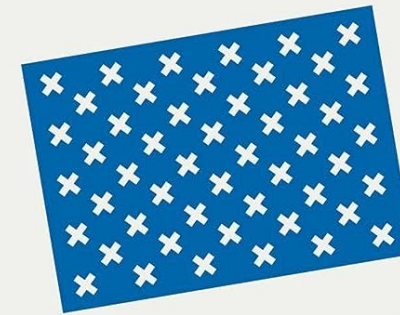
THE CODDLING OF THE AMERICAN MIND

HOW GOOD INTENTIONS
AND BAD IDEAS ARE
SETTING UP A GENERATION
FOR FAILURE

GREG LUKIANOFF
JONATHAN HAIDT



The Canceling of the American Mind



Greg Lukianoff
and Rikki Schlott
Foreword by
Jonathan Haidt

Cancel Culture
Undermines Trust
and Threatens Us All—
But There Is a Solution

Generational Review

- **Traditionalists: *Born before 1945, 79+***
- **Baby Boomers: *1946-1964, 60-78***
- **Generation X: *1965-1980, 44-59***
- **Millennials: *1981-1995, 29-43***
- **Gen Z: *1996-2010, 14-28***
- **Generation Alpha: *2010-2025, birth-14***

Traditionalist

(Born before 1945)

We have been through tough times before

Loyal to Institutions/Corporations

Great Depression and World War II

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Baby Boomer

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Shift from Collectivism to Individualism began

John F. Kennedy and Vietnam War

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Generation X

(Born 1965-1980)



Life is hard; steady as she goes

Latchkey Kids

Challenger Disaster

Generation X

(Born 1965-1980)

Last generation to have mostly analog childhood

Millennials

(Born 1981-1995)

9/11 and Great Recession

Millennials

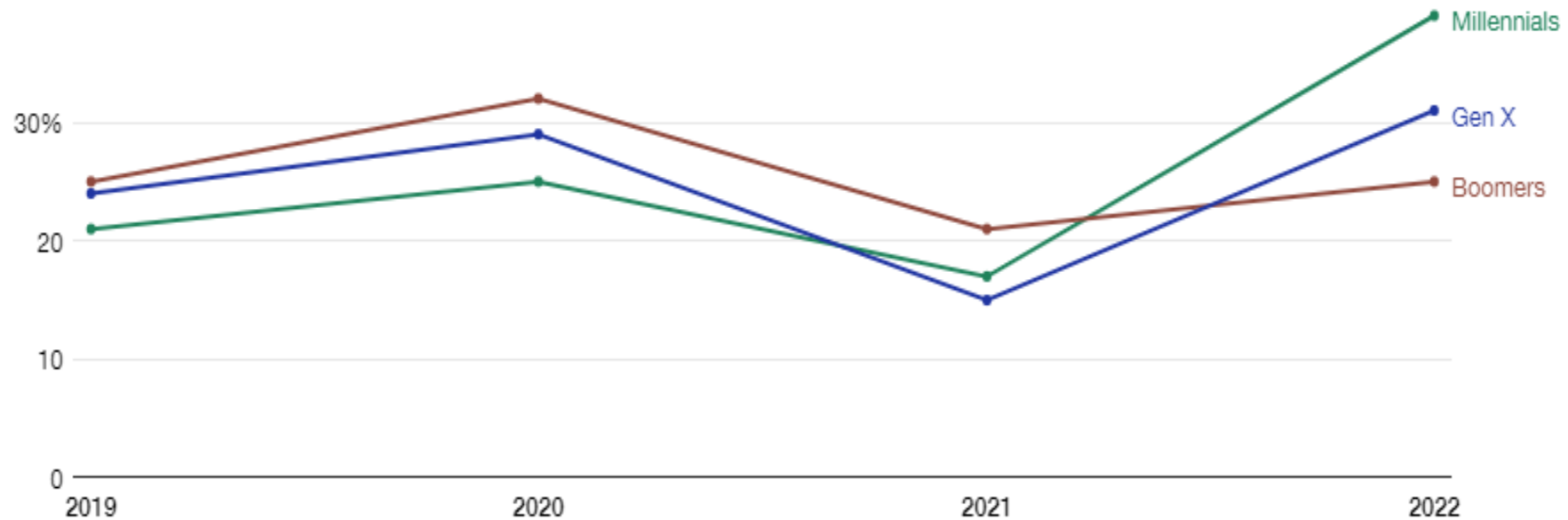
(Born 1981-1995)

[You've Gotta Love Millennials - Micah Tyler \(youtube.com\)](#)

Millennials

WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE, BY GENERATION

Barna



n=13,349 U.S. adults, 2019–2022. | Source: Barna Group | [Download image](#)

© 2022 | [Barna.com](#)

Millennial Pastors

Less interested in popularity and platform and more interested in local ministry.

Less top down and more consensus-building.

Less fixated on size and more fixated on health

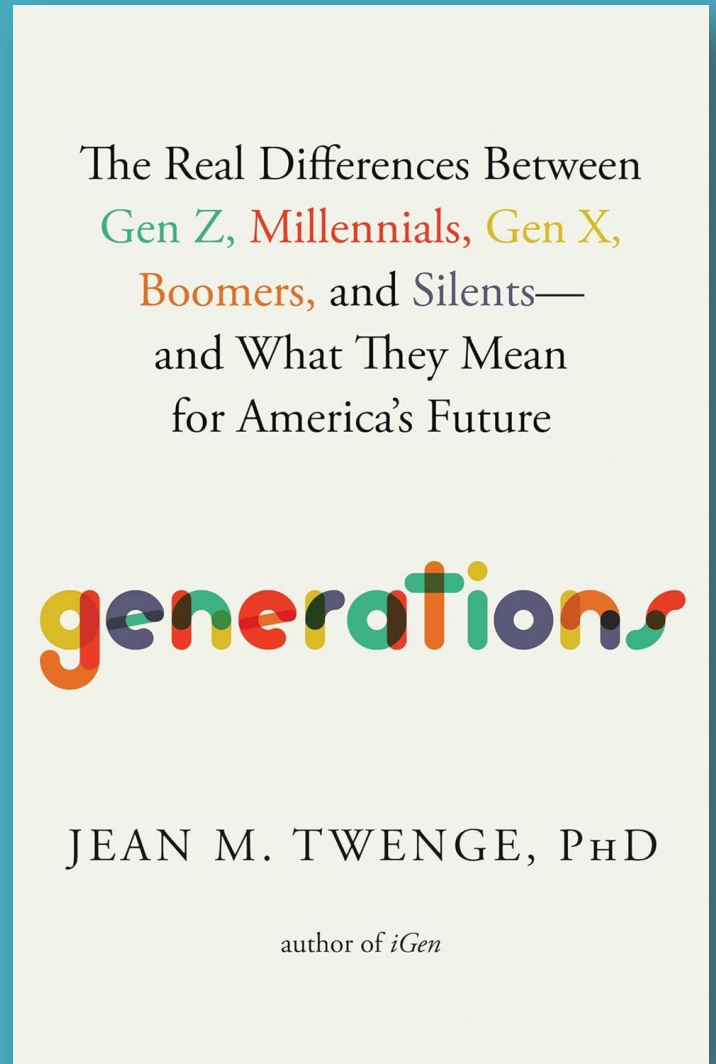
Carey Nieuwhof

Driving Forces of Generational Change

Technology

Individualism (Collectivism)

Slow-life (Fast-Life)



NextGen Ministries

0-28 year olds

We risk too little

We rescue too quickly

We rave too easily

Tim Elmore

Generation Z

(Born 1996-2010)

I feel postponed and penalized

Me too and church too
Covid-19

[gnash - pajamas \(music video\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

Be Aware

NextGen Challenges



Mental Health

National Emergency (2021)

Macro-Trends

Mental Health



Anxiety

Depression

Suicide

Loneliness

Anxiety

- *Constant Comparison*
- *Peer reference*
- *Imposter Syndrome*
- *Agency/Grit deficiencies*
- *Information Burden*
- *Performance Burnout*
- *Relational Poverty*
- *Spiritual Formation Delays*



Macro-Trends

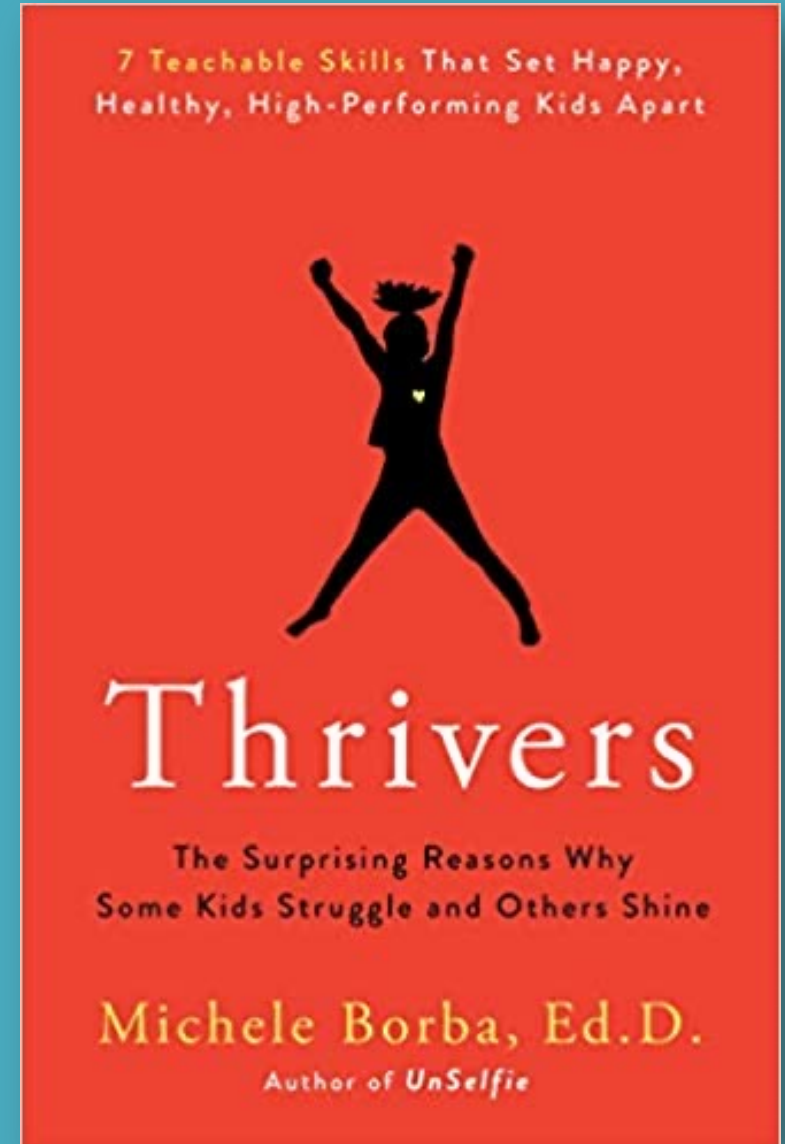
- *External Locus of Control*
- *Decreased independent play*
- *Cyber-Socialization*
- *Hyper-individualism*
- *Polarized/Tribal*
- *Absence of Shared Truth*
- *Ideological Intolerance*

Macro-Trends

- **Artificial Intelligence**
 - *Our smart technology advances so quickly it outpaces our ability to civilize it. (Kevin Kelly)*
- **Dehumanization**
- **Feelings given ultimate authority**
- **Transhumanism (body is just stuff)**
- **Confirmation Bias**
 - **We are in a crisis of spiritual formation because we live in an attention economy. Attention is money. You are the product. (The Great De-Churching)**

In Their Own Words...

- *We are college and career ready, but sure aren't human ready.*
- *We lack passion because everything is pushed on us so we don't know who we are.*
- *We may look good on the outside, but we're not so good inside. We're kind of lost.*
- *We need more time to be kids and have friends.*
- *Our generation always focuses on trying to make everything picture-perfect, so we're drained.*



“NEVER ENOUGH is the book for our times.”

—NED JOHNSON, bestselling coauthor of THE SELF-DRIVEN CHILD

NEVER ENOUGH



NEW YORK
TIMES
Bestseller

When Achievement
Culture Becomes Toxic—and
What We Can Do About It

JENNIFER BREHENY WALLACE

*For today's kids, it's less about
“measuring up” than “measuring
over.” Everyone needs to stand out
from the crowd.*

Empathy markedly lower

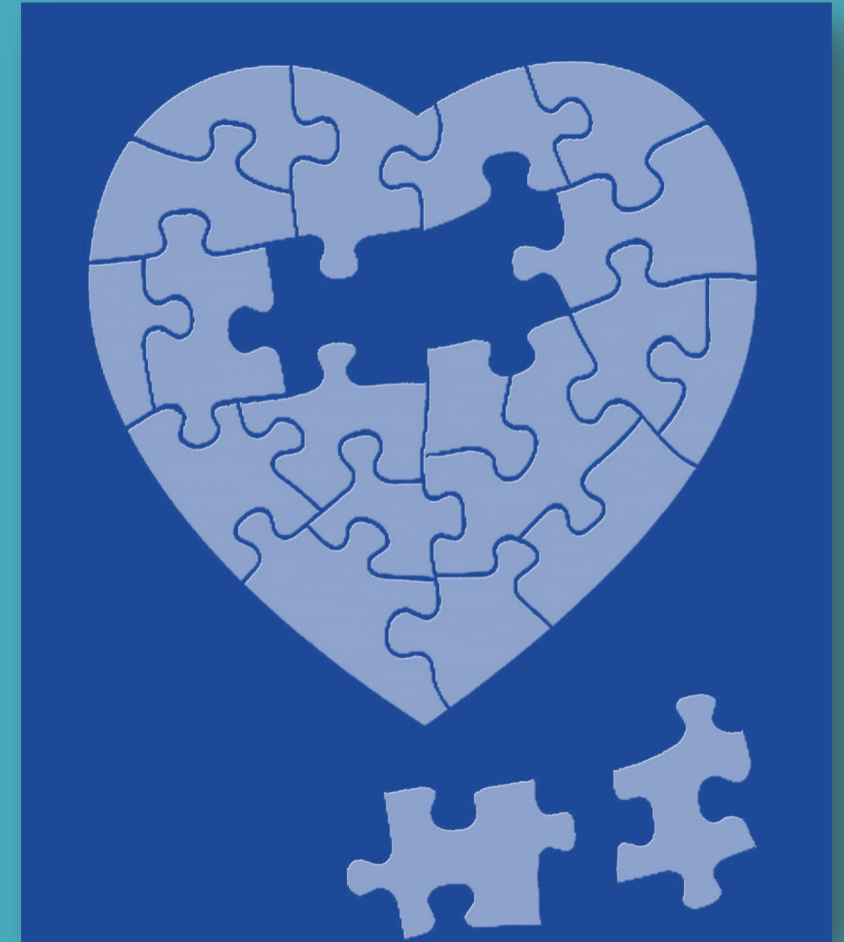
Narcissism epidemic

The Puzzle is Us:

We're trying to fit into the world but we can't because we're missing pieces....

- Which pieces are missing?
- The pieces on how to be people, like how to get along, handle mistakes, cope with stress, that kind of stuff—pieces that build your character and make you human. But we're being raised to just be products, so we all feel empty.

- Aiden (Borba, 5)

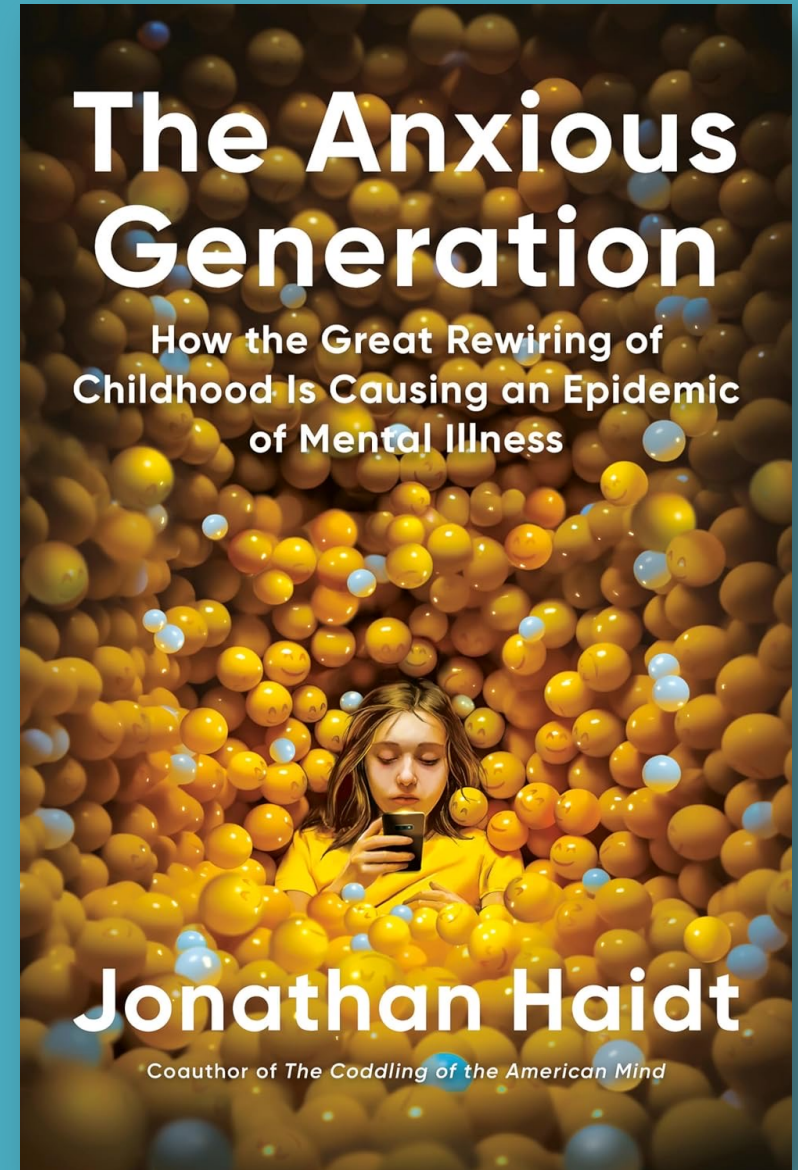


[Sean Killingsworth - PKN Orlando v30 \(youtube.com\)](#)

Sound Bytes

- Entire ecosystem has been lost
- No longer have to roam (feed bins)
- What was your “savannah” like as a teenager?
- Isolation Phones
- Social Wasteland
- Moments are meant to evaporate....they are permanent....unnatural anxiety
- Isolating us next to each other
- Kids are lonely...there is nothing for us to turn to if we put our phones down
- Real connection doesn't happen naturally in this ecosystem
- Opposite of addiction=Human connection
- We are living isolated no matter what we do

**Shift from Play-based
childhood to a
Phone/Technology based
childhood**



Hearing the Story Being Told

Communication



Copyrighted Material

"If you want a deep dive into the motivations, challenges and opportunities of today's youth, this is the book." – William D. Parker Founder, *Principal Matters*

READY FOR REAL LIFE

Unpacking the Five Essential Soft Skills Great Leaders Instill in Their Students

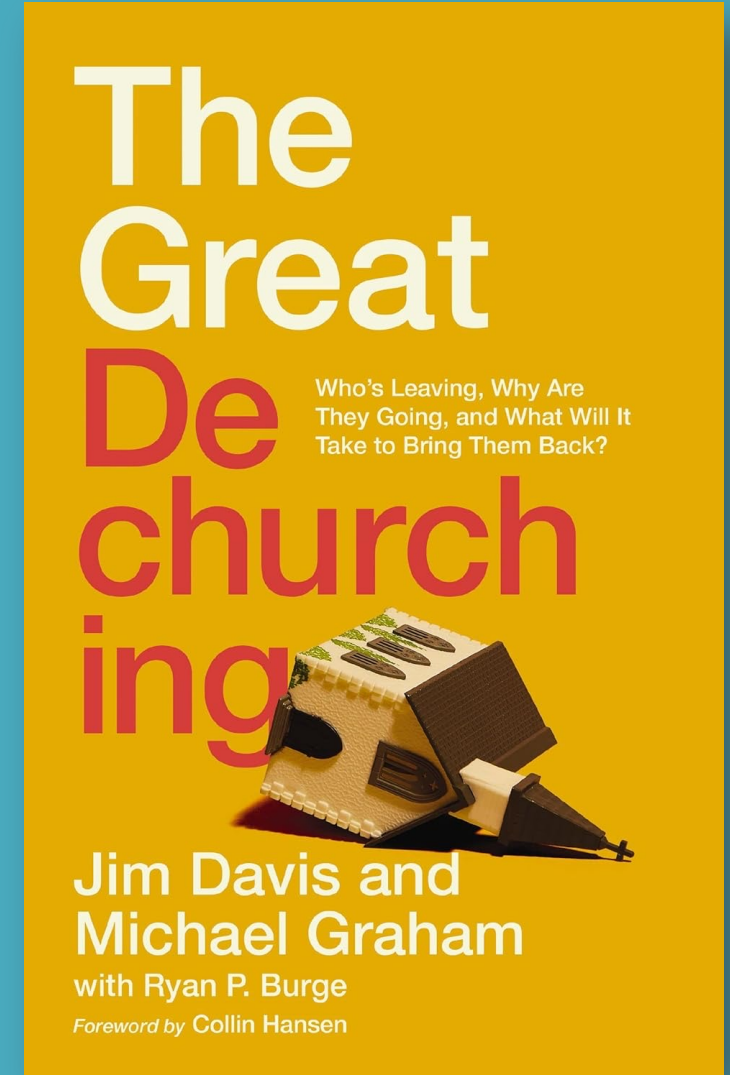
ANDREW MCPEAK
Foreword by Tim Elmore

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What is at Stake?

Missed Generational Handoff

- 68% said parents played a role in leaving church:
 - 1. Emphasis on Culture wars (14%)
 - 2. Lack of love, joy, gentleness, kindness and generosity (14%)
 - 3. Inability to listen (14%)
 - 4. Inability to engage in other viewpoints (13%)
 - 5. Their racial attitudes or actions (13%)
- In 2020 church membership fell below 50% in America
- Covid isn't transforming us. It's speeding up the changes already underway. (Thomas Kidd)



Quotes

The movement that spent 40 years at war with Secular America is now at war with itself. The result is the fracturing of the American church.

(p. 22)

In just a generation, the children of the dechurched will be unchurched, changing the nature of spirituality in America.

(pg 33)

Gen Z

Gen z church will likely be less produced, more personal, less performance-based, more authentic, and finally, less head-driven and more heart-driven.

Stop trying to reach them or speak for them. Invite them around your leadership table instead, and let them shape and make decisions.

If you don't have a digital delivery system for your discipleship strategy, you don't have a discipleship strategy.

Carey Nieuwhof



ANGELS LANDING

STRENUOUS CLIMB

NARROW ROUTE WITH
CLIFF EXPOSURES

HAZARDOUS DURING
THUNDERSTORMS, DARKNESS,
AND ICE / SNOW CONDITIONS



Application

- *Are you creating learning environments to match the needs of Gen Z?*
- *How will you apply this information to your ministries?*
- *Are you impacting other generations on the trail?*
- *Are you using a two-way radio or a megaphone?*

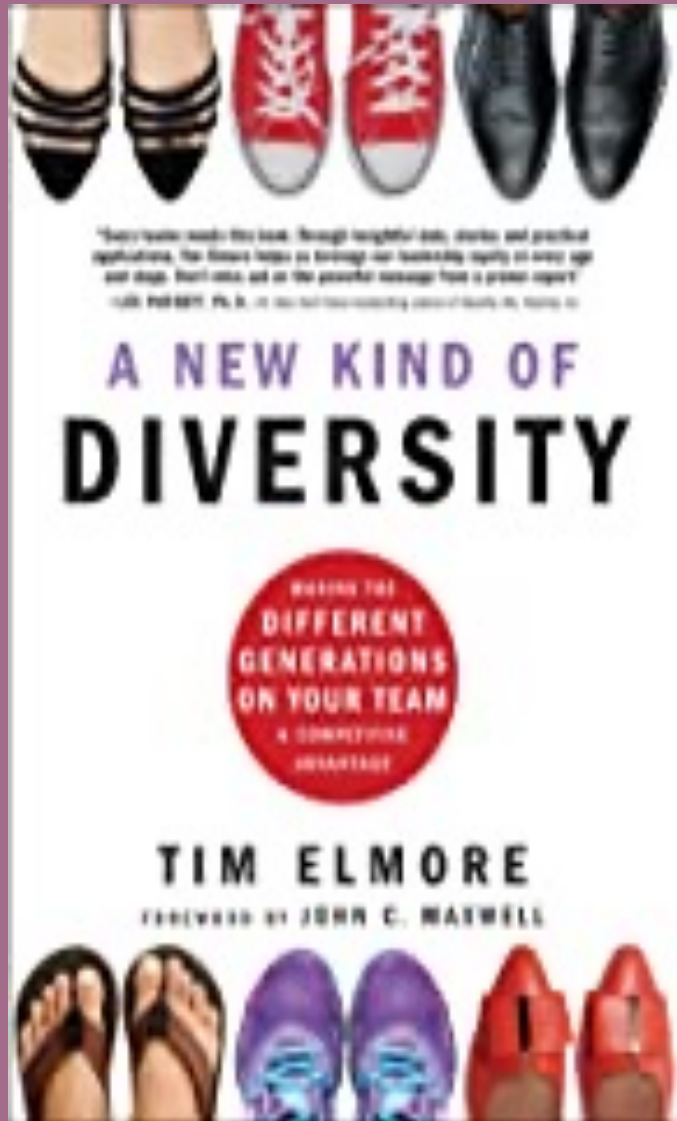
Generation Alpha

(Born 2010-present)

Generation Alpha: Who Are They?

(Born 2010-present)

- 2010 was the year Instagram and the iPad launched.
 - *“I would rather have an iPad than a dog.”*
- Celebrity Generation: Facebook, Youtube, TikTok, Gender Reveal.
- Mark McCrindle coined the term, *“Most transformative, disruptive generation ever, first generation born entirely in the 21st century.”*
- Majority from a non-traditional, or hurting and dysfunctional household.
- First babysitter was an iPad: *“An average 7 year old will have spent 1 year of his life in front of a screen.”*
- Tech-Creators more than Tech-Consumers.
- 65% will end up working in a job that doesn't even exist yet.



- *Tablet is the new pacifier*
- *Baby monitor is the new babysitter*
- *Netflix is the new playground*
- *Fortnite is the new pickup baseball game*
- *Instagram is the new photo album*
- *Google is the new encyclopedia*
- *Youtube is the new TV*
- *TikTok is the new shopping mall*
- *Medication is the new timeout*

Physical:

- Decline in *fine motor* skills
- Weaker *hands*
- Hygiene Hypothesis
- Brain Development
- Obesity
- Increased Myopia

Mental:

- Instead of learning to love *books*, they learned to *stream*
- *Video Deficit Effect*
 - Artificial Intelligence
- Lack of filters create increasing need for *critical thinking skills*



Social/Emotional:

- Anxiety and depression
- Lower levels of empathy
- Isolation
- Non-verbal learning disabled (body language, facial expression, nuanced vocal reactions rendered invisible)
- Diminished levels of *Face-Time*
- 34% growing up in a *single parent home*
- 43% of children growing up without a *father*

Spiritual:

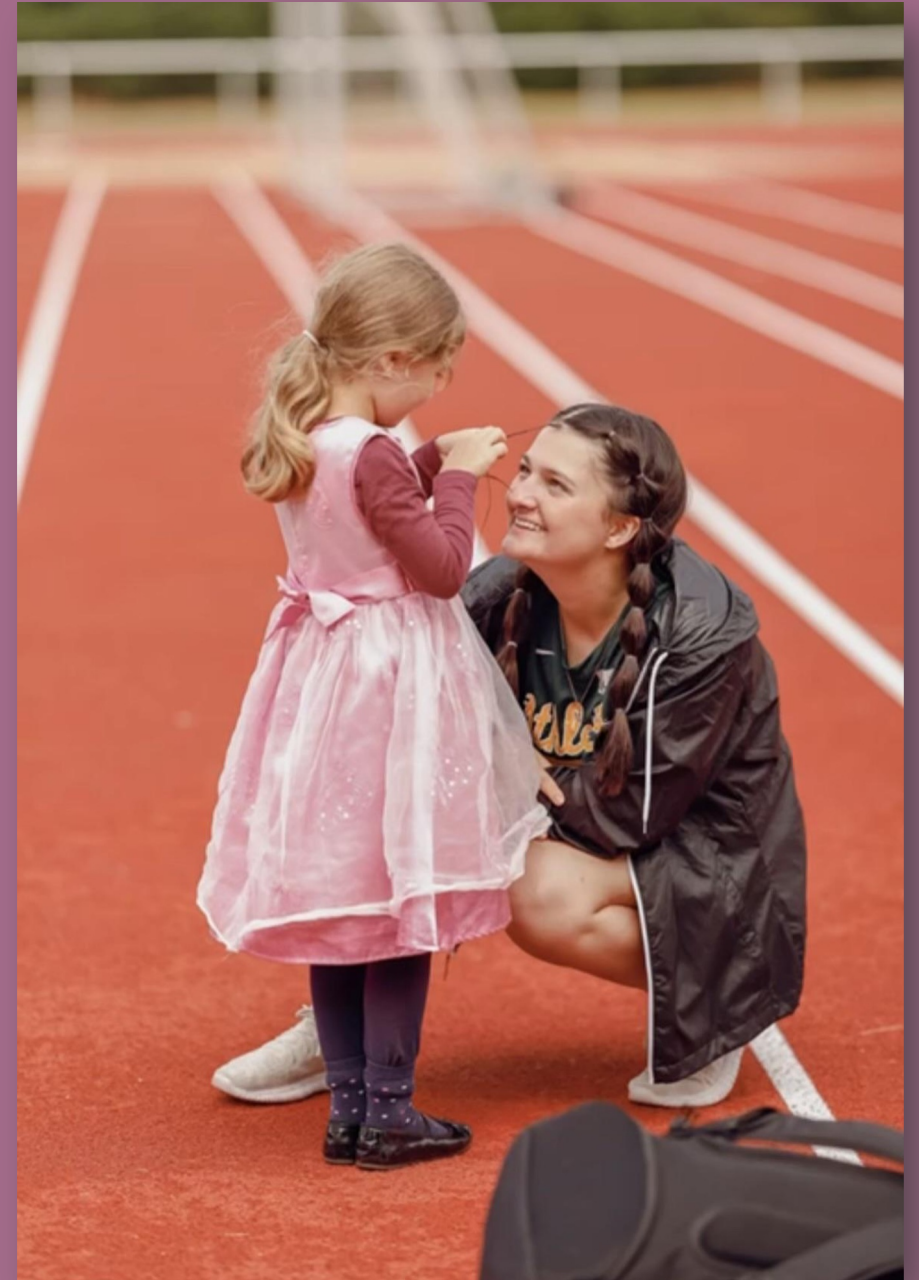
- *Post-Christian and Post-Church* generation of parents
- Exposure to *opposing* worldviews
- Ingrained *skepticism/Deconstruction*

Be Attuned:



Attunement:

- Face-Time
- Genuine Interest
- Understand their story
- Love them unconditionally



Attunement:

...more than just attention.
(absent presence)

...a deep sense of connection.

...to be truly seen and known.

Be Authentic:

A filtered and formulaic faith is not an authentic faith



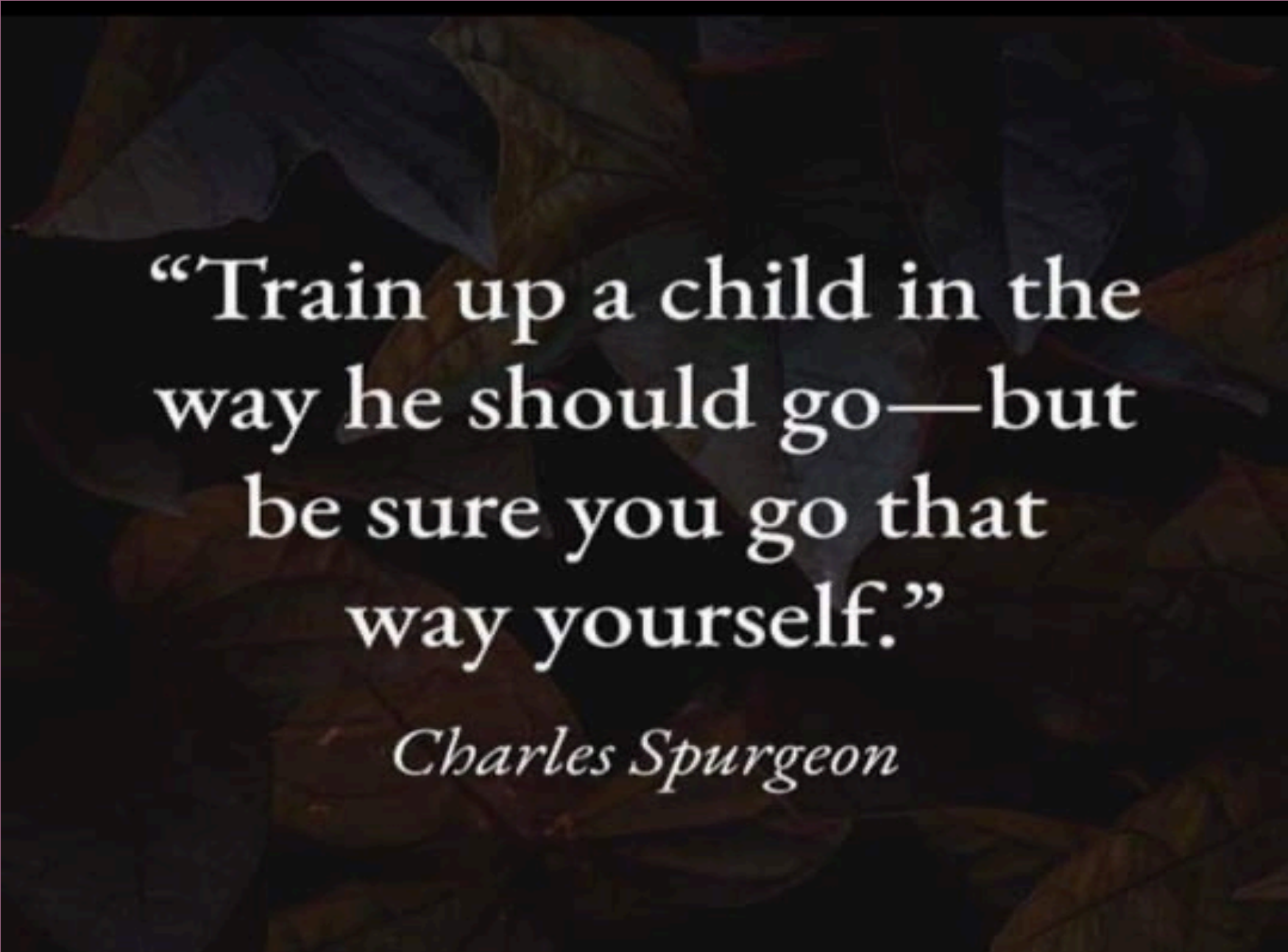
Why Be Authentic?

Two Common Paths when faced with extreme difficulty:

- 1. Maybe God is not real*
- 2. Maybe it is me (shame and blame)*

How do we want them to respond:

“This is really hard, but I know it is normal to face extreme difficulties. I will lean into my faith to get through this. I have done hard things before, and I can do this hard thing.”



“Train up a child in the
way he should go—but
be sure you go that
way yourself.”

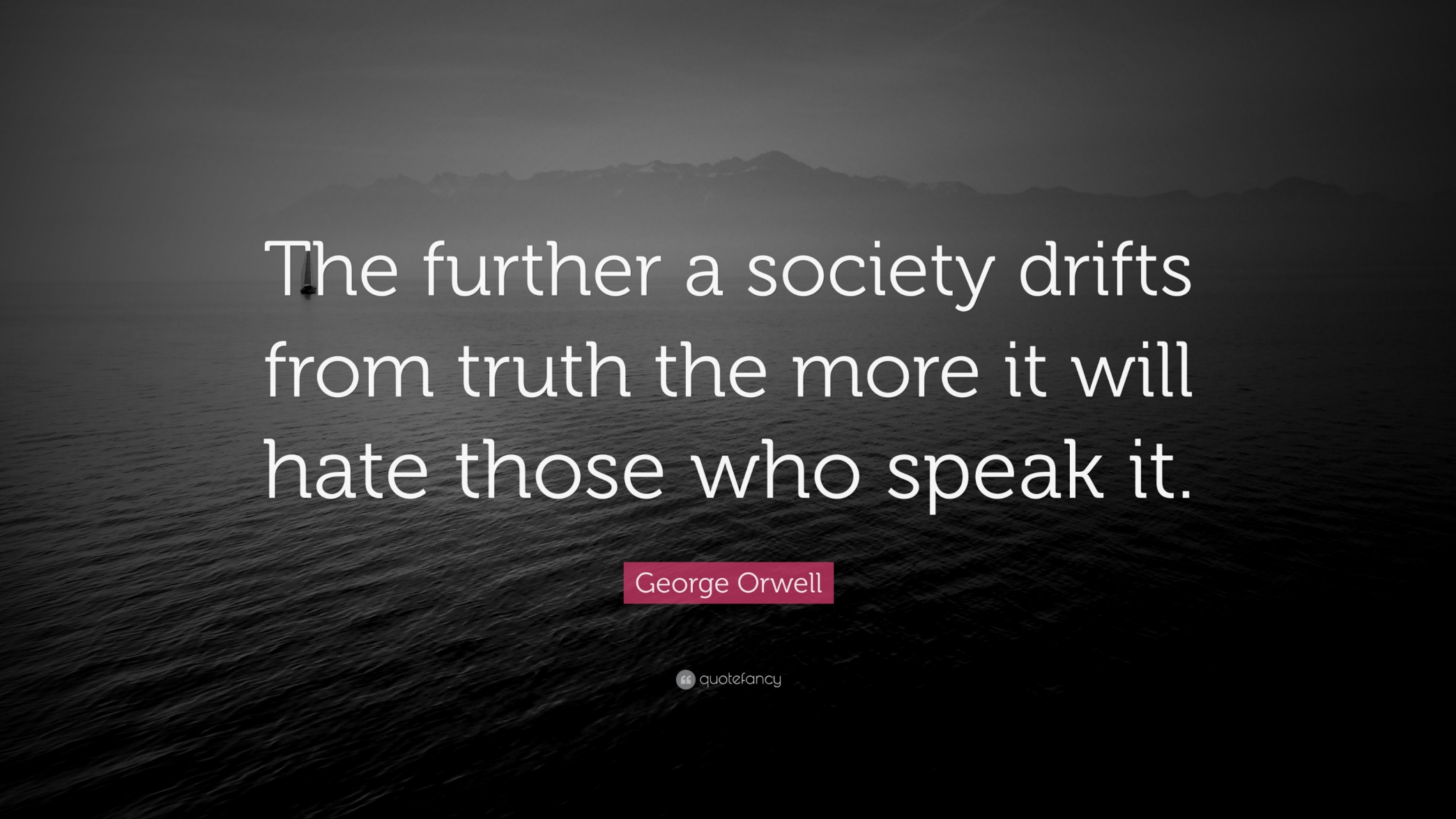
Charles Spurgeon

Biblical Worldview

- When does it start?
- How does God speak to young children?
- *God speaks to young children in the same ways he speaks to adults—through the mystery of the Holy Spirit’s work, through relationships among the people of God, through the revelation of God’s will and purpose in Christ and the Scriptures.*

(May, Stonehouse, Posterski, and Cannell)

- Are we teaching young children to recognize God’s voice?
- How do we use Scripture to impact a child’s spiritual formation?
- How can we teach young children to know God and not just know about God?



The further a society drifts
from truth the more it will
hate those who speak it.

George Orwell

Truth According to the World...

- Truth is Relative. Experiences and feelings determine beliefs.
 - Only 4% of Americans have a Biblical Worldview (Barna)
 - Two questions impacting worldview:
 - Do absolute moral truths exist?
 - Is absolute truth defined by the Bible?
- I am my own authority and I create my own truth.

Generational Needs:

- Truth
- Unfiltered Faith
- Mentors
- Gap Fillers (Ps 68:5)
- Relational Pedagogy
- Micro-empathy

Strengths of Gen Alpha:

- Adaptability/Resilience
- Increased appetite for community
- Global Mindset (Missions)
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Authenticity over Performance
- Champions for Diversity

Minding the Gaps



From Macro Trends to Ministry Strategies

[Know Your Why | Michael Jr. \(youtube.com\)](#)

Identify 5 Gaps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



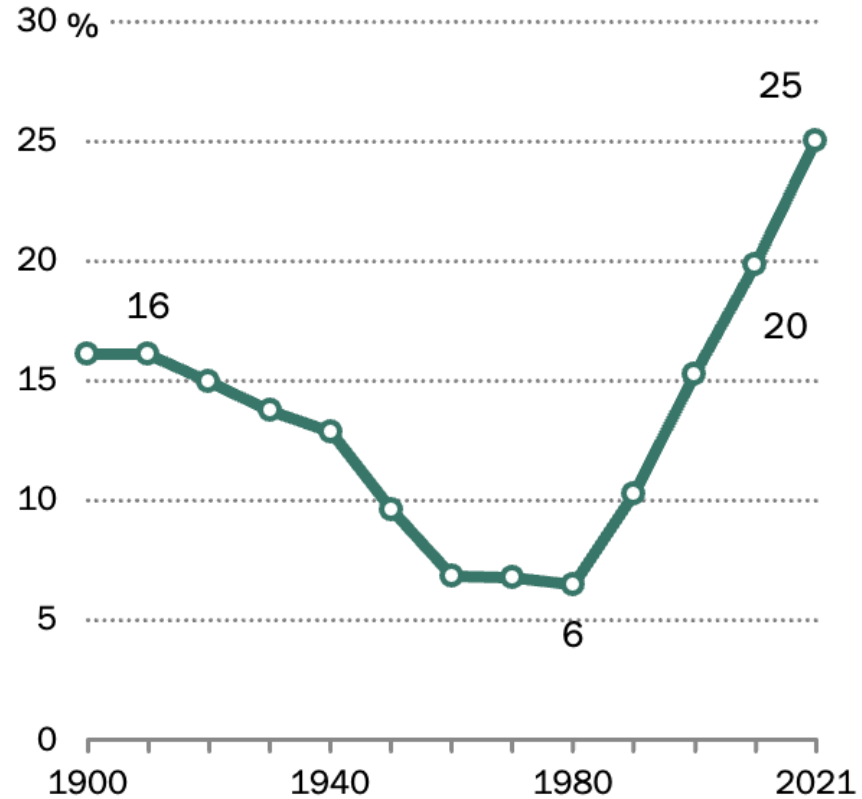
The period of *highest* religious interest was from ages 0-18 years old.

The *lowest* religious interest was 18-25



One-quarter of U.S. 40-year-olds have never married, a record high

% of 40-year-olds who had never married



Note: Data labels shown for 1910, 1980, 2010 and 2021.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1900-2000 decennial census and 2010 and 2021 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Ministry for Single Adults



Belonging is a primary pain point.

People are finding a more compelling and rich community around their children's sports teams...

What Keeps You Involved at Church?

1 out of 3 people responded with personal relationships.

First relationship, then formation

First belonging, then belief

*Growing Young, Powell,
Mulder and Griffin*

Relationship Rich Environments

Understand there is no learning without relationships

Prioritize the spiritual formation of children and students

Move from individualistic model to community/family model

Provide opportunities for dialogue rather than just monologue

Rely on small groups for transformation rather than large groups



**Belong
Believe
Become**

They swim in the deep end of challenging cultural and developmental questions and often view the church as merely splashing around in the shallow end.

The Struggle is Real...

3 Essential Questions:

1. Who am I?
Identity
2. Where do I fit?
Belonging
3. What difference do I make?
Purpose

Powell, Mulder and Griffin

Spiritual Formation

= Relationships + Repetition + Rituals

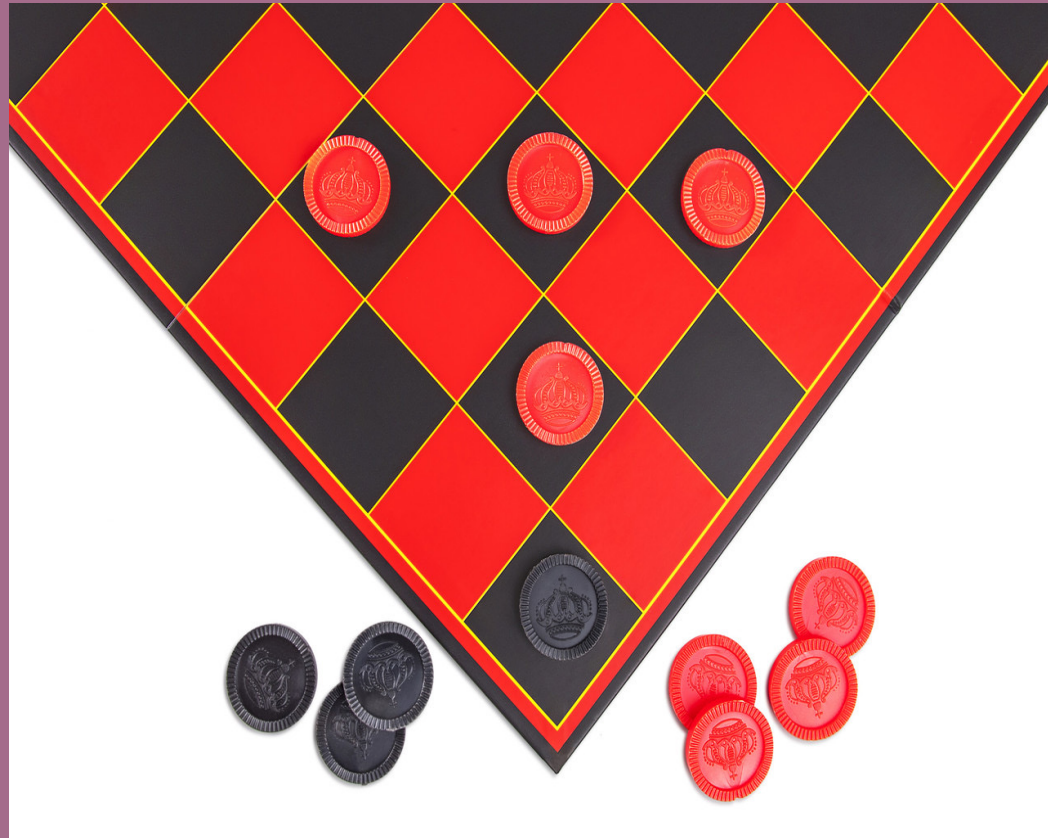
(Belong)

(Believe)

(Become)



We are Isolated



Intentionally Intergenerational

“Younger generations have been identified as so radically different by the older generations that they are traveling through these milestones alone or with little input and support from previous generations.”

- Darwin Glassford

True community necessitates the presence and interaction of three generations.

- 1. Generation of Memory (wisdom)***
- 2. Generation of the existential present (reality)***
- 3. Generation of vision (passion)***

- John Westerhoff

Ministry as 5:1

5:1 ministries are greenhouses of formation
It is about the quantity of quality relationships

Sticky Faith

Among conservative Protestant teens:

- 35% have no adults (besides their parents) they can look to
- 26% have one or two adults
- 16% have three or four adults
- 11% have five or six adults

Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*



Motivation for Generosity

Traditionalists: Give to Programs

Boomers: Give to Productivity

Gen X: Gives to People

Millennials: Give to a Passion

Gen Z: Give to _____



Doubts and Deconstruction