

How Do We Reclaim This 'Vanishing Generation'?

Nearly two-thirds of people ages 18-29 who grew up in the U.S. going to church have dropped out, according to the Barna research group.

One-third described church as "boring," one-quarter said faith is "not relevant," and one-in-five who attended church as a teenager said God "seems missing" from their experience.

What went wrong?

I believe we've left a whole generation floundering because—despite all our teaching materials, church programs and activity—they've never had a genuine encounter with the living Christ. Instead, we've been led to believe the smartphone generation needs constant media bombardment.

Our misplaced emphasis on fast-moving media and rock-concert volume has replaced the much-needed timeless discipline of seeking God in quiet meditation and reverent silence. As a consequence, our worship services have focused on performance rather than coming before God.

Look where that's got us. An entire generation is vanishing from the church, deserting the faith, before our eyes.

Why? They've found nothing of substance, nothing real to cling onto. In their own words, God "seems missing."

"Push-button" Generation

Decades ago—long before the iPhone, Twitter and Instagram—the preacher A.W. Tozer wrote: "The ideas of cultivation and exercise, so dear to the saints of old, have now no place in our (church life). A generation of Christians reared among push-buttons ... is impatient of slower and less direct methods

of reaching their goals. We have been trying to apply machine-age methods to our relations with God. We ... have our short devotions and rush away."

Tozer was spot on then, and his words still ring true today.

Our "push-buttons" and obsession with busy-ness and "doing" are pushing us further away from the presence of God. We have every resource at our fingertips yet God is as distant as the stars.

We've created a Christ of our own convenience. We deal with Him on a horizontal level, not a *vertical* level where we are looking up to Him. St. Augustine put it this way: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

Jesus told the Pharisees: "The Scriptures are all talking about me, but you don't want to come to me."

The hope for this generation in the midst of our crazy world will be found in the quiet place, where God reveals Himself one-on-one. Only in this sacred quietness will this generation enjoy God's all-enveloping presence, find rest in Christ and discover the life-purpose they long for.

Set Apart

The church *can* reclaim this "vanishing generation."

This is why GFA World is inviting young people ages 18-30 to its first-ever Set Apart () retreat June 20-26, helping them discover a deeper calling as they learn to tune into God's voice instead of their smartphones.

Francis Chan, author of *Crazy Love*, George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilization, and I will invite them to cultivate timeless practices of the faith that connect us to God—times of solitude and reflection, meditating on the Bible and prayer.

My heart longs to see this generation experience the firebrand Christianity that has not only sustained the church for 2,000 years but has turned the world upside-down.

They need a genuine, earth-shaking, one-on-one meeting with the living Christ, the only one who is able to free them from the self-centered, push-button culture and give real meaning to life.

With the quiet discipline of a heart set apart unto God, their lives can be set aflame by the Holy Spirit and made ready to change the world. {eo}

K.P. Yohannan *is the founder of GFA World (). The Set Apart 2022 retreat, featuring ministry leaders Yohannan, Francis Chan and George Verwer, will take place at GFA World's campus in Wills Point, Texas, June 20-26. Learn more at .*

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.