

American Church Must Do This for Millennials to Survive

For the American Church to survive, or even thrive, among millennials, young believers must learn how to defend their faith in a hostile environment.

That's the whole goal of the Millennial Tour, a traveling seminar of sorts with a mash-up of teaching, music, testimonies, curriculum and more, based on the themes presented in *God's Not Dead*.

"I think in the secular, you can't just rely on the Bible to be your defense when you have an audience or peer group who doesn't dignify the Bible as truth," says Patrick Hess, the director of the Millennial Tour. "Dr. Rice's (Brooks, the author of *God's Not Dead*) teaching, approaches it on a level more of talking to them on secular perspective, scientific, psychological approach."

And he's right. A whopping 35 percent of the millennial generation classify themselves as "nones," according to a Pew Research Study. The same study reveals 21 percent identify as evangelical Protestant, 16 percent as Catholic and 11 percent are mainline Protestants.

"The tricky part is that age group, this demographic, very very much influenced by entertainment, so the logical vehicle used should be film and music for reaching those disenfranchised with the church, disconnected with faith because of culture wars," Hess says.

The tour breaks down like this: It's a 2 1/2-hour event with five to six artists per night. Not all artists will be at all the events, depending on geography and demographics. The stops will feature Brooks and Heath Adamson, the director of the Human Right, whether in person or by video. Between each

artist will be a three-to-four-minute video telling vignettes.

"It's a two-prong approach," Hess says. "First, talk about how to defend that there is a God, and once you know there is a God, what's next, which is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

To reach a generation that's moving away from God, Hess says the tour is putting into practice Paul's teaching of becoming all things to all people, and that starts with having quality that will draw nonbelievers.

"Paul's methodology of evangelism 'was when in Rome,'" Hess says. "He became what it took in his environment. He didn't compromise the message of Christ (being) crucified, but he did become culturally relevant."

To draw on quality, the tour is pulling some up-and-coming names of millennials who happen to be Christians, but aren't what "Mom listens to in the car."

What makes these artists unique in the Contemporary Christian World is their desire to show authenticity and use their personal struggles as a way of telling others about Jesus. Their songs aren't just worshipful tunes about God, but reveal how struggles do affect the lives of everyone ... yes, even Christians.

"This whole world, like on social media, it's just putting up a front, pretending to be something better than you are, searching for something that is real," says Brooke DeLeary of LoveCollide, one of the artists on the tour. "... When we show them authenticity, they really crave that, and our authenticity comes from an authentic God, a real God who really wants true relationship with them."

For example, when was the last time you heard a song on Christian radio about teenagers who cut themselves or are dealing with depression and loneliness? Music like

LoveCollide's "Numb" or "Scars" is hard to come by in Christian tradition, but it's what a new generation of believers is dealing with.

And that's why the Millennial Tour is preparing to open up new doors to the gospel so that younger believers can defend their faith and plant seeds of God's love in the hearts of their friends.

"It's equipping the millennial age, teaching them, how to defend their faith, and that's what we resonate with," says Lauren DeLeary. "(The band's) mission statement is to awaken a movement, ignite wildfire passion for Jesus, and you can do that by teaching people how to defend their faith and awakening the lukewarm church. Whether that's people who don't know the gospel or who want an awakening, it is ... teaching those to stand up and be bold."

It's the message presented in the first *God's Not Dead*, which was a breakout hit of 2014. The sequel is currently being filmed in Arkansas, and will star Melissa Joan Hart and several of the Tour's artists. It's set to premiere Easter 2016.

Want in? Check out the tour dates, which artists will be where and more information [here](#).