

Gen Z Study: Young Men Are Getting Serious About Faith

Three weeks ago I led a men's discipleship event at a church in suburban Chicago. Some of the guys traveled from as far away as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Washington to attend the conference. Men of all ages were there, but a large percentage of the guys were 20-somethings. The young man who led the worship that weekend is only 21.

On the second night, many men ran to the stage to receive prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. One of the youngest guys who responded was Jason Vitorsky, a 12-year-old from Missouri. Another guy, Giuseppe Battaglia from Ohio, is 15. Both of them were excited to tell me the next morning that they had been filled with the Spirit at the altar.

All the men spent three days worshipping, sharing meals, listening to sermons and sharing their hearts in small groups. When the event was over on Saturday, nobody wanted to leave.

I don't consider such moments unusual because I've been doing similar discipleship events for men for 15 years. I've witnessed growing spiritual hunger in the young generation as I've mentored many young adult men. But now, even secular journalists are recognizing this as a spiritual trend. On Sept. 22, The New York Times ran an article with the headline "In a First Among Christians, Young Men Are More Religious Than Young Women."

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The author of the article, Ruth Graham, interviewed Phil Barnes, a Southern Baptist pastor in Waco, Texas, who has seen more and more young men joining his congregation, Hope Church. He admitted that he has been curious about the trend. Barnes

asked: “What’s the Lord doing? Why is he sending us all of these young men?”

For decades, women have always been more involved in church than men. They are typically the ones who attend prayer meetings, teach children’s classes and generally keep the church going. But for the first time, statistics indicate that young men are attending Christian services more often than their female counterparts, and they are more likely to identify as religious.

Surveys also show that a larger percentage of Gen Z women are religiously unaffiliated (40% compared to 34%); meanwhile men in the Gen Z category are more likely to consider themselves conservative, while Gen Z women are more likely to identify as liberal.

I’ve seen this trend for years as I’ve helped young adult men grow in their faith. Young guys today are eager to join Bible studies, share their faith with others, go on mission trips and volunteer to serve in church. I meet young guys every month who are passionate believers, and many of them feel called to full-time ministry.

My friend Jason Savarese from New Jersey gave his life to Jesus a year ago. He’s 25 now, and he attends his church several times a week. Brandon Brecht, 32, was hooked on drugs during his teen years and almost died of an overdose when he was 24. Today he has kicked his drug habit; he now works for a drug rehab facility in Florida and wants to be an evangelist. My 22-year-old friend Kyler Gammon from Illinois rededicated his life to Jesus in 2022 and now attends a ministry school in Tennessee.

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David Szabo, a 30-year-old Hungarian immigrant, gave his life

to Jesus 10 years ago and has been involved in his church in New Jersey ever since. Javier Diaz, who lives in Florida, is 25; he rededicated his life to Christ at age 19 and was baptized in 2020. Joseph Chaparro, who is 35 and from Puerto Rican heritage, recommitted his life to Christ at age 25 and has been serving in a leadership position at his Chicago-area church for six years.

Is there a spiritual awakening happening among young men today? Cynics assume this is all political—implying that young men are being influenced by “toxic masculinity” and that this is all an attempt to reassert power over women. That’s ridiculous. This new wave of Christianity among Gen Z men is not about abortion laws, gender roles or Donald Trump’s running mate, J.D. Vance; the Holy Spirit is obviously drawing this younger generation to Jesus.

Centuries ago the prophet Joel predicted that when the Holy Spirit was poured out in the last days, “your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28b, NASB 1995). What we are seeing today could be the early stages of another massive youth awakening. It won’t end with the guys. I fully expect the girls to jump on the revival train in huge numbers.

Women have no reason to fear men who embrace genuine faith. In this age of fatherlessness, family breakdown, gender confusion and widespread mental and emotional crisis, we should welcome this movement as an answer to prayer. Young men who find Jesus are not going to be toxic; their masculinity will be healed. Young men who have been transformed by Christ are not going to abuse, dominate or marginalize women; instead, they will serve with them as equal partners to reach the world with the gospel.

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