

Transform Retreat – GenFree Presentation  
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Mellisa Pressley - Director of GenFree

Psalm 78:4-7

## What makes reaching Young Generations Unique?

\*\*Statistics provided by 2018 and 2021 Barna Studies

- Largest demographic group (32% of the global population)
  - Born between 1999-2015 - called Gen Z
- Have always been wired...digital natives
- Skilled researchers and fact-checkers
- Visual Multitaskers
- Impatient – attention span is 7-8 sec
- Racially diverse and multiracial
  - 2 in 5 teens interact with people who are different from them (*compared to just 1 in 4 Boomers*)
- Independent
- Aware of a troubled planet
- Justice-minded
- Average time on screens: 9-10 hours per day
  - Teens are missing their 2-3 times of REM Sleep, so brain function suffers
  - Self-inflicting identity disorders
- Real Safety is a myth
  - Most Gen Z do not remember the years before 9/11. They do not recall ever having lived in a country at peace
- Their parents are double minded
  - They are both “helicopter or lawnmower” parents in some areas and negligent at the same time in different areas
  - Half say parents are their primary role model, but only 1/3 say that family is core to their identity

### Gen Z - Identity and Goals of 13–18-year-olds

Achievement means success: 43% state their identity is in their professional/educational achievement

- 66% want to finish their education, start a career and become financially independent by age 30, while only 1 in five wants to be married by then (20%)

Doing is Primary: 42% state their identity is in their hobbies and pastimes

- 31% feel these hobbies will help them find who they really are

## Gen Z Emotional Climate

- Lonely
- Overwhelmed
- Anxious
- Want Transparency
- Cautious & Pragmatic (58% are worried about the future)
- Teens are 10-15X more impulsive now than 10 years ago

## How Gen Z Feels *less* loneliness (June 2020)

### If you are feeling lonely, what makes you feel better?

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 45% | Connecting with a person other than a family member |
| 20% | Connecting with family                              |
| 18% | Music   |
| 12% | Watching Videos/movies/TV                           |
| 10% | Gaming  |
| 8%  | Social Media  |
| 4%  | Food  |
| 3%  | Meditating/Focused Thinking                         |
| 3%  | Animals   |
| 2%  | Reading   |
| 2%  | Exercise  |
| 2%  | Creating Art  |
| 1%  | Sleeping/relaxing                                   |
| 1%  | Journaling  |
| 5%  | Other   |

## How Gen Z Feels *less* anxiety (June 2020)

### If you are feeling anxious, what makes you feel better?

|     |                           |
|-----|---------------------------|
| 26% | Music                     |
| 24% | Talking with someone      |
| 14% | Watching Videos/movies/TV |
| 11% | Meditating                |
| 9%  | Sleeping                  |
| 9%  | Gaming                    |
| 7%  | Physical Activity         |
| 5%  | Food                      |
| 4%  | Solitude                  |
| 3%  | Social Media Platforms    |
| 3%  | Animals                   |
| 3%  | Reading                   |
| 2%  | Prayer/Reading the Bible  |
| 2%  | Drugs/Alcohol             |
| 1%  | Art                       |
| 1%  | Journaling/Writing        |
| 8%  | Other                     |

## Gen Z Morals

- Only 1/3 of teens believe lying is wrong
- Are more accepting of sexual fluidity
  - 1/3 of teens say gender is how a person feels inside, not their birth sex
  - 1 in 8 describe their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual (12%)
  - 7 out of 10 believe it's acceptable to be born one gender and like feel another (69%)
- Have seen porn
  - 64% of young people ages 13-24 actively seek out porn weekly or more often
- Only 21% believe sex before marriage is wrong
- Only 29% believe abortion is wrong

## Gen Z Faith

Post-Christian BUT are open to faith

- Skepticism toward authority
- Doubt rather than trust
- Knowledge without wisdom
- Distorted view of reality
- Attempts at spiritual formation without foundation
- Preferential view of truth

Most young people abandon their faith while they are still at home with their parents.

79% of these young people say they walked away from Christianity during their adolescent and teen years. *Many reported that they left the faith between the ages of 10 and 17.*

Only 4% of Gen Z has a biblical worldview. *(Only 12% of today's youth pastors have a biblical worldview)*

Teens 13-18 years old are twice as likely as adults to say they are atheist (13% vs. 6%)

## What is the purpose of GenFree?

*GenFree exists to equip and encourage young generations and those who work with them to desire a true knowledge of God through a relationship with Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:17-18).*

We will do this by teaching them to:

- understand and believe the truth of their identity in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-20)
- turn from deception and live in Truth (1 John 1:6-10)
- mobilize others to live a transformed life, free in Christ (Matt. 5:14-16)

## Who and How does GenFree serve?

### PASTORS & MINISTERS

- Building a process of youth ministry
- Leading young people to faith
- Enabling Bible study
- Facilitating conversations
- Sharing testimonials and stories

### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Counselors
- After-school clubs
- Community centers
- Adult mentors
- Collegiate outreach and support groups
- Crisis care and intervention teams

### FAMILIES

- Navigating social media
- Relating to and understanding your young person
- Modeling security, acceptance, and significance in loving your child
- Building autonomy and resilience into your young person

### GEN Z (being developed in the future)

- *Peer testimonies*
- *Music Share*
- *Peer Leadership Training*

## Resources

Website: **[genfree.ficm.org](http://genfree.ficm.org)**

Digital Course for new Believers: *First Steps*

Books: *Stomping Out the Darkness*, *Bondage Breaker Youth Edition*, *Steps to Freedom in Christ for Teens Booklet*, *Unstuck*

## Connecting with Young People

### L.U.V.E.

#### Listen

- We surrender control of a conversation when we choose to listen
- We give God the control to unfold the conversation

#### Understand

- Are we seeking to really understand where their beliefs are coming from
- What has shaped their ideas
- Reflective listening – asking questions that are clarifying, not entrapping person

#### Validate

- Endorse their value and their identity in Christ

#### Empathize

- Capacity to understand a person's inner world and connect with them emotionally
  - Not sympathy or compassion, it is far deeper

### ATTUNEMENT

"I see you"

"I hear you"

"I understand how hard this must be for you"

"I am honored to **walk alongside** you in this journey"

### THROUGH CURIOSITY

Mark 9:14-27

Curiosity leads us to keep reaching and keep seeking for the light while we were in the dark. Our need to know keeps us asking, "God, are you still there?"

Jesus says, let the kids come to me. If you don't become like a child, you are going to miss out on what God is doing right in front of you. Childlike faith helps us not miss God. A childlike faith is not a blind faith, a naive faith...but it is filled with curiosity. The average 4-year-old asks 300 questions a day. It is ok to reach out; it is ok to ask questions.

Faith and doubt usually goes hand in hand. Doubt is neutral, but it is what you do with your doubt that determines where you will land. Doubt can lead to a deconstruction of a faith, or it can lead to a desperation that will ultimately lead you into a deeper intimacy with Jesus.

Doubt happens when there is a gap...a gap between:

- what you've seen/heard and what you are experiencing now
- where you are and where you want to be
- what you hope for and what you see if front of us

- what we believe and what we experience

#### Recognize the gap

- Jesus acknowledges the gap and steps into the gap (vs 19)

#### Jesus acknowledges the gap and now begins to build a bridge

- One thing that is required to build a bridge is tension. But our culture doesn't want to walk in the tension. We DON'T like tension.
  - We want to know what's right, what's wrong
  - What's black, what's white
  - What's conservative, what's liberal
  - But Jesus is ok with the tension.  
How many times do the disciples and other followers press Jesus, and ask Jesus, is it right or left?? And Jesus says..."Let me tell you a story."
- Jesus is our bridge. Jesus tells the father, "All things are possible with God" Father says, "I believe...but I need help with all this unbelief. Jesus, I have faith, but I need you to help me with all this doubt and tension here."

Doubt increases when we need to sacrifice. Faith gets replaced by sight, then by knowledge. Where you have faith there is always room for doubt. Where you have doubt there is always room for faith.

In the "Faith Hall of Fame," Abraham, Moses, David all had loads of faith **and** loads of doubt/mistakes.

Come to God as a whole person...real, genuine, authentically wrestling with the Lord through your doubts. Bring our questions to God.

Our questions do not dethrone God....it is what we do with these questions. When doubt creeps in....know you are not alone, welcome to the journey, and allow curiosity to drive you to the feet of Jesus. Sometimes we bring our doubts to God and just assume He will make them disappear....but sometimes they get heavier before they lead to some breakthrough.

***Would you step into the presence of God and be truly honest with Him about what you are really feel, what you are wrestling with?***

I have never met someone who deconstructed their faith and stepped away from God who was actually reading the Bible, and who wasn't isolated. Run to God's Word, and run to God's people, and be honest.

We are not supposed to "fix" those who doubt; we give them space to create intimacy with God.

- You and I can be amazed by miracles, but our belief is in a person! Our belief is not in the miracle but in the miracle worker....it is not in what He does, but in who He is!

Is your faith and trust in the overcome or miracle? Or is it in Christ? God is good and can be trusted no matter the outcome.

## Why ASKING GOOD questions is essential for a generational connection

❖ Questions are **personal**

*lecture has limits ... it's impersonal...one person speaking to many ... ALSO, the learners are passive... typically falling into mentally agreeing "yes, yes, yes" to every statement made by the teacher.*

*Questions—good ones—are tailored to individuals ... meeting their needs*

❖ Questions **provoke thought**

*questions are active ... even if a person doesn't talk ... this is the beauty, everyone has the opportunity to be engaged*

❖ Questions **create community**

*conversation connects deeper than spectating an event ... FANS of a particular team have a lot in common—but nothing personal... two fans can talk for hours without really connecting, because nothing intimate is shared ... questions change this*

*A good discussion isn't just a shared experience, people reveal their thoughts...*

❖ Questions **draw out wisdom**

*people learn when other people speak ... seeing different perspectives is an essential aspect of life in God's kingdom ... as, God is doing different things in different people...*

❖ Questions **reveal character**.... or maturity ....

*a person's answer reveals where he or she is "at" on a particular issue ... good questions will lead to answers that allow you to see, firsthand, a person's spiritual condition*

❖ Questions **spark more questions**

*creating a culture of questions isn't easy ... but asking questions will lead to more questions...*

*Discipleship is about transformation, not the transfer of information ... if we want our students to own their faith, then they need to think about it—in their own terms—there is no ownership without personal processing...*

❖ Questions **lead to undiscovered places**

*you can't FULLY control a good conversation... and that's good...wonderful...amazing...awesome ... you should have an objective, a destination in mind, but the journey to get there will be wild*

❖ Questions **express humility**

*Our students already put us up on a pedestal ... great leaders lead like Jesus, and this means leading in humility ... we don't know everything, and asking questions—even ones we don't know the answer—demonstrates humility to our students...*

## Tips for Asking better questions

- **Accept the reality that your answers are not nearly as powerful as your questions.** Hard truth ... this is a difference between average and great leaders ... Think of your life: how often did you learn from another person's answers?
- **Pray for discernment for each young person.** "God, what's next for BOBBY?" .... personally pray, by name ... spend time in reflection to hear God's voice ... you don't need to "play god" and control their lives... but you do need to seek God for a vision of what questions they need to hear...
- **Define the objective or goal for your discussion.** If you don't have the end in mind, you aren't caring enough ... we have goals for the things we value ...
- **Be ready to learn.** Romans 1:12 ... "mutually encouraged by our faith" Ask every question as if it were your OWN question... False questions are evil ... a false question is when you don't care about the answer because you already know it all ... this is fake, a false projection of an over inflated ego ... if you only ask questions you know the answer to, then you are either asking weak questions or you don't know the limits of your understanding.
- **Be understandable, stay away from Christian culture jargon.** Jargon is for experts; it leads to condensed conversation that is efficient. It's great that medical Doctors have their own "language" they need it ... in discipleship, we need to speak plainly... This doesn't mean avoiding difficult or complex truth...
- **Be able to ask the same question in different ways.** People understand things differently ... what is clear to you is unclear to someone else ... people think differently and respond to different words ... Especially the important questions ... and especially when a question is answered in silence ... In your opinion, why is it difficult to forgive others? What are some hurdles you've faced? When is it hard to let go of a grudge?
- **Be ok with awkward silence.** Silence is powerful ... it gives people time to think ... it's also a cue that someone ought to be talking
- **Create confusion: push things to extremes, teaching opposing truths.** You can't learn without confusion ... you need to know you are missing something before you add it to your life... Most of us think we are right—99.99% of the time ... Forgiveness extreme ... so you say we are supposed to forgive everyone, all the time ... what if a person is getting picked on at school ... and it's getting bad ... do we just forgive and let it happen? Opposing truths ... e.g. free will vs. God's sovereignty ... Nearly every comment/answer a young person gives can be pushed to an extreme ...
- **Make eye contact.** This is a basic human skill ...

- **Affirm responses...even “incorrect” ones.** “It’s tough to share, great job.”
- **Be slow—like glacier slow—to correct answers.** I almost never correct ... it shames them ... shuts down sharing ...
- **Keep it practical, abstract ideas are interesting for only a few.** Jesus taught us to go and teach people to obey. Connect the abstract with the concrete, “theology” with “real life. Ultimately, we are about spiritual growth ... life change ... according to Jesus, going “deep” only means one thing: obedience
- **Encourage students to ask their own questions.** I always start, “who has questions? What is confusing? Is there anything that doesn’t make sense?”
- **Challenge easy answers—test their conviction and ownership, especially don’t settle for superficial answers.** Don’t assume kids are getting it ... if they aren’t personalizing it in their own words ... struggling to find words ... passionate
- **Don’t answer your own questions...never in the beginning and rarely at the end.** You don’t need to answer every question. Give them something to think about ... I’ve had kids come back from college say, “I remember ... you didn’t always answer the questions ... it was frustrating ... but it got me to think...”
- **Speak less than a third of the time.** Don’t talk.
- **Be both focused and flexible.** Keep the goal of your discussion in mind but be flexible if God goes in a different direction.
- **Admit your confusion.** I can’t read three verses without having a question ... admit this to your students... they already put you up on a pedestal ... take yourself down.
- **Avoid closed questions (one-word answers).** There are a few expectations: when the group will be polarized, or if a simple question sets up a more complex question.
- **Be passionate.** If you aren’t, get recharged.