

Making the Next Generation a Priority



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You've probably heard that 59 percent of young Christians temporarily or permanently disconnect from the church after age 15. You've probably heard that suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth ages 10–24. You've probably heard that a quarter of teenagers have at least one major episode of depression in high school.

These numbers aren't just statistics; they're my peers. As part of this next generation, I need to ask, are you praying for this generation, knowing we're the ones to inherit the Church in the coming decades?

Unprecedented Opportunity

What an opportunity we have before us! Young people aren't a burden to be borne; they're a generation to be activated. Consider the ways God has used young people in the past to shape the direction of nations.

At the age of 26, George Whitefield expanded the impact of the First Great Awakening in America. Before Charles Spurgeon was

20, he had preached more than 600 sermons. Evan Roberts, the central figure of the Welsh Revival, was only 26 when God used him to carry the message of revival to an entire nation.

God is passionate about using young people to further His Kingdom on earth. As the Church, we need to learn how to pray for the next generation and how to mobilize prayer for them. The need and the opportunity are set before us; it's time for us to pray.

Praying for More

God wants so much for my generation. Nick Hall, in his book *Reset: Jesus Changes Everything* (pulsemovement.com), suggests eight areas in which the next generation needs prayer. I've adapted them here:

- **Faith.** For those who have walked away from Jesus, pray for their faith to be restored and strengthened. For those who are following Him, pray for their faith to grow even more.
- **Plans.** The decisions young people make will affect them for the rest of their lives. Pray for God to direct their plans away from evil and toward good.
- **Self-Image.** Many young people struggle with feelings of worthlessness. Pray for the love of God to surround and fill those struggling with self-image.
- **Relationships.** Broken relationships plague this generation. Pray for restoration of relationships with family, friends, and God.
- **Purity.** Pray for a restoration and renewed vision of purity for this generation. Pray for any shame to be removed by the love of Jesus.
- **Habits.** Destructive habits further drive my generation from God. Pray not only for the removal of old habits but for the establishment of new, God-honoring

practices.

- **Affections.** At the root of our habits are affections. Pray for God to awaken a deep longing only He can fill in this generation, and pray for Him to satisfy our affections in Jesus.
- **Generation.** Finally, pray this generation will experience awakening and revival from coast to coast. Jesus longs for my generation not only to know Him but to spread His gospel around the world.

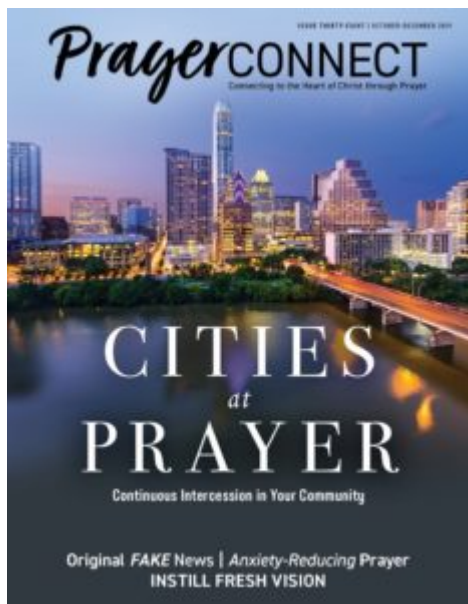
Mobilizing Next-Generation Prayer

Knowing the *need* to pray for the next generation and *how* to pray for us, what are some ways to incorporate this into what you're already doing as prayer leaders? Here are a few simple suggestions:

1. **Pray for the next generation regularly.** Incorporate prayer for the next generation into your prayer group. Maybe this means a little each time, or maybe it means taking one night to focus solely on the next generation. I encourage you to pray monthly for the needs of young people.
2. **Create intergenerational relationships in your church.** Meet and get to know a young person or couple at your church. Learn about them. Invite them to lunch. Ask how you can pray for them, and begin to build these "prayer bridges" in relationship between generations.
3. **Partner in prayer.** Invite young people to join you in prayer. Consider ways you can adapt your group to accommodate their needs. Commit yourself to sharing the baton of prayer with the next generation.

The choice before us is clear. We can either ignore the cries of a generation, or we can do the hard work of praying for them and engaging with them. The brokenness the enemy means for evil can be turned around and used by God for good.

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