

10 Reasons Millennials Are Backing Away From God

Millennials and their habits, beliefs, views and work ethic are a frequent topic of conversation in today's culture. This generation has stymied business leaders, professors, pastors, politicians and other cultural influencers.

Now, religion and culture expert, national radio host and author Dr. Alex McFarland () is offering insight to why Millennials are backing away from God and Christianity. As the co-author of the new book *Abandoned Faith: Why Millennials Are Walking Away and How You Can Lead Them Home*," written with apologist and evangelist Jason Jimenez, McFarland explores why Millennials are leaving the church and how those who love them can bring them back.

"College-aged Millennials today are far more likely than the general population to be religiously unaffiliated," McFarland writes in a new op-ed for . "This is true when they are compared to previous generations as well. In fact, the Pew Research Center documents that Millennials are the least outwardly religious American generation, where 'one in four are unaffiliated with any religion, far more than the share of older adults when they were ages 18 to 29.'

"Just over 60 percent of Millennials say that Christianity is 'judgmental,'" McFarland added. "And 64 percent say that 'anti-gay' best describes most churches today. In ministry circles, it has long been reported that of youth raised in homes that were to some degree 'Christian,' roughly three-quarters will jettison that faith after high school. Just under half of this number will return to some level of church involvement in their late 20s or early 30s."

McFarland asks, "Why is this?" His research for *Abandoned*

Faith, which includes dozens of interviews with teens, 20-somethings, professed ex-Christians, and religion and culture experts, points to factors like these:

1. Mindset of “digital natives” is very much separate from other generations. Millennials are eclectic on all fronts—economically, spiritually, artistically. There is little or no “brand loyalty” in most areas.
2. Breakdown of the family. It has long been recognized that experience with an earthly father deeply informs the perspective about the heavenly Father.
3. Militant secularism: Embraced by media and enforced in schools, secular education approaches learning through the lens of “methodological naturalism.” It is presupposed that all faith claims are merely expressions of subjective preference. The only “true” truths are claims that are divorced from any supernatural context and impose no moral obligations on human behavior.
4. Lack of spiritual authenticity among adults. Many youth have had no—or very limited—exposure to adult role models who know what they believe, why they believe it, and are committed to consistently living it out.
5. The church’s cultural influence has diminished. The little neighborhood church is often assumed to be irrelevant, and there is no cultural guilt anymore for those who abandon involvement.
6. Pervasive cultural abandonment of morality. The idea of objective moral truth—ethical norms that really are binding on all people—is unknown to most and is rejected by the rest.
7. Intellectual skepticism. College students are encouraged to accept platitudes like “Life is about asking

questions, not about dogmatic answers.” Claiming to have answers is viewed as “impolite.” On life’s ultimate questions, it is much more socially acceptable to “suspend judgment.”

8. The rise of a fad called “atheism.” Full of self-congratulatory swagger and blasphemous bravado, pop-level atheists such as the late Christopher Hitchens made it cool to be an unbeliever. Many Millennials are enamored by books and blogs run by God-hating “thinkers.”
9. Our new god, Tolerance be thy name. “Tolerance” today essentially means, “Because my truth is my truth, no one may ever question any behavior or belief I hold.” This “standard” has become so ingrained that it is now impossible to rationally critique any belief or behavior without a backlash of criticism.
10. The commonly defiant posture of young adulthood. As we leave adolescence and morph into adulthood, we all can be susceptible to an inflated sense of our own intelligence and giftedness. The cultural trend toward rejection of God—and other loci of authority—resonates strongly with the desire for autonomy felt in young adulthood.

“Is it really any wonder that kids raised in the churches of 21st-century America aren’t often stirred to lifelong commitment?” McFarland added, “Most churches are so occupied with ‘marketing’ themselves to prospective attendees that they wouldn’t dream of risking their ‘brand’ by speaking tough-as-nails truth.

“It is true that our culture has grown visibly antithetical to God and Christian commitment,” he continued. “But in addressing the spiritual attrition rate of young America, it

must be admitted that a prayerless, powerless church peddling versions of 'Christianity Lite' share in the blame. God only knows the degree of our complicity, and also the time when we'll be concerned enough to change direction."