

You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . And Rethinking Faith



Synopsis

Is the Church Losing the Next Generation? More than half of all Christian teens and twentysomethings leave active involvement in church. Based on research conducted by the Barna Group, *You Lost Me* exposes ways the Christian community has failed to equip young adults to live "in but not of" the world--to follow Christ in the midst of profound cultural change. This wide-ranging study debunks persistent myths about young dropouts and examines the likely consequences for young adults and for the church if we maintain the status quo. The faith journeys of the next generation are a challenge to the established church, but they can also be a source of hope for the community of faith. Kinnaman, with the help of contributors from across the Christian spectrum, offers ideas for pastors, youth leaders, parents, and educators to pass on a vibrant, lasting faith, and ideas for young adults to find themselves in wholehearted pursuit of Christ.

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Customer Reviews

"The ages eighteen to twenty-nine are the black hole of church attendance," writes David Kinnaman. Most church leaders and Christian parents know this. And most believe that the "next generation" will return to church once they've married and had kids. There's some truth to this belief. Church involvement among Boomers and Busters followed predictable patterns, with participation in childhood and adulthood sandwiching non-participation in young adulthood. And yet, this generation--referred to as Mosaics--may very well be different than preceding generations. The goal of *You Lost Me* is to "define the dropout problem [of Mosaics] and interpret its urgency." No church

leader or Christian parent can read Kinnaman's research and remain complacent about the absence of Mosaics. It is an urgent problem requiring thoughtful solutions. The culture in which Mosaics have grown up is "discontinuously different" from the culture of preceding generations. "The next generation is living in a new technological, social, and spirituality reality," Kinnaman argues; "this reality can be summed up in three words: access, alienation, and authority." Access refers to "the changing means and methods of communicating and finding information." Alienation refers to the "very high levels of isolation from family, community, and institutions" experienced by Mosaics. And authority refers to "[t]he changing spiritual narrative" told by the culture, leaving Mosaics asking "new questions about what to believe and why." Mosaics have more information, fewer role models, and more questions about what constitutes truth than preceding generations. These social realities "have deeply affected the cognitive and emotional process of 'encoding' faith" in the next generation.

Since we Americans have a "can do" attitude, we tend to think every problem has a solution. Obviously not. After all, we all die, eventually. Some things are inevitable, and though it gives me no pleasure to say this, I think it's certain: in our increasingly secular and hedonistic culture, Christianity is going to decline - numerically, anyway. The mainline (liberal) churches have been declining for 60 years because they conform so closely to the secular culture that most people don't think it's worth getting up on Sunday morning. But the evangelical churches are affected too, and though numerically they seem healthy enough at the present, the fact is that most people, especially the under-30s, have only a superficial knowledge of the Bible and Christian belief. There are plenty of self-styled evangelicals who, according to surveys, don't believe in hell, think Christianity is only one way to heaven, that it is wrong to try to convert others, that sex is a purely private matter that is of no concern to God or the church. In other words, lots of people in the churches are not, strictly speaking, Christians. They've learned the mantras - inclusive, tolerance, nonjudgmental, etc - which means they look at traditional Christianity with a jaundiced eye. What can be done about the people who drop out of a church they consider "repressive" or "exclusive"? In my opinion, not much - because the church as Jesus and the apostles designed it is inevitably going to get called "repressive" and "exclusive" and even worse things in this culture. There's no getting around it. I read *You Lost Me* hoping the author might have some suggestions for how to hold onto the churches' young people. "We need new architects to design interconnected approaches to faith transference. . . .

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