

Passion 2017: 55,000 Reasons to Believe in Millennials Again

A recent Pew Research Center survey found that only four in 10 millennials care about religion.

But I've got 55,000 reasons to believe they may be wrong.

Passion 2017, a Christian conference, kicked off with that many millennials packing out the Georgia Dome in Atlanta for one reason—to be the generation that says yes to the call of Jesus.

You won't see this story trending on Twitter or Facebook because these young adults were not looting or rioting in the streets, but they are making a difference.

They came from 90 countries and more than 1,600 colleges—and several of them happened to be my friends.

Dalton Glasscock, of Wichita, Kansas, told me “millennials are ready to carry forward the baton of faith.”

He said the conference was an indicator of “revival” and “a mountaintop experience that should give hope to the millions of Christians across this country and world.”

Passion began 20 years ago as a Bible study in Texas started by Louie and Shelley Giglio as a way to reach college students.

And to celebrate, they gave a few gifts to the 18-25 year-olds, including early copies of The Jesus Bible and a surprise visit from country singer Carrie Underwood.

Passion literally gave students an out-of-this-world

perspective when NASA astronaut and former Passion attendee Shane Kimbrough addressed them from on board the International Space Station. He shared about reading the story of Jesus' birth from the station on Christmas day—the first time it's been done.

Louie and Shelley had an incredibly inspiring afternoon discussion with Katherine and Jay Wolf, the authors of *Hope Heals*. The book tells the story of Katherine's recovery from a stroke.

Their message was especially encouraging to my friend Megan DeGruy, who is battling cancer and other health issues.

"This year was the best because, I felt like I was able to relate on so many levels with dealing with pain and suffering, how to cherish it and use it for good, even when it hurts," said Megan.

"Everyone spoke about the cross, and how our pain relates to Christ, how to let God use it for his glory, even when we don't see the good in it!" she added.

Students also heard from Christian powerhouse preachers and speakers Christine Caine, Beth Moore, John Piper, Francis Chan and Levi Lusko.

And if the speakers weren't enough, the worship was powerful; led by Passion Band, Chris Tomlin, Christy Nockels, Crowder, Matt Redman, Jimi Cravity and Hillsong United.

Seeing a stadium of millennials singing their hearts out and lifting their hands in worship wasn't all, though.

As a Passion veteran, my friend Shaina Morrow, a student ministry director from Curtis Lake Church in Sanford, Maine, went for the first time as a leader —no longer a student.

"Regardless of fashion trends, social media, politics, speakers and music genres, Passion will always be focused on

Jesus,” adding that “Passion rallies around a cause every year.”

Passion partnered with Compassion International, a Christian humanitarian aid child-sponsorship organization dedicated to the long-term development of children living in poverty around the world, in an initiative called “Make History Together.”

Sure enough, they made history. The students sponsored every child on the waiting list in the countries of Rwanda, El Salvador, Indonesia and Tanzania. Just to give you an idea of how many little ones that is, in Rwanda alone, there were 2,013 children. They also sponsored some of the children in Bolivia.

How incredible is that? Passion played a video of children on the waiting list in Rwanda getting the news of their sponsorship. The joy on their faces was priceless.

“My husband and I committed to sponsoring a little girl named Agnes who lives in Tanzania, and it already has made an impact on our lives—knowing we are giving her a better future. Millennials are cause-driven, and when you combine a focus on Jesus and a chance to be a part of something bigger than themselves, this generation responds,” Shaina said.

A stadium full of millennials just gave poor children all across the world food and clean water, medical care, education, life-skills training and spiritual guidance. An act Dalton says can only be explained by the power of the gospel.

“Personally, I am always blown away by the way each communicator has an incredible love and knowledge of scripture,” Shaina said. “It has challenged me to commit to knowing Jesus and Scripture more. As Ben Stuart said in our group, ‘we exist to know God and make Him known.’ That was the biggest challenge that I will take away from Passion 2017.”

So, in the heart of Atlanta, thousands of young people stormed

out of a stadium, not to loot or riot in the streets, but to bring the light of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to their campuses, their communities, and to our world.

As one of the speakers, Christine Caine, put it on her instastory: "Millennials love Jesus," and I've got 55,000 reasons to prove it. {eoa}