

Rise of Neoliberalism Plaguing Millennials, Generation Z

Perfectionism is on the rise among Millennials and Generation Z, according to a new study.

Perfectionism is broadly defined as a combination of excessively high personal standards and overly critical self-evaluations, according to a study by Thomas Curran and Andrew Hill published in the American Psychological Association's Psychological Bulletin.

The authors point to three reasons for the rise: neoliberalism's expansion, parents who are anxious and controlling and meritocracy's increase.

"[N]eoliberalism and its doctrine of meritocracy have combined to shape a culture in which everybody is expected to perfect themselves and their lifestyles, by striving to meet unrealistic achievement standards," the study states. "For parents, this new culture confers an additional burden. On top of their own duty to succeed, they are also responsible for the successes and failures of their children."

What are these researchers talking about?

Neoliberalism is "a liberal who de-emphasizes traditional liberal doctrines in order to seek progress by more pragmatic methods," according to *Merriam-Webster*. This same dictionary defines meritocracy as "a system in which the talented are chosen and moved ahead on the basis of their achievement; leadership selected on the basis of intellectual criteria."

And most of us know what anxious and controlling parents are like.

Why is this such a bad thing (aside from the controlling anxious parents)?

“Research among college students and young people, for example, has found self-oriented perfectionism to be positively associated with clinical depression, anorexia nervosa and early death,” the study authors point out. “It is also associated with greater physiological reactivity (e.g., elevated blood pressure) and ill-being (e.g., negative affect) in response to life stress and failure.”

Noteworthy is the fact that perfectionism is actually a doctrine. I didn’t realize that until I did some research on the topic while I was writing my book, *Faith Magnified*.

This doctrine states that the perfection of moral character constitutes a person’s highest good. It’s a disposition to regard anything short of perfection as unacceptable. We serve a perfect God, one without sin who delivered us from sin. But we’re still not perfect—and we never will be so long as we’re in this flesh.

The good news is God doesn’t demand absolute perfection. When Jesus said “Therefore be perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48), He was speaking about walking in love.

So, Millennials, Generation Z, Generation X, Baby Boomers—whatever age you are—don’t get hung up on trying to be perfect while you are in this body of flesh, or you may get religious instead. We should strive for maturity. That said, we can be in the perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2). We should set our hearts to pursue Christ. When we do, we’ll mature in Him and find His perfect will.

I break the powers of false doctrines over your life. I bind the voice of neoliberalism. I shatter the drive for perfection and release a grace to pursue excellence. I push back the ideology of meritocracy, in Jesus’ name.

And, well, for the anxious and controlling parents—love them.
They love you.