

# 4 TRUTHS THE NEXT GENERATION NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CHURCH

You don't have to look far to find stats, articles, or books on what's wrong with the church today and how young people are leaving in droves upon their high school graduation. In fact, [a study from Lifeway Research](#) found two-thirds (66%) of American young adults who regularly attended a Protestant church for at least a year as a teenager say they also dropped out for at least a year between the ages of 18 and 22.

We're constantly hearing about ways the church has fallen short of what God has called it to be. Blogs and articles tell us what changes the church needs to make to attract the next generation. In fairness, the stats are real, and much of this content is justified. As the church, we should always strive to be better witnesses and be more effective at reaching the next generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ — to figure out ways to not only keep young people engaged with the church but also to teach them to value and love the church. So at times, it's necessary to point out the faults, inconsistencies, and hypocrisies.

However, I want to talk about what's right with the church. As believing adults and leaders, it's our calling to disciple students to stay engaged with the local church and serve it well. Rather than complain about the church's faults and criticize those who leave, we need to start discipling students to stay, love the church, and help build the church to be all that Jesus calls it to be.

Thankfully, the Word of God is effective at pointing out what's beautiful about the church. It teaches us how to love and serve the church. Here are four truths the next generation needs to know about the local church:

## 1. There is one church

I'm a huge fan of age-specific ministries. However, one of the biggest mistakes we make in a student ministry is operating like a church within a church. Many youth groups have their own names, logos, and vision and mission statements. They rarely interact with the local church at large.

If a student ministry runs like a church within a church, when teens graduate out of that student ministry, they feel like they're joining a different church even though it meets at the same address. It's a strange transition for them because they don't know the leadership, the vision, or have any established relationships outside the youth group. That's why many leave.

Take time to disciple a generation, and operate as one church with multiple generations. Find ways for the entire congregation to be on mission together, serve together, and build relationships together.

*"...in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another" (Romans 12:5, CSB).*

## 2. The church is your forever family

If you've been bought by the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit of God lives inside you, you are the church. Disciple the next generation to understand the church isn't a building; it's a people. The next generation is the church. If they're the church, they will always be a part of the church even when they try to run from the local expression of it.

When God saves you, He brings you into a family. The local church is God's answer to your loneliness. As the church, you can laugh together and cry together. You can rejoice together and mourn together. That's a beautiful word: *together*.

and mobilized, hell cannot prevail against it. There's no cause bigger than the cause of Christ and His church.

When it comes to responding to disasters, sex trafficking, injustice, orphan care, and other needs, the church is the greatest responder. Do we always get it right? No. Are we sometimes late to the party? Yes. However, when the church (fueled by the Holy Spirit) rallies around a cause, nothing can stop it. And the world takes notice.

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, CSB).*

***"If you've been bought by the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit of God lives inside you, you are the church."***

Like with your physical family, you'll be annoyed, frustrated, and inconvenienced by your spiritual family. However, as leaders, it's our responsibility to disciple young people to not run from and abandon the church but to press in. Enjoy the church. Love the church. Serve the church. We will spend eternity together, after all.

*"So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19, CSB).*

## 3. The church can impact the world

Many young people are cause-oriented. They want their lives to matter and want to make the world around them a better place. One of Generation Z's core values is being a part of a cause bigger than themselves. So, help a generation understand that when the church is unified

## 4. The church can maximize their potential

The Great Commandment and Great Commission call every follower of Jesus to do three things: love God, love people, and make disciples. It's a nonnegotiable that we disciple a generation to have the same prayer and attitude as John the Baptist — *"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, CSB)*. Spiritually mature followers of Jesus realize that real Christianity has more to do with others than ourselves. We are called to love God; we are called to love people; and we are called to make disciples.

To do this, every Christian (including young people) is given spiritual gifts through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. These spiritual gifts are used to strengthen others in the body of Christ. *"For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Romans 1:11-12, CSB).*

Ironically, the more you serve, love, and pour your life into others, the more joy, hope, and peace you tend to have. The church isn't an organization created to fulfill your preferences; the church is a people created to know the Lord and serve others. It maximizes the effectiveness and legacy of your life, and no one should ever walk away from that high calling.

As leaders, we must disciple the next generation in these truths, so they will rise up and teach the generation after them. After all, this is exactly why the New Testament church has continued to exist for 2,000 years. [»](#)



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