

The New Youth Boom

Study Guide



About The Future Of...Podcast: The New Youth Boom

Participants are encouraged to listen to each podcast before they use this material.

<https://blog.umcdiscipleship.org/>

<https://blog.umcdiscipleship.org/the-future-of-podcast-the-new-youth-boom-study-guide/>

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Instructions for Leaders

Why this study?

Generation Z, those young Americans age 1 to 18, are at a critical time of their lives. Like previous generations who have reached this stage of maturity, they are discovering their voice. We see this in their response to school shootings, to the way they are using social media to share their passions, and in their questioning of authority when it comes to race, gender, ethnicity, and national identity.

Parents of teenagers and children are at a crossroads as well. They wonder what the future looks like for their children. They wonder how they can best support their children's pursuits. They question how the widespread use of digital media is impacting their children's lives.

The church is at a challenge point as well. In too many churches, young people are non-existent. While they may want young people in their churches, they don't want to have to make the changes that would make them feel welcome. Church leaders struggle as to how to share the gospel of love and grace when many in their name make pronouncements or do misdeeds that turn off the young.

With these things in mind, we offer you this four-part study which can be used with adults, youth, or as a multi-generational experience. The study is based on the [The Future Of...Podcast: The New Youth Boom](#).

You may invite participants to listen to the podcast before each lesson or have the leader of the group listen before leading each lesson.

Why Use This in a Group?

People best learn when they are in conversations with others. The format of this resource is designed to generate discussion and interaction. Rather than having a large-group discussion, the participants will break into groups of two, three, or four during the lesson. Instead of having the discussion dominated by one or two people, this grouping allows everyone to get involved. To get the most out of this study, be sure to follow the instructions in the material.

Starters	Each lesson has a survey or set of questions for each participant to read and to answer. (Provide pencils or pens for them to use.)
Discussion Questions	First have them share with one or two other people, then with the whole group.
In the Know	An article based on the podcast will focus on the topic of the lesson.
Reflection on the Bible	The Scriptures are used to help the participants focus on the theme for the lesson.
Background	This gives a brief commentary on the passage to help participants understand the Scripture and apply it to their lives.
Questions for Discussion	Break into groups of three or four to discuss the Bible material.
Making It Personal	Questions designed to take it deeper are provided.
Close in Prayer	Close in Prayer.

Time: This lesson is designed for 60 minutes. Along side each section you will see a recommended time for that particular part of the study. To facilitate greater discussion, you may instruct the group to focus on one question in the discussion following the scripture and in "Making it Personal."

Be sure to print off a copy for each person to use!

Additional Resources:

How to host difficult discussions, lead by youth: <https://youthworkercollective.com/from-safe-spaces-to-brave-spaces-a-tool-to-process-with-youth/>

Processing Tragedy: <https://youthworkercollective.com/processing-tragedy-youth-worker-collective-podcast-episode-18/>

Dealing with Death: <https://youthworkercollective.com/dealing-with-death-in-your-community-youth-worker-collective-podcast-episode-15/>

Books:

[*Boomer Spirituality: Seven Values for the Second Half of Life*](#), Craig Kennet Miller, Discipleship Resources.

[*iKids: Parenting in the Digital Age*](#), Craig Kennet Miller, Discipleship Resources.

[*Building Spiritual Muscle*](#), Chris Wilterdink and Sabrina N. Short, Discipleship Resources.

[*Everyday Disciples: Covenant Discipleship with Youth*](#), Chris Wilterdink, Discipleship Resources.

Flipboard:

Link to Craig Miller's magazines on Flipboard with hundreds of articles collated from magazines, newspapers, and blog posts:

The Future Of...Podcast

http://flip.it/t6_OHx

Boomer Spirituality

<http://flip.it/oK5MvU>

iKids

<http://flip.it/bpWC3G>

The New Youth Boom 01//Voice



STARTERS (10 minutes)

What do you think is the biggest issue facing youth today?

- School safety
- Use of digital media
- Loss of trust in institutions like the government, church, and school
- Other

Discuss with one or two people, and then share with the whole group:

- If you are an adult, what do you think is the biggest difference in how you were raised compared to young people today?
 - If you are a young person, what is the most important thing adults need to know about your life?
-

In the Know (15 minutes)

After reading the information below, if your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss.

Youth Booms Past:

These are some of the cultural markers when a generation experienced their “youth boom.”

Boomer Youth Boom: 1964 to 1971:

The Beatles, Anti-war movement, Women’s rights, Civil rights, Sex, Drugs, & Rock’n’roll.

Generation X Youth Boom: 1986 to 1993:

Challenger Disaster, Fall of the Berlin Wall, MTV, Latch-Key Kids, Grunge, Hip Hop, Postmodern

Millennials Youth Boom: 2004 to 2011:

Birth of Facebook, 9/11, Perpetual wars, the Great Recession, American Idol, Pop Punk, R&B, Hipsters

Generation Z Youth Boom: 2018:

School shootings, Tech revolution/evolution, Streaming, Dreamers, A New Kind of Diversity

Youth Booms – A phenomenon that happens about every eighteen years, when the leading edge (the oldest members) of the youngest generation turns eighteen and are seniors in high school. A youth boom signals the beginning of a seven-year time period when a generation exerts its influence over a whole culture.

Share your thoughts about youth booms.

1. What do you think about the idea of youth booms?
2. Of the events listed above which had the most impact on you while you were still in High School?
3. Are there formative events or moments that you would add to the list for your generation?

Reflection on the Bible (20 minutes)

Ask a member to read aloud the following passages from 1 Samuel 3:1-11. Ask another person to read the Background.

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

1 Samuel 3:1-11

Background:

The books of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel in the Old Testament tells how Israel went from a group of loosely affiliated tribes who were at the mercy of their enemies to becoming the most powerful Kingdom in the Middle East led by King David. This dramatic change starts when a young teenager heard and responded to God's call. Samuel, who had been raised in the Temple at Shiloh, was an altar boy who served the Priest Eli, who could barely see. In the middle of the night, Samuel heard a voice and naturally thought Eli was calling him. After the third time, Eli knew something special was happening, God was calling Samuel. Heeding Eli's instructions, when Samuel heard the voice again, he responded to God and received God's call in his life. Because Samuel said yes to God, he found his voice and became a leader for the people of Israel.

Questions for Discussion:

If your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss the Scripture passage.

1. What was Eli's role, as an adult, to help Samuel hear the voice of God?
2. Why does God call us to follow?
3. How does responding to God by saying "yes" help us to find our voice?

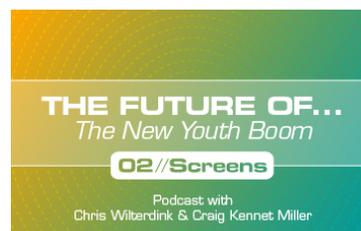
Making it Personal (10 minutes)

The school shooting in Parkland, Florida has energized high school students across the country who find themselves confronting life and death experiences in their schools and communities. One of the leaders of the movement, Emma Gonzalez, made a stirring speech to lawmakers about her experience of surviving the shooting in her school. She summed up her feelings towards law makers and gun advocates when she uttered this phrase, "We call BS." <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/17/us/florida-student-emma-gonzalez-speech/index.html>

1. Where do you see BS in the actions and inactions of people today?
2. What does your faith say about your need to stand up?
3. For what and for whom do you need to raise your voice?

Close in Prayer (5 minutes)

The New Youth Boom 02//Screens



STARTERS (10 minutes)

**How much time each day do you normally look at a screen?
(phone, computer, tablet, TV, etc.)**

- 0 to 5 hours
- 6 to 10 hours
- 11 to 15 hours
- 16 hours or more

Discuss with one or two people, and then share with the whole group:

- Do you remember a time when you didn't have screens to look at?
 - What do you think is the average amount per day a teenager looks at screens and uses digital media?
 - How does screen time enhance or inhibit the development of good relationships?
-

In the Know (15 minutes)

After reading the information below, if your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss.

85% of Americans use a smartphone to talk to friends and family
The average American checks their phone 47 times or more a day
80% look at their phone within a hour of waking and/or going to bed

250 minutes a day is the average amount of time a teenager is on their phone. This is worldwide.

223 minutes a day is the average amount of time a millennial is on their phone. This is worldwide.

Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/12403/smartphone-addiction>
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/736727/worldwide-teen-average-online-time-devices>

Today's children and teenagers live in two worlds. The real world where a parent reminds them to brush their teeth and do their homework and the digital world that connects them to an information-rich always-on culture that can both expand their possibilities or limit their perspectives.

While parents hope they still have an influence on their children, the number of screens is exploding with young people having access to digital media through multiple screens via tablets, smartphones, laptops, and smart TVs. Even schools have joined the digital revolution with many replacing textbooks with online sites. The question for all of us, both young and old alike is this, "How is digital media shaping who we are?"

Share your thoughts about how the use of screens affect you.

1. As the first generation to have grown up with smartphones, how does this make Generation Z different?
2. How do you think digital media helps young people make friends?
3. Have you experienced times when people have used digital media in ways that harmed you or a friend?
4. In your experience, how is technology affecting the relationships between parents and children?

Reflection on the Bible (20 minutes)

Ask a member to read aloud the following passage from Matthew 19:16-22. Ask another person to read the Background.

Then someone came to him and said, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘I have kept all these; what do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Matthew 19:16-22

Background:

The story of the young rich ruler is about what is most important. When Jesus talks about the commandments he is referring to the Ten Commandments. Jesus saw that the young man had followed all the commandments but one. Do not covet. Coveting is the desire to have more and more. It also has to do with being envious, wanting the things other people have. Jesus real question was this, “are you willing to give up what you love most in order to follow God?”

Questions for Discussion:

If your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss the Scripture passage.

1. Why do you think the young man was unable to follow Jesus’ request?
 2. Why does Jesus ask us to put God first?
 3. If you had to identify one prized possession in your life, what would it be?
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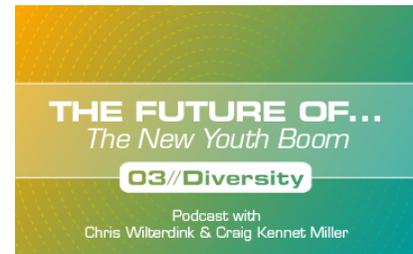
Making it Personal (10 minutes)

The one discovery that most resonated with me was this: We are in the midst of a great experiment. No one knows how the use of techgear and digital media is affecting the mental and social development of iKids...The only thing we know for sure is that as our society purchases techgear in record numbers and puts it in the hands of our youngest generation, we are faced with a slew of questions that won’t be answered until the iKids are in their twenties and thirties. *iKids*, Craig Kennet Miller, p. 13.

1. What do you think of the idea that we are in the midst of a “great experiment”?
2. What do recent reports from Facebook say to you about how your information is being used?
3. Do you feel positively or negatively about how digital media is shaping the future?

Close in Prayer (5 minutes)

The New Youth Boom 03//Diversity



STARTERS (10 minutes)

How does the diversity of the younger generation enhance the lives of all generations?

- It allows us to connect to people from all over the world.
- It helps people be more creative.
- It opens people to new ideas and experiences.
- Other

Discuss with one or two people, and then share with the whole group:

- How much racial ethnic diversity do you experience in everyday life?
 - What do you think people misunderstand about diversity?
-

In the Know (15 minutes)

After reading the information below, if your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss.

United Methodist Church in the United States by Race (2016)

White: 90% Black: 6% Hispanic/Latino: 1% Asian/PI: 1.7% Native American: 0.3% Other: 1%

Public School Enrollment By Race K-12 (2018)

White: 47.7% Black: 15.7% Hispanic/Latino: 27.1% Asian/PI: 5.5% Native American: 1.2% Other: 0.5%

<http://www.gcfa.org/services/data-services/statistical-resources/>
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_203.50.asp

While older generations think of diversity in terms of cultural awareness, Generation Z is creating a new emerging culture that reflects its diverse population, with over 50% of its generation being Black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander, and two or more races. But this isn't all, over 26% have at least one parent who was born outside the United States, making it a generation with a global perspective unlike any other American generation that has come before.

The challenge for the United Methodist Church is that its current membership in the United States does not reflect the demographics of Generation Z and thus the cultural perspectives of the young. While 90% of United Methodists in the United States are white, only 47% of public school students are from the same group. The youngest among us are growing up in a diverse youth culture that is vastly different from previous generations and as a result, they are creating a global, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, technologically sophisticated culture that is calling into question the values and beliefs of their parents and grandparents.

Share your thoughts about diversity.

1. Why do you think the United Methodist Church is low in racial ethnic diversity?
2. What does Generation Z have to teach older generations about this topic?
3. What are the benefits of diversity? What are the challenges?

Reflection on the Bible (20 minutes)

Ask a member to read aloud the following passage from Hebrews 11:8-16. Ask another person to read the Background.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, ‘as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.’

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:8-16

Background:

This passage from Hebrews tells of the faith of Abraham and Sarah, who left the security of their native land to follow God's call to become a great people. Even though they felt they were strangers in a new land, they were determined to find a better place, to create a new homeland. This passage reminds us that all of us, regardless of where we come from, are here only for a short time, that our spiritual homeland is found in heaven with God.

Questions for Discussion:

If your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss the Scripture passage.

1. **What is your homeland? (place you were born)**
 2. **Is this different then your parent's homeland? Or are you living in the same area as your parents?**
 3. **How does moving from your homeland (new city, school, church, job, etc.) change and challenge you?**
 4. **How can a church become a spiritual homeland for all who participate in its ministries?**
-

Making it Personal (10 minutes)

For Boomers (those born from 1946 to 1964), diversity is something that is kept at a comfortable distance. It's something that feels right, but is hard to live out. They address it by attending diversity workshops or having special days for particular racial groups. The goal is accepting other cultures, learning from the, and tolerating their differences. In contrast, for the youngest generations, diversity is a way of life. It is who they are. It is their culture...The future of all the generations will depend on boomers' ability and willingness to be part of a conversation about issues that are painful, hurtful, and filled with landmines. As the baton of leadership in the workplace, in government, in schools, and in the church is passed to the next generation, boomers will play a key role. Will they fight change with all their being? Will they mentor new leaders, even if they have a different heritage from themselves? Will they listen and learn from their younger colleagues? Or will they bit their tongues until they retire and be glad it is over?

Boomer Spirituality, Craig Kennet Miller, p. 151

1. How do you see these issues playing out in your work, school, or church?
2. How can we move from confrontation to conversation?

Close in Prayer (5 minutes)



STARTERS (10 minutes)

What are the things that bring out the most anxiety in your life today?

- The challenge of being in the right school so you or your child can be successful in the future?
- Concerns about violence in the streets and in schools?
- Wondering how you or your child will be able to make a living in the future?
- Other

Discuss with one or two people, and then share with the whole group:

- Why do you think anxiety and loneliness are two of the biggest issues for young people today?
- In what ways are parents having to change to meet the challenges of raising children today?

In the Know (15 minutes)

After reading the information below, if your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss.

How does family life affect faith development? Parenting seems more difficult than it used to be. Adulthood seems like a challenge. In many ways, being a child and an adolescent is tougher than it has ever been. The right school often feeds a culture of expectation where the future becomes the focus for this generation. Academic performance in the right school sets up a youth on a trajectory for professional success...except for when it doesn't. Gen Z is becoming conditioned to strive for excellence in return for compensation because of their success. Because the stakes are perceived as being so high, many parents do not want to let their children fail. The result is young adults who show up to college, or gain legal adulthood, and are still learning how to "adult."

Gen Z has experienced traumatic events and know both fear and anxiety. The church should be challenged to grow and develop faith in young people knowing that the church can create grace-filled, anxiety-relieving, loneliness-combatting community. It can be a place of retreat where the spirit is invited to rest, reconnect, and grow. Recently the Barna Institute released these findings:

- Generation Z is "the loneliest generation on record" – They are less likely to leave their homes, drink alcohol, get their driver's license, and go out on dates than generations before them at the same age.
- Teen suicide and depression rates are greater than ever.
- Social media usage and screen time mirror those of Millennials, but Gen Z has become sensitive to oversharing. In general, platforms that restrict who can see content are preferred. Facebook is old news, as is total public transparency in posting. Multiple accounts are often used to provide additional secrecy.
- Being spiritual, but not religious is rampant. Gen Z is often working from a "blank slate" with less of a religious foundation than previous generations.
- Empathy and a desire to not offend can sometimes be confused for a lack of conviction or indecision.

<https://www.revmelissacooper.com/blog/2018/2/7/barna-research-update-on-gen-z>

<http://www.whoisgenz.com/>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/generation-z-profile-2017-9#but-they-use-social-media-differently-than-the-millennials-who-popularized-it-2>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/11/magazine/why-are-more-american-teenagers-than-ever-suffering-from-severe-anxiety.html>

Sharing Thoughts:

1. What would you consider “traumatic” or “anxiety-causing” in your own youth?
2. How can a person be well connected on social media but still feel lonely?
3. Describe the difference between being spiritual and religious. Which one are you? Why might people be less willing to take on one of these labels?
4. What is the role of the church in combatting anxiety and fear?

Reflection on the Bible (20 minutes)

Ask a member to read aloud the following passage from Matthew 13:1-9. Ask another person to read the Background.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!’

Matthew 13:1-9

Background:

The passage continues explaining that different soils produce different results. Seeds on the path produce no crops. Seeds on the rocky group produce some crops. Seeds in the thorns produces crops with weeds. Seeds in the good soil produce plentiful crops. In this case the gardener spends little time preparing the soil, the focus is on spreading the seeds, which is the word of God. His point is to challenge the crowd as to what kind of soil they are. Are they open to the word?

Questions for Discussion:

If your group has more than seven members, divide into groups of four to discuss the Scripture passage.

1. How have you heard this parable explained in the past?
2. Consider God as the Gardener, and how inefficiently God plants things. God doesn’t seem to be worried about making the garden “just so.” Instead God seems to be concerned with generosity. Consider yourself as the gardener. What is difficult about that role for you?
3. How are you preparing the soil in your home, school, work, and faith community?

Making it Personal (10 minutes)

With faith comes action, and the two work together to form us as Christians. We commit to our ongoing spiritual growth, to become the people God intended each of us to be. By doing so, we turn what we believe into an outward display of our faith. By becoming more like Christ, we increase our love for God and our love for one another. The goodness of the Lord leads us to repentance. As youth practice new spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, God will begin to shine a light on behaviors or things that need to be left behind. As God weeds out the bad, youth need to learn about the difference between conviction and condemnation. God’s conviction is sweet and invites us to live in a way in which we can better recognize God’s goodness. This is very different than condemnation that we can experience. Condemnation comes from judgment. Condemnation leads to shame, disappointment, and feelings of not being good enough. Ensure that youth know that they are good enough and God loves them!

Building Spiritual Muscle, p.38

1. How are you a generous Gardener? What gifts do you share?
2. How have you experienced conviction or condemnation? How did those experiences form your own faith?
3. How are you creating a safe, healthy place for young people to explore their faith and develop ongoing relationships that foster spiritual growth?

Close in Prayer (5 minutes)