

Sally Contessi, Queensland Baptist Catalyst for Children and Families (2019).
Research for Theology of Family

[Can I Ask That?](#) (volume 2 [here](#); Student vol. 1 & 2; website [here](#))

- Research indicates that about 5 of every 10 highschoolers will walk away from their faith after graduation. Because of that tragedy, the team at Fuller Youth set out to discover how to help young people develop a faith that lasts, or [Sticky Faith](#).
 - Some leave because other things become more important to them
 - Some leave over a bad experience in a youth group
 - Some leave as they seek independence from independence from the opinions of their parents
 - Some leave because they never felt like part of the church to begin with.
 - And some leave because the church fails to prepare them adequately for life beyond highschool.
 - One recent survey asked leaders of a campus-based atheist club why they don't believe in God. Their responses were revealing (Many had actually been involved in a youth ministry during their high school years-they named the church's failure to engage difficult questions as a key reason they left)
 - Specifically, these young people cited the church's failure to wrestle with issues like the reliability of the biblical text, sexuality, evolution versus creation, and the exclusivity of Jesus. But notice these students did not say they left the faith because of the stance their church took on these issues. *They left the church because the church failed to address them at all.* When tough questions were addressed the answers they found were vague and superficial. Teenagers will ask these questions with or without you. Encourage teenagers that *any* questions and doubts are welcome. In fact, they are required.

[Zombies, Football and the Gospel](#)

- “Most millennial Christians see local churches as business as usual, focused inwardly, more concerned about the needs of the members than the needs of the community and nations.”
- The US Government's Office for Nonprofits is being overwhelmed with applications, and most of those applications are coming from Millennials. According to the author of *True Religion*, “*Their aim is not to grow massive aid or charity organisations. They are far more organic than that. They are simply living their passions. They are responding to the needs of desperate people that grip their heart.*”
- In ‘You Lost Me’ –David Kinnaman says that apparently this generation is “prepared to not merely be hearers of doctrine but doers of faith; they want to put their faith in action, not just to talk.”
- A generation is not walking away from the church because they haven't heard the story of the gospel. They're exiting because they were never invited into the mission of the gospel. I recently had a conversation with a

22-year-old who left the church when she was 15. She explained, “They taught me what they wanted me to know about all of the stories when I was a kid, but I was never really invited to be a part of the discussion or to do anything significant. I feel like the church is the super-exclusive club that I’m too poor and female to get into.”

- I do believe this generation definitely craves a deeper understanding of the narrative of Scripture. But connecting their personal lives to that story in a relevant way is something you must do if you want to re-engage them.
- *USA Today* “Not that the evangelical old guard hasn’t cared, or hasn’t served others but we are seeing a seismic shift in emphasis- from an emphasis on assenting to the right theological ideas and getting to heaven, to one where it’s all about translating belief into righteous action on behalf of others. You can expect to find, on a scale not seen for decades, more and more Bible-believing Christians on the front lines of compassion campaigns for the poor, abused women, modern-day slaves, children (born as well as unborn), minorities of every sort, and anyone else being exploited and mistreated.”
- This generation doesn’t need a new and improved version of Sunday school. They need to engage in a passionate adventure outside the walls of a church building.
- Young people who are involved in service are much more likely to be firmly bonded to their churches, much less likely to drop out of school, less likely to engage in behaviours that put them at risk and have a higher intrinsic motivation towards a future career.
- Robert Putnam, “Young people are dropping out of religion with astounding speed, five times the historical average. As many as 30-40% say they have no religious affiliation. That number was 5-10% only a generation ago.
- David Kinnaman, “Young people are dropping out earlier, staying away longer, and if they come back are less likely to see the church as a long-term part of their life.” (see also [You Lost Me](#), [Churchless](#), [UnChristian](#), [Faith for Exiles](#), [Gen Z](#), and [Meet Gen Z](#))
- David Olson, “The vast majority of churches in America (roughly 80%) are in a state of decline. If present trends continue, the percentage of the population that attends church in 2050 is estimated to be at almost half of 1990’s attendance. A drop from 20.4% to 11.7% of the population. Olson’s projections for the years leading up to 2050 aren’t any more encouraging. He estimates a drop to 15.4% in the next 8 years.
- Young people are disillusioned with the way the church
 - Overprotects
 - Handles doubt
 - Treats gays
 - Ignores community service
 - Communicates truth (see Barna Report 2018 on “[The Truth about a Post-Truth Society](#)”
 - Judges failure
 - Pushes political agendas

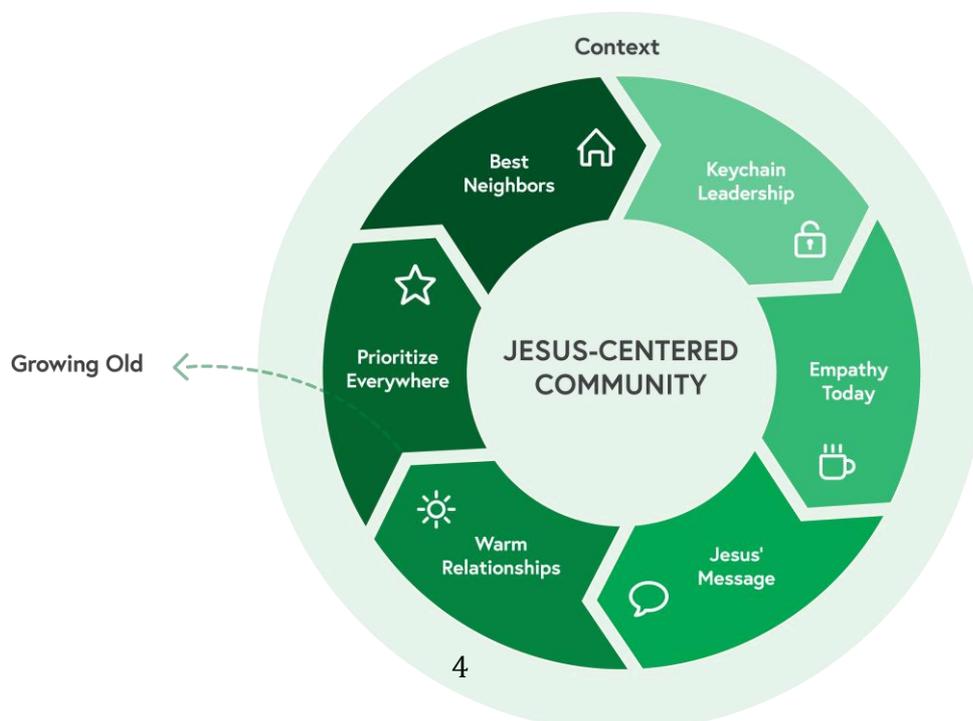
- 25% of the population treat Sundays as a Holy day. The other 75% treat it like a holiday.
- Is our primary goal to get them to church on Sunday?
- Primary family trends of today
 - Getting married later
 - Living together without getting married
 - Unmarried couples raising children
 - Gay couples raising children
 - Single women having children without a partner to help
 - Parents who adopt/foster children
 - Raising children with special needs
 - Marrying people of another culture/race
 - Living with extended family (statistics page 57)
- Children will decide what they think about the church when they see how you treat their parents.
- Millennials top 5 most important things:
 - 61% family
 - 25% friends
 - 17% education
 - 16 career
 - 13% spouse/partner
- Research indicates that Millennials have a better attitude toward their family than they do the church. It also suggests they care about every family better than the church does.
 - Will you do a baby dedication for a child whose parents are cohabitating?
 - Do you believe someone gay can attend your church and pursue a relationship with God?
 - Can children of gay couples participate in your programs?
 - Can any parent attend your parenting training or classes? What is your strategy for a couple in your church who gets divorced?
 - How are you inviting families in your church to participate in helping orphans and widows of this generation?
 - Will you do premarital counselling for couples who live together?
 - Will you do their wedding? Can they join your church?
 - What is your plan when a teenager in your church finds out they're pregnant, or they have been abused, or they think they're gay?
 - What services will you provide for children with special needs? How do you plan to encourage and support their parents?

[Growing Young \(https://churchesgrowingyoung.com/\)](https://churchesgrowingyoung.com/)

- “Rise of the Nones”
- Congregations are aging – of the US population, 18-29 year olds make up 22%, but in our churches, they only make up 10% of the population.
- Studies suggest that 40-50% of youth group seniors- like the young people in your church- drift from God and the faith community after they graduate from high school. Let’s make that statistic a bit more personal. Visualize a photograph of the young people in your congregation. Now

imagine holding a red pen and drawing an X through almost 50% of their faces.

- 10 things your church doesn't need in order to Grow Young
 - A precise size. Size does not matter
 - A trendy location or region
 - An exact age.
 - A popular denomination, or lack of one.
 - An off-the-chart cool quotient. (Warm is the new cool.)
 - A big, modern building. "feeling at home transcends any building."
 - A big budget. Small budget does not translate to small impact.
 - "Contemporary worship" service. Not a stand-alone factor in what attracts & maintains young people.
 - A watered-down teaching style. Actually want more.
 - Hyper-entertaining ministry program. We don't have to compete. Slick is no guarantee for success.
- Scripture doesn't change, but the world around us does.
- Six Core Commitments
 - Keychain leadership (empowering them – actually giving them the keys)
 - Empathise with them (instead of judging or criticising – step into their shoes- be aware of what they are facing)
 - Take Jesus' message seriously – "instead of asserting formulated gospel claims, welcome young people into a Jesus-centered way of life." (Authenticity)
 - Fuel a warm community – instead of focusing on cool worship or programs, aim for warm peer and intergenerational friendships.
 - Prioritize young people (& families) everywhere. Tangibly support, resource, and involve them in all facets of your congregation. (Don't silo them off and think of them as a tag-on)
 - Be the best neighbours – enable them to neighbour well locally and globally. (Mobilise them for action)



Lead Small

- Most studies today indicate that at least half of students will walk away from their faith in college. Why? The real culprit starts long before English 101. It's not something they come across on campus. It's not lying in wait beneath dorm room lofts. It's something they bring from home. It's packed in their bags next to their 'shower shoes', beneath the keepsake from a nearly forgotten high-school romance.
It's a pseudo, immature, green, borrowed or fragile faith.

Now before we start the blame game, we, as parents and leaders in their lives didn't necessarily fail them. Think about their stage of life.

1 Timothy 1:18-19

When we lead small, we make a choice to invest strategically in the lives of a few over time so we can help them build an authentic faith.

- Be present
- Create a safe place
- Partner with parents
- Make it personal
- Move them out
- Partner with Parents
 - Cue the parents
 - For forty years in the desert, the Israelites had a consistent, physical, daily reminder of God's presence.
It wasn't a WWJD bracelet.
It wasn't a daily devotional on the back of the toilet door.
It wasn't a fish outline on the back of their minivan.
It was manner from heaven. A pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night. No one could ever wonder if God still cared, or where he was. Of course he did. He provided for them everyday. SO when it came time to cross the Jordan into Canaan, Moses knew he would have to prepare the Israelites for the harsh reality of a life without everyday, physical signs from God. Moses called the people together and gave them Deuteronomy 6. On the banks of the Jordan, the edge of Canaan, Moses didn't talk about how to set up a new government or give detailed battle plans. Moses gave instructions for preserving everyday faith.
 - Moses was talking to the *whole nation*: grandmas, uncles, tent-makers, and parents.
- If you're not on the parent's side, your're not on the kid's side. They are the greatest influence in the kid's life. So, build a bridge. Choose to honour the parents.
- Reinforce the family.

Back the parents. Even if the parent isn't a believer, they are still the parent, and including them in these [big] experiences has the potential to make a more meaningful impact in the lives of your kids. [Don't get greedy as a SGL].

- Honour the parent
- Reinforce the family

[The ABC of XYZ](https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/publications/books/the-abc-of-xyz/) (mccrindle.com.au/insights/publications/books/the-abc-of-xyz/)

- 42% Gen Y-ers surveyed reported that poor management and leadership was the main reason for leaving their previous role.
- Gen Y – even in their primary years were given leadership opportunities and encouraged to challenge and independently evaluate each other's decisions. As a result, they expect to be treated as equals, they expect to have choices and input into decision-making processes, expectations that run counter to hierarchical systems of leadership. Supporting this is the statistic that 97% of Gen Y-ers value a leadership style that involves empowerment, consultation & partnership, and would leave if they did not get it

[Sticky Faith](https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/stickyfaith) (<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/stickyfaith>)

- Faith that is both *internalized* and *externalized*: a faith that is part of a student's inner thoughts and emotions, and is also externalized in choices and actions that reflect that faith commitment. These behaviors include regular attendance in a church/campus group, prayer and Bible reading, service to others, and lower participation in risk behaviors, in particular sex and alcohol (two behaviors we are studying specifically). In other words, Sticky Faith involves whole-person life integration, at least to some degree.
- Faith that is both *personal* and *communal*: a faith that celebrates God's specific care for each person while always locating faith in the global and local community of the Church
- Faith that is both *mature* and *maturing*: a faith that shows marks of spiritual maturity but is also in process of growth. We don't assume a high school senior or college freshman (or a youth worker for that matter) will have a completely "mature" faith. We are all in process.
- What creates sticky faith?
 - Partnership with Families
 - Research demonstrates that parents are the #1 influencers when it comes to spirituality in young people—yes, even teenagers. We help leaders develop new ways to partner with parents, empowering them to nurture faith in their families.
 - Intergenerational Relationships
 - Despite the age segregation that exists in our churches and broader culture, each young person is greatly benefited when surrounded by a team of five adults. We call this the new 5:1 ratio.
 - Whole Gospel

- Many young people see faith like a jacket: something they can put on or take off based on their behaviour. We seek to help students develop a more robust understanding of the gospel, one that integrates faith into all aspects of life.
- A Safe Place for Doubt
 - Doubt is not toxic to faith; silence is. Young people want conversations in response to their hardest questions, not just answers. We offer tools and training for these discussions that deepen the faith of everyone involved.

Here2Stay (<https://here2stay.org.au/>)

If the church is haemorrhaging young people, we have to ask our selves if it's because we address the issue of discipleship too late. Is the spiritual education we provide for our young people neither consistent enough or rigorous enough to provide them with the means to have a strong and stable faith in a time when there are many challenges to the authenticity and relevance of our beliefs?

Jason Gardner, [Mend the Gap](#) (UK)

Almost with that exception, those young people who are growing in their faith as adults were teenagers who fit into one of two categories;

they came from families where Christian growth was modelled in at least one of their parents, or

they had developed significant connections with an extended family of adults within the church.

How often they attended youth events (including Sunday School and discipleship groups) was not a good predictor of which teens would, and which would not, grow toward Christian adulthood.

- The family is the most important group of people mentioned in the Bible. While acknowledging that families come in different shapes today, consider some difficult perspectives. Mark Griffiths in his book, *One Generation From Extinction*, helps to bring this back into focus in our modern context. He writes:

Often we are dissatisfied with our children's ministry. We know we should do more; we're just not sure what. We're trying to take our ministry forward, but we're not sure where to. I propose that 21st-century children's work should be in three dimensions, and that to miss any one of these dimensions is to seriously jeopardise the impact of your ministry to this rising generation.

The first two of these dimensions are outlined below. There are two Hebrews words used throughout the Old Testament that are translated as 'family'. One describes a 'household of faith', the other refers to the larger 'community of

faith'. All children belong to a 'household' and it is this close communal setting that has a major influence on their development as human beings.

DIMENSION ONE: BAYITH (pronounced BAH'-YITH)

The first is the word Bayith. This communicates the concept of what we would now call the immediate family – parents and children together under one roof. We encounter this word in the instructions for the Passover meal (Exodus 12:21-28)

DIMENSION 2: MISHPACHAH (pronounced MISH-PAW-KHAW)

This word carries within it the sense of tribe, clan or community; it is in effect a bond of kinship uniting people to a common cause. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 and Deuteronomy 11:18-19, when instructions are given for the passing on of the belief system from one generation to the next, are written in the context of mishpachah'.

Our journey with all ages helping to see Christ formed in them must involve active participation within the bayith and mishpachah settings.

8 formational pillars

- Anchors/Rites of passage
- Responding with compassion
- Encounters with Jesus
- Big Story of the Bible (see [The Bible According to Gen Z](#), [The Insect and the Buffalo](#), and [The Drama of Scripture](#))
- Serve in mission
- Mentors and life coaches
- Peak experiences
- Peer positive community

[Barna Group Research](https://theconnectedgeneration.com/) (https://theconnectedgeneration.com/) Findings + Webcast + Report

- **Reason #1 – Churches seem overprotective.**
A few of the defining characteristics of today's teens and young adults are their unprecedented access to ideas and worldviews as well as their prodigious consumption of popular culture. As Christians, they express the desire for their faith in Christ to connect to the world they live in. However, much of their experience of Christianity feels stifling, fear-based and risk-averse. One-quarter of 18- to 29-year-olds said "Christians demonize everything outside of the church" (23% indicated this "completely" or "mostly" describes their experience). Other perceptions in this category include "church ignoring the problems of the real world" (22%) and "my church is too concerned that movies, music, and video games are harmful" (18%).

- Reason #2 – Teens’ and twentysomethings’ experience of Christianity is shallow.**

A second reason that young people depart church as young adults is that something is lacking in their experience of church. One-third said “church is boring” (31%). One-quarter of these young adults said that “faith is not relevant to my career or interests” (24%) or that “the Bible is not taught clearly or often enough” (23%). Sadly, one-fifth of these young adults who attended a church as a teenager said that “God seems missing from my experience of church” (20%).
- Reason #3 – Churches come across as antagonistic to science.**

One of the reasons young adults feel disconnected from church or from faith is the tension they feel between Christianity and science. The most common of the perceptions in this arena is “Christians are too confident they know all the answers” (35%). Three out of ten young adults with a Christian background feel that “churches are out of step with the scientific world we live in” (29%). Another one-quarter embrace the perception that “Christianity is anti-science” (25%). And nearly the same proportion (23%) said they have “been turned off by the creation-versus-evolution debate.” Furthermore, the research shows that many science-minded young Christians are struggling to find ways of staying faithful to their beliefs and to their professional calling in science-related industries.
- Reason #4 – Young Christians’ church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic, judgmental.**

With unfettered access to digital pornography and immersed in a culture that values hyper-sexuality over wholeness, teen and twentysomething Christians are struggling with how to live meaningful lives in terms of sex and sexuality. One of the significant tensions for many young believers is how to live up to the church’s expectations of chastity and sexual purity in this culture, especially as the age of first marriage is now commonly delayed to the late twenties. Research indicates that most young Christians are as sexually active as their non-Christian peers, even though they are more conservative in their attitudes about sexuality. One-sixth of young Christians (17%) said they “have made mistakes and feel judged in church because of them.” The issue of sexuality is particularly salient among 18- to 29-year-old Catholics, among whom two out of five (40%) said the church’s “teachings on sexuality and birth control are out of date.”
- Reason #5 – They wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity.**

Younger Americans have been shaped by a culture that esteems open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance. Today’s youth and young adults also are the most eclectic generation in American history in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, technological tools and sources of authority. Most young adults want to find areas of common ground with each other, sometimes even if that means glossing over real differences. Three out of ten young Christians (29%) said “churches are afraid of the beliefs of other faiths” and an identical proportion felt they are “forced to choose

between my faith and my friends.” One-fifth of young adults with a Christian background said “church is like a country club, only for insiders” (22%).

- **Reason #6 – The church feels unfriendly to those who doubt.**
Young adults with Christian experience say the church is not a place that allows them to express doubts. They do not feel safe admitting that sometimes Christianity does not make sense. In addition, many feel that the church’s response to doubt is trivial. Some of the perceptions in this regard include not being able “to ask my most pressing life questions in church” (36%) and having “significant intellectual doubts about my faith” (23%). In a related theme of how churches struggle to help young adults who feel marginalized, about one out of every six young adults with a Christian background said their faith “does not help with depression or other emotional problems” they experience (18%).
- **Turning Toward Connection**
David Kinnaman, who is the coauthor of the book [*unChristian*](#), explained that “the problem of young adults dropping out of church life is particularly urgent because most churches work best for ‘traditional’ young adults – those whose life journeys and life questions are normal and conventional. But most young adults no longer follow the typical path of leaving home, getting an education, finding a job, getting married and having kids—all before the age of 30. These life events are being delayed, reordered, and sometimes pushed completely off the radar among today’s young adults.
- “Consequently, churches are not prepared to handle the ‘new normal.’ Instead, church leaders are most comfortable working with young, married adults, especially those with children. However, the world for young adults is changing in significant ways, such as their remarkable access to the world and worldviews via technology, their alienation from various institutions, and their skepticism toward external sources of authority, including Christianity and the Bible.”

[Playing For Keeps](#)

6 Things Every Kid Needs

- Love over time = worth
- Words over time = direction
- Stories over time = perspective
- Tribes over time = belonging
- Fun over time = connection
- Work over time = purpose

[Lasting Impact](#)

- Of the Christians who are leaving the church, none are leaving more quickly than millennials. Young adults under the age of 30.
- Not 40-50% of kids, but 40-50% of kids who are active in their faith in their final year of highschool.
- Behaviours that related to mature faith
 - Forming intergenerational relationships (multigenerational experiences – including serving together)
 - Giving and Receiving grace (Making our homes and churches places where it is safe to talk about mistakes)
 - Expressing Doubt Safely (Only unexpressed doubt is truly toxic to faith. Everyone has doubts.)
- Reasons millennials are leaving the church
 - The church is irrelevant, leaders are hypocritical and experienced too much moral failure. We need to foster integrity, authenticity & grace.
 - God is missing in the church. Searching for personal experience.
 - Legitimate doubt is prohibited.
 - People aren't learning about God –“people speaking Christianese”.
 - Not finding community. “Nobody should be able to out-community the local church.”
- Many leaders think that moving a pulpit out and replacing it with a stage and adding lights and a good video system might move them from stagnation to growth overnight. They'd be wrong. If there was ever a time when that alone would grow a church, that time has recently come to close. Sometimes all a good video system does is magnify your irrelevance. Being cool is not enough. Nor is it as important as you think. “If you are going to gather people, gather well.”
- Cool church isn't what it used to be. Imitation killed innovation. Cool churches aren't so hard to find anymore. But, the answer to keeping up with relevance is not a return to irrelevance. Not bridging a cultural gap isn't the answer.
 - The new cool
 - Authentic leadership & connection
 - An elevated sense of mission
 - Hope
 - Elevated community
 - Experimentation

[Faith and Belief.org](#) ([infographic](#) + [report](#) + [presentation](#))

- 2016 CENSUS results
 - 52.1% Christian
 - 30.1% No religion
 - 2.6% Islam
 - 2.4% Buddhists
 - 3.2% all other religions
 - 9.6% not stated

- Since 1911 – 0.4% no religion on increase
- Greatest influence on faith 57% parents & family

NCLS (Baptist) + “Australian Communities Survey”

- Of church attenders with children over the age of 15, 71% attend church. However,
- 28% do not – and that’s up from only 4% of children under 15.

Sticky Faith in Australian Baptist Churches: Surveying Generational Participation and Ministry Priorities

- Selected groups are moving in less siloed and more intergenerational directions.
- Churches have a significantly higher proportion of older people
- Significantly lower proportion of younger people than the population of Aus.
- A snapshot of all Baptist families and the church-attending patterns of their children of any age shows evidence of a generational drift away from Baptist churches.
- In 2016, 44% of the children of current Baptist church attenders no longer attend any church.
- “Churches largely rely on the expertise of Sunday School teachers and youth leaders rather than empowering parents and the broader church community to foster faith formation.
- A lack of intergenerational connection. “We’ve told them, ‘it’s time for the kids to go out of church,’ and when there is no longer a program for them, they go.”
- “Out of sight, out of mind.”
- Baptists rated ministry to children and youth as number #3 on their list of values – 24%