



# LEGACY

PARENTING WITH ETERNITY IN MIND

———— BREAKOUT SESSION ————

## GEN Z: A FIELD GUIDE TO THE AMERICAN TEENAGER

LED BY KREIG TODD

## **Overview**

---

- Born between 2000-2015
- Largest generation in the US (25%)
  - Millennials come in a 24%
- 1/3 of the World population
- They are predicted to be the last generation where Caucasians are the majority (55% in Gen Z, compared to 72% in Baby Boomers).

## **From Their Perspective**

---

- Google has always existed
- Email is formal; Texting is casual
- They've never licked a stamp
- Use 3-5 screens a day
  - Compared to 1-2 for Millennials
- Prefer "snackable" content
  - *Snackable*: content for social media. Easily digestible. Videos are often previewed for a few seconds, with the option to keep watching. It is a soundbite culture.

## **What do they think?**

---

- Open minded to
  - Religion
  - Sex
  - Lifestyles
- Feel empowered to change institutions
  - BLM pushes back on the Police.
  - Sexual/Moral revolution pushes back on religion and traditional morals/values.
- Resource: “The Briefing” is a daily podcast by Albert Mohler. It examines news and events from a Christian worldview. It is helpful as we seek to think well about all that is happening in our society and culture.

## **By the Stats**

---

- 78% believe in God
  - Not necessarily the Christian God
- 41% attend religious services weekly
  - Gen Z, generally, is apathetic toward religion
- 83% prefer face-to-face communication

## Regarding the Church

---

- Gen Z has a negative view of the Church; viewed as:
  - Anti-Homosexual
  - Judgmental
  - Hypocritical
  - Old fashioned
- When responding to Gen Z's view of the Church, we must:
  - Acknowledge the truth of their concerns.
  - Ask: "How accurate is this?"
  - Be firm, yet loving.
- A 2018 Barna Study showed that:
  - 29% (3/10) of Non-Christian teens see the problem of evil as a barrier to faith.
  - 28% (1/4) of Gen Z say that Science and the Bible are complementary.
  - 82% (4/5) Churchgoing Teens say that church is relevant to them.
  - 61% (3/5) of Christians who don't think church is important, "find God elsewhere."
  - 21% (1/5) teens choose a negative, judgmental image to represent a Christian Church.
  - Approx. 20% (1/5) churchgoers in this study identified as an Atheist, Agnostic, or None.

## Characteristics (Self-Described)

---

- Loyal (85%)
  - They are loyal-ish.
  - Exhibit strong feelings/concerns for those around them.
  - Align pledges of support with issues that affect many.
- Compassionate (73%)
  - 24/7 access to information, images, and videos about war, famine, disease, and other major world events.
  - Viewing these images naturally invoke a strong feeling of compassion in them. Think of the ASPCA ads.
- Thoughtful (80%)
  - *To move forward, we all should have well-educated minds so that we will be able to better understand our world, our problems, and each other. —Gen Z Student*
- Open-Minded (70%)
  - They view diversity as a good, desirable thing
  - *This generation is a very open-minded one and accepts uniqueness and the things that make others different.*  
— Gen Z Student
- Responsible (69%)
  - Rooted in the Post-9/11 Experience, and the 2008 Housing & Financial Crisis.
  - “If not you, then who?”

## **Continued: Characteristics (Self-Described)**

---

- Determined (74%)
  - *Generation Z consists of community-driven individuals who find creative ways to problem solve. They are extremely driven and intelligent. —Gen Z Student*

## **Role Models of Gen Z**

---

- Who made the cut?
  - Parents (69%)
  - Teachers (50%+)
  - Coaches (NS\*)
  - Peers (NS\*)
  - Fictional Characters (NS\*)
  
- Who didn't make the cut?
  - Bosses (NS\*)
  - Religious Leaders (8%)
  - Professional Athletes (4%)
  - Celebrities (5%)
  - Political Leaders (3%)

\*NS: No Stat Given

**MORAL  
THERAPEUTIC  
DEISM  
(MTD)**

**GEN Z'S RELIGION**

## **Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD)**

- People often talk about a faith and a worldview that *sounds* Christian, but is not.
- Essentially, MTD teaches that:
  - Central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person. This means being nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, responsible, [constantly] at work on self-improvement, taking care of one's health, and doing one's best to be successful.
  - One should seek to follow MTD in order to gain therapeutic benefits. It is not about repentance from sin, keeping the Sabbath, living as a servant of a sovereign divine, being faithful in prayer, building character, etc. Rather, it is about feeling good, happy, secure, and at peace.
  - There is a God who exists and created the world, but is not personally involved in one's affairs—especially those that one would prefer God to stay out of. He stays away at a safe distance.

## **How is MTD taught?**

MTD is taught, both explicitly and implicitly, through culture. Consider celebrities who periodically reference God, or even claim the Christian faith, but do not live as such (explicit). Consider also how some view the church: "If I go to church every Sunday, God is happy with me and all will be well" (implicit).



## **MTD Tenants**

---

1. A God exists who created and ordered the world; he watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught by the Bible and most world religions.
3. The central goal in life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

## **Our Students & MTD**

---

A survey of 20 students at Easthaven Baptist Church revealed their beliefs in relation to MTD. Using the above numbering for the tenants, the students were asked whether the statements were true or false. They responded in the following way:

- Statement 1: 19-True 1-False
- Statement 2: 18-True 2-False
- Statement 3: 7-True 13-False
- Statement 4: 4-True 16-False
- Statement 5: 6-True 14-False

## MTD v. The Bible

MTD	Biblical Truth	References
<p>A God exists who created and ordered the world; he watches over human life on earth.</p>	<p>While true that God exists and created and ordered the world, it is not true that he only watches over human life. He is actively involved in human life.</p>	<p>Gen. 1.1; Is. 9.6-7; Jer. 23.5-6; Mt. 3.2; Mk. 1.14-15; Lk. 4.43; Acts 1.6-7; Rom. 1.18-20, 5.17</p> <p>See also: Article II of the <i>Baptist Faith &amp; Message 2000</i></p>
<p>God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and most world religions.</p>	<p>The ultimate purpose of man “is to glorify God and enjoy him forever... as he obeys the commands of God” (<i>A Baptist Catechism</i>, questions 3 &amp; 5)</p>	<p>Ps. 16.11, 37.4, 73.25-26; Is. 43.7; Rom. 1.15, 15.18, 16.26; 1 Cor. 10.31; Gal. 5.6; 1 Thess. 1.3; 2 Thess. 2.11</p>
<p>The central goal in life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.</p>	<p>See previous truth.</p>	<p>See previous references.</p>

MTD	Biblical Truth	References
<p>God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem.</p>	<p>As the Creator God, God has unhindered access to our lives. We are to be a people who recognize our desperation for him, both in the good and bad times of life.</p>	<p>Gen. 1.1; Ps. 40.17; Jer. 32.38; Jh. 6.66-69, 14.6, 15.5</p>
<p>Good people go to heaven when they die.</p>	<p>"There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3.10) and because of sin, all are separated from God. Only by the grace of Holy God can man be brought back into relationship with him and experience the fullness of God.</p>	<p>Gen. 1.26-27, 2.5; Ps. 1; Is. 6.5; Acts 3.15; Rom. 1.19-32, 3.10-18, 3.23, 5.8, 6.23, 10.9-10, 13</p>

## Starting With Us All...

---

- Do I affirm any tenants of MTD, whether it be implicitly or explicitly?
  - What do/don't we say that would communicate we believe any tenant(s) of MTD? What do/don't we do that would indicate we believe any tenant(s) of MTD?
  - Example:
    - MTD—The central goal in life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
    - Parent or Leaders: *You need to get a good job so that you can be well-taken care of and not have to worry about anything.*
  
- Am I able to recognize, evaluate, and refute the moral teachings of culture? If not, what do I need to do to be better equipped?
  
- Am I willing to invest the time and energy into understanding culture so that I can better teach my child/student to live and walk in faithful obedience before a Holy God? If not, why not?
  
- Do I live out the example of my faith before my child/student on a regular (and consistent) basis? If not, what must I change?

**Parents are the  
primary influence in  
the lives of their  
children and students.**

## **The Shema: Deuteronomy 6.4-9**

<sup>4</sup>“Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup>Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. <sup>7</sup>Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup>Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. <sup>9</sup>Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.

The Shema urges parents to use the rhythms of life to disciple their children. Talk to your children and students as you go to and from the store, practice, school, ect. Use the everyday stuff of life to show your children and students Jesus.

## **Potential Game Plans**

- Make your faith a Sunday-Saturday thing.
  - Do family devotions (at least weekly).
  - Talk about your quiet time and encourage your child/student to have one, too. Then, ask him/her about the quiet time.
  
- Pray at dinner together (if you don't eat together as a family, then start doing so).

## **Continued: Potential Game Plans**

---

- Pray for your child/student in his/her presence...Do not pray on him/her.
- Ask questions about Sunday School Lessons and Sermons.
  - *What was your takeaway from the lesson/sermon today?*
  - Don't settle for the Sunday School answer and after they've answered, share your takeaway, too.
- Know that your Gen Z child/student has a great deal of pressure on him/her.
  - Recognize your child/student's stress and struggles; do not be dismissive.
  - Understand Social Media presents unique problems.
    - They receive both positive and negative affirmations.
    - You can set limits on Social media.
  - Constantly affirm your child/student and tell him/her that you love and support him/her.
- Speak God's truth into their lives (Ephesians 4.15).
  - Be intentional about having conversations—both the easy and hard ones (2 Corinthians 2.4).
  - Listen to their opinions and concerns (James 1.19).
  - Gently, yet firmly, correct any erring opinions/thoughts that do not align with God's Word (2 Corinthians 10.5).

**You teach what you know,  
but you reproduce what  
you are.**



**As the church, we are  
behind you 100%,  
though we are only with  
you 1% of the time.**

