



# THE STATE — OF THE — YOUTH

DECEMBER 2023

## 412 LATELY

November was one for the books! We had an absolute blast this month in the 412 student ministry. We started the month off with our Annual 412 Family Bonfire. This is something we all look forward to every year as this is one of the few times in the year we get all the families together in the youth group. Whether the kids like it or not, they are forced to bring their parents ;) So if you have a preteen soon to be in the Student Ministry, this is something you get to look forward to also!



*-Fellowship at the family Bonfire.*

Many of our students also volunteered to help with the Community Thanksgiving Meal. This is a time when our church partners with other churches in the area to meet the needs of people in our community. It is always such a wonderful thing to see these young people giving their time and talents for the Lord.

Other than some incredible AXIS services on Wednesday nights, we rounded the month out before Thanksgiving with our last AfterLife of the semester. We played Dodgeball with a Dessert Buffett. No, we did not throw desserts, not for lack of trying on their part. The desserts were simply eaten in as cordial a manner as they could muster, and we took headshots with soft, designated Dodgeballs.

As for our AXIS services we had an awesome month of Bible study and worship. We finished up our series on True and Better. We talked about how Jesus is the better version of many of the highly respected characters in the Bible such as Adam, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, and David.



*-Prayer mosaic for Solemn Assembly*

Once again this was one of my favorite teaching series to date, and I hope I get to do it again someday with a future group teenagers!

Now we look forward to December and the beginning of Advent. I love Advent, and I mean, who doesn't love Christmas! We have a very unique month planned in the 412 Student Ministry and I can't wait to see what God is going to do in it!

## AN 'AUTHENTIC' YEAR

I'm on TikTok... There, I said it. I watch TikTok. I've posted on TikTok. I'm a true Z-lennial, okay?

Now that that's off my chest, let me tell you about one of favorite things on TikTok. There is a woman, whose name and account I won't mention, that works for eBay Authentication. Specifically what she specializes in is shoes and sneakers. What her job is all day is to look at sneakers that people are wanting to sell on eBay and decide whether it is approved for the "Authentic" tag. Many people want their sneakers to be authenticated because there are so many fakes out there in the shoe industry. I'm not sure what is so entertaining about watching her look over sneakers, but it is especially entertaining when she finds a fake and the seller gets very angry. Hey, who doesn't like drama?

What I think is so intriguing about these videos is not actually when she finds a fake, that only happens seldomly, but it's simply watching her give such close attention to detail. It is evident that she has years of experience handling the real things. She has seen time and

## GEN Z LINGO

"Do it for the plot"; phrase. - This is an encouragement from someone else to do something you may not normally do. Perhaps you are uncomfortable doing something you this is not something you maybe should do. Synonymous with YOLO. The "plot" is your life's story.

Note: If you hear one your children telling their siblings this, or one of your kid's friends is telling them this, you should pay very close attention. Mischief is close by.

Example 1: Stephen is being pressured at camp to enter the belly flop competition. Teenagers: "Ah come on, *do it for the plot.*" 2. A Teenage guy is thinking about asking a girl to the dance. His friends: "*Do it for the plot.*"

## GEN Z LINGO

“Laughing face”; emoji - The laughing face is no longer used to portray something as funny. It no longer carries enough feeling with it. Instead, if something is truly hilarious, use the “crying hard/balling my eyes out” emoji.

Example: 1. Stephen said something hilarious in the GroupMe. “Crying hard emojis” from everyone.

time again, not just fakes, but the actual *authentic* version of those sneakers. She has a trained eye for knowing what to look for and where to look for it. She knows how the shoe should look, feel, and even smell.

I think this is a wonderful example of what our culture is struggling with right now. Did you know that Merriam-Webster determined that the Word of the Year for 2023 is the word *authentic*? Why is that? What has happened in our world and society that authenticity is so sought out? Well there are a number of factors at play. In the age of social media it is now easier than ever to fake or augment how you look to the rest of the world. Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, X (formally known as Twitter), and BeReal are ground zero for fabricated celebrities, influencers, and even people in your own town. Our consumerist culture does not make it any easier, with the cunning and prevalence of advertising, there is a constant flow of marketing ever in your face. Don't even get me started with A.I.! All of these factors have built to a year where individual people are looking around and wondering, where in the world can I find the real thing? So much so that now we have an entire society of people desperately searching for authenticity anywhere they can find it.

There is good news and bad news, Parent. I'll give you the bad news first... This isn't going to get any better. The culture is only going to get more and more augmented and fake the farther we take technology down the road. It is only going to get harder at finding authenticity. The good news? Well the good news is that we have an anchor in the Truth found in God's Word. I know I know, that sounds very Christian of me to say, but I think it is very helpful to remember. We serve a God who has spoken to us through a book that has stood the test of time. Societies and cultures have come and gone, nations and empires have risen and fallen, yet what always stands in the end is the Word of God.

We as Christians have a hope that far exceeds anything the culture can throw at us, and we serve a God who is more real and authentic than the fabrications of society. As a Christian parent, it is your job to teach these things to your children. The purpose of this letter is to show you what I am seeing in real time from our culture that is going

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to directly impact your preteen very soon. It is important that your future teenager knows this hope that we have in the Lord and that they have a firm foundational knowledge of God's Word. There is no better way to check the authenticity of something than to hold it next to the Bible and see if it checks out. Anything not in line with God's Word is simply a fake and distorted version of His true desire for the world.

There are a handful of Bible verses that were drilled into my mind since I was very young. One of which is this month's memory verse. I want to encourage you to make this month's memory verse a constant in your home.

Following His Lead,

Stephen Yates

Associate Pastor of Students and Young Adults



## THEOLOGY 101

*Scripture – The special and chosen revelation from God to His people and the world. The texts that are revered far above any others because they are inspired from the very Spirit of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 15:5; Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 24:35.*

*Memory Verse: Isaiah 40:8*