

Firm Foundations – Reaching Gen Z

Isaac Langmead | 2nd November 2025

Welcome everyone to All Saints. I'm super excited to speak tonight about Gen Z. I was born in Bath but lived in the U.S from 2017 until May 2025. Over this time I grew up in middle and high school in Boston, and went to an Assemblies of God Church and then onto a Christian University near Philadelphia. I've worked with the passion I have for media and used it as a tool to reach young people, which fuels my passion in youth groups here in Bath as well! Before we dive into this message, this is going to be a little **spicy** for a message, but also it's one with a lot of practical steps to take away, so I highly recommend taking notes.

I love to be organized and so I'll give a little insight into what I'm going to share

1. What world are young people growing up in?
2. What shapes our identity today?
3. The contrast between Culture and Jesus
4. How all of us can respond?

Before we dive into the core of this message, I thought I'd explain GEN Z

Those born between 1997 and 2012 — *today's teenagers and young adults*.

After them comes *Gen Alpha*, born from 2013 onward, and they're now starting to enter their teenage years. The world Gen Z and Alpha are growing up in is radically different from previous generations (so I'm told). A few decades ago, attending church was statistically more common. Upholding at least some Christian values were part of the everyday fabric of life — in schools, in families, even in mainstream media. Even if someone wasn't a Christian, there was still a general respect for the Bible, for truth, for church.

But things have shifted. We now live in a world that is increasingly **secular** — meaning: God (or at least the Christian God) is seen as optional. Church is no longer a normal part of life. Truth is seen as personal, not universal. And identity is something we invent for ourselves rather than agreeing on something else foundational

But before we go further

Please put your hand up if you've ever told a proper lie before (those with hands down, you just lied). We are ALL sinners. None of us are perfect. I want to (at least temporarily) try to get rid of this 'I'm better than them' mentality that we sometimes get.

Another thing is that Gen Z didn't create the increasingly secularised world we're in, but they inherited and are living it. I think it's important that we don't blame young people for reflecting the culture of today. Gen Z is just as valuable to God as with any other generations.

So, with that being said, I want to ask you the question - **“What is Truth”?**

I want to explain a term that has become ever increasing in society and that is MORAL RELATIVISM. Big words I know: **it's the belief that there is no fixed standard for right and wrong. What's right or true depends on your personal feelings, culture, or situation.** Truth has become increasingly subjective in culture. instead of “Live *the* truth” it's “Live *your* truth.” I recently listened to an amazing evangelist named Cliff Knechtle, and he broke down the ways we as people usually find what “truth” is.

The Four Sources of Truth

1. **YOURSELF** - “I decide what's right or wrong for me.”
2. **AUTHORITIES** - “I'll trust the government or the experts to tell me what's right.”
3. **CULTURE** - “If it's popular, it must be okay.”
4. **GOD** “Truth comes from outside of us — from a Creator who made us, knows us, and doesn't change.”

With these sources of Truth, I'd like to focus on 1) “*Yourself*” and 4) “*God*”.

When Jesus came to earth, he made it very clear that his way was quite the opposite of the way of the world, so of course this means that the very essence of his way goes against everything our own sinful nature:

John 18:36 NIV – “Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”” The chosen people Jesus came for helped to plot Jesus’ death.

Luke 16:15 - “What this world honours is detestable in the sight of God” - other translations say, “what people value highly”. The King James Version says, “an abomination.”

John 17:14 ESV - “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.”

1. GEN Z: THE WORLD VS THE WAY

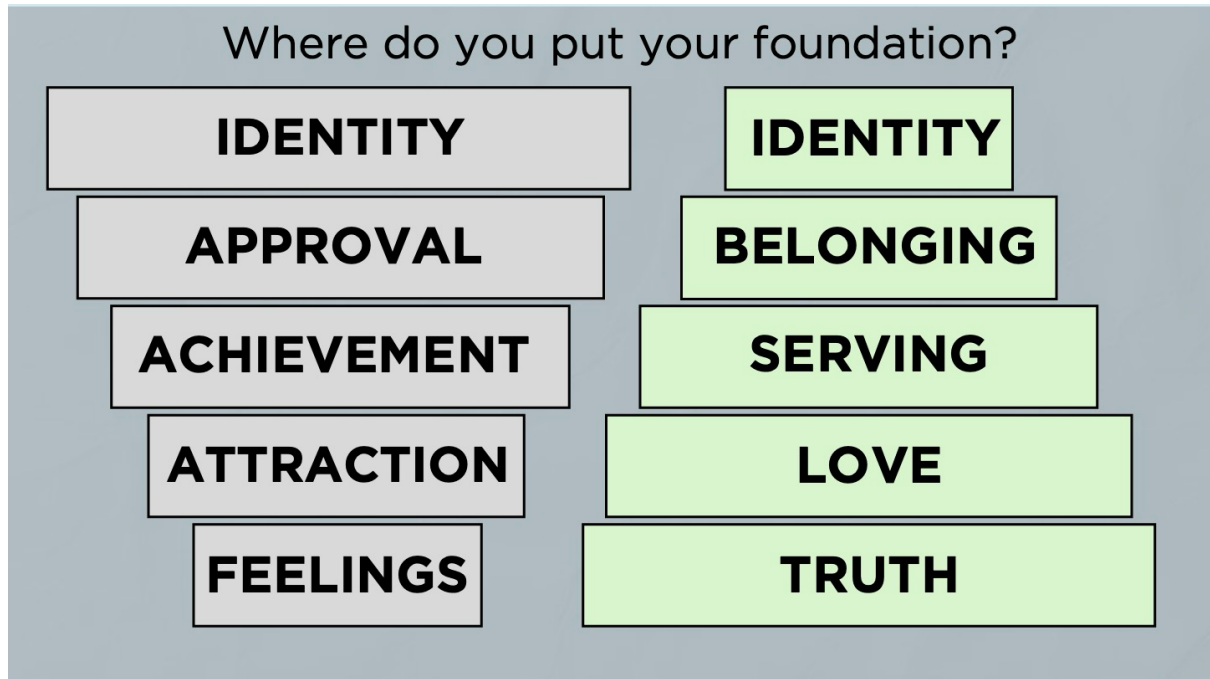
So, with this being explained. What is this way that Jesus proposes vs our own way? The main passage I want to share with you today is one of my favourites.

Matthew 7:24-27 says:

“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.”

So, what is going on with Gen Z - and what are the major challenges that my generation and below are going through?

The first point I want to make is about the emphasis of self-worth and a need for an identity. I’m going to show you this visual to get an idea with how the culture of 2025 presents life and how the Bible shows it.



1. Feelings

“I AM WHAT I FEEL”

Over my time as a teen and young adult, I have repeatedly heard phrases like:

- “Love yourself”
- “Just follow your heart”
- “Have pride”
- “Live your truth”

Our culture teaches us to start with our emotions. It is all about **US**. How do *WE* feel? If you feel something strongly enough — it must be true. But (at least for me), feelings change **constantly**. Example: It’s Monday morning and you feel anxious or tired. But then you go to Greggs and have a sausage roll that JUST got baked out the oven. Suddenly everything shifts. Nothing *really* changed — just your *feelings*.

Has anyone here said something that you didn't mean in the heat of the moment? I certainly have! You can ask my mum how I was like as a teenager! But this is how the world is instructing our generation to feel and respond. It's all about ourselves and our feelings. And don't get me wrong, feelings are definitely real, but they're not always *reliable*. It is difficult to build truth by shifting emotion. What happens when you're depressed?

Jeremiah 17:9 – "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

2. Attraction

“I AM WHO/WHAT I'M ATTRACTED TO”

So, let's say we live based on these feelings, the next step comes our **attraction**. Now, this can look different in various ways.

I had the – experience – of living in the States over the last eight years. Having watched everything that has happened since 2017, it was very obvious that people there loved to identify strongly with their political party and political positions. Many of my friends even in Gen Z would spend more of their Instagram posts on political messaging rather than about Jesus. In England, I think this is a lot more subtle but we've seen with recent protests and political discussions that this could deter us from what really matters.

My question for us is “Do we talk more about Jesus or a group we are a part of?”

Another attraction based area of Culture is around (brace for it) romantic or sexual attraction. Culture says:

- "Your desires define your identity"
- "Love is love"

There is huge pressure to label yourself based on attraction which is often described as fluid. I personally spent my teenage years in a very progressive high school, and it caused me to even think about my identity when I arrived in Year 6 at the age of 12. In school I never really had the desire to try and have a partner like most of my friends, and so I was even like ‘Am I Asexual?’

Now, as we all know, this is a sensitive topic in church, but I do want to say that regardless of what we think, it is so important to know that Jesus offered his gift of salvation to EVERYONE and DEEPLY LOVES every person. Jesus really did die on the cross as a gift of salvation to you and wants you! It doesn't matter where you're at now. I also want to personally apologize if you have been struggling with your identity and have felt condemnation from someone you know or even in church. None of us are perfect and often we don't reflect the character of Jesus accurately. Having grown up in the church, I sadly can attest to some of these struggles, especially in the states, because there was an overworking culture that did pour into the church, and I had experienced a few leaders who claimed spiritual authority over me. However, after coming back to Bath in May and coming to All Saints, being here gave me such encouragement because this church really is a family and has been to me. If this is your first time or you're sceptical about church, I really do recommend this place.

1 Peter 2:9 –

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession.”

Our generation is instructed to have our political and romantic desires as such a big part of who we are without knowing that we are created to be so much more! I'll touch back on this later.

3. Achievement

“I AM WHAT I DO”

Building off these two comes **achievement** - the world teaches us that we are what we DO. “I’ve had to drop an A level”, “I’ve got to workout, be married by 25”. “ If I don’t get those high marks, I’m a failure, because of how I feel and how I think others look at me.”

We’re taught to prove our worth through success and performance. If I’m not doing well, I’m not worth much. This is a crushing weight.

But what happens when we burn out? Or fail? This kind of identity falls apart when performance stops.

4. Approval

“I AM WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK OF ME”

After achievement comes **approval**. “I am how others perceive me.” Culture says your worth is based on **belonging**. If you’re rejected, you lose value. It’s why cancel culture hits so hard. Love is treated as conditional.

- “What will people think if I think or dress like this?”
- “If people reject me, maybe I’m not worth loving”.

You can already see how the way of Jesus goes against culture, so as an adult, think of how challenging it is to learn and accept a Christian worldview, and then share the gospel with others or in school. It is taught as if a Christian worldview is silly and unintelligent.

Another part of this is social media - There was a point in my life where I would post on Instagram some things I felt to be cool, but they wouldn’t get many likes and I would second-guess myself or take them down. I would check hourly how many saw and liked my stories.

For you who aren’t Gen Z, imagine if Instagram existed as you were growing up and you all had phones. It’s an extension of who we are.

5. Identity

This all culminates into an identity based on a foundation that entirely depends on how you're feeling.

2. THE WAY

But how many of us know now that there is a way to have a foundation that never fails! I'm here to say that you are not valuable because other people accept you or not. You are valuable because **God accepts you** and loves you. He loves you when things are going great and when they're not.

Romans 5:8 says –

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

This brings to the first point on this half.

1. Truth

"I AM WHAT GOD THINKS IS TRUE"

John 8:31-32 says **'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.**

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

Truth is who Jesus is and what he says about you-

Proverbs 3:5–6 **"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."**

2. Love

“I AM DEEPLY LOVED BY GOD”

From Truth comes LOVE, Jesus saw your sin, your struggle, turning away from him and yet he STILL loves you and wants a relationship with you. I also think we have a tendency to think we need to change before we come to the Lord but he wants a relationship with us RIGHT NOW. Inerrant and Infallible - without mistake and trustworthy.

Matthew 11:28–30: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

3. Serving

“I AM HERE TO SERVE, NOT TO PROVE”

John 13:3-5 Jesus, knowing that the Father had put all things under his power...got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet.”

The entirety of Jesus’ interactions clearly demonstrate the importance of serving and putting other people before yourself. The person who stacks the chairs at the end of service doesn’t do it for attention but to serve. This critically goes against the pride that we give to ourselves. To be prideful is to put yourself before God or his intentions and say ‘my way is better’. Even when we don’t see it, God is in control and his way is the best. Before my family and I moved to China, we had no home to live in and little plan, but when we trusted in the Lord’s plan for us he provided in ways I never thought were possible. Gen Z loves a good cause and fighting for rights.

4. Belonging

“I AM A PART OF GOD’S FAMILY”

The next tier is Belonging. One of the biggest cries of our generation is just a sense of belonging. “I just want to fit in, find my people’ Culture says you belong if you dress like us, act like us.” But the moment you disagree it becomes toxic. In Christ this sense of belonging I feel is a part of the church’s role, and I think that in recent decades the church has been perceived as a place of judgement. You only fit if you agree or dress nice for church.

We’ve been so loud about the sins of others while being quiet about the love

of Jesus. Imagine we shared more about what Jesus did for them and the peace of knowing him could do for someone. Jesus doesn’t just accept you, he adopts you into his family. You become a child of God!

5. Identity

“I AM A NEW CREATION”

This culminates in a strong foundation that leans on Jesus whose word never changes or fails. Like the house built on the rock, he is our firm foundation.

3. WHAT NEXT?

Many of you who are parents or grandparents listening, I hope I've brought a perspective on the culture of the world that my generation is now facing. I have a few things that I encourage you to do in support of this generation:

Pray - Pray out of love for people you know and their friends, that they will experience Jesus personally and bypass the thoughts that God isn’t real or that they could never be good enough. Pray that they will encounter Jesus. Don’t just pray *about their problems* — pray for their purpose, their calling, and their confidence in Christ.

Listen - Gen Z doesn't need condemnation. Whether it be addictions, identity questions or simply their values, it is not our place to condemn them but instead point them to the goodness of God. Let God be the one to change their hearts, and as they know and love Jesus, they will align their lives more. Sometimes the most healing thing you can do is *listen without rushing to fix*. You of course know the truth of the gospel, but put yourself in the place of those who are not at their point. How do you reach someone if you don't meet them at their level?

Encourage - Celebrate even small steps toward Jesus. "That's God working for you!"

Disciple - Support ministries that disciple young people. Volunteer behind the scenes, give rides, pray over events, or help cook for youth nights.

Be An Example - Are you modelling your life from Jesus? When in a situation, think 'how would Jesus respond' Spend time with and disciple Gen Z and millennials, and those in your family.'

FORGIVE - If you have been hurt by others in church or in the world, I have too and get it, but God calls us to forgive those who sin against us. It has brought me peace to forgive others who have wronged me. I hope this has encouraged you in your faith and also helped you to understand what could be the cause of the generation we have today.