

## **Throwing Footballs**

One lazy summer day, I was sweeping the front of my house.

I looked up and saw the neighbour's three year old son dragging a red plastic baseball bat, following his five year old sister.

"You stand over there!" She commanded.

The little boy walked to where his sister pointed, and got the baseball bat in a ready-to-swing position.

How cute, I thought as I resumed sweeping. They're gonna play baseball together!

Well, I THOUGHT they were gonna play baseball.

Bong! Thud!

I looked up once again and saw the silliest thing ever.

The two kids were indeed playing baseball—but they were using a football!

I choked down a giggle as I watched the little girl throw a red and black football as her younger brother unsuccessfully attempted to hit it with his baseball bat.

I quickly finished sweeping the front, and then went inside to tell my mom about the silly, cute incident.

### **A Not-So-Silly Reality**

How come so many young people are walking away from church?

Although it's easy to chuckle at what I saw my neighbour's kids decided to play that day, I must admit that there's a cold hard truth woven symbolically into what I witnessed in their little game of playing baseball with a football.

What do I mean by that?

According to statistics, a lot of young people are leaving the Christian faith.

Especially those within my own generation: Generation Z.

According to Barna, 34% of those in Generation Z have no religious affiliation.

Why is that the case?

Maybe it's because many of us are acting like my neighbour's five year old daughter.

We're throwing footballs at our young people instead of throwing baseballs.

Before I get into what I mean, I'd like to share a snapshot of what this "football throwing" has resulted in.

### **The What**

open bible

In an article by Tessa Landrum, she quotes the words from the book Meet Generation Z by James White:

the most defining mark of members of Generation Z, in terms of their spiritual lives, is their spiritual illiteracy...They do not know what the Bible says. They do not know the basics of Christian belief or theology. They do not what the cross is all about. They do not know what it means to worship.” –FROM MEET GENERATION Z BY JAMES WHITE

Why is that the case?

### **The Why**

white beads on question mark sign

Jonathan Morrow, Director of Cultural Engagement & Student Discipleship at Impact 360 Institute, stated in an interview with Christian Post one distinct reason why so many young people are slipping out of the church:

“We have been entertaining them but we haven’t been training them. A lot of churches are well-meaning and they want kids to have a good time. I am all for that but just entertaining them isn’t going to produce a lifelong disciple of Jesus and training takes time and intentionality and it is more of a personalized approach.” –JONATHAN MORROW

Just entertaining the young people in church—but barely giving them authentic Biblical training and discipleship in what is and Who is truth—is the FOOTBALL we’re throwing!

A religion that just entertains and goofs around is the football.

A religion that teaches and mentors the truth and love of Christ is the baseball.

An Appeal & A Prayer

If you, dear reader, are a leader of some sort (a parent, a teacher, a student leader, a Bible study leader, a pastor, a mentor, a role model, etc.) I ‘d like to really appeal to you.

Many young people are in a spiritual crisis right now.

And they need to learn to play baseball and learn to truly hit home runs in their spiritual life!

They need to learn HOW to KNOW Jesus and learn HOW to LOVE Jesus!

We need to stop throwing them footballs of entertainment and start throwing them baseballs of discipleship!

But how can we as leaders do that?

I believe the words that Ellen White wrote in her devotional, *With God At Dawn*, will show us the first practical step to seriously begin throwing baseballs instead of footballs at the Christian young people in our lives:

In the meek and lowly spirit of the learner, all human methods and plans and ideas must be brought to God for His correction and endorsement; otherwise the restless energy of Paul or the skillful logic of Apollos will be powerless to effect the conversion of souls. – WITH GOD AT DAWN PG. 178–

Friends, we need to pray.

We need to prayerfully lay down our own ideas, thoughts, and opinions at the foot of God's throne. We need to embrace the plans and ideas God has outlined in His Word.

If, dear reader, you sense the Holy Spirit convicting you to stand and throw the baseballs He wants You to throw; to help this young generation be the true disciples Jesus desires them to be, and truly disciple them into the love and truth of the Lord, I wanna appeal to you to just pray:

I'd like to conclude this with another statement from Ellen White that I hope and pray will encourage you as you meditate over the above prayer:

As they seek the Lord for help, he will communicate with them. They will receive plans devised by the Lord himself. –THE GENERAL CONFERENCE BULLETIN APRIL 14, 1901

Amen! Maranatha!