



BEYOND

A TOOL FOR YOUTH INVESTORS

*A guide to investing in the youth of today
to ensure a better tomorrow.*

Beyond: Youth Investment

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Why did we develop Beyond: Youth Investment?

One day the youth we know will stop needing us. They will grow past us. They will step into their own lives, families, careers, and more.

They will move beyond us and our influence.

If we are doing our jobs properly, then we should be preparing each of them for these moments.

We should be equipping them for healthy, sustainable, and faith-filled lives beyond us.

How To Use this Program

Each week of this program is designed to discuss a specific topic related to engagement with Generation Z. These are based on common trends found within in this demographic, as well as common challenges faced by those in youth ministry. This could include youth pastors, volunteers and other leaders, teachers, parents or anyone else who is in frequent contact with members of Generation Z. We recommend you participate in this program with other individuals, members of your leadership team, spouses, friends, etc. This will allow greater opportunities for application in your own ministry context.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this program:

Generation Z is defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Generation Z will also be referred to as Gen Z, youth, and students.

Youth Investors refers to anyone who holds a position of authority or intentional influence in the life of any number of Generation Zers.

Ministry refers to any space where members of Gen Z are being intentionally invested in.

A final note before you begin

This program was designed to offer assistance for those looking to become better youth investors. It is not intended to solve specific challenges for individuals; rather it is meant to be a starting point for those who would like to learn more about Generation Z in the context of their ministry. It is a program in which participants will get out of it what they put in. This is not meant to be a deterrent from participating but an encouragement to engage fully. You will only find this program to be helpful if you are willing to reflect on your current style of leadership and incorporate new strategies. Take the time to engage with honesty and your leadership is sure to be better as a result of your participation in this program.

Week 1: Exploring the Key Questions

Key Idea -- Gen Z members are asking tough, raw, and real questions about life, faith, and spirituality. As we guide them on their journey, our job as youth investors begins by avoiding simple and blunt answers. Rather, we enter into a meaningful dialogue with Gen Z by listening well to help them feel understood.

Discuss: What are the questions you asked about life, faith, and spirituality when you were younger?

Discuss and record on flip-chart, poster board, or a white board: What types of questions do you think Generation Z is asking today?

Introduce *Beyond* Videos: The instructor in these videos, Victoria Sharpe, is speaking as a member of Generation Z and previous participant in youth and campus ministry. She has invested a significant amount of time in researching ministry to Generation Z under the direction of Momentum Campus Ministries.

Watch Week 1 Video: <https://youtu.be/4L2p3x6dNHg>

Discuss: What ways do you think Gen Z feels misunderstood?

Read these survey responses: Victoria surveyed members of her generation and these are a sample of the responses explaining how Gen Z feels misunderstood:

- "Some people think that if we go out with our friends we're just doing drugs and vaping and stuff like that when in reality my friends and I just have campfires and talk about our lives and world issues lol."
- "Gen Z's are known for our activism and mental health issues, but that's just the cause of a deeper issue. There [is] so much expected of us, at such a high stake. Sometimes I wonder if I'll get to my 40's before the world collapses due to war and climate change..."
- "We are not all lazy/entitled/always on our phones. We are creative and have passions outside of the internet. A majority of us have great ideas and work hard to make those goals reality."

Week 1: Exploring the Key Questions

Discuss: What preconceptions might you have about Generation Z that influences how you interact with and teach them?

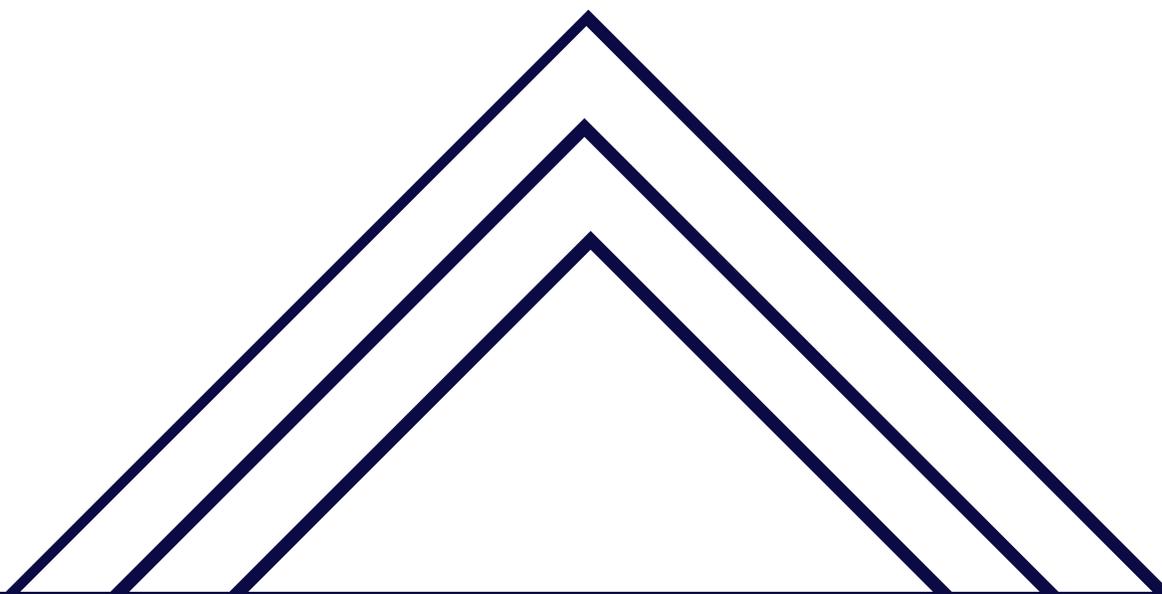
How can we help Generation Z navigate their questions about life and faith?

What is our role as youth investors?

Revisit the questions you wrote on the white board/flip chart at the beginning of the session.

Discuss: How might you dialogue with Gen Z about one of these questions? How can you avoid simple solutions or fast answers? How can you journey with them to answers rather than (unintentionally) shutting down the discovery process?

Challenge -- This week message, text, or meet up with a member of Generation Z (they can be nieces, nephews, grandkids, or students you know). Ask them "What are your biggest questions about Christianity, and how can people of other generations help you navigate these tough questions?" Fight the temptation to 'answer' their questions or preach at them. Just listen in a way they feel understood.



Week 2: Eliminating Fear-Driving Vocabulary

Key Idea -- Gen Z reports higher levels of stress, anxiety, and generalized fear than any other generation. In this session, we will work on understanding Gen Z's common fears and communicating with these youth in ways that minimize fear rather than escalate it.

Discuss: What are some of the fears common to individuals of your generation?

Read about the fears of Gen Z. We asked members of Gen Z about their biggest fears and here's how they responded:

- Getting a full time job and always having doubts if I'm on the right track
- Relationships (not finding community or friendships)
- Fears that I will not actually be able to accomplish the goals I have set out for myself
- I have a fear of the future, of what it brings
- Fears relating to purpose, having a positive impact on the world, falling behind my peers (in all areas)
- Financial concerns, planning future (work, relationships, etc.), spiritual challenge
- That I'm not good enough, that I don't know what I'm doing with my life, that my life won't turn out how I picture it
- Fear of leaving the 'Christian school bubble' when going to university next year and not having friends with all the same beliefs as me
- General anxiety, mostly about the future and friends and family

Notice how Gen Z's fears fall into some of the following categories:

Fear of . . .

- Missing out (a.k.a. FOMO) • Financial instability • Political uncertainty
- Future doom • Lack of purpose • One's own mental health
- Environmental catastrophe • Inability to cope

Week 2: Eliminating Fear-Driving Vocabulary

Discuss: What do you find most striking about this survey of Gen Z's fears?

Watch Week 2 Video: <https://youtu.be/LChCqNE0CK8>

Review Victoria's helpful advice about leading youth through anxiety. Remember these three A's:

1. **Acknowledge and affirm** our youth's feelings of fear. Piling on guilt for feeling afraid only pressurizes the anxiety.
2. **Admit** to your own similar feelings of fear to become a safe and trusted person.
3. **Avoid** fear-driving vocabulary that will further add to the anxiety.

Review: Read these examples of fear-driving vocabulary and their replacements. Where do you see some of these statements showing up in your communication with others?

GIVING ADVICE:

What are some examples of Fear-Driving Vocabulary and how can you replace them?

GET RID OF:

"Do you know what could happen if you _____??"

"You just don't understand the situation, you're too young to know how serious this is."

"What were you thinking?"

"You can't do that, it's way too risky."

"You have to do this instead, it's the obvious better choice."

TRY INSTEAD:

"I have had some experiences with this. I know mine is not the same as yours, but I'd be happy to share my thoughts, if you're interested."

"I'd love to hear what else you think about that. Are there any other options that you've considered?"

"What kinds of things were/are happening for you that led to making that decision?"

"Let's create a list of pros and cons together."

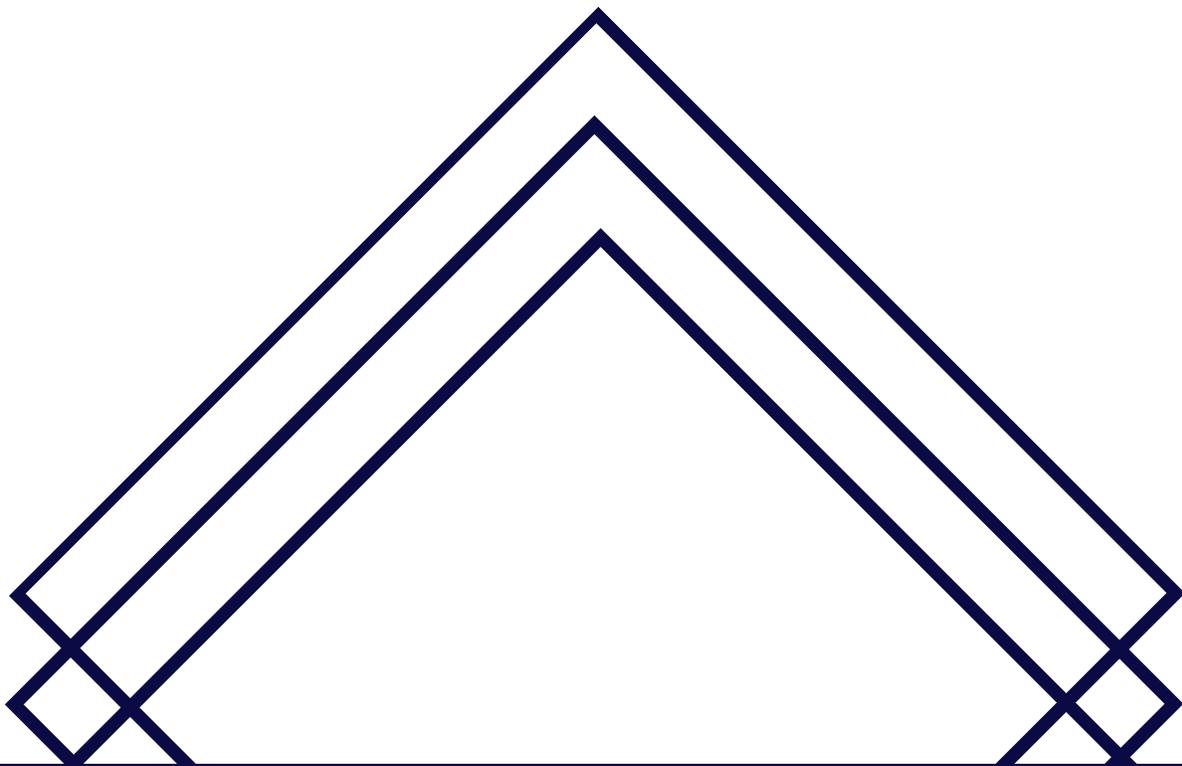
"What could I do to help you in this situation?"

Week 2: Eliminating Fear-Driving Vocabulary

Discuss: Looking again at the 3 A's for leading through anxiety, which one do you struggle with the most?

What makes fear-driven responses so easy to say for youth investors and parents?

Challenge -- This week sit down with at least one member of Gen Z and share openly with them (in an age-appropriate way) some of the fears you had as a teenager and young adult. What fears do you still struggle with now? What are some strategies you've taken to manage your worries? Invite them to share their fears with you if they are comfortable doing so.



Week 3: Exercising Spiritual Disciplines

Key Idea -- Spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and Scripture reading, are timeless ancient practices that every generation uses to create space in their life to develop a close relationship with God. However, due to Gen Z's technological reliance, we need to find innovative ways to technologize the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Discuss: How would you define spiritual disciplines?

How important have spiritual disciplines been in your own life? What do they look like?

Read this description of Spiritual Disciplines from Renovaré:

Jesus is the way to life — and not just life after death, but life here and now. When he said, “Follow me,” he meant it. In all he did and taught, Jesus conveyed that our spiritual life takes place in our physical reality as well as in the heart. If we believe what he said about the spiritual life, it only makes sense we should do what he did.

The practices of Jesus have been recognized for centuries as the core activities of the spiritual life. In the same way a runner is equipped to compete in a marathon by the discipline of physical training, so training through spiritual disciplines frees us to live each day with the “easy yoke” and “light burden” Jesus spoke of (Matt 11:30).

Disciplines do not earn us favor with God or measure spiritual success. They are exercises which equip us to live fully and freely in the present reality of God — and God works with us, giving us grace as we learn and grow.

C.f.: Renovaré Website, <https://renovare.org/about/ideas/spiritual-disciplines>

Discuss: What do you think makes spiritual disciplines more difficult for Gen Z?

Watch Week 3 Video: <https://youtu.be/iZBY1F8PWko>

Discuss: In your own words, what was Victoria trying to communicate in this video?

Week 3: Exercising Spiritual Disciplines

Read this description of tech-savvy vs. tech-dependent: Generational researcher Jason Dorsey distinguishes between the two terms: “tech-savvy” and “tech-dependent.”

“Tech-savvy” implies that members of Gen Z are masters of all technology. As Dorsey puts it: “digital wizards, able to intuitively navigate code, design motion graphics, and maintain server infrastructure.” While Gen Z might be more comfortable in these areas, they are not all masters of tech.

A more accurate description would be “tech-dependent” which suggests that Gen Z has learned to live their lives with the integration and assistance of technology in every way. Dependence does not necessarily imply an unhealthy addiction creating addicts out of children and teens. This relationship could be more similarly compared to today’s essential reliance on vehicles rather than a dependency on drugs.

Discuss: Understanding Gen Z’s deep reliance upon technology, how can we adjust or shift the way we teach spiritual disciplines?

In what ways can spiritual disciplines not be technologized?

Challenge -- This week you will:

1. Read through Renovaré’s list of spiritual disciplines and invite one member of Gen Z to experience the spiritual discipline alongside you. Come up with a plan together!
2. Read through the Technological Resources for Spiritual Disciplines (found in the further resources section at the end of this handbook) and explore one resource by utilizing it this week.

Week 4: Examining Your Worldview

Key Idea -- Gen Z is the most diverse generation to date. They are consistently exposed to new ideas and perspectives. The combination of diversity and an increased focus on tolerance in culture means Gen Z needs to learn how to respectfully agree and disagree with those in their world.

Consider this definition of a worldview:

A worldview is a set of lenses with which you see the world around you. It is a collection of habit-forming beliefs that help you understand your experiences. We all have one, but it can (and likely will!) shift over time. Worldviews include:

- our beliefs (what we think is true about the world)
- our values (what we see as most important)
- our attitudes (whether we like, approve, dislike or disapprove of something)
- our actions (how we spend our time/money, choose our friends, our routines etc.)

Being exposed to other worldviews makes us more aware of our own, granting us power and permission to be intentional about what we believe and how we live.

Discuss: How would you describe Gen Z's common worldview?

Watch Week 4 Video: <https://youtu.be/1GEGClB-3bg>

Discuss: How would you describe a Christian worldview?

How can a worldview approach encourage and assist Gen Z?

How can a worldview approach help our ministries in a culture of diversity?

Week 4: Examining Your Worldview

Consider these points from the video:

- We can unapologetically let Generation Z know that our goal as Christian parents, pastors, and youth investors is to see them form a worldview based on the Bible and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- We can show youth that there is a direct link between their worldview and their actions, and we can reflect our own worldviews by being intentional about our actions. We want to aim for consistency between what we believe and how we behave.
- We can give ourselves permission to correct our worldview over time, asking for forgiveness when our actions do not line up with our professed worldview.
- We need to admit our perspectives, acknowledge different ones around us, and accept other individuals. By helping our students to understand the worldview approach, we equip them to be sustainable, dedicated, wise followers of Jesus regardless of what perspectives they encounter in their lives.

Challenge: Take one or both of these “worldview tests” to begin thinking through your own worldview. Invite a member of Gen Z to take the test as well and have a conversation with them about your own worldview and their worldview.

1. Test created by Annick de Witt (Utrecht University) will place you in one of four contemporary worldview types: traditional, modern, postmodern or integrative. [Welcome to the Worldview Test!](#)
2. Impact 360 Ministries worldview test with a religious focus. [WHAT'S YOUR WORLDVIEW QUIZ - Impact 360 Institute](#)

Week 5: Engaging in Meaningful Relationships

Key Idea -- We will learn how to balance being extraordinary in our love for Gen Z while maintaining our mission to see them follow Jesus. We will hone communication skills which balance grace and truth.

Read John 1:14:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Discuss: How did Jesus embody grace and truth in his ministry?

What does Gen Z need more: grace or truth? (You have to pick one.)

Watch Week 5 Video: <https://youtu.be/1GEGClB-3bg>

Discuss: In your own words, what was the video communicating?

Do you tend to gravitate more towards truth or more towards grace in your interactions with Gen Z?

Can you think of someone (parent, teacher, pastor, etc.) who used grace and truth well with you when you were younger?

Review the following:

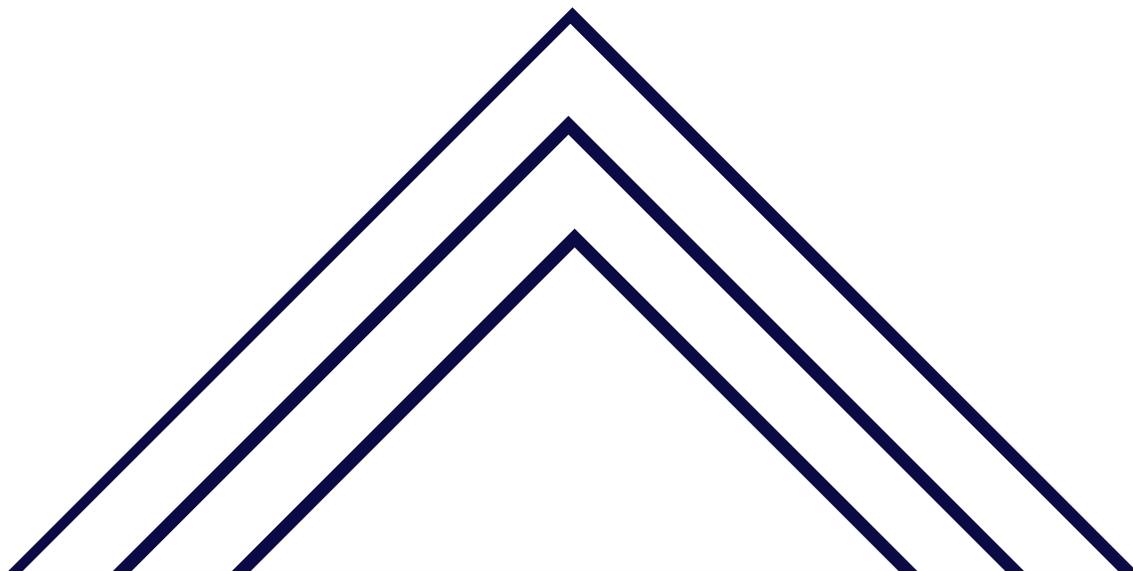
- **ASK:** Before doing anything ask the youth for their thoughts and opinions. Try to avoid questions with a condemning tone or ones that lead to obvious answers. Ask with the intention of hearing. Let them consider the topic. Give them an opportunity to have thoughts and the freedom to share them.

Week 5: Engaging in Meaningful Relationships

- **VALIDATE:** Listening can be hard when you take issue with the ideas being presented for any number of reasons. You don't need to agree blindly, but you should offer a validation for the thought process being shared in the first place. This contributes to the safety and freedom necessary for Gen Z to keep sharing.
- **OFFER:** Members of Gen Z may be more open to feedback and (constructive) criticism than you might think. They are aware of their need for growth and are desperately afraid of failing. They are all too aware of what is at stake. If you are a person that they trust they will likely be ready to hear your thoughts and perspectives, especially when they have had an opportunity to share their own. It is best to offer your perspectives for their consideration and engage in a discussion than provide a top-down answer to a question. Give them the benefit of the doubt as much as possible and share your ideas with grace and respect.

Discuss: What are examples of what you might say to ask, validate, and offer?

Challenge -- This week you will ask a member of Gen Z about their thoughts and opinions. Listen well to them and then validate their input. Look for an opportunity to offer them truth in a gentle way. Come prepared to share about your interaction next time (respecting their privacy).



Week 6: Expecting the Unexpected - Planning for Endurance

Key Idea -- More than specific lessons, Gen Z needs to learn strategies, tools, and skills that will help them through the rest of their lives. We will learn to help Gen Z plant a foundation for healthy, Christ-centred living that will continue when their leaders are no longer around.

Read Jesus' words in Matthew 7:24-27:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

Discuss: Think back to your own adolescence or young adult years. What helped you develop healthy, long lasting, sustainable faith in Jesus?

Watch Week 6 Video: <https://youtu.be/ldo0gWHEN44>

Think through and discuss the three qualities we might instill in Gen Z. In what ways do you see these qualities in your ministry, parenting or caring for Gen Z? In what ways do you want to grow in instilling these qualities into Gen Z?

1. **Discipline** -- Gen Z is experientially-led. Structures, boundaries and resilience help the younger generation remain steadfast when the emotions fade away.
2. **Critical Thinking** -- Another way of thinking of biblical wisdom. Rather than downloading biblical data into Gen Z, we help them think biblically about the world around them.
3. **Kindness** -- In a combative virtual world, this fruit of the Spirit goes a long way. It teaches people to reflect the truth of God with the heart of God.

Week 6: Expecting the Unexpected - Planning for Endurance

Review and discuss the word cloud below. We asked members of Gen Z: If you could develop three qualities from youth groups and your faith leaders, what would they be? The bigger the word in the word cloud, the more often it was included in an answer in the survey. What stands out to you in the word cloud? Imagine this word cloud as Gen Z's plea. These are the Christian tools which they require in their walk with the Lord. How will you respond?

Take a silent moment of reflection and journaling. Answer the questions on the next page and then take time sharing with your group. Have a final prayer time with your group.

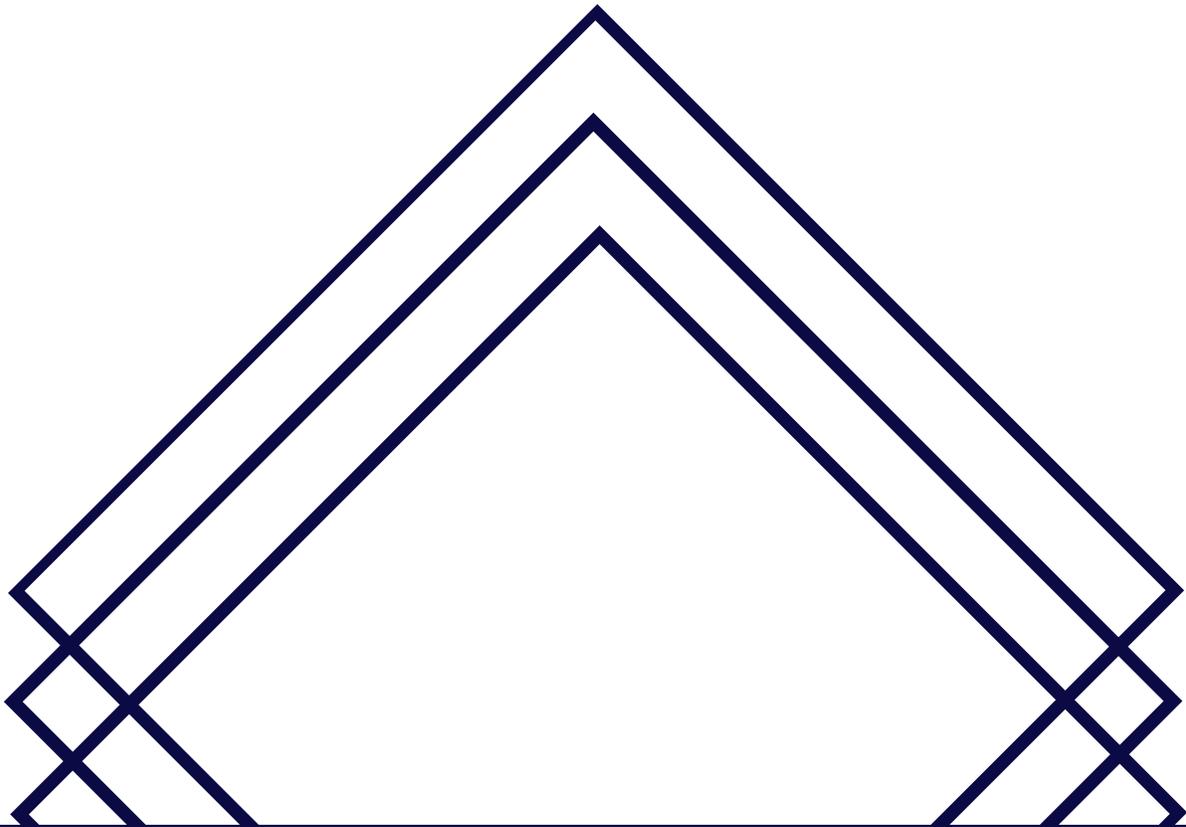


Week 6: Expecting the Unexpected - Planning for Endurance

Final Reflection Questions

1. What is your biggest takeaway from this course?
2. Who are three members of Generation Z you are mentoring, parenting or investing in? How would you like to take this discipleship to the next level and what does that look like? (Be careful not to share confidential information with your group.)
3. What is your biggest prayer for Generation Z? How will you pray this frequently?

Take some time to pray for these considerations at the end of the session.



Further Resources

These links will direct you to further resources on Generation Z. All titles are clickable and will take you to a downloadable PDF document containing further resources. An expanded version of these resources is also available in a downloadable PDF on the Momentum Campus Ministries website alongside the facilitator and participant guides.

- [Books, podcasts, and websites for further learning about Generation Z](#)
- [Technological resources for spiritual disciplines with Generation Z](#)
- [Chart depicting the greatest challenges faced by Generation Z according to our survey](#)
- [Axis: Christian organization researching Gen Z trends and providing free or purchased resources for “difficult discussions” with teenagers](#)