



*By*

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Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World (Baker Books, 2017) by James Emery White is about our children and grandchildren, who White says, were born between 1995-2010. Based on those birth years members of Gen Z are already filling our schools and universities and beginning their careers. They will be the parents of a new generation and will lead business, education and government in the near future.

There are other researchers who date Gen Z a bit differently than White. Some date the births of this new generation from 1996 -2012 or even to the present (2017). However, for the purpose of this book review I will use White's dating.

White wrote that "the rise of the nones and the coming force of Generation Z will inevitably challenge every church to rethink its strategy in light of a cultural landscape that has shifted seismically. If the heart of the Christian mission is to evangelize and transform culture through the centrality of the church, then understanding that culture is paramount." (White, James Emery. Meet Generation Z: Understanding and

Reaching the New Post-Christian World (p. 12). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.” Ecclesiastes 1:4 KJV

## Part 1: The New Reality

White makes some strong arguments in his book about coming to a “pivotal time” in our culture. He quoted political strategist Doug Sosnik as saying that the United States is “going through the most significant period of change since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.’ Years from now, Sosnik argues, ‘we are going to look back at this period of time and see it as a ‘hinge’ moment . . . a connection point that ties two historical periods in time, one before and one afterwards.” (p. 18) White believes that members of Generation Z will be an important part of that change.

“So who is Generation Z? They are growing up in a post-9/11 world. They are experiencing radical changes in technology and understandings of family, sexuality, and gender. They live in multigenerational households, and the fastest-growing demographic within their age group is multiracial. But let’s unpack them a bit more slowly.” (p. 39)

White then shared what he called “five defining characteristics of Generation Z.”

- 1 Recession Marked
- 2 Wi-Fi Enabled
- 3 Multiracial
- 4 Sexually Fluid
- 5 Post-Christian

“The most defining characteristic of Generation Z is that it is arguably the first generation in the West (certainly in the United States) that will have been raised in a post-Christian context. As a result, it is the first post-Christian generation.”  
(p. 49)

White went into depth in Chapter 3 about how members of Generation Z are the children of Generation X – “a generation that was warned repeatedly not to become ‘helicopter’ parents (i.e., always hovering over their children). As a result, Generation Z has been given more space and more independence than any other generation. This means that Generation Z is very self-directed.” (p. 51)

White wrote that if Millennials were raised by overprotective parents, then Gen Z is being raised by “underprotective” parents.

“Reflect on this in relation to Generation Z. In other words, consider the effect of an underprotective family environment in a day of sexting and Facebook, bullying in schools and internet porn, cutting and hooking up. When children need to be protected as never before, they are met with a parenting culture that is less protective than at any other time in recent history.” (p. 53)

One of the most powerful statements in White’s book are these –

“One might be tempted to say the same of our own day, particularly in relation to how we are shaping Generation Z. There are many ways to characterize them, but in essence, two headlines must not be missed. First, they are lost. They are not simply living in and being shaped by a post-Christian cultural context. They do not even have a memory

of the gospel. The degree of spiritual illiteracy is simply stunning.” (p. 64)

Think about that. The young people who are part of Generation Z do not even have a memory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It’s one thing to state the problem – it’s another to offer a solution.



## Part 2: A New Approach

White's "new approach" includes –

- The Countercultural Church
- Finding Our Voice
- Rethinking Evangelism
- Apologetics for a New Generation
- Decisions

Here are several quotes from White's book that highlight this new approach:

"Those two ideas—church and counterculture—lie at the heart of reaching a post-Christian generation. The challenge is, first, to understand the ideas and, second, to engage them." (p. 69)

"Our voice, as Christians, is clearly a minority report in the modern world." (p. 89)

“Biblically, there are three primary voices speaking into culture: the prophetic, the evangelistic, and the heretical.”  
(p. 92)

“At this point in the journey, I am hopeful it is abundantly clear that approaches to evangelism used in the past must be ruthlessly reevaluated in light of the nature of a post-Christian culture and the generation it has spawned.” (p. 107)

“The church must rethink evangelism—no longer can we be simply event driven. The church must view evangelism as both a process and an event.” (p. 109)

“It’s simply a cultural reality that people in a post-Christian world are genuinely incredulous that anyone would think like . . . well, a Christian—or at least, what it means in their minds to think like a Christian. So of course they are going to ask: ‘What is up with not wanting two people who love each other to get married?’ ‘What is up with thinking sex is so bad?’ ‘What is up with a loving God sending someone like Gandhi to hell?’ I’m sure you can think of any number

of questions. Answering the ‘What is up with’ questions is what lies at the heart of modern-day apologetics, the pre-evangelism so missing in churches.” (p. 130)

## Endorsements

“In *Meet Generation Z* James Emery White shares helpful insights into the generation that follows the Millennial generation in a clear, practical way. Pastors and church leaders seeking to better understand the world of their youth ought to read this text.” Ed Stetzer, Billy Graham Distinguished Chair, Wheaton College

“*Meet Generation Z* is much more than just another popular sociological interpretation of our current cultural moment, as important as such an analysis, in and of itself, may be. This new and outstanding work by James Emery White, characteristic of the excellence we have come to expect from his prolific publications, provides not only wise and thoughtful cultural interpretation but also important theological insight regarding the trends, ideas, and movements that have shaped our twenty-first-century world. Christian leaders who are not only serious about church and ministry but who also want to understand and engage culture in order to connect this post-Christian world

with the claims of the gospel will find White's work to be essential reading. Highly recommended!" David S. Dockery, president, Trinity International University/Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"It's clear that Jim has a white-hot passion for Generation Z to know God. His research, practical applications, and desire for all church leaders to get this right will inspire and challenge you." Sue Miller, children's ministry champion; Orange Conference staff; coauthor of *Not Normal: 7 Quirks of Incredible Volunteers*

# An Investment

I hope we have whetted your appetite to read this book for yourself. It will be a great investment in the lives of Christian parents and children you know and their pastors and teachers. Every generation brings new challenges and opportunities for ministry.

White, James Emery, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World*, Baker Publishing Group, 2017

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