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## Review of Know. Be. Live.

Cory T. Branham

*Liberty University*, cbranham1@liberty.edu

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## Review of Know. Be. Live.

### Abstract

Born between 1995 – 2012, America's young and emerging adults are known as "Generation Z." As with nearly everything they are involved in, a shorter version of that label is available as simply Gen Z, or Gen Z'ers. Generally speaking, Gen Z'ers were raised by Millennials but have had life and social interactions going as far back as the Baby Boomer Generation (those born near the end of World War II and into the mid-sixties). In "*Know. Be. Live.*," the combination of what has been handed down to them by previous generations, and the current state of cultural, political, and world affairs are examined. These factors have left the Church very low on the list of priorities for this generation. On top of those factors, Gen Z had a pause, shutdown, lockdown, and reset of their adolescence in a way not seen in a century. Efforts to evangelize to this audience were already fledgling. Doing so in the wake of Covid-19 has added an additional layer of difficulty. The ball is now in the hands of the Church. Boomers, Gen X, and Millennial Christians must answer the call and properly inform and motivate millions of young people desperately wanting to positively impact their own culture and the world.

### Keywords

Discipleship, Generation Z, post-modern, post-Christian, worldview, skepticism, post-Covid, behavior modeling, servant leadership, Church, and mission.

### Cover Page Footnote

Master of Divinity, 2021. Doctor of Ministry candidate, March 2024.

**Basie, John D. *Know. Be. Live: A 360 Degree Approach to Discipleship in a Post-Christian Era*. Brentwood, TN: Forefront Books, 2021. 216 pages, \$21.97.**

Generation Z was already the loneliest, most anxious, and post-Christian generation in the whole of American history, and quite possibly all of Western history. As noted by most of the fourteen authors who contributed to Basie's work, since 2020 all metrics gauging skepticism and religious doubt in this generation have increased since Covid.<sup>1</sup> All the while, dynamic and diverse values among young and emerging adults have become the assumed mindset. The Church as a whole, has not adequately filled the space between Gen Z's doubts or explained why the Christian Worldview answers them satisfactorily. The search for belonging and identity may also be at a historic high for those navigating to find their place in the larger society. Although the observed and accumulated data paints a real David and Goliath picture, there are strong and devoted Christians in this Generation. The goal, however, is to adequately present why faith should be the standard, not the exception.

Truly word-changing impact exists within this Generation. The mastery of digital space combined with Gospel-motivated actions could spread the love of Christ in ways never before accomplished if ever even attempted. Although fluid in some respects, "Gen Z's" motives, struggles, and desires are well documented. This generation is worth saving. History is full of examples of one generation struggling to pass on information, beliefs, and traditions to the next (20). Therefore, this problem is not new. The authors detail how the context and struggles of the day are unique, but the underlying concepts are not new.

The writers detail the potential doom and gloom as it pertains to Gen Z. Of note is that only four percent have a Biblical worldview (22). Additionally, only one-third believe lying is wrong, less than thirty percent oppose abortion, and less than forty percent believe that marriage should be a life-long commitment (34). To them, religion has become "moralistic therapeutic deism" while severe and general depression among Gen Z is up drastically post-Covid (22-23). Dealing with an audience with this makeup, to this extent, is truly groundbreaking and this work is nothing short of timely – if these findings were left unreported or solutions not encouraged and attempted, the already bleak outlook for this generation would be even worse.

A post-modern and post-Christian context is the assumed reality for this work. Postmodernism roughly corresponds to the post-World War II tendency to emphasize rationalism, individualism, and scientism in everyday life - concepts that had been growing in favor since the Enlightenment (44). Post-Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Contributing authors repeatedly use the work of George Barna and the Barna Group's evaluation of Biblical Worldviews.

culture is defined by the reality that modern pressures exist to conform to “the spirit of the age” instead of clinging to Christian thought (36). This book also assumes the significance of the digital age and makes special mention that Gen Z is the first generation to not know a world without a smartphone (151). Lastly, the authors assume that Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials contributed to the current state of Gen Z. Previous Generations contributed to the cultural dynamics or outright modeled aspects of Gen Z behavior (34).

Despite all this, there is hope. The book suggests that something assimilating Gen Z would have happened long before if not for Church activism. This is a call back to action as opposed to a call to action (8). There are unique challenges facing a post-Covid Gen Z and there are opportunities for the Church. Gen Z, experts on TikTok, Netflix, and gaming, know a production when they see one. It is suggested that this is why evangelism that blurs lines of commercialism and religion are not solving the problem (24). This generation may want to know “why” more than any generation before them (106). Also, Gen Z wants to have a cause. Having a cause appears to be a way for emerging adults to present their dynamic values (95). Non-Church organizations, movements, and structures like Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) have welcomed those values. Even though a Gen Z’er may not know why they support a cause, being invited is filling a need for belonging and acceptance that they have not found in the Church that is often portrayed as a social bully (47).

Although misguided, the ingredients of a Christian culture led by Gen Z are often present. Gen Z and the Church use the same lingo, just with different definitions. Christians cannot use terms like love and freedom when trying to reach Gen Z without defining them against their secular usage (72-76). Culturally speaking, freedom is thought of as the right or ability to do whatever one chooses and love is often thought of as the affirmation of those choices. The stage is set for the Church to reclaim those terms. However, to do so effectively the Church must provide a safe setting, in real life or digitally, where those concepts can be thoroughly addressed and tough questions can be asked without real or perceived condemnation directed toward the asker (109).

Lastly, the Church must better model the proper identity of Christianity. Modeling and coaching are required elements of Gen Z discipleship (142, 154-156). Their pursuit of identity can lead them to Christ if He is properly modeled around them. This is where the “*Know. Be. Live*” concept comes in. Believers must know God in a way that displays their own transformation and lets others know that they can likewise be transformed (174). “Be” refers to a believer displaying who they really are (old creation or new) through their character (175). Christians must try to navigate the world, a “modern-day Babylon,” daily as they live a life for Christ (176).

“Know. Be. Live.” was sought as an aid to disciple Gen Z in the post-Covid era. Due simply because of time, and noting that long-term effects of Covid events may still be ongoing, this is an excellent resource. It is also brave to take on a topic that is as controversial and divisive as whether or not Covid protocols took the long-term best interest of a generation into consideration. The early data has shown that Covid protocols have drastically sped up the decline of an already dwindling number of people who had a Biblical understanding of following Christ. Anyone wishing to better understand this problem should be aware of the Barna’s Group worldview research.<sup>2</sup> The years ahead will likely be full of similar works as clearer pictures are drawn. Basie’s efforts to compile thoughts, from more than a dozen leaders, is groundbreaking and timely.

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<sup>2</sup> The Barna Group’s overview of this research can be found on their website. See “A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person’s Life,” *Barna*, Dec. 3, 2003, <https://www.barna.com/research/a-biblical-worldview-has-a-radical-effect-on-a-persons-life/>.