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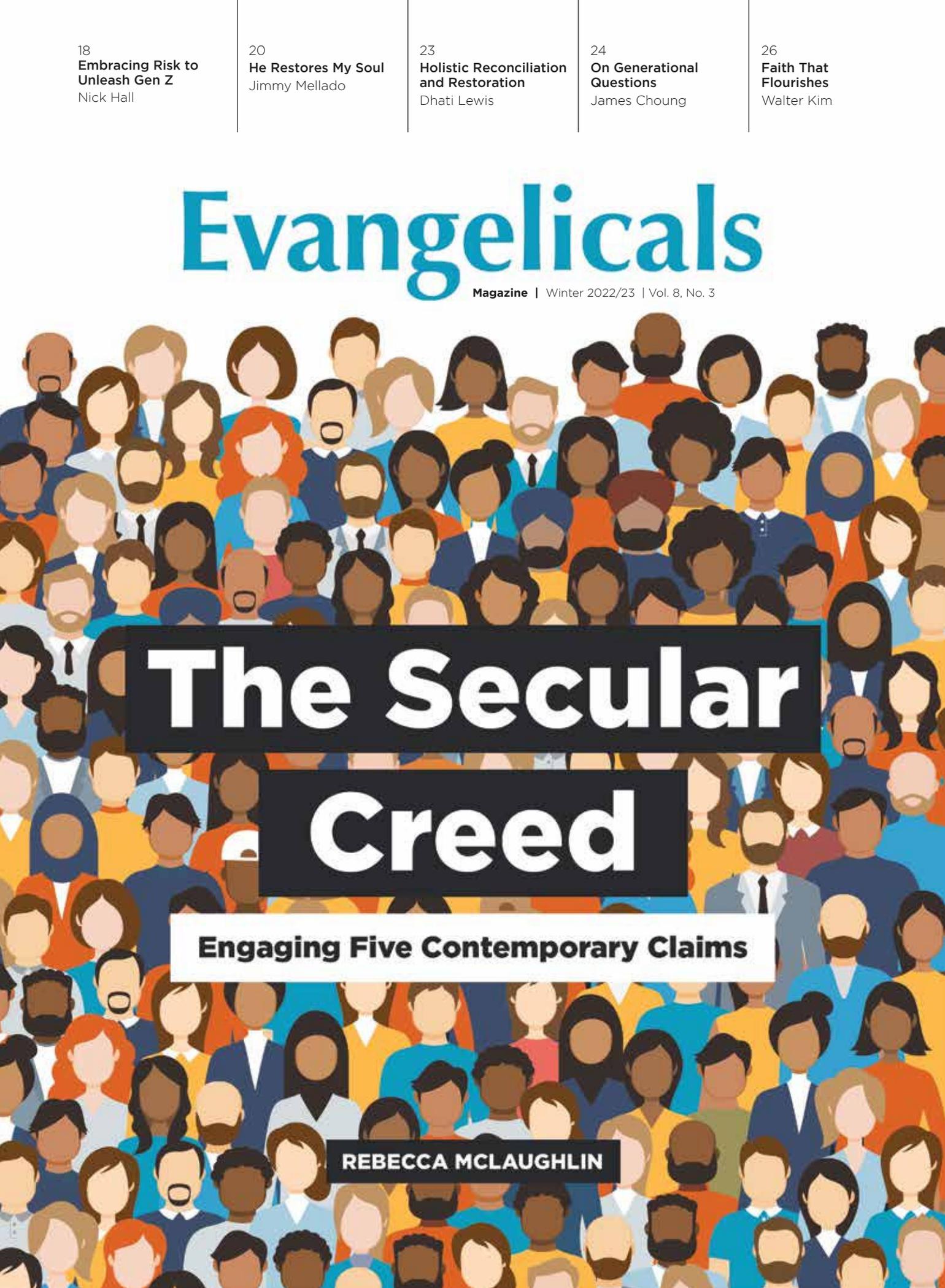
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Evangelicals

Magazine | Winter 2022/23 | Vol. 8, No. 3



The Secular Creed

Engaging Five Contemporary Claims

REBECCA MCLAUGHLIN



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my disciples, if you love one another.” ^{NIV}

John 13:35

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JUSTICE THAT RESTORES



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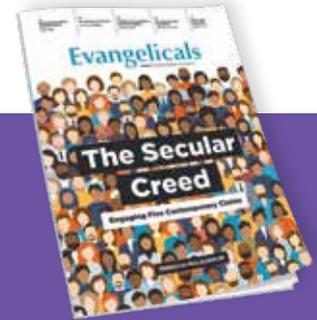
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Evangelicals

The Magazine of the National Association of Evangelicals



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With Support From **He Gets Us**



We are in the midst of a cultural and moral convulsion. There is a competition for truth and a confusion around identity. As Rebecca McLaughlin notes, there is an entire secular creed that includes a list of statements that we must support if we do not want to be labeled as part of an oppressive system standing against equality. The next generation is looking for clarity on these issues. They are also looking to see who listens to them and who values them.

At the same time, pastors and leaders are weary. It has been a difficult season. Over the past few years, many have experienced trials, upheavals in work and home, and constant demands on time and energy. The challenges and opportunities of today requires leaders whose souls are being refreshed by God (see Jimmy Mellado’s article on Page 20), leaders who are willing to model and facilitate difficult conversations, and leaders who are ready to risk in order to unleash the next generation for Christ.

This magazine issue contains some of the conversations that were started at Flourish, a new conference of the National Association of Evangelicals, held in October in Nashville. It offers frameworks for engaging some of the cultural tensions we experience with an eye toward the next generation. We need to create an environment where there is biblical clarity

around difficult issues, where people (including leaders) can find welcome and rest, and where all God’s people flourish.

In his article, Walter Kim reminds us of Ezekiel’s vision of water flowing from the temple. It starts as a modest trickle and grows into a mighty river that brings all kinds of flourishing — including trees whose leaves are for healing and fruits are a never-failing source of food (Ezekiel 47:6–12). With humble and repentant confidence, we pray that God might give us insight to speak clearly into the questions people have, that we may be a people who flourish and cause others to flourish, and that we may bear fruit and produce leaves for the healing of those around us. **E**

Door to Glory

“Look around you. Look at the creation, look at the trees, look at the sky, look at these kinds of verdant hills. They don't have a sign up that says, 'Praise the Lord' or 'I belong to Jesus.' They just give glory to Jesus.”

Bono, lead vocalist of U2, explaining how his songs are “Christian” in *Christianity Today*

“The pattern for many leaders is to be exalted in life and forgotten after death. The pattern for all who serve God — famous or obscure, respected or ignored — is that death is the door to glory.”

Justin Welby, archbishop of Canterbury, at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth

Steve Douglass will be remembered for many things, among them making the most of every opportunity to tell someone about Jesus, his brilliant mind and humility, but also his partnership with his wife of 47 years, Judy. He modeled a consistent walk with God as a servant-leader encourager who prayed daily for me and hundreds of others. Even though we all rejoice that Steve is with Jesus, this is a tremendous loss for the family and Campus Crusade for Christ/Cru. A great missionary statesman has gone home.”

Steve Sellers, president of Cru, on the death of Steve Douglass, former Cru president and NAE board member



Living in a Pluralistic Nation

My view — plainly expressed to all of our people, including in the context of abortion-related violence — is that I don't care what side of the issue you're on, you don't get to engage in violence, and we are equal-opportunity when it comes to that.... Since the *Dobbs* decision, probably in the neighborhood of 70 percent of our abortion-related violence cases or threats cases are cases of violence or threats against ... pro-life organizations.”

Christopher Wray, director of Federal Bureau of Investigation, on the increased violence on pro-life organizations in a hearing before the Senate Homeland Security Committee

It is simply incorrect and unfairly pejorative to label biblical views of marriage as 'homophobic.' Nine justices of the Supreme Court in the *Obergefell* case spoke approvingly of this difference of opinion in stating that, 'The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered.'”

Amanda Staggborg, chief communications officer of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, in a letter to the editor of *Inside Higher Ed*



“ ‘Revival has broken out at Asbury University. The students haven’t stopped meeting for two days!!’ I received this text message from a friend who has heard me use the term ‘revival.’ I don’t use the term lightly, but what God seems to be doing is unprecedented.

We saw over 2,000 students repent of sin and turn to Jesus last week through events at the University of Georgia, Minnesota, Texas Tech, Wisconsin, Iowa State, and North Dakota State. I’ve been doing evangelism for 20 years. I was trained by and traveled with both Billy Graham and Luis Palau. These are the highest percentage of responses to the healing, redeeming message of Jesus that I’ve ever seen.

... I can’t say for certain if this is revival. What I can say with full confidence is that God is inviting us to turn to him now ... and he’s no more present in Kentucky than he is wherever you are reading this. He’s moving now. Jesus is calling now. His love is here.”

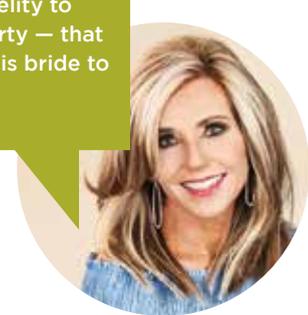
Nick Hall, founder and chief evangelist for PULSE, in an opinion article at Fox News



Photo credit: Asbury University

Christian nationalism isn’t the way ahead for Jesus followers. Christian faithfulness is. It’s fidelity to Christ — not fidelity to notions of American Christianity or to any political party — that will bring light into this present darkness. The Church is bride to no one but Christ.

Beth Moore @BethMooreLPM



Remembering and giving thanks for all God has done is not just for holidays — it’s a practice we can do anytime, anywhere. Giving thanks boosts our faith and reminds us that God has been with us before, is still with us today, and will be with us going forward.

Christine Caine @ChristineCaine



Many mock prayer as talking to “a sky fairy” but for those of us who face death or other foes, prayer is a feast of love, joy and power given by God “in the presence of mine enemies.” Thank you, Lord, for prayer.

Timothy Keller @timkellernyc



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EVANGELICAL CALENDAR

Please join the evangelical community at these events hosted by the NAE and its members. **Your prayers are welcome too.**

Many of these events include downloadable resources for promotion and participation.

MARCH 28-30, 2023

Outcomes Conference

Chicago, IL

Christian Leadership Alliance
[OutcomesConference.org](https://www.outcomesconference.org)

The Outcomes Conference is an experience for nonprofit Christian professionals who want to increase leadership capacity and build strength to become God's love in action.



APRIL 26-28, 2023

Orange Conference

Atlanta, GA

Orange
[Conference.ThinkOrange.com](https://www.conference.thinkorange.com)

This family ministries team conference will consider how Christians and leaders can lean into their potential to show a generation what it looks like to be like Jesus.



MAY 29-JUNE 2, 2023

Alliance Council 2023

Spokane, WA

Christian & Missionary Alliance
[CMAlliance.org/events](https://www.CMAlliance.org/events)

The theme for this year's annual gathering of leaders in The Alliance is "expectant." They are expectant of how the Lord will lead them as they continue to have hard conversations, minister to congregations and leaders, and seek the Father in their daily lives.



MAY 31-JUNE 3, 2023

Ever After

Orlando, FL

Citygate Network
[CitygateNetwork.org](https://www.CitygateNetwork.org)

This annual convention brings together leaders of faith-based crisis shelters and life-transformation centers across North America. Together they will receive education, training and resources as they seek to apply biblical truth to the practical challenges of ministry.

APRIL 12-14, 2023

EPA Christian Media Convention

Lancaster, PA

Evangelical Press Association
[EPAconvention.com](https://www.EPAconvention.com)

The annual Evangelical Press Association convention provides an opportunity for Christian communicators to explore new ideas and learn from one another through seminars, workshops, discussions and presentation.



JUNE 22-25, 2023

Jesus Is the Subject

Tampa, FL

Church of God Ministries
[JesusIsTheSubject.org/convention-2023](https://www.JesusIsTheSubject.org/convention-2023)

Church of God Ministries will host its first-ever global gathering as a new international partnership, drawing together 100 Church of God assemblies at work in 23 time zones. NAE President Walter Kim will be one of several inspirational plenary sessions.



✓ New Research Shows Evangelicals Want to Welcome Immigrants

A recent study by Lifeway Research shows that there is increasing consensus among evangelicals on immigration. The study, sponsored by the Evangelical Immigration Table and World Relief, finds that a large majority of evangelicals want a balanced approach to immigration. For instance, four out of five say legal immigration is helpful to the United States, and two out of three believe the country should at least maintain the current number of legal immigrants approved in a year.

Lifeway Research worked with World Relief to conduct a similar study back in 2015. In almost every category, evangelicals have moved closer to views that protect and welcome immigrants, including 70 percent who say the United States has a moral responsibility to accept refugees and 78 percent who support a path

to citizenship for immigrants who are currently in the country illegally. And 80 percent back bipartisan immigration reform that strengthens border security, establishes a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children, and provides a reasonable number of screened, legally admitted farmworkers.



Discover NAE resources on immigration at [NAE.org/immigration](https://www.nae.org/immigration).

Watch our videos series, "I Am Your Immigrant Neighbor," at [NAE.org/immigrantneighbor](https://www.nae.org/immigrantneighbor).

✓ Campaign Aimed at Reintroducing People to Jesus

While much has been said about Jesus, much is still misunderstood. In an effort to introduce and reintroduce people to Jesus and to start new conversations about who he is, a Christian foundation launched a \$100 million campaign called "He Gets Us." To date, over 100 million people have been exposed to the billboard and television ads.

"He Gets Us" is not affiliated with a church or denomination. The ads show how Jesus experienced challenges and emotions, and they bring awareness to Jesus as he's depicted in the Bible — full of radical forgiveness, compassion and love. The campaign's website answers questions, discusses a variety of topics, offers Bible reading plans, and connects people to local churches.

To learn how your denomination or church can be involved, visit [HeGetsUsPartners.com](https://www.HeGetsUsPartners.com).

✓ New Books from NAE Staff

Congratulations to Steve West, executive director of the Evangelical Chaplains Commission, and Mekdes Haddis, director of the NAE's Racial Justice & Reconciliation Collaborative, on their recently published books. "The Bronze Scar" by West helps readers understand how post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) feels to victims and offers hope for healing. "A Just Mission: Laying Down Power and Embracing Mutuality" by Haddis challenges aspects of Western missions and offers a way forward.



✓ Violence, Vandalism and Threats in Post-*Dobbs* America

Criminal attacks on pro-life congregations and organizations across America immediately and dramatically increased following the leaked draft of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*, according to a study by the Religious Freedom Institute (RFI). Attackers often committed multiple crimes against the same organization, including arson, death threats, property destruction, and menacing or vile graffiti.

“These crimes not only imperil American citizens, their institutions, their property, and, often, their life’s work. When aimed at pro-life congregations and organizations motivated by religious conviction, they also constitute assaults on the inalienable right of religious freedom guaranteed to all Americans in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States,” the RFI report states.

The RFI released a Crisis Toolkit for Religious Institutions designed to help institutions prepare for, mitigate and respond to non-violent attacks, while also navigating the devastations left by criminal attacks.

Pro-life ministries and other nonprofits who face threats can apply for grants through FEMA’s Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which will assist with upgrading security systems and equipment.



Read the full report at [ReligiousFreedomInstitute.org](https://www.ReligiousFreedomInstitute.org).

✓ Teens Are in Crisis

Nearly half of American high school students report “persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Excessive social media consumption is strongly linked to mental health issues among individuals.

The Institute for Family Studies notes that children ages 8 to 12 spend approximately 5.5 hours a day on screens while teens (13 to 18 years old) spend nearly nine hours a day on some sort of device. Teen girls ages 11 to 13 are especially vulnerable to the use of social media, along with boys ages 14 and 15.

Another study found a different group of students are just as vulnerable as young teens: those in a stepparent or single-parent household. Those from nonintact families tend to use social media and digital platforms as a way to cope with pain, struggles or loneliness,

according to the Institute for Family Studies. “Parents struggle with what that means for their children, concerned that so much media use may be harmful, but unsure of what to do,” according to the Teens and Tech 2022 report.



Read more about the latest research on tech and teens at [IFStudies.org](https://www.IFStudies.org).



A Collective Deep Breath

“Take a deep breath.” A simple request at a doctor’s visit to check our health.

Many in ministry have not felt they have had the luxury or ability to breathe, to live, let alone flourish. These past few years have been overwhelming and exhausting in life and ministry. We have been caught up in a series of, as Ed Stetzer describes them, “cultural convulsions.”

These times have been more than convulsions. They have been more akin to being in the corner on the ropes of a boxing bout and being relentlessly punched by your opponent. We went from Covid (punch) to mask mandates (punch), to racial injustice (punch), to vaccines, to pre-election, post-election, insurrections, impeachments (punch, punch, punch) and

more. They occurred one after another with no time to come up for air, no time to breathe, no time to flourish.

The debates that raged in our culture also infiltrated our ministries. Where once you felt you could stand together against cultural tirades, the “convulsions” fractured Jesus’ Church. It was no longer “us vs. them” but “us vs. us,” and on any given day every decision you made in ministry was being challenged.

“Flourish,” a conference of the National Association of Evangelicals, was the first large scale event I have attended over the past two years. I needed to hear some outside perspective.



I quickly discovered that Flourish was not just another conference, but a long overdue conversation that gave you permission to breathe again.

We have been living in two years of non-stop monologues and 140-character tweets passed off as dialogues. By stark contrast, Flourish was a place to engage in meaningful conversations and be able to do so in a safe, constructive and God honoring way. The NAE's vision to connect us with each other, to always take on tough topics in a thoughtful way and be a transformative influence for God's goodness in our culture was prevalent all through the Flourish conversation.

We have been living in two years of non-stop monologues and 140-character tweets passed of as dialogues.

Thoughtful, articulate, session leaders took us through topics of today. Starting with an analysis of where we are in our culture by Rebecca McLaughlin and Ed Stetzer, the sessions built from there. Sessions ranged from, "Capturing Gen Z for the Gospel" by Nick Hall, to "The Gospel and Racial Justice" by Derwin Gray, to "What's Next after *Roe v. Wade?*" led by Kelly Rosati.

Day 2 began with tending to the bruised souls of those who minister. Led by Jimmy Mellado and Curt Thompson, we journeyed into a deep dive into Psalm 23, and the power and healing of the simple verse, "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want" for our souls, and the need for everyone to be "seen, soothed, safe and secure in their life." This has now become a daily reflection for me, and has helped in the transformation of my soul, which had been left parched and gasping prior to Flourish. This session provided a bridge before diving into the tough topic of gender identity and its impact on real people and seeing people as God sees them.

The main session conversations continued around tables and meals together. Small, confidential table groups after each

session provided a safe place to be honest, to talk, to disagree, to learn, to pray, and be in a true dialogue with each other, so we could learn, grow and find life together.

Flourish provided a way forward out of the "floundering" of many these past two years. Surveys will tell you about four out of 10 pastors have looked to quit over these past years. Many like myself had ceased to live and thrive in the call of God.

Zephaniah the prophet wrote this to encourage God's people, then and now.

The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing
(Zephaniah 3:17).

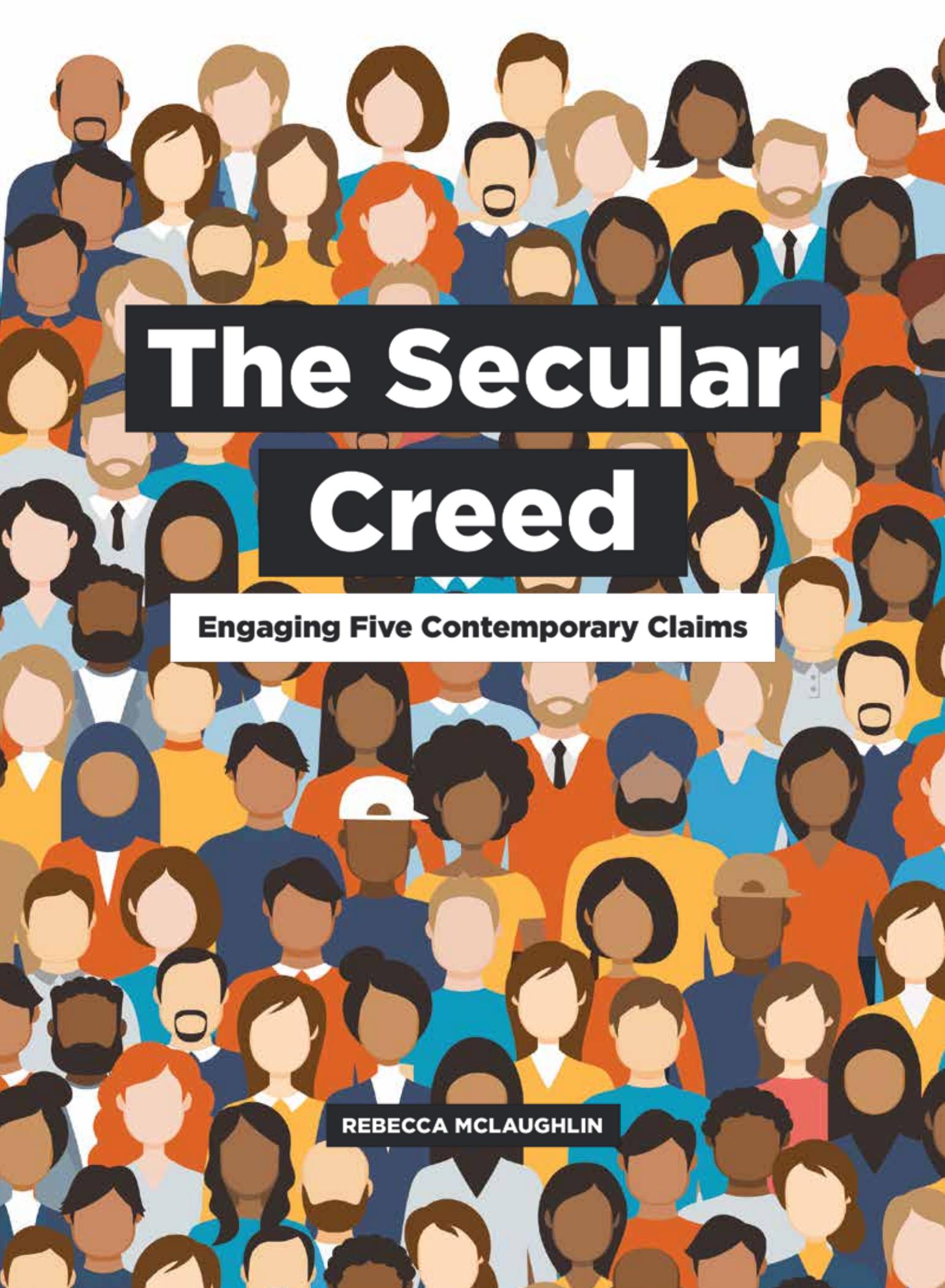
God promises to sing a song of joy, love and life over his people.

Flourish was an opportunity to take a collective deep breath and live in the thriving kingdom of God. Once again to say together, "God is here. Let's move forward together for the kingdom." A kingdom not restrained by culture, but a bringer of life to culture. My hope and prayer is that in the years to come, the NAE will continue to provide timely, restorative teaching and fellowship for evangelical leaders across the country as they seek to respond with wisdom and biblical clarity to whatever challenges they may face.

Take a deep breath. It is time to flourish again. 



Speakers at Flourish 2022 offered rich and diverse evangelical perspectives on the most difficult issues of our day. All teaching sessions are now available to watch. Get access at [NAE.org/flourishvideos](https://www.nae.org/flourishvideos).



The Secular Creed

Engaging Five Contemporary Claims

REBECCA MCLAUGHLIN



“What does that mean?”

My 8-year-old held a bracelet she’d found at school. Stamped on its rim were three words: “Love Is Love.” On our drive to church, we pass a hair salon, its windows filled with posters of George Floyd and massive, multicolored wings proclaiming, “Trans Lives Matter,” “Black Lives Matter,” “Love Is Love,” “Better Together.” Across our neighborhood, yard signs declare,

In this house we believe that:
Black Lives Matter
Love Is Love
Women’s Rights Are Human Rights
We Are All Immigrants
Diversity Makes Us Stronger

Signs like this sketch out a secular creed or statement of belief. It centers not on God, but on diversity, equality and everybody’s right to be themselves.

Seeing signs like this, Christians tend to grab hammers. Some grab one to drive the sign into their lawn. They lament racial injustice, they believe in diversity, they know women are equal to men, and they’ve been taught that affirming gay relationships, trans identities, and pro-choice positions comes part and parcel with these other things. If Black lives matter (which they surely do), then love of all kinds must be love. Others take up hammers with a different plan.

Knowing that the Bible rejects some things that underlie this modern creed, they swing a hammer to flatten the sign. Perhaps not literally, but in their hearts and minds. If these ideas stand together, they must all be wrong.

Offering Another Approach

We must offer a third approach. Wielding a marker instead of a mallet, we need to consider five contemporary claims: “Black Lives Matter,” “The Gay-Rights Movement Is the New Civil-Rights Movement,” “Love Is Love,” “Women’s Rights Are Human Rights,” and “Transgender Women Are Women.” Examining each claim through the lens of Scripture and in light of culture, we need to disentangle ideas Christians can and must affirm from ideas Christians cannot and must not embrace. But to wield the marker well, we must get down on our knees.

First, we must recognize that the tangling of ideas in the secular creed has been driven not only by sin in the world out there, but also by sin in the Church in here. We must fall to our knees and repent. The frequent failure of Christians to meet biblical ideals of fellowship across racial difference, equal valuing of men and women, welcome for outcasts, love for those with unfulfilled desire, and care for the most marginalized has allowed this mixture of ideas to coalesce under the banner of diversity. But with our heads bowed to the earth, we’ll see that the very ground in which the yard sign stands is unmistakably Christian. Clear that Christian soil away and you won’t



find solid, secular rock. You'll find a sinkhole.

To our 21st-century, Western ears, love across racial and cultural difference, the equality of men and women, and the idea that the poor, oppressed and marginalized can make moral claims on the strong, rich and powerful sound like basic moral common sense. But they are not. These truths have come to us from Christianity. Rip that foundation out, and you won't uncover a better basis for human equality and rights. You'll uncover an abyss that cannot even tell you what a human being is. Like cartoon characters running off a cliff, we may continue a short way before we realize that the ground has gone from underneath our feet. But it has gone. Without Christian beliefs about humanity, the yard sign's claims aren't worth the cardboard on which they are written.

If you're a follower of Jesus, I hope you'll be ready to join with the call to loving arms.

So, when we pass these signs, I tell my children that in our house we believe that Black lives matter because they matter to Jesus. We don't believe that love is love but that God is love, and that he gives us glimpses of his love through different kinds of relationship. We believe women's rights are human rights, because God made us — male and female — in his image; and for that same reason we believe that babies in the womb have rights as well. We believe God has a special concern for single mothers, orphans and immigrants, because Scripture tells us so again and again. And we believe that diversity does indeed make us stronger, because Jesus calls people from every tribe and tongue and nation to worship

him as one body together.

If you're a follower of Jesus, I hope you'll be ready to join with the call to loving arms. If you're not yet following Jesus, or if you couldn't imagine ever wanting to, I hope you'll see the moral soil on which you stand is more Christian than you realize. And I hope you'll start to wonder if the poor, first-century, brown-skinned, Jewish man known as Jesus of Nazareth — who lived as a member of an oppressed ethnic group and died at the hands of an imperial regime — might truly be the Savior of the world: the one who showed us what love is by laying down his life for us (1 John 3:16).

Call to Loving Arms

I didn't need a car in London. But when we moved to America, my husband taught me to drive on the manual-shift car he'd bought second-hand at age 16. I struggled to learn when to change gears. I'd start in first and accelerate until the car was pleading for second. Focused on the road ahead, I'd miss the tell-tale sound. "Can't you hear it?" Bryan would ask. I'd rush to switch from accelerator to clutch, grab the gear stick, pull it back, and slide it across so I could push it forward again into second. And so we'd go on, until the car was crying out for third.

Perhaps, like me, you're a follower of Jesus, and you want to keep your foot on the gas. There is so much that we Christians need to do, and so far we need to go to see people from every tribe and nation won for Christ. But after 12 years living in America, I'm convinced that in order to make progress we must change gears. Rather than just ramming our foot down, we must pull the gear stick back and do the hard work of repentance before shifting into second or third.

In particular, white Christians like me must recognize the ways in which our tribe



has been complicit in the pain of Black Americans: from slavery to segregation to racial inequality today. We might worry that proclaiming “Black Lives Matter” affirms a broader progressive agenda that also celebrates LGBT+ identities. But what if our failure to fight for racial equality while also upholding biblical sexual ethics allows that progressive wedding of ideas to stand unquestioned? If we don’t fight for the biblical goals of racial justice and equality, we’re playing into the script that says Christian sexual ethics come bundled with oppression. In order to make progress, it’s vital that we unyoke these ideas. To show where progressives are wrong, we must also freely acknowledge where they are right.

Whatever our racial background, we Christians must also repent of the ways we’ve allowed actual homophobia — fear, hatred and mistrust of gay and lesbian people — to infect our churches. Too often, LGBT+ people outside the Church have only heard a message of hate. Too often, we’ve left our same-sex-attracted siblings within the Church shivering in the dark, believing they’re unwanted and unloved. If you want to pour lighter fuel on sexual temptation, you leave someone alone. But if we want same-sex-attracted Christians to thrive, we must embrace them with loving arms. This doesn’t mean affirming same-sex romance. It means obeying the Bible, which calls us to bear each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2) and to love each other deeply (1 Peter 4:8). What’s more, in a world in which people block their ears to the gospel because they think we’re homophobic bigots, the faithful, same-sex-attracted Christians in our congregations are a God-given SWAT team to burst through those defenses. There is no more powerful way to testify to Jesus in this generation than to turn away from sexual and romantic fulfillment because you believe in a better love.

We must also acknowledge the ways in which we’ve failed to follow Jesus in his treatment of women. Rather than sidelining women, we must celebrate women’s gospel ministry, cultivate women’s theological growth and encourage women as they serve the Lord whether in the home or in the workplace. In a world where women are pushed into commitment-free sex, the counterculture of the Church should affirm both marriage and singleness as compelling options for Christians, rather than making women who aren’t married or don’t have children feel marginalized. And against the history of shaming women for having babies outside of marriage, our churches should validate women who have chosen to keep their baby against all social pressure to abort, and offer the extended family and practical support that single mothers need.

On all these fronts, we must fight hard with the weapon God has given us: self-sacrificing, unrelenting love. Rather than shouting progressives who seek love and justice down, let’s call them in with a Jesus song: his song of good news for the historically oppressed, his song of love across racial and ethnic difference, his song that summons men and women, married and single, young and old, weak and strong, joyful and hurting, rich and destitute, into eternal love with him. Let’s fight with love and sing the song with which we’ll one day overcome. 🗣️

*This article was adapted from Rebecca McLaughlin’s book *The Secular Creed* and is used with permission of *The Gospel Coalition*.*





Nick Hall is founder and chief evangelist for PULSE, a student-led prayer and evangelism movement.

Embracing Risk to Unleash Gen Z

Be a Moses, Not a Saul

Gen Z is asking the Church, “Do you want my generation?” How will we answer? And what are we doing about it? More than anything, this generation wants to be seen and valued, and unfortunately many don’t think the Church is showing up for them. Young people aren’t in churches because they don’t feel wanted or valued.

Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z makes up between 74 to 86 million people in America. As an evangelist, I believe Gen Z has the greatest potential to change the world for the gospel than any generation before. Major brands and organizations have taken notice of this rising workforce and consumer base, investing countless sums of money to capture their imagination and benefit from their talent.

Church, it’s time for Gen Z to become our priority.

Not only do we want them engaged in the Church, we need them if there’s going to be a narrative of faith in our nation’s future. And while many will state the negatives of this generation, I have experienced them to be incredibly passionate about Jesus, incredibly creative, and able to reach an ever-changing world with ease — because this is the world in which they’ve been raised. God loves this generation, and so do we! If they are going to be our future, we have to make them our present.

The Greatest Cause

Many call Gen Z the activist generation, because they seek causes that make a difference. Put another way, they want to see the gospel before they are willing to hear it. Churches that prioritize Gen Z are better because their presentation of the gospel becomes more holistic and empathetic.

Imagine what will happen when this “Cause Generation” is connected to the greatest cause in history... Jesus!

And if we make time to see and hear this generation, we will find they are hungry to learn. Imagine what will happen when this “Cause Generation” is connected to the greatest



cause in history ... Jesus! I truly believe that as we disciple this generation, they will complete the Great Commission by marrying it to the Great Commandment!

Questions to Engage Gen Z

We must start by asking ourselves tough questions — questions that will challenge our thoughts, our wallets and even the leadership structures in our churches. These questions are worth leaning into, so that we might see the next generation unleashed with their full potential for God’s glory.

There are four areas we must begin to evaluate if we want to show Gen Z we care.

1. Time – Show me your calendar, and I can show you what you value. Are you making time for Gen Z?
2. Talent – Is Gen Z (those under 25) represented on your stage or staff?
3. Treasure – How is this generation represented in your budget? Does your treasure represent that you value this missing generation?
4. Risk – If they can’t hurt you, then you aren’t invested in them. They are young. They may do or say things that you wouldn’t. But the Holy Spirit lives inside them! Empowerment comes at a cost. If we aren’t willing to risk our reputation to give this generation the platform, they will find a space that does.

It’s not rocket science. The churches that are winning young people to Jesus, are the churches featuring young people. Our

wallet, our programs, and our priorities must prove we value them.

Gen Z is going to change the world, the unanswered question is ... for what? Church, do we want Gen Z?

An Example to Live By

The history of leaders in the nation of Israel began with Moses. Moses led Israelites for 40 years. He was a leader who exemplified humility, empathy, wisdom and heroism, and he followed God’s commands. Even when Moses went through hard times, he sought favor from the Lord and was willing to lead many. As a result of his faithfulness and obedience, God kept his promise with Moses.

In contrast, the later appointed king of Israel — Saul — was a man who sought his own glory. Saul was disobedient to God’s commands, resented those who disagreed with him and surrounded himself with people who only supported his ideas. When Saul realized David would be the next king, jealousy and envy crept into his life through pride. Saul failed miserably as a leader.

Are you a Moses or a Saul? Are you seeking to reach the next generation for God’s glory, or are you seeking your own name to be praised? While you consider if you are a Moses or a Saul, also evaluate if you are raising up the next generation of Moseses who will humbly lead the Church.

If we lead like Moses, what will we see happen in the Church today and in the next generation? **E**



He Restores My Soul

A Different Take on Psalm 23

Christian leaders have seen a tumultuous few years. Through an unprecedented pandemic, increased political division and a culture seemingly antagonistic toward evangelical faith, church and parachurch leaders have struggled to process their own emotions while supporting their congregants or teams.

Navigating an array of new, challenging and often emotionally charged questions, in addition to trying to protect their own families, left many pastors overwhelmed and exhausted. The intensity of the new daily rhythm became tiresome, leaving leaders' decision-making wells drained.

Soul Restoration Before Daily Contribution

We cannot run on empty tanks, but that is what many evangelical leaders have been trying to do for years. It's critical that we sustain our souls amid the many demands of ministry output. Everything flows out of our souls. All our reactions — how we metabolize disappointments, criticism and hurt — reflect the strength of our soul. Similarly, our ability to perform and contribute to the kingdom in life-giving ways

flows from the health of our soul.

By looking at a familiar passage of scripture in a new way, we find direction for a healthy life rhythm of soul restoration.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days



of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psalm 23 KJV).

Being in Christ and Doing for Christ

This passage reminds us that we’re designed to be with and to be submitted to our Creator. He guides us. He is all we need. He calls us to replenishment, so we are ready for the journey ahead. Then, after submitting and being restored, he leads us toward righteous activities. He never asks us to do first. He initially says to relax, rest, take a nap. Take a stroll by the still waters. Then, after being with our Creator and having our souls restored, we are ready to employ our unique gifts and talents to contribute to his greater redemptive plan.

Everything we do for Christ only has meaning when it is the fruit that naturally flows out of a restored soul. It flows out of a soul that is surrendered to Christ. How much value is there if it isn’t flowing out of love?

Too often, we do God’s work in ways that destroy what

Everything we do for Christ only has meaning when it is the fruit that naturally flows out of a restored soul. It flows out of a soul

he wants to do in us. We are so busy doing and responding to the things happening around us. How do we — as busy evangelical leaders — take the time to do soul work in our own lives?

Practical Application for Soul Work

We must remember that rest is a strategic investment toward becoming the kind of people God calls us to be. Psalm 23 calls us to start with resting. Instead of viewing morning as the start of your day, consider going to bed each night with intentionality — getting quality rest and sleep to begin your next day. Consider taking a sabbatical, a vacation or even just intentional moments to disconnect from the daily grind.

When you have these times of rest, don’t make big decisions. Focus on soul recharging.

God’s call in Psalm 23 reveals several steps we can begin taking today:

Submit. Submit means to yield oneself to the authority or will, or to subject to and accept a particular process. Surrender to God’s call of submission and rest.

Be content. We shouldn’t look for contentment in the things we do or the experiences behind and before us. To be truly content means to separate our joy and satisfaction from our circumstances. We should be content in all the blessings and joys of life, as well as in all hardships and struggles.

Lie down. “He maketh me lie down.” The original word to communicate “make” does not mean God is forcing us to lie down, to stop and to rest. Instead, the Good Shepherd, is gently guiding and directing us to pause. He is leading us to find — and enjoy — tranquility, peace and restoration. The green pastures are not just a soft place to rest, but they represent safety and a protected dwelling where he meets our needs.

Walk. We walk calmly, communing with God and having our souls restored. Then, and only then, can we begin turning the corner toward our righteous activities.

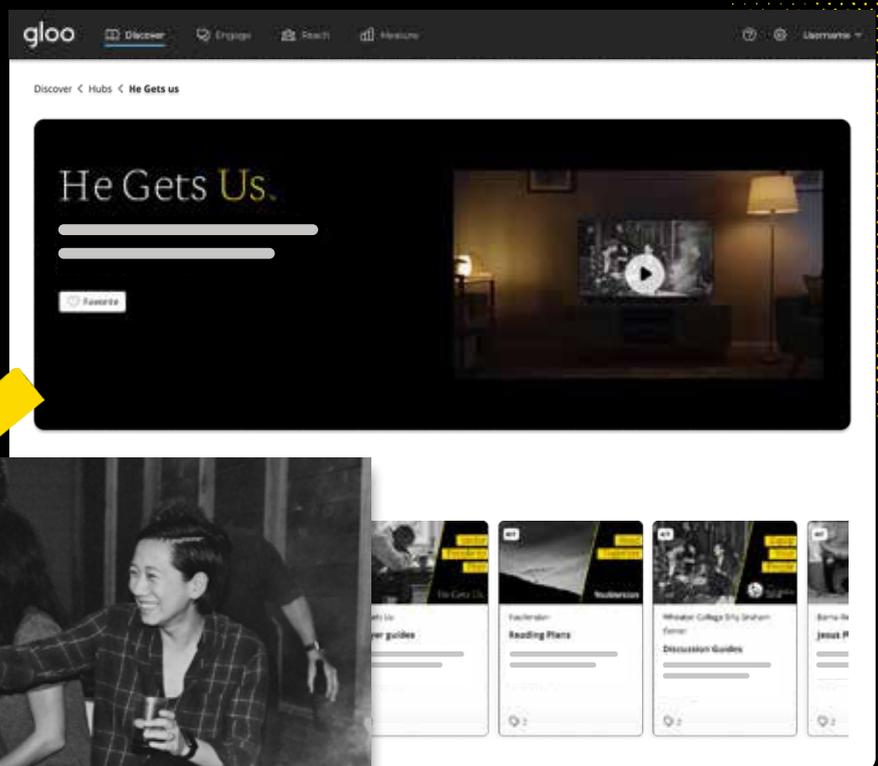
The Shepherd’s Promise

Even when we follow the plan laid before us in Psalm 23, we are told to expect difficulties. We are not immune to hardships and valleys while on the path of righteousness. But because we are walking with our Shepherd, there is no need to fear the enemies or the attacks coming our way. Our restored soul will keep us doing the right things in the right ways. It will keep us on the righteous path, despite the challenges we face.

As you commit to this life of promise, surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life. Those good days are a promise for right now, not just after you die. The kingdom of heaven is in session now — even as you face tumultuous valleys like we have all been navigating in recent years. 

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Holistic Reconciliation and Restoration

If your church had to close its doors next week, would anyone in your community notice? Is your church essential to the lives of your members? Or is it treated more like a convenience?

God designed the Church to be a city on a hill. The salt of the earth. The light of the world. An army, pushing back the kingdom of darkness and building the kingdom of God. A family, bearing one another's burdens, loving deeply and serving sacrificially as each member grows more and more into the likeness of Christ.

And yet, the harsh reality is that many of our churches have far too little influence on the lives of those who attend. In the United States, we are so entangled in confusing conversations about polarizing views that the love of Christ often gets left behind in our arguments. In the end, the message most society hears about Christians doesn't reflect the command we were given to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. We end up being known for everything except our love.

Until the Church decides this is a legacy we cannot accept, we will continue to perpetuate a cycle of faulty faith and shallow witness.

So what's the alternative? We go back to the gospel – the whole gospel. Rather than accepting a truncated view of the gospel that only addresses spiritual brokenness, we embrace a holistic understanding of reconciliation and restoration — one that acknowledges how Christ has come to make all things new, to restore all that has been broken spiritually,

emotionally, economically and socially.

The gospel has an answer for the everyday issues you and your neighbors are facing. In fact, the gospel is essential to the holistic well-being of every single person in your congregation and community. But when we present a truncated view of the gospel, we shortchange the transformation and healing offered in Jesus, and people miss out on learning how the gospel can transform their everyday lives.

In order to become a Church that is essential — both to the community and to the Body of believers — we must engage spiritual, emotional, economic and social needs. We must believe and embrace the gospel, teaching about the God who came down as a man and ministered to the holistic needs of the people he served. When we do this and fight for ways to live it out, then we begin to see and experience the restoration made possible to us because of Christ's work on the cross. Only then will the Church embrace her true identity and live out the essential role she was made for.

“He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making all things new!’” (Revelation 21:5). 





On Generational Questions

James Choung serves as vice president of strategy and innovation for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and is the author of several books, including “Longing for Revival: From Holy Discontent to Breakthrough Faith” and “Real Life: A Christianity Worth Living Out.” He has spent years researching what each generation values, and discusses the central gospel question that must be answered for each generation.

HOW DID YOU COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT EACH GENERATION HAS A UNIQUE APPROACH TO HOW THEY VIEW THE WORLD?

The deep dive really happened during my doctoral studies when I was studying for a degree in post-modern leadership development. I ran across the work of Strauss and Howe, particularly their books “Generations” and “The Fourth Turning.” I was introduced to this idea of generational theory

where they unpacked the theory and differences between generations. Each generation has its own unique personality and temperament, along with its own contribution and calling to wider culture. From there, it provoked the idea and curiosity if there was a spiritual lens to the various generational approaches.

LAY OUT A FRAMEWORK OF THE DIFFERENT



GENERATIONAL ARCHETYPES.

As Strauss and Howe were looking at American history, they noticed there was a four-generation cycle that repeated itself throughout generations. This cycle only skipped one generation and that was during the Civil War, which was such a traumatic experience for our country. Other than the jump during the Civil War, there has been a consistent generational cycle of what they call the “prophet” generation, the “nomad” generation, the “hero” generation and then the “artist” generation. The prophet generation for this cycle were the Boomers born between 1946 and 1964. Gen Xers are considered the nomad generation, and they were born between 1965 and 1980. They are also considered the first postmodern generation. Millennials born between 1981 and 1996 are considered the hero generation. iGens or Gen Z born between 1997 and 2015 (still being debated) is the artist generation. The generation after Gen Z will start the cycle again with the prophet.

At the time Strauss and Howe published their theory, Millennials would have been around 10 years old at their oldest. Today, we can see that they accurately predicted what this generation would be like as adults. It made them the foremost experts on Millennials.

HOW DO EACH OF THESE GENERATIONS REPRESENT THEIR ARCHETYPE?

As I began to understand each generation, I began to wonder if there was a spiritual element to their differences. Were they asking different questions as they approached the gospel? I began to realize each generation is asking one essential question related to their archetype. It guides their view on life and spiritual understanding.

The four questions are even the questions asked in Greek philosophy of what is essential. Boomers, the prophet generation, is asking “What is true?” They want to know the truth and will bank their life around it. Gen Xers are asking “What is real?” They don’t want the facts and science of what is true, they value authentic life stories. Millennials began asking “What is good?” Individuals from this generation are optimistic and want to contribute to changing the world. They are known as the “doer” generation. iGens or Gen Z are asking

“What is beautiful?” They want to know what is worthy of worship. What is worth spending their lives going after?

These are the generation’s front door question. Though all questions are important, if you don’t answer that front door question, they won’t hear your answer to the other questions.

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT THE WAY WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT THE GOSPEL AND SHARE OUR FAITH WITH THESE GENERATIONS?

With Boomers, the apologetics and authors like C.S. Lewis were very beneficial. But with a generation that is asking “What is real?” (Gen X) a set of arguments will turn them off. They don’t want to hear the company line; they want to hear how this is connecting with you. Sharing the gospel with Xers means to tell them authentically and vulnerably how your life is being impacted by the gospel.

Millennials are asking what is good about the Christian faith and not seeking simply fire insurance — a way to avoid hell. The ways the kingdom of God being here reflects Old Testament. The good news is with us now. So what does that mean for my everyday life and my contributions? Glorification and theological concept of consummation will be very key for the iGen generation. God is in this whole project and will make it an excellent end as he promised.

The key for each generation is connecting with where they are. This is a chance for us to understand different people. We do not come to them with what is important to us. We must approach them with answers to what they are asking. Being contextual to each generation is a bridge to help us get them to the gospel and eventually answer all questions of what is true, what is real, what is good and what is beautiful. **E**



Faith That Flourishes

Whatever we may think of “quiet quitting,” we can agree that workers everywhere are seeking some sanity. This also applies to the church, as 42 percent of pastors have seriously considered quitting ministry due to stress, loneliness and political polarization. The issues of mental health, the complexities of cultural issues, and the contentions of social discord are all too real and pressing.

Where do believers go to find rejuvenation? They should go fishing, well, at least theologically so.

One of the greatest catastrophes to befall God’s people happened during Ezekiel’s lifetime. After hundreds of years in the Promised Land, the Israelites confronted the anguish of exile. The covenant was an invitation to flourish in God’s bounty. But the people wouldn’t have it, and their rebellion brought judgment in the form of the Babylonians, whose destructive wake seemed irrevocable.

What could God’s people recover from the shattered remains?

In the midst of exile, the Lord grants Ezekiel a revelation of a new temple in Jerusalem. Chapter 47 begins with an angel guiding the prophet to see “water coming out from under the threshold of the temple” (47:1). This modest trickle becomes ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then waist-deep, and then a mighty river (47:5). The water rushes swiftly through the craggy-rocked desert and empties into the Dead Sea, where desolation was transformed, and the wounds of sin and exile are redeemed. Life miraculously flourishes with swarms

of living creatures, schools of many kinds of fish, and trees of extraordinary variety and vitality, whose leaves are for healing and fruit are a never-failing source of food (47:6–12).

The vision bursts with allusions to Genesis and promises that from the chaos of exile God will bring a new creation. Ezekiel is swimming in the realities of God’s redemption, in which his grace touches every parched aspect of life.

Although in our present modest experiences of “exile” we are tempted to wallow in despair or to whack others in anger, we must instead go to the river of life. We may be wading in grace that seems just ankle-deep now, but be assured that God’s vision will prevail, if not through us, then through others. With humble and repentant confidence, may we be a people who flourish and cause others to flourish, who bear fruit and produce leaves for the healing of the deepest wounds of those around us. **E**

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