

GENERATION Z AND THEIR PASSIONS

NOTES MOSTLY FROM A PODCAST BY DOUG JONES INTERVIEWING DR. ROCK JONES (OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT), LEADING IDEAS TALKS, "EPISODE 75: "UNDERSTANDING GENERATION Z AND CONNECTING WITH THEIR PASSIONS," SPONSORED BY THE LEWIS CENTER FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP OF WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN WASHINGTON D.C., POSTED ON MARCH 23, 2021. YOU CAN ACCESS AT [HTTPS://WWW.CHURCHLEADERSHIP.COM/PODCAST/EPISODE-75-UNDERSTANDING-GENERATION-Z-AND-CONNECTING-WITH-THEIR-PASSIONS-FEATUREING-ROCK-JONES/](https://www.churchleadership.com/podcast/episode-75-understanding-generation-z-and-connecting-with-their-passions-featuring-rock-jones/). THESE NOTES ALSO CONTAIN SOME INSIGHT GAINED FROM A DISCUSSION WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS AT A WESLEY FOUNDATION AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, APRIL 6, 2021.

FOCUS

**FAITH FORMATION FOR TODAY'S COLLEGE STUDENTS
(GENERATION Z) - PEOPLE COMING OF AGE RIGHT NOW
AS YOUNG ADULTS**

QUESTIONS

- **WHAT ARE THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERATION Z?**
- **WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMING THEM INTO A LIFE OF FAITH?**
- **WHAT SHOULD BE THE CONSIDERATIONS AND GOALS OF CAMPUS MINISTRIES AND CONGREGATIONS IN ENGAGING AND INFLUENCING GENERATION Z?**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FROM SOCIOLOGISTS AND OTHER
GENERATIONAL RESEARCHERS

1995-2009

Follow the Millennial
Generation

Ages 18-22 are in
middle of this
generation

As old as 25

POST 9-11 WORLD

Always have known our
country to be at war and at
risk of terrorism

LIVED THROUGH A RECESSION EARLY IN THEIR LIVES

Less likely to believe they
will work for a company for
40 years and retire

HEIGHTENED AWARENESS OF SAFETY

Most school shootings
Pandemic

WORK THROUGH THEIR VALUES AND PASSIONS

Care more about the planet

Climate change is not a
controversial topic - believe it
is real and will impact their
lives

World is smaller



DIGITAL NATIVES

Don't remember a life
without the iPhone

In relationships with
people they have never
been physically
connected with than
can be anywhere on
the planet

Investigative

SUSPICIOUS OF INSTITUTIONS

Capital riot

Police brutality

Church scandals

COMPASSIONATE AND OPTIMISTIC

79% feel that when faced
with challenges they have
the capacity or power to
change that situation for
the better

Feel deep moral
responsibility to make
world better

STRESSED OUT GENERATION

91% report feeling physical or
emotional symptoms
associated with stress
(American Psychological
Association)

Half of this generation has felt
overwhelming anxiety that has
affected them at some point;
creating feelings of alienation

1/3 have a diagnosed mental
health condition

LONELY

Report loneliness higher
than any other generation

36% have considered
suicide (2008 survey,
UCLA Higher Education
Resurgence Institute)

CRAVE STABILITY

Closer to parents
than previous
generations

HIGHER PERCENTAGE IN COLLEGE

75% identify as 1st
generational college
students, low income, or
racial minority

PARADOX

More connected than any other generation, yet lonely and anxious

IMPORTANT!

VALUES AND PASSIONS



GLOBAL CONNECTION AND CONCERN

CONCERNS, PASSIONS, AND CARES ARE MORE BROADLY SHARED



CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL!

FUNDAMENTAL, MORAL, AND SPIRITUAL ISSUE



POLITICALLY ACTIVE



CHAMPIONS OF DIVERSITY

RACIAL AND GENDER EQUALITY. DESPISE BIGOTRY.



INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

TEND TO BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING FROM STUDENTS FROM OTHER FAITH TRADITIONS AND SEEING HOW THAT WILL INFORM THEIR FAITH



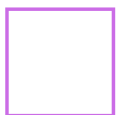
RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

"I'M SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS."



LGBTQ+ ISSUES

THESE ISSUES ARE ALIENATING A LARGER SEGMENT OF THIS GENERATION THAN OLDER GENERATIONS



SERVICE TO THE WORLD (FAITH TO WORK)



WANT TO BE A PART OF THE CONVERSATION AND SOLUTION

"YO. JUST LET ME VIBE."

GEN Z'ERS

Big Questions for Gen Z

CONNECTING FAITH WITH LIFE AND VOCATION

1. What do you care about?

a.) What are your passions? b.) What are you thinking about when you get up in the morning and you go to bed at night?

2. Where do you want to go?

a.) Literally? You can go anywhere in the world. b.) Metaphorically? Where do you want your life journey to go?

3. Who do you want to be?

a.) What kind of impact do you want to make on the world? What kind of difference do you want your life to make? Where do you want to live out your vocation? Where does your vocation intersect with avocations (hobbies or other pursuits)? How does personal intersect with professional?

GENERATION Z AND THEIR PASSIONS

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CAMPUS MINISTRIES AND CONGREGATIONS FOR THE FAITH FORMATION OF TODAY'S COLLEGE STUDENTS



MAKING A PLAN: ARE WE ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

- THIS INFORMATION SHOULD INFLUENCE HOW WE THINK ABOUT CULTIVATING SPIRITUAL LIFE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO GROW AND DEVELOP IN THAT DIMENSION OF THEIR LIFE.

- "THERE IS PROBABLY NO 4 YEAR PERIOD OF GREATER MATURATION THAN THE 4 YEARS OF TRADITIONAL COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE."

- GOAL SHOULD BE TO CULTIVATE THE WHOLE PERSON. - INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY, SOCIAL CONNECTION, VOCATIONAL COMPETENCE, ENGAGED CITIZENS, AND EQUIPPED TO TEND TO THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF LIFE.

- VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT IS AT THE CORE OF CAMPUS MINISTRY TODAY. WHEN DONE WELL IT CAN HELP STUDENTS OVERCOME ANXIETY ABOUT THEIR PURPOSE.

- WE WANT TO HELP STUDENTS NAVIGATE TOWARD A LIFE OF FULFILLMENT THAT ALLOW THEM OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD AND EQUIP THEM WITH THE TOOLS TO DO IT WITH HOLISTIC WELL BEING.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

WE NEED INDIVIDUAL AND CONGREGATIONAL HUMILITY! THIS GENERATION IS NOT BEING REACHED IN THE WAY PREVIOUS GENERATIONS WERE.

IF YOU DO NOT CARE ABOUT THEIR VALUES AND PASSIONS, YOU WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY INTERACTING AND INFLUENCING THIS GENERATION. THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO BECOME INVOLVED OR ENGAGED UNLESS THERE IS SOME ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THOSE SHARED VALUES.

THERE ARE THINGS THAT ARE DEEPLY POLARIZING AND CONTRADICTORY TO OLDER GENERATIONS THAT JUST ARE NOT THE CASE WITH THIS GENERATION.