

# Emerging Generations

Why Observing Generational Trends Is Essential for Ministry Leaders

*Seminar Notes*



*Mel Walker*



**VISION FOR YOUTH**  
P U B L I S H I N G

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# Some resources for youth workers, parents, and church leaders:

## PODCAST

**YOUTH  
MINISTRY  
QUESTIONS**  
— WITH MEL WALKER —

<https://youthministryquestions.podbean.com/>

**SPEAKING  
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## NEWSLETTER

**ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION  
TO GROW UP  $\approx$  GO ON  $\approx$  GOD**

AN UPDATE ON THE MINISTRY OF MEL & PEGGY WALKER — [mel@visionforyouth.com](mailto:mel@visionforyouth.com)

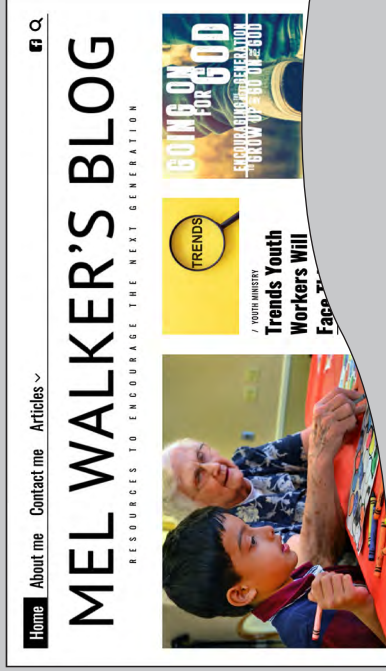
## WEBSITES + WEBINARS

**YOUTH  
MINISTRY  
QUESTIONS**  
[youthministryquestions.com](http://youthministryquestions.com)



<https://youtu.be/s37k98ft8TQ>

## BLOG



[www.melwalker.org](http://www.melwalker.org)

## BOOKS + LITERATURE



<https://www.youthministryquestions.com/other-books>



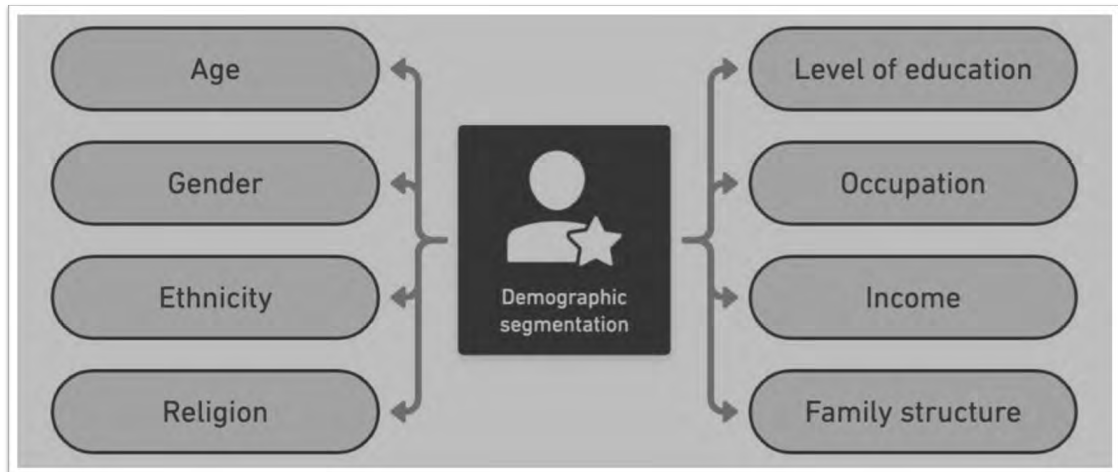
# Emerging Generations

Why Observing Generational Trends Is Essential for Ministry Leaders

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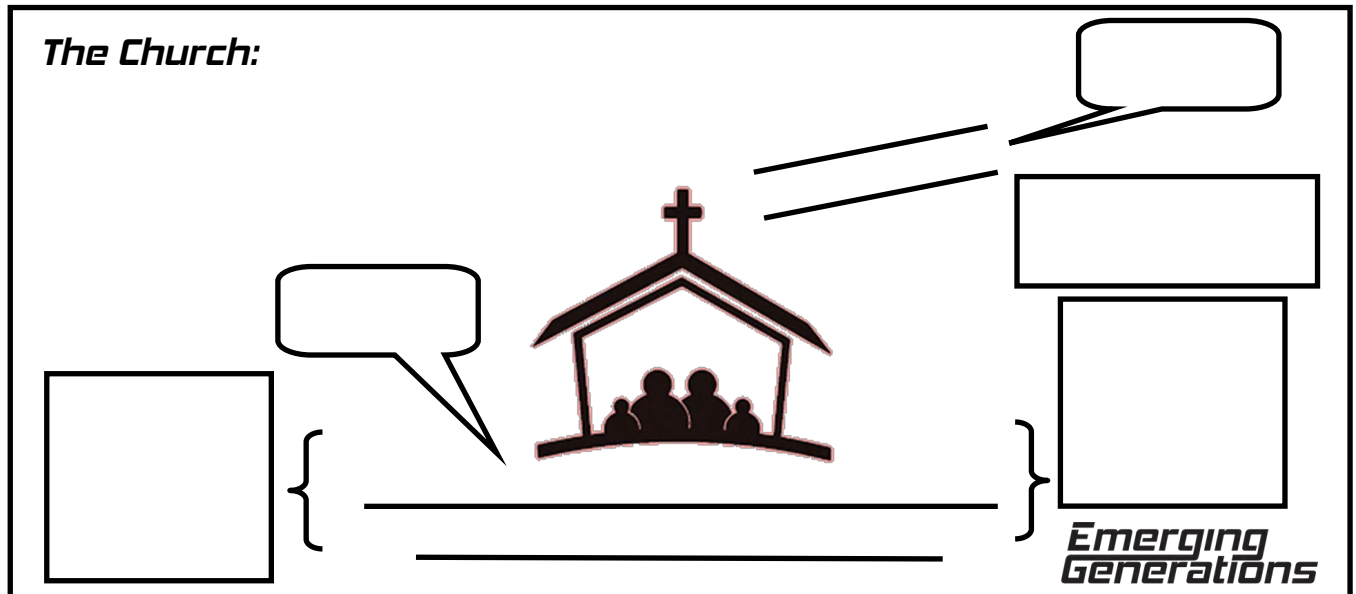
## Demographics—

...the study of the characteristics of human populations and population segments to be used to identify needs and opportunities for ministry and outreach.



## Demographics Reveal—

**NEEDS +  
OPPORTUNITIES**



## ***Current Generations:***

<b>GENERATION</b>	<b>AVG. AGE</b>	<b>DEFINING MOMENT</b>	<b>SIZE (approx)</b>	<b>NEEDS</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>
<b>GREATEST</b>	85	Pearl Harbor	1.4 million	Support & Recognition	
<b>SILENT</b>	70's	Communism	22 million	Connections	
<b>BOOMERS</b>	60	The 60's & JFK...	71 million	Mentoring	
<b>GEN. X'ers</b>	45-ish	Scandals	65 million	Involvement	
<b>MILLENNIALS</b>	30	9/11	72 million	Causes	
<b>GEN. Z</b>	Teenagers & Young Adults	Recessions & Fear	67 million	Training	
<b>GEN. ALPHA</b>	11 and younger	COVID	52 million (estimated)	Security	

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/797321/us-population-by-generation/>

## ***HOW TO IDENTIFY NEW DEMOGRAPHIC & CULTURAL TRENDS FACING YOUR MINISTRY***

**Acts 1:8** “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”



1. Pray for God to give you a burden—and study the Scriptures for a solid Biblical foundation.
2. Be intentional about observing the cultural trends and needs of your community & target areas.
  - Acts 1:8
  - Acts 17:16-24
  - Nehemiah 2:2:11-20

3. Talk to your constituency, your community leaders, and “influencers”.

4. Get involved in your community (in the public sector). Volunteer.

5. Read what “experts” (thought leaders) are saying.


<https://www.pewresearch.org/>

<https://www.barna.com/>

<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/>

<https://www.springtideresearch.org/>

<https://churchanswers.com/>

Pew Research Center 



6. Notice generational trends and characteristics.

(Develop an interest in population segments -  
and emerging generations.)



7. Make it a practice to spend quality time with members of emerging generations—and their caregivers.

**“Visionary leaders have the ability to anticipate  
cultural trends.”**

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## ***HOW TO DO YOUR OWN DEMOGRAPHICS STUDY:***

<https://www.usa.gov/statistics>

<https://www.census.gov/data.html>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>

<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/>

<https://freedemographics.com/>

[www.bestplaces.net](http://www.bestplaces.net)

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/>



***Emerging  
Generations***

## ***KEY DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:***







- What are the population trends in your community and target area? (Are people moving in or moving out?)
- What are the sizes of the different generations in your community? (Greatest, Silent, Boomers, Gen. X'ers, Millennials, Generation Z, Generation Alpha)
- What are the educational trends in your community? (High school, college / university, grad degree...)
- What are the major employers of people in your church? (White collar / blue collar / service industry / agricultural / industrial / technological / medical / educational...) Do most people work in your community or commute to work?
- What is the racial / ethnic population distribution in your community and target area? (Who are your closest cross-cultural neighbors?)
- What are the home values in your community?
- What is the per capita income in your community?
- What is the average household size in your community?
- What are the cultural descriptions of the households in your community? What are the household trends? (married / single / divorce rate / unmarried / multigenerational / other cultural influences)
- What are the obvious outreach and ministry opportunities in your community?



# WHAT SHOULD OUR MINISTRIES LOOK LIKE?



			
<p><b><i>CHURCH STRUCTURE</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>COMMUNITY NEEDS</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>CULTURAL IMPERATIVES</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>CALENDAR &amp; SCHEDULING</i></b></p>
Empty space for notes	Empty space for notes	Empty space for notes	Empty space for notes



## SUPPORT MEL'S MINISTRY WITH VISION FOR YOUTH!

The Lord is leading Mel to serve in a full-time capacity with Vision For Youth. He will develop new books and other ministry resources for youth workers, ministry leaders, Christian parents, and teenagers - and lead in-person and on-line training sessions to fulfill the strategic ministry of VFY. **He is looking for a team of friends who would be willing to donate a one-time gift or regular monthly support for the next 3 years to financially fund his ministry.**

**MAKE A DONATION TODAY**

<https://www.youthministryquestions.com>

# FREE ZOOM WEBINARS

## 1 GENERATION alpha

Why Learning About The Next Generation Is Essential For Church Leaders Now

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Torgru5cOTY&t=17s>



## 2 Family Ministry (As We Know It) Must Change:

How Emerging Generations Will Change the Way Local Churches Reach & Minister to Households

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s37k98ft8TQ&t=6s>

## 3 Emerging Generations

Why Observing Generational Trends Is Essential for Ministry Leaders

Posted Soon at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXdATg9oow1MWZi-y-7xsyg>

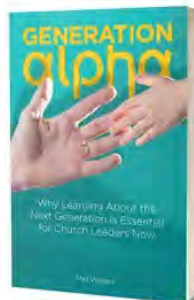
## NEW RESOURCES FROM VISION FOR YOUTH PUBLISHING



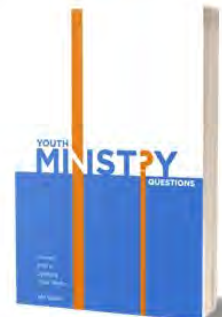
*Big-Picture: 66 Books, 1 Message*, by Kristi Walker – only \$14.99



*Get to the Point: Principles for Communicating Biblical Truth to Students*, by Ken Rudolph – only \$5.99



*Generation Alpha: Why Learning About the Next Generation is Essential for Church Leaders Now*, by Mel Walker (coming soon)



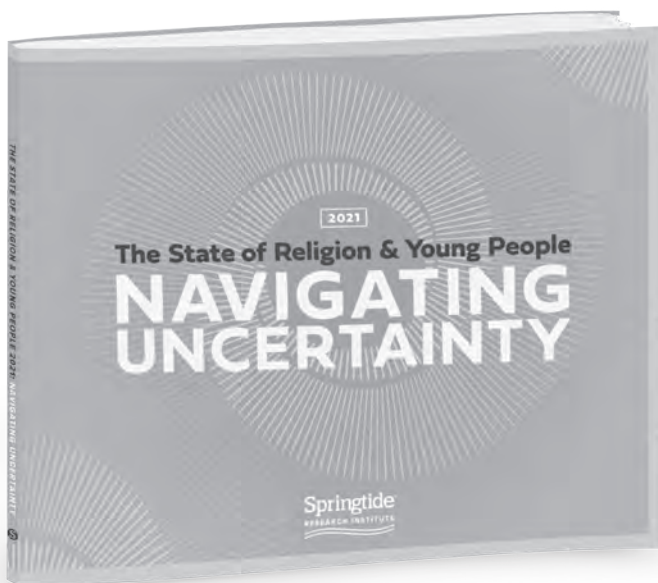
*Youth Ministry Questions: Lesson from a Life-Long Youth Worker*, by Mel Walker – only \$14.99 pre-publication price (order now)



[www.YouthMinistryQuestions.com/other-books](http://www.YouthMinistryQuestions.com/other-books)

# Is Gen Z deconstructing or reconstructing their faith?

Young people are approaching their faith differently. They are forming bonds of trust differently. And they are turning to those trusted relationships first when it comes to navigating life's biggest questions. **Our newest report will help you understand the way Gen Z is approaching their faith. More importantly, it will give you resources to help them flourish.**



**We're here  
to help you  
turn the tide.**

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Magazine and more*

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# ***HISTORY OF YOUTH MINISTRY:***

## **A SELECTED TIMELINE**

<b>DATES</b>	<b>LEADER</b>	<b>GROUP</b>	<b>GOAL / PURPOSE</b>
1780	Robert Raikes	Sunday School	Teach children the Bible
1808	Samuel Mills & others	Haystack Prayer Meeting	Student missions
1844	George Williams	YMCA	A gathering place for young people
1880	Francis Clark	Christian Endeavor	Promote spiritual vitality
1886	R. Wilder & R. Speer	Student Volunteer Movement	Spread the Gospel
1929	Lloyd Bryant	Christian & Missionary Alliance	City-wide youth rallies
1931	Percy Crawford	Young People's Church of the Air	Christian radio
1934	Jack Wyrzten & others	Word of Life	Reach youth for Christ
1937	Jim Rayburn	Young Life	Youth meetings in homes & churches
1944	Torrey Johnson & Bob Cook	Youth for Christ	Youth evangelism
1950	Lance Latham	Awana	Evangelism & Scripture memory
1968	Mike Yaconelli & Wayne Rice	Youth Specialties	Youth ministry movement
1970	Jerry Falwell & Gordon Luff	Lynchburg / Liberty Baptist College / Liberty University	Youth ministry major in college
1978	Bill Sterns and others	Scripture Press / SonPower	Youth materials & curriculum
1979	Dann Spader, Moody Bible Institute	SonLife	Youth discipleship
1979	Paul Fleischmann	National Network of Youth Ministry	Network of youth workers
1994	Mark DeVries	Family-Based Youth Ministry	Youth ministry should work with parents of teens
2009	Reggie Joiner	Think Orange	Christian parents and the church must collaborate

# **BIBLICAL MANDATES ONLY THE CHURCH CAN PROVIDE**

**DISCIPLESHIP**

**EQUIP  
TO SERVE**

**PREACHING**

**TEACHING**

**EVANGELISM**

**FELLOWSHIP IN  
COMMUNITY**

**CARE**

**WORSHIP**

**GIVING**

**LEADERSHIP &  
AUTHORITY**

**CORPORATE  
PRAYER**











**MENTORING**



# WHAT DO GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES LOOK LIKE IN MINISTRY?

MINISTRIES	BABY BOOMERS (Born 1946-1964)	ACTION STEPS	MILLENNIALS (Born 1980-1996)
✓ Preaching	Lecture	"Preach The Word" & Give Opportunity for Interaction	Presentation - then Discussion & Questions
✓ Mentoring	Sharing Information	Motivate Older People to Build Relationships...	Growing Relationships
✓ Evangelism	A Systematic Presentation	Equip All Believers to Take Opportunities...	Share the Gospel out of Relationships
✓ Church Services & Programs?	Busy Schedules (especially on Sunday)	Clearly Communicate the Philosophy & Purpose...	Fewer Services – But, Meaningful Interaction
✓ Leadership?	"Pay Your Dues" First	Identify the Next Generation of Leaders...	Collaborative Voice...
✓ Fellowship	Organized Events...	Plan Inter-Generational Interaction...	"Hanging Out" – Developing Connections
✓ Education / Equipping?	Classes & Curriculum Organized by Age	Create Creative Learning Environments...	Find Info Online – Learn via Relationships
✓ Discipleship	A Series of Meetings	Disciple Leaders to Disciple Others	Doing Life Together

**10 ESSENTIAL FACTORS THAT  
ENCOURAGE EMERGING GENERATIONS TO GROW UP AND GO ON FOR GOD**

	<p><b>MENTORING IN MINISTRY</b> – How is your church motivating and training the next generation to serve the Lord?</p>	
	<p><b>INTER-GENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS</b> – How is your church developing intentional connections between adults and young people? How are all generations included in your church?</p>	
	<p><b>BIBLE TEACHING CURRICULUM</b> – What does a fully-devoted follower of Christ look like? What should fully-devoted Christ-followers know, do, or believe in?</p>	
	<p><b>“SWEAT EQUITY”</b> – How is your church helping young people get actively involved in the ministries of your church?</p>	
	<p><b>DEVELOPING YOUNGER LEADERS</b> – How is your church identifying and training the next generation of leaders?</p>	
	<p><b>OUTREACH TO CHILDREN &amp; TEENAGERS</b> – What is your church doing to reach young people in your community?</p>	
	<p><b>EQUIPPING PARENTS &amp; BEING “FAMILY FRIENDLY”</b> – How is your church training and helping parents and families?</p>	
	<p><b>CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES</b> – Is your church a safe place for minors to attend – and do families feel confident about your children’s &amp; youth ministry programs?</p>	
	<p><b>SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES</b> – How is your church assisting families in implementing spiritual disciplines in the lives of people?</p>	
	<p><b>THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY</b> – How is your church reaching out and ministering to the growing number of nontraditional families and households in your community?</p>	

## ADOLESCENCE

# 5 REASONS WHY YOUTH WORKERS SHOULD LEARN NOW ABOUT GENERATION ALPHA

**MEL WALKER**

May 11th, 2021

Time flies – that’s for sure!

It seemed like we were just talking about the Millennial Generation and their mark on culture, when Generation Z came along. Millennials were the ones who were going to change everything – especially the way we did ministry. But then we were told to adjust our strategies because the new generation, Gen Z, would see life differently, and it would take new methodologies to reach them.

Of course, there is something particularly important about staying culturally relevant. Youth workers, maybe more than other ministry leaders, must understand the cultural influences that our students are experiencing while staying true to the teaching and practice of Biblical principles.

Our youth ministry forefathers led the way for us. Robert Raikes, the founder of the Sunday School movement in the 1700s, looked at what was happening in society and launched a ministry to reach kids by teaching them the Bible. Visionary leaders like Jack Wyrzten and Percy Crawford in New York City and Torrey Johnson in Chicago rented stadiums to host youth rallies in the 1940s to reach an emerging youth culture with the Gospel. About the same time, para-church organizations like *Young Life* and *Youth for Christ* began to connect with kids in America’s communities and public schools.



Christian colleges offered youth ministry majors and churches hired vocational youth pastors. Curriculum publishers produced youth materials and books, and youth ministry organizations, like *Youth Specialties*, became a part of a new youth ministry movement with the grand purpose to reach a new generation.

But times changed and teenagers changed. Baby Boomers were replaced by the members of Generation X, who were followed by Millennials and then Generation Z. Now it's time for youth workers to realize that a new generation of young people is on the cultural horizon.

The leading edge of "Generation Alpha" (their name coined by Australian researcher, Mark McCrindle) are this year's 11-year-olds. They are the age group born between 2010–2025, and will be the first generation to be born entirely in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Alphas are likely to be the generation most affected by COVID-19 and are growing up in a world quite different than any other previous generation.

Today's youth workers are facing a new opportunity to develop culturally relevant and Biblically-based ministries for a new generation of students. In three short years, the first wave of Generation Alpha will be teenagers. In ten years they will be young adults and will be the generation everyone is talking about. It is imperative that youth workers understand that they need to learn all they can now about our newest generation.

## Why Learn About Generation Alpha Now?

Here are five reasons why youth workers must make it a priority to learn about Alphas now:

- 1. Today's children will grow up.** This sounds too obvious, but it's true. One of the most important reasons to connect with pre-teens is because it is easier to reach them while they are young. If we do not build positive relationships with them now, there is a real likelihood that they will grow up without an important Godly influence on their lives.
- 2. Many kids make lasting spiritual decisions when they are young.** It has been true for several generations. Most people make spiritual decisions while they are young. One researcher says that nine out of ten Christians accept Jesus before the age of 18. Church leaders would be advised to develop intentional and culturally relevant ways to creatively share the Gospel with today's kids.
- 3. Generation Alpha is part of your congregation now.** Too often youth leaders ignore their church's ministry to children until they get to be teenagers. Of course, many youth workers are busy and don't need anything else on their plates. But strategically, it is important to understand that today's youngest generation is already a key target group for your youth ministry in the near future.
- 4. Reaching kids helps churches connect with today's households.** Today's children are growing up in a rapidly changing culture. Demographics reveal a growing number of non-traditional and dysfunctional households. Taking the initiative to share the Gospel with kids might give churches the opportunity to connect with those households in our communities.

**5. Children are trend-setters and are great predictors of the future.** Maybe the most important reason for today's youth workers to learn all they can about Generation Alpha is that kids are trend-setters with the ability to influence the future. Advertisers understand this and are targeting children now with a wide range of products and services. Real leaders understand the importance of being able to anticipate upcoming trends and develop ways to connect with people as time progresses.

Before we know it, a new generation will be a part of our ministries. Like other age groups, Generation Alpha has the potential to make a significant change in culture and in our churches. Youth workers should be observers of cultural trends and should be visionary leaders who see the importance of developing relevant and effective ways to reach Alphas now.

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1. *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, Mark H. Senter III, published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2010.
  2. [Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids](#)
  3. [5 Big Ideas For Ministry To Increasingly Dysfunctional Households](#)

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#### Related

[4 Reasons Why Our Ministries to Parents & Households Must Change](#)  
July 22, 2021  
In "Families"

[Resource Review: "Engaging Generation Z" by Tim McKnight](#)  
March 23, 2021  
In "Culture"

[Generation Z](#)  
July 26, 2016  
In "Culture"

#### MEL WALKER

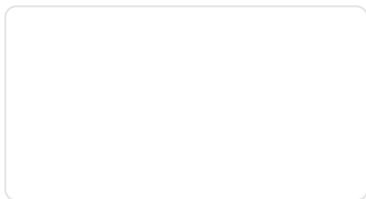
Mel Walker has invested his life in the next generation. He is uniquely positioned by God to have a leading voice in today's youth ministry. He has over 45 years of practical

experience in ministering to students and their parents. He has been a youth pastor, pastor, professor, administrator, ministry leader, editor, writer, and speaker. Mel has visited approximately 30 churches each year for over 30 years – and he is the author of over 13 books on various topics relating to youth ministry. Mel, and his wife, Peggy, speak to hundreds of young people, young adults, church leaders, and youth workers each year in a wide variety of events and venues. They are also the parents of three adult children – all of whom are in vocational, career ministry – and they currently have 10 grandchildren.

[Website](#)

*Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in the YS Blog are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of YS.*

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## How Will COVID-19 Impact Generation Alpha?

*Time will tell, but there are likely to be enduring effects of this far-reaching pandemic. Depending upon the actual duration of this isolation from other people, there are habits and life patterns that are apt to develop that may persist with the members of Generation Alpha for decades to come.*

[Mel Walker \(https://www.christianity.com/author/mel-walker/\)](https://www.christianity.com/author/mel-walker/)

Contributing Writer

2020

7 Apr



The current COVID-19 pandemic means that schools are closed, and children are at home. Much has been written about the Millennial Generation and Generation Z, which is the cohort that followed the Millennials.

According to social researchers (e.g. James Emery in *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*), members of Gen Z were born between the years of 1995 and 2010 and are today's teenagers. This means that the children age 10 and under, who are at home right now, and who are experiencing the current "social distancing" strategy, are members of America's newest generation — "Generation Alpha."

This [term \(https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blog/generation-alpha-mark-mccrindle-q-new-york-times/\)](https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blog/generation-alpha-mark-mccrindle-q-new-york-times/) was coined by an Australian researcher, Mark McCrindle, in 2008, who observed that by the time all members of this generation have been born, they will number almost two billion people around the globe, and will be the **first generation (https://www.thoughtco.com/names-of-generations-1435472)** to be born entirely in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most demographic experts agree that members of Generation Alpha are the children born between 2010 and 2025, observing that all the generations in recent history have a birth span of approximately 15 years.

One of the defining characteristics of each generation is a significant, common historical event or situation that members of a specific age group encounter together during their formative years. Some examples include the "Greatest Generation" (as named by well-known news anchor [Tom Brokaw, \(https://www.amazon.com/Greatest-Generation-Tom-Brokaw/dp/0812975294\)](https://www.amazon.com/Greatest-Generation-Tom-Brokaw/dp/0812975294) who experienced the raid on Pearl Harbor and the eventual allies'



by MEL WALKER

# Gen Z Is Changing Everything

## Encouraging a new generation to go on for God

A new generation is emerging right before our eyes. The Millennials are now adults, and today's current youth culture is dominated by members of Generation Z. Everyone from professional marketers to church leaders are beginning to realize that things are changing dramatically.

Research abounds about the characteristics and motivations of Generation Z. Most sociologists and demographers agree that this generational cohort, born between 1995 and 2010 and which now constitutes over 25 percent of the US population, is about to have a significant and lasting impact. That's why James Emery White makes this recommendation, "Drop everything and start paying attention to Generation Z. They will not simply influence American culture. . . . They will constitute American culture."

Based upon my own personal reading, research, and observations, here are some defining features of this new generation.

**Gen Zs are "digital natives."**

This generation has always had constant access to the internet in their pockets or purses. I've seen two-year-olds with their own iPads, and five-year-olds with their own smartphones. I'll add to this later, but as Seemiller and Grace have suggested, the members of Gen Z are most likely the offspring of Gen Xers. Gen Xers were the first generation to use their PCs or Macs for work, and they are the first generation to be totally comfortable with their children utilizing various devices for continual connection to the internet.

Social researchers tell us that Gen Zs spend less time with friends, less time outside, less time at the mall, less time dating, and less time at the movies than any previous generation.

The long-term goal for any church ministry is for our people to grow up and go on for God. Our mission is for people to “no longer be children,” but that they would “grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Ephesians 4:14–15).

Why? They are using their internet-enabled smartphones to accomplish all those things. The ubiquitous use of smart devices is perhaps the most visible characteristic of this new generation. This means that we are now seeking to reach a group of people who believe that access to anything and everything is through the digital devices in their pockets.

Church leaders will need to develop the balance between effectively utilizing modern technology to connect with this generation *and* finding ways to help them disconnect so that real-life, interpersonal relationships can develop and grow within the church.

#### Many are “post-Christian” and “post-church.”

Today’s pastors and youth workers must realize that Gen Z is a post-Christian and post-church generation. According to a 2017 Barna Research project, “Rates of church attendance, religious affiliation, belief in God, prayer and Bible-reading have all been dropping for decades. By consequence, the role of religion in public life has been slowly diminishing, and the church no longer functions with the cultural authority it held in times past.”

We can no longer assume that the church or church youth ministry will be an attractive option for today’s families and teenagers. However, this phenomenon provides a renewed opportunity for outreach and evangelism. Let’s remember that the discipline of youth ministry began in the hearts of visionary leaders who noticed a looming youth culture and who took the risks necessary to reach a new generation of young people with the gospel.

I am convinced, however, that we should return to our youth ministry roots with an emphasis on reaching kids for Christ. The days of ministering to church kids almost exclusively is over. Generation Z’s post-Christian, and most likely post-church, mentality gives them a craving for authenticity; they are desperately seeking answers to their tough questions. This provides an incredible opportunity for churches to creatively and strategically plan culturally relevant outreach endeavors and to train students to boldly communicate the gospel, most often via relationship-driven, personal conversations.

#### They have Gen X parents.

Most Gen Xers are now somewhere between 35 and 50,

which means their children currently average about 15 years old. Therefore, the teenagers in your church’s youth group and the kids in your community are Gen Zs—with parents from Generation X. A quick review of the generational background of these current middle-age adults reveals that many were born during the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s and probably started college during the days of the O. J. Simpson trial and the Oklahoma City bombing. They came of age during the highest divorce rate in the history of the US and were having their children during the Great Recession. They were also the generation often characterized as being latchkey kids, growing up in a society where both parents worked outside of the home.

These trends emphasize that Gen Zers are more likely than other recent generations to grow up in dysfunctional, unstable, or broken homes. In fact, a recent publication from Barna Research—interestingly titled *Households of Faith*—made this statement about today’s homes: “Churches that want to understand and serve teens and young adults should focus first on true household ministry, and not just family ministry.” Perhaps more than ever, churches will need to *be a family* to reach out and minister to this new generation who are probably the products of nontraditional households.

The long-term goal, of course, for any church ministry is for our people to grow up and go on for God. As the apostle Paul instructed believers in Ephesians 4:11–16, our mission is for people to “no longer be children,” but that they would “grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”

I identified these three noteworthy characteristics of Gen Zs to emphasize that members of Generation Z are likely to be digital natives with a post-Christian outlook and are likely to be products of nontraditional households. However, we can impact this generation for eternity as we effectively communicate the gospel in ways that are in tune with this new generation. **B**

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*Mel Walker and his wife, Peggy, are longtime members of Heritage Baptist Church in Clarks Summit, Pa. Mel is the cofounder and president of Vision For Youth, Inc., and is the author or editor of 10 books relating to youth ministry, including Going On for God: Encouraging the Next Generation to Grow Up and Go On for God. More information about Mel’s ministry and books can be found at [www.GoingOnForGod.com](http://www.GoingOnForGod.com).*

victory in World War II. The “Baby Boomers” lived through “the Sixties” together including the assassination of President Kennedy and the Vietnam War, and the “Millennials” came of age just as the terrorists’ attack of 9/11 happened.

In addition to the health ramifications, perhaps there will be another lasting effect of the Coronavirus pandemic. For sure, the growing death toll and the infectious nature of this virus will leave an enduring impact upon today’s kids who are experiencing this phenomenon together.

However, there may be another, somewhat unexpected result of this current global crisis — and that is the generational affinity that comes from experiencing something this significant together with others of the same age and in the same stage of life.

## **Potential Consequences of Lengthy Social Distancing**

Time will tell, but there are likely to be enduring effects of this far-reaching pandemic. Depending upon the actual duration of this isolation from other people, there are habits and life patterns that are apt to develop that may persist with the members of Generation Alpha for decades to come.

This pandemic may create a new normal for today’s children that proves to be like the lasting life changes that happened following the other similar generational-defining events or seminal moments.

Here are five possible consequences of an extended time of social distancing and isolation from a broader community:

### **1. The Feelings of Fear and Anxiety (<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-life/how-to-deal-with-anxiety-as-a-christian.html>) May Continue to Grow**

Today’s young people are more likely than previous generations to struggle with depression and anxiety disorders (<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2018/stress-gen-z.pdf>). Plus, their negative feelings are only likely to grow as a result of the current days of virtual quarantine.

The constant, pervasive nature of negative news relating to the coronavirus is quite likely to become a breeding ground for even more apprehension and worry for today’s children. Coupled with the reaction to the current crisis by parents and other influential adults, this situation is likely to develop a growing sense of foreboding and uneasiness in the lives of the next generation.

Of course, this will not be universally true, but the likelihood that the anxiety that comes from the potential of getting sick, or someone they know getting sick; compounded by the negativity in a socially isolated atmosphere will be even greater than it is now for Gen Xers and Millennials.

Church leaders, youth workers, and other caring adults would be wise to put positive and hope-filled resources into the hands of parents, other guardians and caregivers, and the children themselves during these days of crisis and pandemic.

## **2. Being in Seclusion May Become More of a Norm**

Another long-term effect of social distancing for children is that living without the presence of other children and other influential adults in their lives may become an enduring pattern. There are some children from homes that may be accustomed to a socially isolated world much like the situation today.

For example, some homeschoolers may fit into this description. However, it's important to remember that humans are designed by God to live in community with others, and it is especially important for followers of Christ to be actively involved in His work — the church.

One of the potential dangers of a quarantine is that the segregation from others might become "safe", or even cozy and natural. This generation already has a natural propensity toward technology, which is a key reason why parents and church leaders alike should make it a priority to provide opportunities for some positive and healthy social interaction for kids even if that is via tech — especially if these days of social distancing increase.

## **3. The Creative Use of Interactive Technology Will Expand**

The first wave of **Generation Alpha** (<https://nowthisnews.com/news/move-over-gen-z-generation-alpha-is-here>), began in 2010, which is the same year the iPad was released, Instagram was created, and when the term "app" was selected as the word of the year. It's no wonder that this generation is very comfortable with using all kinds of technology.





# Do Millennials and Boomers Share the Same Values?

Mel Walker

Rivalries seem to attract people's attention. Sports fans are glued to their television sets for some of the best ones. Examples include the New York Yankees versus the Boston Red Sox, Ohio State and Michigan, Duke and North Carolina, and the Lakers against the Celtics.

Rivalries also extend outside of the world of athletics. Who hasn't heard of the Hatfield's versus the McCoy's, or Marvel versus DC comics?

Human conflict and hostility are prone to arise in the church as well. The Bible includes accounts of tension and discord in the churches in Corinth ([1 Corinthians 3:3](#)), Galatia ([Galatians 5:19-21](#)), and on the island of Crete ([Titus 3:9-11](#)).

Sometimes church conflicts arose over doctrinal differences (see [Acts 15:1-29](#), [1 Timothy 1:3-7](#), and [1 Timothy 1:18-20](#)). On other occasions, disputes occurred over areas of personal preferences and conflicting opinions. Examples include Paul's disagreement with Barnabas over John Mark in [Acts 15:36-41](#) and Paul's confrontation with Peter in [Galatians 2:11-21](#).

## Addressing the Generation Gap

Perhaps one of the most significant rivalries, however, throughout the chronicles of church history has been the validity of a "generation gap."

[According to one writer](#), "The term 'generation gap' was coined by an editor at *Look* magazine named John Poppy...His point was that there was a substantive divide in politics, tastes, mores and virtually everything else between the young and the old—with the 'old' including everyone over 30."

It seems as if the Bible notes the existence of a generation gap as well. Various generations were identified in the Scriptures because of their differences. Notable examples include the Apostle Paul's instruction for older generations to mentor younger people in [Titus 2:1-5](#), and in one of John's letters as well. (See [1 John 1:12-14](#).) These references point to the presence of a separation of the generations all the way back to the first century following the life of Christ.

## Current Generational Rivalry in the Church

Some observers believe that generational rivalries are currently at a peak in today's church. They look at areas of church ministry such as differing musical tastes, the way people dress to attend church, and church attendance patterns and scheduling as some points of contention and disagreement.

A recent Google search for the word "rivalry" revealed this basic definition, "competition for the same objective or for superiority in the same field."

The truth of this definition may be particularly evident in the church with the seemingly widening gap in the way churches function and operate between members of the baby boomer generation and millennials—the two [largest generations in American history](#).

This country's best-known generational experts, William Strauss and Neil Howe, define boomers as those people who were born between 1943 and 1960, and who number now about 70 million people. These authors also describe millennials as those who were born between 1982 and 2003, who now number about 70 million people. (See *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, published by William Morrow and Company, 1991.)

Both generational cohorts have been characterized as seeking superiority or control in the way churches function. Boomers are prone to want churches to operate the way they used to when they were young, while millennials would like to see significant changes made to give members of their generation more acceptance and influence.

There is a human tendency for each generation to act like the church exists just for them. And historically many churches have developed functions and ministries to target specific generations with age-appropriate programming. These programs may have helped members of specific generations grow in their own [faith](#) journeys, but now many churches are seeing the [importance of connecting the generations](#) for the common benefit of all generations.



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## Building Generational Connections

It may be more important than ever for churches to establish ways of practically connecting these two generations. Instead of concentrating on church programs that segregate the various generations, perhaps it is time to develop ways to link the generations in biblically-based strategies and functions.

For example, the two generations can pray together like the inter-generational prayer meeting that is described in [Acts 12:12-13](#). The generations can gather like the early church was instructed to do in [Hebrews 10:25](#). They can serve the Lord together like what was described in [Romans 12:6](#), and they can study the Word of God together as the church did in [Acts 12:26](#). Other biblical examples of ways God's people can connect abound.

Helping boomers and millennials get together will prove to be essential for the future of church programming. Not being intentional about this process only leads to a wider generation gap of mixed generational goals and a lack of inter-generational communication.

## 5 Important Values Millennials and Boomers Share

These two generational giants may in fact have more in common than what appears on the surface. Church leaders and church members of both generations would do well to identify and then build upon the traits common to both age groups with the objective of church unity and spiritual growth of everyone involved.

Instead of concentrating on their generational differences, churches must recognize that there are some significant commonalities between boomers and millennials.

### 1. Both boomers and millennials have a desire to see God at work.

It's quite obvious that both of these generations of believers have a great desire to see God at work. They both have lived through historic times of disillusionment and difficult times—and they both have a definite longing to see God do something great. This desire can prove to be a great benefit for any local church. Elders and other church leaders should get the two generations together and ask them to brainstorm together what they'd like to see God do in and through their church. The results of this mutual conversation may prove to be a catalyst to help generate a spiritual revival in the church.

### 2. Both generations have a great appreciation for mentoring.

Another common denominator between these two generations is their mutual appreciation for the importance of mentoring. Boomers tended to grow up with a desire to have a more loving relationship with their parents and other members of older generations. Many millennials grew up having been the recipients of those closer relationships. This is a characteristic that can be utilized effectively by the church to build interpersonal relationships between the two. Boomers are motivated to be mentors—and millennials have a desire to be mentored.



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### 3. Both boomers and millennials are looking for authenticity.

Members of the baby boom generation and millennials alike would readily admit that they have a great desire for genuineness and authenticity. Both generations grew up in a time when they saw what they perceived to be a

contrived reality in previous generations. They both crave learning and growing in real-life situations. This can be a tremendous advantage for local churches looking to establish a true discipleship emphasis.

#### 4. Both generations see the value of strong family relationships.

Family relationships are also very important to both generations. As mentioned earlier, boomers grew up in an era when they wanted stronger relationships with their parents. The generations prior to the boomers tended to look at providing for their families as more important than spending time with their families. Millennials are the generation that grew up with “[helicopter parents](#)” who hovered over their kids and who may have been overly-protective and overly-involved in the lives of their kids. Churches can recognize this mutual generational distinctive by making family ministries a tangible emphasis in church programming.

#### 5. Both cohorts are looking for meaning and purpose.

Both boomers and millennials also want their lives to count and are willing to give their lives to something that matters for eternity. [Pastors](#), elders, and other church leaders should do everything possible to emphasize the Biblical mandate of God’s Great Commission to secure both boomers’ and millennials’ energy and enthusiasm toward the lasting mission of the church.

Neither generation wants to waste their time, nor waste their lives in something that doesn’t matter. They will work together and will serve the Lord for the common purpose of the church, actively accomplishing what God wants His church to do.

These two generations, baby boomers and millennials do not have to be rivals for influence and leadership in the church. They actually have a great deal in common. Church leaders must provide ways for these two generations to connect and to build growing and positive relationships with each other in the church.

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***Mel Walker** is the president of Vision For Youth, Inc., an international network of youth ministry, and he is currently in the process of raising financial support to serve with VFY on a full-time basis. Mel has been actively involved in various aspects of youth ministry for over 45 years. He is also an author, speaker, and consultant with churches. Mel has written 13 books on various subjects relating to youth ministry. More information about his speaking and writing ministry can be found at [www.YouthMinistryQuestions.com](http://www.YouthMinistryQuestions.com). Mel & Peggy Walker are the parents of 3 adult children—all of whom are in vocational ministry. You can follow him on Twitter: [@vfyouth](https://twitter.com/vfyouth).*

This time of isolation from a larger community will certainly not be a problem for them. They have grown up with various forms of “smart” technology and are most likely used to a “virtual” world. Since today’s school-aged children are now home for longer periods of time, they will be compelled to utilize technology even more and more for their educational requirements and pursuits.

The current global crisis will very likely push this new generation toward even more creative use of technological tools. Parents, church leaders, and educators alike should expect more and more members of Generation Alpha to become creators, publishers, and entrepreneurs instead of being just consumers of virtual media.

#### **4. The Stress of Financial Pressure May Become More Intense**

One of the lasting ramifications of living through the Great Depression (1929-1939) for the “Silent Generation” of that era was the lack of finances and a scarcity mindset, and the members of the World War II generation experienced several years of shortages due to the needs of the war effort. Economic struggles are already one of the leading pressure points for any generation, and this occasion is likely to be no different for Generation Alpha.

The wide fluctuation of the Stock Market, plus the rapidly growing unemployment rate has caused a major and unprecedented reaction from the United States government. Customers have already experienced the grocery stores' lack of commodities such as toilet paper, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, and medicines.

As this pandemic tarries, and as more and more travel restrictions are enforced, Generation Alpha is also expected to experience more widespread shortages in several areas. Some are predicting a rapid economic upturn once this crisis is over, but today’s children are likely to remember and experience a lasting impact of financial pressure as a result of COVID-19. Parents and other influential adults, such as grandparents and other caregivers, will need to be diligent to teach and demonstrate financial discipline during these difficult days.

#### **5. There Will Be a Growing Number of Hurting and Non-Traditional Households**

According to some authors (e.g., Corey Seemiller and Meghan [Grace](https://www.christianity.com/theology/what-is-grace.html)) in *Generation Z: A Century in the Making*, many members of today’s younger generations are already living in broken, hurting, dysfunctional, and non-traditional households. This means that the current coronavirus crisis is not going to be a good thing for many children.

Both community and church leaders must remember that there are several households out there where it will not be a positive experience for children to have more extended time at home. That means that household stress and pressure are likely to grow and have more of a lasting impact on members of Generational Alpha.

This is exactly why it will be imperative for conscientious outside influencers to stay in regular communication with both children and other household members. One youth ministry writer also put it this way:

“Churches would be wise to bolster their resources for counseling — marriage counseling, family counseling, addiction recovery, and a response to abuse. We must pray for healing and grace in homes today and be ready to provide pastoral care and help... hopefully, before it’s necessary, but we probably won’t hear about most of the heartbreak until the dust has settled.” (Facebook, April 6, 2020.)

## What Does This Mean?

This COVID-19 crisis will sadly have many victims. The impact on adults and teenagers will undoubtedly be devastating, but its lasting influence is likely to be arguably greater on children.

Everyone is learning to adapt to this new normal and it’d be easy to say that today’s kids will take it all in stride, however **generational history** (<https://www.wired.com/story/covid-19-is-hitting-teens-especially-hard/>), says that this will not be the case.

Caring adults must be truly compassionate and be intentional about keeping lines of real interpersonal communication open. Children and adolescents watch adults and will learn much about handling crisis situations from them.

Members of Generation Alpha are at home right now and that is likely to have a lasting effect on them.

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**Emerging Generations**  
Why Observing Generational Trends Is Essential for Ministry Leaders

1

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<sup>1</sup> **GENERATION alpha**  
Why Learning About The Next Generation Is Essential For Church Leaders Now  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Torgru5cOTY&t=17s>



<sup>2</sup> **Family Ministry (As We Know It) Must Change:**  
How Emerging Generations Will Change the Way Local Churches Reach & Minister to Households  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s37k98ft8TQ&t=6s>

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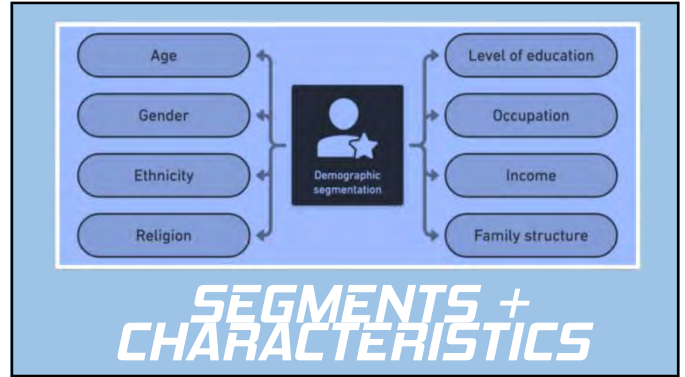
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...the study of the characteristics of human populations and population segments to be used to identify needs and opportunities for ministry and outreach.


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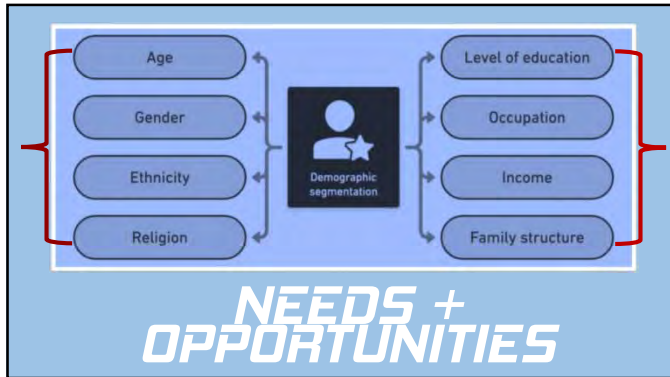
**Demographics reveal -**



**NEEDS + OPPORTUNITIES**

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12



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**The Church:**

**SHOULD CHANGE FOR CULTURE**

Ministries Methods

Worship styles, evangelism techniques, schedule, programming, training...

**MUST NOT CHANGE!**

**Message, Mission & Mandates**

2 Tim. 3:16-17  
2 Tim. 4:2  
1 Thes. 2:2-9  
Heb. 4:12  
1 Cor. 15:1-8

Acts 1:8  
Matt. 28:19-20  
Eph. 2:19  
2 Tim. 2:16-17  
Eph. 4:11-16  
Rom. 12:1-8

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DISCIPLESHIP	EQUIP TO SERVE	PREACHING	TEACHING
EVANGELISM	FELLOWSHIP IN COMMUNITY	CARE	WORSHIP
GIVING	LEADERSHIP & AUTHORITY	CORPORATE PRAYER	MENTORING

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**NO "COOKIE CUTTER" CHURCHES**

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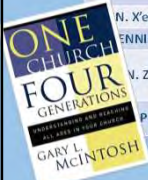


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## CURRENT GENERATIONS:

GENERATION	AVG. AGE	DEFINING MOMENT	SIZE (approx)	NEEDS	OPPORTUNITIES
GREATEST	85	Pearl Harbor	1.4 million	Support & Recognition	
SILENT	70's	Communism	22 million	Connections	
BOOMERS	60	The 60's & JFK...	71 million	Mentoring	
GEN. X'ers	45-ish	Scandals	65 million	Involvement	
MILLENNIALS	30	9/11	72 million	Causes	
GEN. Z	Teenagers & Young Adults	Recessions & Fear	67 million	Training	
GEN. ALPHA	11 and younger	COVID	52 million (estimated)	Security	



<https://www.statista.com/statistics/797321/us-population-by-generation/>

18

## CURRENT GENERATIONS:

7 CURRENT GENERATIONS

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GEN. Z	Teenagers & Young Adults	Recessions & Fear	67 million	Training	
GEN. ALPHA	11 and younger	COVID	52 million (estimated)	Security	

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/797321/us-population-by-generation/>

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### CURRENT GENERATIONS:

Outreach / Ministries

GENERATION	AVG. AGE	DEFINING MOMENT	SIZE (approx)	NEEDS	OPPORTUNITIES
GREATEST	85	Pearl Harbor	1.4 million	Support & Recognition	
SILENT	70's	Communism	22 million	Connections	
BOOMERS	60	The 60's & JFK...	71 million	Mentoring	
GEN. X'ers	45-ish	Scandals	65 million	Involvement	
MILLENNIALS	30	9/11	72 million	Causes	
GEN. Z	Teenagers & Young Adults	Recessions & Fear	67 million	Training	
GEN. ALPHA	11 and younger	COVID	52 million (estimated)	Security	

7 CURRENT GENERATIONS

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/797321/us-population-by-generation/>

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## HOW TO IDENTIFY NEW DEMOGRAPHIC & CULTURAL TRENDS FACING YOUR MINISTRY

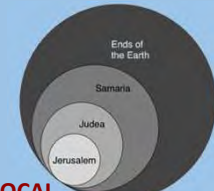


**Emerging Generations**

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### Acts 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”




LOCAL  
REGIONAL  
CROSS-CULTURAL  
GLOBAL

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1. Pray for God to give you a burden & study the Scriptures for a solid Biblical foundation.




2. Be intentional about observing the cultural trends and needs of your community & target areas. (Acts 1:8, Acts 17:16-24, Nehemiah 2:11-20)

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3. Talk to your constituency, your community leaders, and influencers.



4. Get involved in your community (public sector). Volunteer. Be a servant.

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5. Read what experts (thought leaders) are saying.


<https://www.pewresearch.org/>  
<https://www.barna.com/>  
<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/>  
<https://www.springtideresearch.org/>  
<https://churchanswers.com/>



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6. Notice generational trends and characteristics. (Develop an interest in population segments – and emerging generations.)



7. Make it a practice to spend quality time with members of emerging generations... and their caregivers.

**Spend time with young people...**

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“Visionary leaders have the ability to anticipate cultural trends.”

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Generations

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## **HOW TO DO YOUR OWN DEMOGRAPHICS STUDY**

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<https://www.usa.gov/statistics>  
<https://www.census.gov/data.html>  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>  
<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>  
<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/>  
<https://freedemographics.com/>  
[www.bestplaces.net](http://www.bestplaces.net)  
<https://worldpopulationreview.com/>

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Generations

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Generations

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## KEY DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS



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1. What are the population trends in your community and target area? (Are people moving in or moving out?)
2. What are the sizes of the different generations in your community? (Greatest, Silent, Boomers, Gen. X'ers, Millennials, Generation Z, Generation Alpha)
3. What are the educational trends in your community? (High school, college / university, grad degree...)
4. What are the major employers of people in your church? (White collar / blue collar / service industry / agricultural / industrial / technological / medical / educational...) Do most people work in your community or commute to work?
5. What is the racial / ethnic population distribution in your community and target area? (Who are your closest cross-cultural neighbors?)

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6. What are the home values in your community?
7. What is the per capita income in your community?
8. What is the average household size in your community?
9. What are the cultural descriptions of the households in your community?  
What are the household trends? (married / single / divorce rate / unmarried / multigenerational / other cultural influences)
10. What are the obvious outreach and ministry opportunities in your community? ("*cultural hang outs*" – where are people?)

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## WHAT SHOULD OUR MINISTRIES LOOK LIKE?



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**BASIC FACTORS**

**CHURCH STRUCTURE**

**COMMUNITY NEEDS**

**CULTURAL IMPERATIVES**

**CALENDAR & SCHEDULING**

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<b>CHURCH STRUCTURE</b>	<b>COMMUNITY NEEDS</b>	<b>CULTURAL IMPERATIVES</b>	<b>CALENDAR &amp; SCHEDULING</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing schedule</li> <li>History</li> <li>Building use</li> <li>Other ministries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographics (age groups, household structures...)</li> <li>School opportunities</li> <li>"Hangouts"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community identity / flavor</li> <li>Community needs &amp; opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church calendar</li> <li>School calendars</li> <li>Community events</li> <li>Households...</li> </ul>

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**Emerging Generations**

Why Observing Generational Trends Is Essential for Ministry Leaders

**Webinar**

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**SUPPORT MEL'S MINISTRY WITH VISION FOR YOUTH!**

The Lord is leading Mel to serve in a full-time capacity with Vision For Youth. He will develop new books and other ministry resources for youth workers, ministry leaders, Christian parents, and teenagers - and lead in-person and on-line training sessions to fulfill the strategic ministry of VFY. **He is looking for a team of friends who would be willing to donate a one-time gift or regular monthly support for the next 3 years to financially fund his ministry.**

**MAKE A DONATION TODAY**

<https://www.youthministryquestions.com/>

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**FREE ZOOM WEBINARS**

<sup>1</sup> **GENERATION alpha**  
 Why Learning About The Next Generation Is Essential For Church Leaders Now  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Torgru5cOTY&t=17s>



**Family Ministry** <sup>2</sup>  
 (As We Know It)  
**Must Change:**  
 How Emerging Generations Will Change the Way Local Churches Reach & Minister to Households  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s37k98ft8TQ&t=6s>

**Emerging Generations** <sup>3</sup>  
 Why Observing Generational Trends Is Essential for Ministry Leaders  
 Posted Soon at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXdATg9oow1MWZi-y-7xsvg>

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**REACH PEOPLE FOR CHRIST**  
 Acts 1:8


**USE SCRIPTURE TO HELP GOD'S PEOPLE GROW**  
 2 Tim. 3:16-17

**MAKE DISCIPLES AROUND THE WORLD**  
 Matt. 28:19-20

**OPERATE AS A "FAMILY"**  
 Eph. 2:19

**EQUIP GOD'S PEOPLE TO SERVE**  
 Eph. 4:11-16

**EMPHASIZE WORSHIP & SERVICE OF THE LORD**  
 Rom. 12:1-8



**THE CHURCH BEING THE CHURCH**

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**Emerging Generations**

Why Observing Generational Trends Is Essential for Ministry Leaders

**FREE Zoom Webinar with Mel Walker**

Thursday, September 23 at 1pm Eastern Time

Learn How You & Your Team Can Identify New Demographic & Cultural Trends Facing Your Ministry




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VISION FOR YOUTH  
PUBLISHING