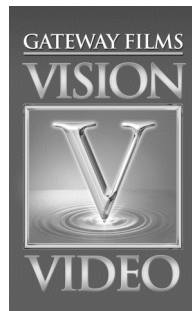


Discussion Guide for

**The Searching Generation:
The Spiritual Life of Twenty-Somethings**

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Discussion Guide

The Searching Generation: The Spiritual Life of Twenty-Somethings

Session 1: Who are Twenty-Somethings? (Use this optional session to help your group explore their experience and understanding of young adults)

1. Ice Breaker. Display some common instant message acronyms, such as TTYL, BTW, LOL, IDK, JK, POS, IC, K, L8R, and PLS. Challenge the group to figure out the meaning of these acronyms commonly used by young adults to speed up their typing and communication. The answers are: *Talk to you later, by the way, laughing out loud, I don't know, just kidding, parent over shoulder, I see, Okay, later, and please*. Point out that this is an example of how today's young adults live in a fast paced world of instant communication.
2. Characteristics of Young Adults. Use the following questions to gauge your group's understanding of young adults. Include people of various generations, including young adults, but be careful not to make the young adults feel like a target or a project. Be sensitive to each generation, looking for common ground and places of connection, rather than points of conflict:
 - Think back to who you were as a young adult. What characteristics did you have at that age? What were your dreams and hopes? What influenced you? How would you describe your faith at that time?
 - When you think of young people aged 18-30, what qualities come to mind? What young adult characteristics seem to be universal and common throughout all generations?
 - Now consider some young adults from the Bible, such as young David, Ruth, Esther, and Timothy. What characteristics can you add to the list of traits found in young adults.
 - Where are young adults currently plugged into and connected to our church?
 - In what settings do you currently interact with young adults? In thinking of the Bible characters you've explored, consider how adults interacted with these young people.
 - Divide your class in half. Give one group a sheet of paper with the word SPIRITUALITY on the top. Give the other group a sheet with the words ORGANIZED RELIGION on the top. Ask the two groups to write down words or phrases to describe the words on their sheets. After a few minutes, reconvene and share the results. Discuss the difference between these two concepts.
3. A Challenge for this week. Invite participants to intentionally interact with a few young adults over the coming week. They should look for common ground between generations as well as positive qualities in the young adults.

Session 2: Reaching Twenty-Somethings (If you have limited time, use only this session to explore how your church can connect to young adults.)

Before the Session: Enlist someone to record responses on tear sheets or on Powerpoint slides projected for all to see. After the session compile responses and email to all participants. You may also wish to send these to some key church leaders.

1. Briefly overview the purpose of the film and what you hope will come out of the discussion. Use or adapt the statement below or write your own purpose statement tailored to your specific goals.

The Searching Generation: Spiritual Life of Twenty-Somethings is a provocative documentary about young adults in today's world and their views about spirituality and religion. Parts of the film may include new information; other parts may surprise or anger you; still others may stimulate your thinking. After you view the film, we will discuss its content and the implications it has for helping our church to become more effective at reaching out to twenty-somethings who view the world through a different lens.

2. Lead a prayer asking God for open minds and hearts in viewing and discussing the film.
3. Distribute copies of the Listening Guide that follows this discussion guide. Encourage note taking.
4. Show the video.
5. Call on three or four volunteers to share their response to the reflection question at the end of the Listening Guide. Use responses to guide your final prioritization of the discussion questions below.
6. **Discussion Questions:** *There are more discussion questions listed below than you can use in 60 or 90 minutes.* Select from these the questions you feel are most relevant to the group and your church in the time allotted. You may wish to prepare in advance one or two questions specifically tailored to your purpose for showing the film.
 - **Questions on the responses of young adults in the film:**
 - (1) What is your response to answers given by young adults about spirituality and religion? How do they differ from yours?
 - (2) What, if anything, surprised you? Angered you? Caused you to view twenty-somethings in a different way?
 - (3) In your opinion, what keeps spirituality from playing a larger role in the lives of young adults?

- **Questions on experts' views on, "Who are Gen-Xers and Millennials?"**
 - (1) What, in your opinion, did Erwin McManus mean when he said twenty-somethings are "extremely passionate" and "don't want to play games"? What kind of Bible study might tap positively into these qualities? what qualities would be important in a potential leader of this age group?
 - (2) Do you agree with McManus's statement that today's twenty-somethings are "extremely optimistic" and want to be personally involved in addressing the world's problems? Why or why not? How could older and younger adults partner to carry out the teaching of Micah 6:8? What ministries outside the church feed the passion of twenty-somethings to change the world?
 - (3) Why, in your opinion, are many young adults not attracted to organized religion? What is spirituality to twenty-somethings, and why do they struggle to find their place in the religious communities of today? How do they make their spiritual decisions?
 - (4) In what ways have Christian churches hindered young adults from asking questions and expressing doubts? How can we as a church become more open and welcoming to them?
 - (5) What examples of hypocrisy in churches may turn off young adults? On a scale of 1-10, 10 being high, how would you rate our church in its authenticity?

- **Questions on experts' views on, "What speaks to Millennials/Gen-Xers?"**
 - (1) Do you agree with Craig Detweiler that more of today's films have spiritual themes? What are some examples? How could our church use some of these films to stimulate dialogue among adults of all ages?
 - (2) Since research shows that most young adults are unlikely to attend church, how might our church go to them? The underground bar described in the film was initiated to demonstrate love and compassion to those who likely would not attend a church. What other options might achieve similar results?
 - (3) What are some examples of religious jargon used in our church? Use Acts 2:6 ("... they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers" NLT) as a guide in identifying types of languages that would connect generations. How can older adults learn to understand the language of twenty-somethings?
 - (4) Kinnamon identified the top seven influences on people's lives as movies, TV, Internet, books, family, music and law. Why do you think church was not in the top 10? What influences contribute most to shaping the values of twenty-somethings?
 - (5) How can a story be more powerful than a traditional sermon in communicating with young adults?
 - (6) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate our church in channeling the creativity and imagination of its members? Why is this particularly important to twenty-somethings? How can we reclaim an image-driven faith?
 - (7) What do we need to consider changing about our church to connect with young adults? How could we go about listening and learning from twenty-somethings to better reach out to them?

- (8) How can show young adults that we care, even if they appear to push us away?
- **Where are we as a church?**
 - (1) On a scale of 1-10, how willing do you think our church is to change some of the things we are doing to reach out to twenty-somethings? What are the first things that need to be changed?
 - (2) What could we do to increase the buy-in of adults of all ages?
 - (3) What are the next steps we should take?