Faith For Exiles
5 Ways a New Generation Can Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon

David Kinnaman & Mark Matlock
Faith For Exiles

5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon

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Digital Babylon & Resilient Exiles
We live in a complicated, accelerated culture.

“Jerusalem”
* Faith at the center
* Monotheistic
* Slower pace
* Idol: false piety
* Simple life

“Babylon”
* Faith in the margins
* Pluralistic
* Accelerated, frenetic
* Idol: fitting in, being up to speed
* Bitter/sweet tension
Weight of Digital Babylon v. Spiritual Input

Among “typical” 15- to 23-year-olds, estimated number of hours per year ...

Using screen media

- Typical 15- to 23-year-old
  2,767 hours

Taking in spiritual content

- Typical 15- to 23-year-old
  153 hours
- Typical 15- to 23-year-old churchgoer
  291 hours

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Screens disciple.
Four Kinds of Exiles

18- to 29-year-olds who grew up as Christians

- **Prodigals (ex-Christians)**: 22%
- **Nomads (lapsed Christians)**: 30%
- **Habitual Churchgoers**: 38%
- **Resilient Disciples**: 10%

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How We Defined Resilient Disciples

Christ followers who:

(1) attend church at least monthly and engage with their church more than just attending worship services;

(2) trust firmly in the authority of the Bible;

(3) are committed to Jesus personally and affirm he was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death; and

(4) express desire to transform the broader society as an outcome of their faith.
What Practices Distinguish Resilient Disciples?

- Experiencing Jesus
- Cultural Discernment
- Meaningful Relationships
- Vocational Discipleship
- Countercultural Mission
What Resilience Looks Like

Experiencing Jesus
- My relationship with Jesus brings me deep joy and satisfaction: 89%
- Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life: 83%
- Worship is a lifestyle, not just an event: 91%

Cultural Discernment
- The Bible teaching I receive in my church is relevant to my life: 86%
- In my church I regularly receive wisdom for how to live faithfully in a secular world: 70%
- In my church I regularly receive wisdom for how the Bible applies to my life: 86%

Meaningful Relationships
- The church is a place where I feel I belong: 88%
- There is someone in my life who encourages me to grow spiritually: 85%
- When growing up, I had close personal friends who were adults from my church: 77%

Countercultural Mission
- I want others to see Jesus reflected in me through my words and actions: 90%
- I have a responsibility to tell others about my religious beliefs: 76%
- I am excited by the mission of the church in today’s world: 67%

Vocational Discipleship
- I want to use my unique talents and gifts to honor God: 94%
- God designs each person with a unique calling for their life: 87%
- My church does a good job of helping me understand how to live out my faith in the workplace: 72%

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Pressures Facing Today’s Exiles

- **Searching for Identity:** *Who am I, really?*
- **Fighting Anxiety:** *How should I live in today’s world?*
- **Experiencing Loneliness:** *Am I loved?*
- **Harnessing Ambition:** *What’s my purpose?*
- **Feeling Entitled:** *What matters beyond me?*
Practice 1

Experiencing Jesus
Experiencing Jesus means clearing religious clutter for closeness with and joy in Christ.
It’s Easy to Say You’re a Christian…

Identifying as Christian

Right now, what religious faith do you consider yourself to be? Christian*

- 100% Resilient Disciples
- 100% Habitual Churchgoers
- 100% Nomads / Unchurched

Which of the following phrases best fits how you would describe your faith to others? (completely or mostly)

- A follower of Jesus
  - 97% Resilient Disciples
  - 79% Habitual Churchgoers
  - 61% Nomads / Unchurched

- A Christian
  - 95% Resilient Disciples
  - 81% Habitual Churchgoers
  - 58% Nomads / Unchurched

* This question was used in part to define prodigals from the other three segments.

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Faith For Exiles

I believe living in relationship with Jesus is the only way to find fulfillment in life. My relationship with Jesus brings me deep joy and satisfaction. Following Jesus shapes my whole life: body, mind, heart, and soul. My relationship with Jesus impacts the way I live my life every day.

…but Less Common to Find Joy in Jesus

Finding Identity in Jesus

- I believe living in relationship with Jesus is the only way to find fulfillment in life: 90% (Resilient Disciples), 49% (Churchgoers), 21% (Nomads / Unchurched)
- My relationship with Jesus brings me deep joy and satisfaction: 89% (Resilient Disciples), 48% (Churchgoers), 25% (Nomads / Unchurched)
- Following Jesus shapes my whole life: body, mind, heart and soul: 88% (Resilient Disciples), 51% (Churchgoers), 24% (Nomads / Unchurched)
- My relationship with Jesus impacts the way I live my life every day: 85% (Resilient Disciples), 41% (Churchgoers), 25% (Nomads / Unchurched)

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Faith For Exiles

I am reenergized when I spend time with Jesus. Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life. Listening to God is a big part of my prayer life. Prayer does not feel like a formal routine, but a vibrant part of my life.

Talking with Jesus

- **Resilient Disciples**
  - I am reenergized when I spend time with Jesus: 85%
  - Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life: 83%
  - Listening to God is a big part of my prayer life: 78%
  - Prayer does not feel like a formal routine, but a vibrant part of my life: 64%

- **Habitual Churchgoers**
  - I am reenergized when I spend time with Jesus: 47%
  - Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life: 43%
  - Listening to God is a big part of my prayer life: 48%
  - Prayer does not feel like a formal routine, but a vibrant part of my life: 39%

- **Nomads / Unchurched**
  - I am reenergized when I spend time with Jesus: 23%
  - Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life: 31%
  - Listening to God is a big part of my prayer life: 21%
  - Prayer does not feel like a formal routine, but a vibrant part of my life: 17%

- **Prodigals / ex-Christians**
  - I am reenergized when I spend time with Jesus: 10%
  - Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life: 10%
  - Listening to God is a big part of my prayer life: 12%
  - Prayer does not feel like a formal routine, but a vibrant part of my life: 11%

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Practice 2

Cultural Discernment
Cultural discernment means taking part in a robust learning community under the authority of the Bible in order to wisely navigate an accelerated, complex culture.
How Churches Build Cultural Discernment

Experiences at church, among those who attend

- Resilient Disciples
- Habitual Churchgoers
- Nomads / Unchurched
- Prodigals / ex-Christians

Question: Which of the following, if any, do you regularly experience in your church, parish, or faith community? Please mark any that apply. And if none apply, please feel free to mark that.

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Building Lives on the Bible

% who agree strongly with each statement

- Bible is the inspired word of God and contains truth about the world
  - Resilient Disciples: 100%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 87%
  - Nomads / Unchurched: 86%
  - Prodigals / ex-Christians: 86%

- Reading the Bible makes me feel closer to God
  - Resilient Disciples: 99%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 86%
  - Nomads / Unchurched: 87%
  - Prodigals / ex-Christians: 83%

- Bible teaching I receive in my church is relevant to my life
  - Resilient Disciples: 49%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 52%
  - Nomads / Unchurched: 8%
  - Prodigals / ex-Christians: 26%

- At church I gain greater love for the Bible
  - Resilient Disciples: 45%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 47%
  - Nomads / Unchurched: 21%
  - Prodigals / ex-Christians: 21%

- Bible is the foundation of all teaching at my church
  - Resilient Disciples: 29%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 29%
  - Nomads / Unchurched: 17%
  - Prodigals / ex-Christians: 15%

- Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches
  - Resilient Disciples: 21%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 41%
  - Nomads / Unchurched: 18%
  - Prodigals / ex-Christians: 21%

- Bible contains everything I need to know to live a meaningful life
  - Resilient Disciples: 8%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 10%
  - Nomads / Unchurched: 8%
  - Prodigals / ex-Christians: 8%
Habits Matter: Resilient Disciples Digest Nearly Double the Hours of Christian Content Annually

Annual Intake of Faith Content, 15-23-year-olds

- Prodigals / ex-Christians: 99 hours
- Nomads / unchurched: 104 hours
- Habitual churchgoers: 291 hours
- Resilient disciples: 562 hours
Practice 3

Meaningful Relationships
Meaningful relationships means being devoted to fellow believers we want to be around and become.
Meaningful Relationships

- The church is a place where I feel I belong: 88% (Resilient Disciples: 43%, Habitual Churchgoers: 10%, Nomads/Unchurched: 5%, Prodigals/ex-Christians: 5%)
- There is someone in my life who encourages me to grow spiritually: 85% (Resilient Disciples: 50%, Habitual Churchgoers: 31%, Nomads/Unchurched: 23%, Prodigals/ex-Christians: 7%)
- I am connected to a community of Christians: 82% (Resilient Disciples: 33%, Habitual Churchgoers: 7%, Nomads/Unchurched: 7%, Prodigals/ex-Christians: 7%)
- When growing up, I had close personal friends who were adults from my church, parish or faith community: 77% (Resilient Disciples: 53%, Habitual Churchgoers: 31%, Nomads/Unchurched: 27%, Prodigals/ex-Christians: 27%)
- I admire the faith of my parents: 72% (Resilient Disciples: 45%, Habitual Churchgoers: 29%, Nomads/Unchurched: 16%, Prodigals/ex-Christians: 16%)
- I feel emotionally close to someone at my church: 64% (Resilient Disciples: 30%, Habitual Churchgoers: 6%, Nomads/Unchurched: 5%, Prodigals/ex-Christians: 5%)

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### Resilient Disciples Have Strong Networks

- **I have at least one close friend I trust with my secrets**: 83%
  - Resilient Disciples: 51%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 53%
  - Unchurched: 52%
  - Ex-Christians: 52%

- **When growing up, I had close personal friends who were adults**: 81%
  - Resilient Disciples: 60%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 69%
  - Unchurched: 60%
  - Ex-Christians: 62%

- **I have someone in my life, other than family, who I can go to for advice on personal issues**: 77%
  - Resilient Disciples: 47%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 45%
  - Unchurched: 49%
  - Ex-Christians: 49%

- **My friends help me to be a better person**: 67%
  - Resilient Disciples: 33%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 42%
  - Unchurched: 34%
  - Ex-Christians: 34%

- **I have friends and family who are honest with me about my weaknesses**: 66%
  - Resilient Disciples: 42%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 34%
  - Unchurched: 34%
  - Ex-Christians: 33%

- **I am very content when I am by myself**: 58%
  - Resilient Disciples: 41%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 37%
  - Unchurched: 44%
  - Ex-Christians: 44%

- **I wish I had more close friendships**: 28%
  - Resilient Disciples: 34%
  - Habitual Churchgoers: 35%
  - Unchurched: 43%
  - Ex-Christians: 43%

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# The Emotional Climate of Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Resilient Disciples</th>
<th>Habitual Churchgoers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loved and valued</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like I am part of a family</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected with those older than me</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief from the anxiety of daily life</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected with my peers</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabled to deal with life’s challenges</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understood for who I really am</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by someone during a personal crisis</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judged by others</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed by the hypocrisy of Christians</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely and isolated</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not spiritual enough</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practice 4

Vocational Discipleship
Vocational discipleship means knowing and living God’s calling, especially in the arena of work, and right-sizing our ambitions to God's purposes.
For Exiles

I want to use my unique talents and gifts to honor God.

Christians are called to do their work with integrity, no matter the type of work.

God designs each person with a unique calling for their life.

I believe that all the work I do is important to God.

I conduct myself in the workplace knowing that others are watching me.

My church does a good job of helping me understand how to live out my faith in the workplace.

Vocational Discipleship

- Resilient Disciples
- Churchgoers
- Nomads / Unchurched
- Prodigals / ex-Christians

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How Churches Shape a Sense of Calling

Question: Which of the following, if any, have you personally experienced in your church, parish or faith community? Please mark any that apply. And if none apply, please feel free to mark that.

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*excludes those who never go to church
Vocational Aspirations of Practicing Christian Teens

Entrepreneurial: \(\frac{1}{2}\)  
Science-minded: \(\frac{1}{2}\)  
Creative: \(\frac{1}{3}\)

Three Ways God Designed Work for Good

Abundance  
Order  
Beauty

Skye Jethani points out that, according to the book of Genesis, God ordains work to accomplish three things: to generate abundance, to bring order, and to cultivate beauty.

What if the Christian community helps young people to better understand God’s design for work and helps young Christians push against the distortions of work gone wrong?

*People can aspire to more than one career, which is why the total equals more than 100%.

See Futureville (Thomas Nelson, 2014).
Practice 5

Countercultural Mission
Participating in countercultural mission means serving as a faithful presence by trusting in God’s power and living differently from cultural norms.
Resilient Disciples Have a Deep Sense of Mission

- I want others to see Jesus reflected in me through my words and actions: 90% Resilient Disciples, 50% Habitual Churchgoers, 11% Nomads / Unchurched, 11% Prodigals / ex-Churchgoers.
- I, personally, have a responsibility to tell others about my religious beliefs: 76% Resilient Disciples, 34% Habitual Churchgoers, 11% Nomads / Unchurched, 7% Prodigals / ex-Churchgoers.
- I am excited by the mission of the church in today's world: 67% Resilient Disciples, 32% Habitual Churchgoers, 8% Nomads / Unchurched, 5% Prodigals / ex-Churchgoers.
- A major part of my purpose in life is to serve others: 66% Resilient Disciples, 35% Habitual Churchgoers, 20% Nomads / Unchurched, 21% Prodigals / ex-Churchgoers.

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How Churches Contribute to Countercultural Mission Part 1

What resilient disciples experience at church

Building Courage & Readiness

- Courage to live my faith in public: 73%
- Courage to tell others about what I believe: 64%
- Wisdom for living with people who believe differently from me: 56%
- Prayer specifically for the challenges of living faithfully in a post-Christian culture: 55%
- Preparation for having difficult conversations with others: 49%

Question: Which of the following, if any, do you regularly experience in your church, parish, or faith community? Please mark any that apply. And if none apply, please feel free to mark that.

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How Churches Contribute to Countercultural Mission Part 2

What resilient disciples experience at church

**Stoking Compassion**

- I better understand the needs of the poor: 65%
- I had the opportunity to serve the poor in my community: 58%
- I have found a cause or issue that I’m passionate about: 53%
- I better understand what is happening for the poor globally: 50%
- I better understand social justice: 44%
- I better understand the needs of marginalized people: 37%

**Question:** Which of the following, if any, do you regularly experience in your church, parish, or faith community? Please mark any that apply. And if none apply, please feel free to mark that.

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How Churches Contribute to Countercultural Mission Part 3

What resilient disciples experience at church

**Giving Real Opportunities to Contribute**

- I am given real chances to contribute to my church: 73%
- I have learned what it feels like to be part of a team: 57%
- I have access to leadership training for ministry through my church: 48%

**Question:** Which of the following, if any, do you regularly experience in your church, parish, or faith community? Please mark any that apply. And if none apply, please feel free to mark that.

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What We Can Learn from Exiles

- Exiles live for the sake of others.
- Exiles take epic risks for the sake of what’s right.
- Exiles make prayer a mission.
- One mandate for exiles is faithfulness, or holiness.
- God is at work for good, even in exile.
- Exiles find their home in God himself.
Exiles are instrumental to God’s purposes in times of change.
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