

LEADING GEN Z:

A Guide for Christian Parents

Raising a member of Gen Z? This tool will help you better understand how your teenager looks at the world, experiences their faith, and thinks about their future. It will also give you some practical ideas on how to lead them well.

WHO IS GEN Z

Gen Z is the group of people born roughly between 1997–2012. They have grown up in the rise of smartphones, social media, and constant digital connection. They are deeply shaped by global events, especially the COVID-19 pandemic. They pay close attention to politics, disliking the constant division they see. They also understand that they live in a world that has a lot of economic instability.

Gen Z experiences high rates of anxiety, depression, and confusion about their identity. They feel a constant pressure to perform, and although they are extremely connected digitally, they are more isolated and lonelier than the generations before them.

These teens and young adults are longing for authenticity, belonging, and purpose. They have a desire to impact the world in a positive way, and they pay attention to social justice issues. They are spiritually curious but often skeptical of organizations and institutions.

WHAT GEN Z NEEDS FROM YOU

When it comes to what Gen Z needs from you, the parents, it obviously depends on your teen. Always be working to build a solid relationship and pay attention to the specifics of what your teen or young adult needs in any particular season.

Generally speaking, Gen Z needs a few things:

Gen Z needs real faith, not just religion. As mentioned, they crave authenticity, and they can see through anything that is fake or manufactured. As parents, we need to show them a real and active faith that makes a difference in daily life. Share about how you are growing in your faith, how you are struggling, and how you are relying on God for your strength. If they see you modeling an authentic faith, they will be drawn to explore one for themselves.

Gen Z needs grace-filled relationships. They need to be led with empathy as we interact with them and attempt to help them navigate the world. They need connection over any content or correction we give them. Wisdom and faith are most likely to be transferred in the context of trusting relationships, and this is especially true with Gen Z

Gen Z needs safe spaces to ask their questions. With all the non-stop information they receive, they have a lot of

questions. Their brains are often not yet able to process all the information that comes their way. Let them bring their doubts to the table without fear. God's not afraid of their questions, and neither should we be.

Gen Z needs to find their purpose in the world and have healthy ways to live out that purpose. Helps them find opportunities to experience their potential purpose and helps them process how they are wired. If they can engage their gifts and passions without feeling like they have to perform, they are more likely to land on a future path that will bring them fulfillment.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO SUPPORT THEIR FAITH

- Model what it looks like to have an authentic faith yourself. You don't have to be perfect, but you should be growing.
- Share about your faith journey, including your struggles. When you show vulnerability, they will feel like they can too.
- Invite them into spiritual practices; don't just enforce them. This generation has a bigger tendency to push back on authority, so give them a sense of agency and control over their own faith development.
- Discuss cultural issues through a Christ-centered lens. There are a lot of hot topics out there, and Gen Z wants to deal with them in a Godly manner. Help them process how to do that.
- Ask their opinions and listen. Fight the temptation to correct how they think and learn more about where they are coming from and how they got there.
- Regularly affirm who they are in Christ. Remind them of their true identity and help them walk away from defining themselves from a worldly perspective.

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR YOUR TEEN OR YOUNG ADULT

- "What are you feeling most stressed about right now?"
- "What's something about faith that confuses or challenges you?"
- "When do you feel closest to God—or furthest?"
- "What's something I can do to better support you right now?"
- "How do you see God working in your generation?"

Be patient. Listen more than you talk. Don't rush to correct, but lean into curiosity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR YOU (THE PARENT)

- Am I more focused on controlling behavior or building trust?
- When was the last time I shared something vulnerable about my own faith journey?
- How can I model grace and truth in my parenting this week?
- Do I create space for questions, or do I rush to answers?
- Am I encouraging growth or expecting perfection?

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

You don't have to have all the answers, and that's OK. No one does. Just learn to be present, prayerful, and anchored in Christ yourself. Remember that God is working in your Gen Z child's story, even in the messy or confusing parts. Keep showing up. Keep praying. And keep loving them with patience and grace.