

CREATE SPACE FOR

GEN Z

to Thrive

2023 GUIDE



ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES,

Across the U.S., InterVarsity is helping Gen Z college students grow into people God created them to be. We want to help you create space for Gen Z students in your life, community, or church, to thrive as you journey alongside them.



TO UNDERSTAND GEN Z WE HAVE TO LOOK AT JAZZ

“We teach the notes through
DISCIPLESHIP”

For Millennial and Gen X student generations, the approach to discipleship was casting a big vision, (e.g. "You can reach the world!") then releasing them to just figure it out. By taking big risks and relying on intuition, past generations grew in faith. Gen Z students are completely different than Millennials and Gen Xers that came before them. And to understand how, let's take a look at jazz music.

In jazz, the band plays the notes as written. Individual musicians have the opportunity to improvise along the scale and even do a solo. Spiritual growth is similar! Discipleship, Bible study, spiritual disciplines are like learning the notes. When the Holy Spirit moves, students actively live out their calling as world changers, improvising through the moments and opportunities set before them.

DID YOU KNOW...

Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation yet!



SO TO HELP GEN Z SUCCEED, WE NEED TO TEACH THEM THE NOTES FIRST

When we ask Gen Z to solo first, or figure it out on intuition and "have faith" like past generations, it typically causes Gen Z students **frustration**. Instead, to help them succeed, **we need to teach them the notes first**—through tools, resources, and curriculum—and then let them improvise as they grow in their leadership and courage!



NOTE #1: MODEL CURIOSITY

- **PAST GENERATIONS:**

We would fire the hard hitting spiritual questions at past student generations and they would respond in meaningful conversation. The directness and intensity didn't intimidate them.

- **THIS GENERATION:**

Now, Gen Z still have many questions, so it's important to discover what it is that makes them curious and pray that they'll be open to asking questions. Our job is to then answer those questions.

- **TRY:**

Give examples of questions they could ask about faith. Try, "Here are my three favorite spiritual questions ... Which one are you the most curious about?"

FUN FACT...

More Gen Zers are pursuing college than previous generations



NOTE #2: INVITE OPENNESS



- **PAST GENERATIONS:**

We could rely on students to be vulnerable. If a mentor modeled openness about spirituality and inner life, Millennials and Gen Xers were quick to reciprocate.

- **THIS GENERATION:**

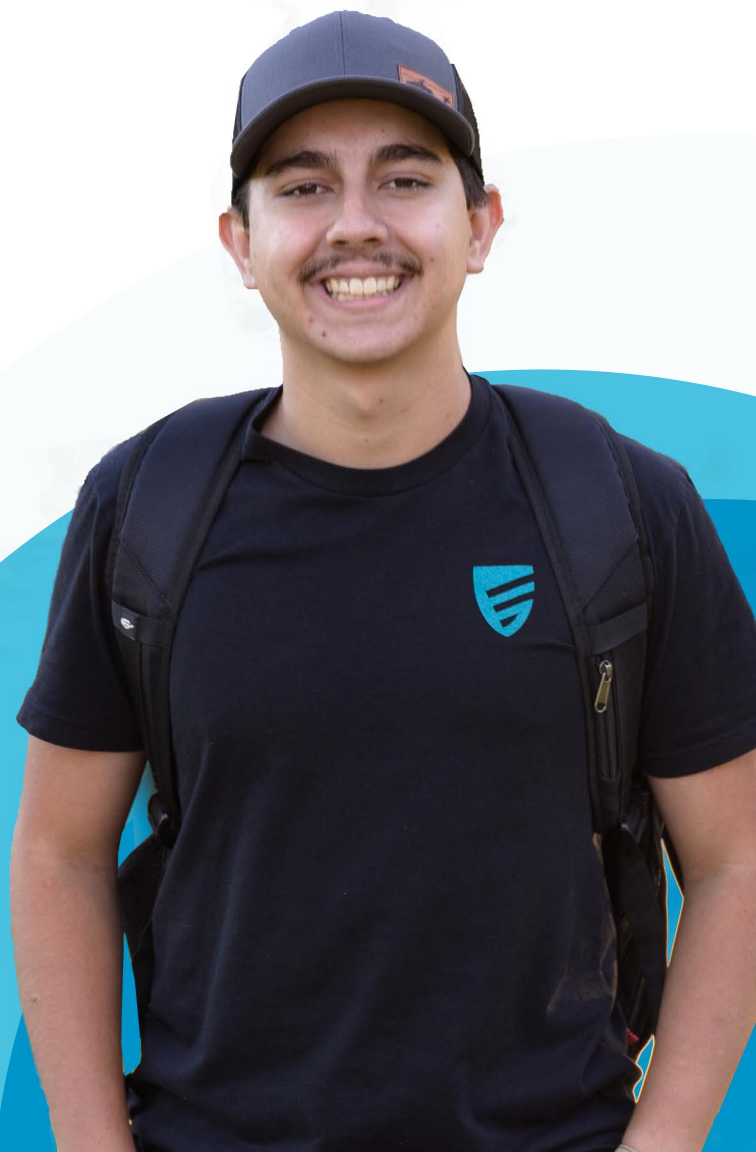
Gen Z is more cautious about vulnerability. As you engage with Gen Z, build familiarity for them to feel safe to explore what vulnerability looks like and invite them directly to be vulnerable with you. This allows them to approach the door of openness with you and Jesus.

- **TRY:**

Create common spaces when you are with Gen Z. It could mean watching tv or a movie in the living room, lingering around after dinner, or going out for a one on one meal. We found that building familiarity by being present is important. Many Gen Z wouldn't open up the first time, however given the opportunity, Gen Z will share vulnerability if they notice that you want to be presence with them.

TIPS WHEN ENGAGING WITH GEN Z

Remember that spiritual conversations don't always end in profound decision questions or share stories.



NOTE #3: FOCUS THEIR SEEKING

- **PAST GENERATIONS:**

We assumed that people would connect the dots for themselves. We expected students could identify and take next steps on their own as part of the application for a Bible study or sermons.

- **THIS GENERATION:**

Gen Z students will thrive if you coach them on identifying growth steps both in their faith and life in general. Because Gen Z is more risk averse, identifying small next steps will help them build up to the bigger, risky steps.

- **TRY:**

Teach them to pray for themselves - "Jesus, what is the most important next step I should be thinking about as I consider how to follow you as an adult?"

TIPS WHEN ENGAGING WITH GEN Z

Share your own spiritual journey you've had - the good and bad. Ask them what they liked about your journey and how they might apply your story to their life.



NOTE #4: DEVELOP STEPS FOR SUCCESS

- **PAST GENERATIONS:**

Students would learn by trial and error until they succeeded. For them, it was helpful to struggle on their way to success.

- **THIS GENERATION:**

Trial and error feel unsafe and overwhelming! Students today need a clear path, a checklist, or a step-by-step guide to success; they need to learn the notes!

- **TRY:**

Coach them by giving clear examples of what success looks like. Assure them that you're helping them practice skills in a safe environment and that success doesn't equal perfection.

TIPS WHEN ENGAGING WITH GEN Z

Turn a real situation into an growth moment. Ask them to tell you about a moment where they're anxious. Then, ask them to role-play with you. Have the conversation together and ask them what went well and what they would do differently.

GET INVOLVED

Visit www.give.intervarsity.org/discipling-genz to learn more

