

## Reaching Gen Z with Jordan Whitmer

### Season 2 | Episode 19

#### Opening

**Josh Yates:** Welcome friends to Sonlife everyday disciple makers podcast. And as usual, Wayne is great to have you on the show with.

**Wayne:** Hey, I'm happy to be here in the virtual studio with you, Josh.

**Josh Yates:** Today we have a great interview with a guy named Jordan Whitmer from How To Life Movement. And he's actually one of our youngest guests we've had on the show. So either that makes us getting older or our guests are getting younger. So that's, that's a good, that's good news. So Jordan comes in he's 22 years old.

So Wayne, 22 years ago, what were you doing with your.

**Wayne:** Man, 22 years ago would have been in my fifth year of high school. I didn't do much the first three years, so it took me a little longer to finish. So, so wrapping up high school and getting ready to do a semester of community college and then head off and joined the Navy to spend spend some time in Great Lakes, Illinois.

**Josh Yates:** okay. So five year graduation plan into your how many years have you served? In.

**Wayne:** Six years in the Navy. So I spent longer than Navy than I did in high school. So I guess that's something.

**Josh Yates:** Yeah. 22 years ago, I would have been just graduating from college and pursuing first ministry location. So my first ministry was in Linden, Washington, and I was about to propose that guess that summer after graduation to. To my girlfriend, who's now my wife.

So that was thinking about future marriage, thinking about starting in ministry, trying to figure out life and ministry and all those things. So that was 22 years ago. White time has, has.

**Wayne:** time has filament and 22 years ago, Jordan our guests, a date was born. This is a great conversation. Jordan, the founder of how to life movement. So enjoy our conversation.

### **Conversation with Jordan Whitmer**

**Josh Yates:** Jordan, Whitmer, it's great to have you on Sonlife everyday disciple makers podcast. And you're coming in from the chilly, very chilly Minnesota. So coming in from the big city. And so Jordan, great to have you on the today's.

**Jordan Whitmer:** Thank you, Josh. I'm so excited to be here and be a part of this conversation.

**Josh Yates:** Yeah. So today in Portland is it's a balmy 45 degrees. So they're in in Minneapolis w what's the, what's the temperature outside for you?

**Jordan Whitmer:** And nice even more, not ball me negative eight. And it probably has a windshield that's lower than that. That's what I've been learning. There's the temperature. And then there's the windchill and, and they often don't line up. Sometimes they do. But when they do. That windchill. I think I read that it's not, you're not supposed to really be outside if the windshield's under zero for too long for risk of frostbite, but Yeah, we're, we're hanging in there.

It's nice. We look forward to those highs of 30 highs of 20 that come two or three times a week. And then the rest of the week, it's like staying.

**Josh Yates:** Yeah, I have been to Minneapolis one time. And it was in my college days. We went there for Thanksgiving weekend with some friends of mine, with the dorm and we drove up there and it was just the beginning. Obviously it was November timeframe and it was already. It's already getting to, you know, very chilly, you know, in the single digits.

And I remember driving through downtown and seeing all the buildings connected and I asked why, so you don't have to go outside in the winter time because the buildings were all interconnected. And so it was a fascinating, kind of

**Jordan Whitmer:** The Skyway. Yeah.

**Josh Yates:** the skyways. Yeah. But that's not what we're talking about today.

Obviously we are really excited to hear your story and. The How To Life Movement and reaching gen Z with evangelism, with a gospel. And and that's something that you're very passionate about and we're meeting you for the first time in 2014 in Texas, and then called Accelerate Conference. And I kind of launched really kind of the beginning of your ministry.

So Jordan wants you to share a little bit of, kind of your story and a little bit about how the life movement, how it all got started.

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, once again, Josh, thank you so much for having me on the Sonlife disciple-making podcast. Very glad to be here. And yeah, I mean, my I'm 23 years old and I have a big passion for my generation generation Z and many people our hearing lots about gen Z. It kind of went from, I did some research looking back even just through my own correspondence and my emails, like when was the first time that the term generation Z even crossed my mind.

Cause I know. The term really in 20 14, 20 15, 20 16, then I think of 20 17, 20 18. That's when like gen Z people started.

using that term. Barnett came out with this big gen Z study and early 2018. And, and from that on everybody who started has started using it. And now today in 2022, everybody knows the term gen Z, whether you're Christian or secular or anything.

And but I am gen Z because gen Z is already getting into our mid twenties.

**Josh Yates:** Yeah.

**Jordan Whitmer:** Anyone born between 97 and 2012. There's the years I had normally throw around and I was born in 98. So I'm a, an early gen Z or Z millennials, if, but, but not a millennial. I mean, there is a millennial or a gen Z, but not a millennial.

But the, Yeah.

I lead a ministry called the How To Life Movement that started seven years ago when I, myself was a junior in high school. So when I was 16, as I've grown up in a Christian family, very passionate about ministry and evangelism and sharing the gospel and looking to help people find hope in Jesus.

And I know Christ absolutely changed my life because, or at least I know I would have been a totally different person if it weren't for Jesus. And I found Jesus at a very young age and to have lived pretty much my whole life walking with him one way or another and, and yeah.

and always trying to find ways to make a difference and tell others about the hope that I found in Jesus.

And when I was 16, I, and some of my friends, we, we came together and we're just praying. Lord, would you move in our city and our community. And we said, Yeah. what if we could plan? We felt the Lord leading us to do something. To plan an event. That'd be led completely by young people. All student led all led by teens to reach teens.

And it started with just four of us around my dining room table. Praying Lord, would you move in Arkansas in my hometown, in Northern Arkansas where I'd grown up and, and it started with four of us. And then. The next meeting had 15 people. And then our next meeting had 35 people. We were just praying that the Lord would move in our city.

And and then things just started to boom in our area with a group of over 60 people. And, and beyond that, we're planning and coordinating and promoting and, and, and then we had over that we planned an event. The day on the calendar was March, 2015. And we had over 750 people that ended up showing up to an event that was completely student led, led by young people to share the gospel, everybody on the stage of this. In this particular event was 18 years old or younger. So there were no youth pastors, no pastors, no worship leaders, no parents, no teachers, no coaches. It was all high school aged people. And even a few middle school people that were on the stage that night. And we planned the event. We promoted the. We were the event and the event itself was about two hours long for this first ever event.

And we called this event how to life and we that's what we named the first event and is now become the name of the ministry. And movement is the how to life movement. And that first event had. Yeah. We had a bunch of stories, a ton of testimonies, young people just sharing about the difference that Christ has made in their lives.

And and then beyond that, a lot of just every message, every testimony, everything was just pointing people to the cross saying I would be, I would not be here today. If it weren't for Jesus, I would, my life would not be as it is. If it weren't for Christ. And just helping point people to the cross and talking about what Jesus has done and, and just pointing people to the gospel.

And now there was, were other elements as well, a lot of music, worship music, and just all led by young people. Even that multiple schools, multiple churches, it was a community-wide thing. It wasn't any particular

denomination. It wasn't any particular school. It was a community-wide thing. We just all came together and created essence of fresh wine skin had to put this event on.

And and then we shared the gospel. I was able to be kind of the evangelist at that first event to preach the gospel. And I got up there and spoke and Sheridan, and we had about 75 people that night that responded to the gospel invitation that came down to the front and kneel to the foot of the cross that we had there.

And I had no idea how many people would respond in that moment at that time. But to see that many people that came down and wanted to in essence, make some form of commitment to Christ and then even more people that. That night just changed their life. It helped them kind of just lit a fire in them for it was an event that helped non-Christian kids find Christ for the first time, it helped a lot of kids that are on the fence, spiritually see their peers in a way, unlike anything they'd ever seen before, seeing them living for Christ on the stage.

And in that the program, like the power of a two hour long program of kids just sharing their heart for Christ on the stage. Turn loose to do that. That was huge. And then for the Christian Young people that put this event on, it was arguably the biggest, one of the biggest leadership opportunities that they've ever had, and it helped them grow as a leader, help them pray more and rely on Christ more.

So for no matter where young people were at on the spectrum of following Jesus, this was a huge event that both led people to Christ, they were disciplined through this process and it just, all in all was an incredible, incredible campaign and initiative and catalytic outreach. And then now long story short over the course of seven years, this started to catch on in other parts of our region and the Ozarks of Arkansas and Missouri.

And then it spread to the Chicago and Dallas and Memphis areas the next school year. And then the next school year, it spread from coast to coast around the U S and then the next year it spread international, starting with Europe, with the UK, Germany and France. I had some young people that found us on Instagram, social media then Mexico and France and different places.

And another been 108, I think is where we're at right now, 108 or 109. How to life events that have taken place in 22 states, six countries around the world. And it's all just young people from gen Z that are stepping up saying, Hey, we want to do something to reach our generation. Time is short. Our heart is broken for our friends.

So few of our friends seem to know Christ yet. We want to do everything that we can to be able to get the good news of Jesus to generation Z, especially while they're still in high school while we're still in high school before we graduate and move on in life.

**Josh Yates:** Yeah. Wow. What an inspiring story. I love, I love hearing students owning ministry, and I think that's the desire. Anyone who's working with students is that they would, that they would own it. And then students ministering to students that peer led evangelism and peer led leadership obviously is, is very inspiring.

It comes with this obviously list of challenges, which we could talk to maybe in a, in a minute here, but I guess I'm curious a little bit. What's making that stick. What's the hunger what's that fuel underneath that, that that you're seeing. Cause I think we've all tried something and it was kind of one and done.

And obviously you could say, Hey, this is spirit led movement, but what, what do you think is capturing the imagination of these young leaders? Like the students are saying, yeah, I'm in, I want to be part of this. Is there something that you can, you've seen your observe that you can articulate to that?

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I. For gen Z Christian Young people. So that I mentioned Barna earlier, their study in 2018 concluded that 4%, only 4% of generation Z American young people, teenagers only 4%. One out of every 25 young people has a biblical worldview, meaning that 24 at a 25 people in gen Z 96, set of a hundred. Probably don't really know what it means to follow Christ or, and, or they just don't follow Christ. They don't want to, or they're confused about what that means and the percent that may or may not be saved born again, that's not what that statistic necessarily represents, but bottom line, there's very few young people in this nation today that really know Jesus and.

And that's sad. And then of the ones who do they need to be discipled, and many of them are very young in their faith. And, and, and I believe that there has been, I love that, that there's a big theme of disciple-making here because disciple-making is huge. Like we, we've got to be able to disciple the next generation, especially when it comes to ministry and rising up and being bold for Christ and making their life count for Christ.

But, but many Christian, young people often what I hear is they say, I want to do something. To be able to reach my friends for Christ because Jesus has changed their life. Young people are gen Z is one of the most broken generations in history, leads all in all leads, statistics in all the wrong ways. So mental health is as bad as ever for probably any generation in American history. Mental health has bad anxiety, depression, suicide rates, it's all really bad. And, and it was, this was, these were the studies before 2019, before 2020. And, and now through a pandemic on top of it, and you just have a generation for the most part, it's like, does not really have a sense of purpose and meaning and direction in it.

And it's really sad, really concerning. It's like, what are we going to do about this? And if we're even for Christian Young people often, they're like, What are we going to do? Where's the purpose and mission and hope behind all this, but, but for many Christian Young people, they say, I want to be able to reach my friends and do something, to be able to get the gospel of them.



And, and there's a lot of nuances with reaching gen Z. We can't just take the same old programs and platforms that maybe worked in the fifties or the eighties or the, or the, the two thousands even, or even the 2000 tens and think that, that we can take those and just apply them to gen Z. We have to really change things, I think in order to get to the next generation. Yeah, And I believe who better to do that than gen Z Christian leaders themselves who really do understand the nuances of what it means to be a teenager in the 2020s and in the Western world or in anywhere in the world. And people are connected their social media, which is a good and a bad thing that I can elaborate more on.

But there with young people today, I believe there is a hunger because people know what it was like to be broken and be lost. And that doesn't mean that Jesus changes their life and makes it completely perfect this side of heaven. We know that that's not going to be the case, but he is our hope. And, and we've been saying more and more than ever like, look, Jesus is the hope for gen Z.

That's even a little motto we're putting on some t-shirts this year. Just Jesus is the hope for gen Z because he is, and, and that's what young people, young people are, are desperate, they're broken and and many are willing to try Christ. If given a chance if given an opportunity and and, and Christian Young people want to be able to get that message to their friends, they just often don't know how.

And that's where the idea of a, how to life event or social media ministry. These are all things where people are trying to find vehicles by which they can help see their friends' lives changed for forever by Christ

**Josh Yates:** yeah, yeah. Yeah, so much, so many things coming to my mind right now, Jordan, trying to figure out which, which path I want to go down. One is I love the fact. That you have really native speakers. What better way to communicate gen Z to one who already speaks gen Z who understands the culture, understands the you know, the platforms, whether it be social

media, as well as just some of the, the challenges they're feeling it emotionally, physically, spiritually, they understand that.

And then the world. So I think, I think what I may want to follow up with, well, how do you equip these students? Is there a training you walk them through in terms of preparing for evangelism. And then maybe the follow up question with that is then what things have you had to adjust in terms of training for evangelism?

He said, Hey, some of the things maybe didn't work even as late as you know, 10 years ago how you training them and then what are you training them to in terms of the, you know, the evangelism tools or strategies, what do you, what are some things you're learning in that

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. Yeah. So for, for a lot of what we have done and what we T T to this date, over the course of the last seven years of of seeing how to life events happen and take place, they've been very, campaign-based where it's like, all right, we're putting a date on the calendar. We're going to rent a facility.

We're going to plan an outreach. We're going to invite, we're going to promote, and we're going to make it all about one big date and invite people to that. And we want to be able to expand beyond this in the future. And even this year, and in the years to come that's is what we're doing now. Even more so. Well, we've done a lot of intentionality of helping people know how to plan an event and, and, and, and some of those things, cause that's a lot, that's a big practical thing because a lot, a lot of young people would love some pumps. People have been telling me like, Jordan, I would love I've wanted to plan an event or rent a facility or do something to be able to preach the gospel.

It's like, I'm not the one who, I'm not the only person who has this idea. There are a lot of young people who have a heart and a passion, but they just don't know how even on that front. And so never happens. They, they

might feel tug of the holy spirit to do something like that. When they're 16, 17, 18, like I did, but they just don't have a vehicle to do it.

And so we try to help them create, help, create a vehicle by which they can do something. But then yeah, beyond that, where we try to a lot of groups encourage each other. We there's a lot of, I don't want to say copy paste, but like a lot of what happens is, is one group will do something and then others.

Watch the video online of their event in another state or in another country, even it'd be like, oh, wow. That was really cool. I'd love to do something like that in my town or in my country or in my language or, or however. And and it's a lot of people in essence seeing, Hey, this is how the Lord's moving here.

And then taking aspects of that and it, and it's less about training and more about probably catching the vision catching.

**Josh Yates:** got it.

**Jordan Whitmer:** The DNA of what this movement has been about, which fundamentally is about Christ, the gospel, evangelism, discipleship, prayer revival, seeking the Lord and letting young people lead the way

**Josh Yates:** Okay. Yeah. So it's more as catching the vision for it and then letting them figure out how they're going to express. That sounds like there's a little bit of flexibility or it's a little bit more that they can kind of create it as they need, or is there like a structure that you encourage or how what's that?

What's it look like if I were to say, Hey, I have a sixteen-year-old who raises her hands? They I'm interested. W what, what would that, what would that look like?

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. I'd say yes, yes. And yes. To your, to your question. So there, there, there, there is flexibility there. I really, really believe in young

people and especially gen Z, gen Z is very scrappy, very good at making plans and kind of just figuring things out. We've grown up on the internet. We know where it's very project oriented a few years ago.

Someone called it the do it yourself, generation, DIY generations. I mean like people just really have a sense of figuring things out. So a lot of times people figure out things now at the same time, we're trying to help people not have to reinvent the wheel every time necessarily. And we do try to find ways to help scale things, to say, Hey, here's the structure of what an event can look like.

We do have a video manual and a training manual that we have to help people know details on how do you do church networking? How do you do, how do you find a facility? How do you build a leadership team? How do you do all the little things that need to take place in planning an event and, and putting things together.

Now, those are all steps that we take in, in that process. And but we are hoping to do more build even more of a of a training system over time and had helped turn even more young people loose to do things. And we don't let just any kid plan an event where we do have some level of an application process these days, we don't let just any 16 year old plant something we really need to know. Okay. What is kind of a big application process that takes place these days?

**Josh Yates:** Okay. So there's some level of accountability. So there there's some form and structure. Maybe it would be kind of like this, Hey, we're going to give you the ingredients. We're going to tell you how to cook it, but we're going to let you cook up your own meal and the own kitchen. But we've given you kind of the, maybe the the recipes we've given you some instructions giving it, but let them take some ownership of it.

So there's there's ownership, but there, as well as there's some kind of form of structure of what it sounds like.

**Jordan Whitmer:** Exactly. It is a mix of both helping people get that ownership because ownership is huge because so many of the younger generations, gen Z and millennials alike feel like in our world today, it's like, okay. Baby boomer and gen X generations run everything. They run the government and they run all the different things in gen Z is like, we have a voice.

We want to be able to use it too. And we want to be able to help impact our world. And often they feel like their voices are silenced or just aren't, they're not empowered. And, and I'm a big fan of empowering young people and giving them a chance. And especially in this sort of realm, there's, there's not.

I mean, sure. Someone could get up worst case scenario. Someone could get up on stage and say something really heretical or off, but like that doesn't usually happen because especially if you empower good quality young leaders who do have a heart. And so, yeah, I mean, it's somewhat. Sometimes we're kind of franchising this out in a way that's kind of the best analogy I can make it out to be.

So like there's a structure that we want to maintain and there's a standard in place where the, how to life event, but we do also try to empower people and let everybody kind of bring their own flavor to this. And, but all with the intent of reaching young people for Christ and, and kind of creating and stewarding a broad national international community, even of some of the most influential gen Z.

And the nation and from around the world,

**Josh Yates:** it. Okay. That's helpful. I think as funny as us older ministry leaders, we kind of go, how do we, how do we release it and how to make it go? Versus chaos. And so I love, I love kind of the structure of the form that you're, you're creating here. And I think the question that I, that I'm also want to hear a little more is, okay.

So what does evangelism look like today with gen Z? What have you learned in terms of keeping that message the same, but what are some of the methods that maybe you, you guys have played with or experimented with in terms of really helping the gospel message getting out with Jen?

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. So I'm going to speak just on a broader sense of what I'm observing and with gen Z Christian Young people, not necessarily super specific to how to life, but. Yes through how to life, but also beyond just with a lot of young people and leaders that I know, and, and I'm connected with in there, there's a lot of, a lot of organic stuff that's been taking place, especially since the beginning of the pandemic.

And one is and I believe in schools, you're in just through the general community, that a lot of Christian Young people that are discipled and growing, they are very intentional about personal evangelism. They do share their faith. They try to find ways to work the gospel into their conversations with their non-Christian, their lost friends that don't know Christ.

And because there've been a lot of studies where. I think people said, oh, of the millennial generation, like a third claim that a third of millennial Christians believe it is immoral to share your faith or like not, or like there's people like in a lot of people try to hype that premise up of like, oh, people don't want to share their faith because they're scared or they view it as unethical to do so now, but that isn't as, I don't think that's as much the case with gen Z, it is with certain people, but for a lot of young people that are genuine believers. has changed my life. He can change yours too. And people are kind of desperate for anything. I mean, there's a lot of like, oh, that's good for you that you follow Jesus, but, but people are very intentional in their conversations usually. And then I would say perhaps one of the biggest things that has happened in these last two years, that a lot of people aren't very aware of is just a huge spreading of the gospel on social media, particularly Tik TOK and Tik TOK has become the most influential platform.

On the planet in terms of social media just passed up YouTube in terms of watch hours. And I believe even Google in some capacity for like hours spent. It's like my goodness. If something is rivaling, Google, our search engine that shows that it is powerful and people all over the world are on. And at the beginning of the pandemic, there were a handful of Christian Young people that were tick talkers that started making videos about Jesus saying, Hey, I'm going to tell people about what Jesus has done in my life.

And they went viral because of tick tocks algorithm, people just straight up preaching about Jesus, the Christ. For some reason, I don't know why that Tik TOK allowed it to boom, but the gospel has trended. Like I think hashtag Jesus has like billions and billions of views. There, there are people all over the world hearing the gospel, seeing Jesus stuff.

And in a lot of it's literally put out by 17. Kids from Florida or different parts of the nation here or around the world that are putting the gospel out there. And, and there have been, according to my friends, they believe it truly is probably tens of thousands of young people that have come to faith through Tik TOK, through Tik TOK, live streams and videos and comment sections and zoom calls.

And. And young people being innovative, especially in that early part of the pandemic. April, May, 2020. yeah, There was amazing stuff happening. And there still is to this day, young people finding the gospel there and that's kind of created a whole new market. And I've, I've said before, if, if Billy Graham and DL moody and evangelists of the past, if they were alive today, And they were in their twenties.

They would be on Tik TOK because they could spot and evangelistic opportunity a mile away. And I believe that there's probably no greater platform right now in terms of the impact that you can get. You can be, it doesn't matter how old you are. You could be twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, eighties.

If you can just relate with young people, share your heart. Be genuine, raw, real. I think every ministry leader that's willing to entertain it should at least consider maybe getting on Tik TOK, put stuff out there and seeing what the Lord does with it, because it is amazing what can take place and what has been taking place through social media.

**Josh Yates:** it seems so intimidating, right? You think, oh, I got, I talked to, does that mean I have to put a tick tock dance on? Does that mean I have to start watching all these videos? Like what's this mean for me? do we get over that threshold? How do you get over the fear of a new platform? What would you, what advice would you give for someone like myself?

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, you don't have to dance. You can, if you want, and it might go if you do, people might think it's funny. You'll get viral, go get more views and in anything for the gospel, I guess. But I think that there definitely is a fear I would recommend. The best thing to do is to start by following.

And just getting familiar with the Christian Tik TOK community. What's already happening, what people are doing what is sticking and, and it does ebb and flow even every few months, just kind of the way that things are going. But, but there's always, there's always people leaving the platform cause they're getting tired of it.

And then there's new people coming on now, but more and more people are on the platform and there's, there's always a need for more voices and people just to, just to try something and to, to share their heart. And I'd say the biggest thing is if you're willing to be genuine. And I believe that for those of us, cause I'm simultaneous the gen Z, but also an adult now.

So speaking as an adult, I believe that we, as adults need to not look down at young people or talk down to them. I think we need to really talk to them, treat them, treat young people as adults, dignify them, let them know that



we believe in them and that we. Yeah, I think that the Lord can use them and do big things in their life.

And if we are talking to them and just trying to have a genuine, authentic conversation, it's amazing what the Lord can do through that. And if we are humble and, and, and not make it about us and our platform and what we're doing. But just try to have a conversation say, Hey, this is my story. This is what Lord's into my life.

And what are your questions? What are you going through? What are you dealing with? And that goes for whether you're doing social media ministry or just in person, youth ministry, or anything with young people. There's I think a need for us to dignify young people and more than anything, show them that we believe in them and that God can use them.

**Josh Yates:** that's powerful. That, that they're, you know, they have something to say and we're coming to them at their level and asking those questions. And so, you know, in ministry, sometimes we spent so much time trying to solve. You know, problems that the world's not even asking. And, and so if I could ask you this question, Jordan, kind of as a voice of gen Z leading really a movement here, what are the questions we should be asking?

What are some things you, as you spend time with young gen Z, that they're going, man, I wish, you know, the church would X, Y, Z, or a wish. My, my, you know ministry leaders would look like this. What, what are some of the. Th the, the questions of some of the issues you're seeing among gen Z, that we're not even asking.

And we need to start, maybe re-engaging your kind of open up that door a little bit, but I'm just going to give you an open platform to say, what are the observe a S w what, what things would you encourage us to start maybe rethinking in terms of engaging gen Z

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. Yeah. I think that more than anything, we need to listen to gen Z and hear what they have to say, hear what they're going through. Be there for them. And. And, and just be a willing voice, not trying to young young people. Our gen Z is really good at smelling agendas and sniffing out, oh, does this person just want to use me?

Does this person just want me for my platform? Does this person just want me to beef up as youth group numbers is this person just want me for, for anything. And, and, and, and that goes beyond just ministry. Like it's for the, does this company just want me for my. Yeah, productivity does this. And that's why everybody, these days is rethinking everything.

It's like gen Z just has like the biggest radar of being able to sniff something miles and miles away in terms of, okay, there's an agenda here or not. And I think it is important for us to approach young people without an agenda. And, but with, but yes, with an agenda, but the agenda is different. It's an, it's an agenda. Of just being for them, listening to them, praying with them, hearing what they're going through and, and being raw and real. Everyone, that's an adult was a teenager at one point. And we can always look back at that and say, Hey, this is where I was at.

At that point, this is how Jesus has changed my life. And I think people, I think Jen's. Wants real raw pointing things to the cross and and, and, and really, and asking those tough questions and then there, and then on another note, there are many young people who do have a ton of questions, and they're big questions about society and like deep questions about society.

Young people, often, not every young person, but a lot of young people, especially young leader, young people that are in in school. They have questions about society and social justice and the world and racism and climate change and things that we as Christians often, they're like, oh wow. Like, whoa, why we usually avoid those topics because they're controversial.

But, but gen Z

often is like, yeah. And that's why we want to talk about it. We want to talk about these slightly more controversial things and, and it's, and it's so okay though to say, Hey, we don't have all the answers on. So long as we are showing young people that we love them and we care about them.

And they're young people dealing with all sorts of stuff. So many young people dealing with identity and some young people deal with same-sex attraction or things that are just like, whoa, how do we even address that in a youth ministry context? And I believe that these sorts of things, it's like we have to show that we love people.

We care about them. We stand by God's word and what God's word says. Absolutely. Yeah. But we need to love people and help meet them where they're at. And, and especially with gen Z, that has questions about life society, the world, why there's so much pain, why there's so many issues. And even if we don't have all the answers, because we don't, we can be there for them.

We can love them. Pray with. Point to the cross and know that he is Jesus alone is our answer. And he is the hope, as I said earlier, Jesus is the hope for gen Z. And the more that we can convey that the more that young people will often listen to us. And, and, and, and we can help be instruments that the Lord can use in their lives.

**Josh Yates:** yeah, I think thank you, Jordan, for, let me open up that door and speaking into that, that was that wasn't part of the script, so to speak, but I, but I'm really curious and I love just your heart the way you articulated that. And I'm curious a little bit to Jordan. What, what are you learning just as a ministry leader stepping into now, this thing went viral essentially, you know, seven years ago, six years ago, and now.

20 different states across the globe and going international. And you're stepping into now you said kind of a, a gen Z adult you're entering into, you know, the front lines of trying to lead a movement and growing as a leader, what are some of the things that maybe you can speak into in terms of just a young leaders who are in your same maybe your same demographic, trying to S trying to step out and trying to lead what's that like for you and what are the things you.

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I I'm constantly learning. I feel like a lot of times people are, at some point I want to write a book and the problem is, is every three months. I am in a different position now because of how much I'm learning about this generation. I'm like, oh, that would be a very different book today than if I had written it three months ago or three months from now.

And eventually I do need to stop and just write a book. But, but the reality is is there, there is so much that I'm learning and. And I spent a lot of time looking at at history and youth movements and how the Lord has moved in the past, both in our country and around the world and throughout the history of the entire church.

But, but even in the last few hundred years, looking at the great awakenings and revivals of the 18th century and George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards and the Wesley's and all those leaders in that era. And then in the 18 hundreds, you have DL moody. You have different things. Sunday school movement, student volunteer movement.

I'm a big fan of the student volunteer movement and just an era where just seven generations ago today we're known as gen Z, but seven generations removed was known as the missionary generation. And that was an era of young people. Leading and going all over the world and many wanted to share the gospel and take the gospel to the nations.

And there was a whole move of God's Spirit. At that time with young leaders stepping out saying the great commission is important and we've got to get the gospel to people and, and, and the 19 hundreds, you've got even more stuff and revivals and youth for Christ. Young life and FCA, I mean, just other really cool things that have happened, but in many cases we're due for, I think, a fresh move, a fresh revival today.

It's been a while. None of the current generations have really experienced much besides baby boomer generation experienced a bit of the Jesus movement and the, in the sixties and seventies, which was definitely some awakening on that level, but in a revival of sorts, but. We haven't experienced a major awakening necessarily.

And, and I guess where I'm going with this is just with, with young people. I think it is important to continue to try to open their minds and hearts. And because it does feel like there's a hunger, perhaps, maybe even a stronger hunger amongst today's young Christian Young people that I know than has been for awhile.

And. And my hope and my prayer is that we can continue to do whatever we can to empower young people, to train them, to pour into them. Young people. One thing I've learned is that young people really need a lot of mentors in their life. They don't have a lot. I put a poll up on our Instagram page for which has over 13,000 people that follow it.

And, and, and we had about a thousand people participate when we usually do like Instagram polls. And one poll I asked was, how many of you have at least these are young people, Christian Young people from around the U S and other parts of the world. And one question I asked was how many of you.

have at least.

At least one good mentor over the age of 40, over the age of 40 pouring into your life. And by 60% said, Yeah.

yeah.

I've got at least one. 40 to 50% said, no, I don't really have anyone over the age of 40 pouring into me. And that was really heartbreaking to realize that so many young people, Christian, young people they're being disciplined by the internet.

They're being disciplined by Tech-Talk, they're being disciplined by their friends, by community. And that's not necessarily the way that it should be. Cause I, I wish every young person had someone over the age of 40 pouring into them, pouring into their life, helping them out. And just being there for them.

And that's going to take intentionality on behalf of both generations, gen Z, to be open to people, pouring into them and, and older generation saying, yeah, we believe in you and seeking them out and just saying, Hey, can I, anything I can do there for you? Anything I can do for you? How can I help you? How can I be there for you?

And, and in having that intentionality, I think would be. And it would be revolutionary if we could scale such a thing and see, one of my favorite verses in all of scripture is acts two 17 where this is Peter's Pentecost sermon, which is quoting the prophet Joel from the old test. Which is talking about God himself.

When God says in the last days, I will pour out my spirit on all people, your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. And I like that verse because it shows that at the end of time, whenever that is as we're approaching, when Christ will return, there will be a big outpouring of the Lord. And it will involve young people, your sons and daughters prophesying leading the way, both men and women, young people going crazy for Jesus and in your young men will

see visions and dream or all sorts of really cool things. But then your old men will see visions. It shows that young and old, both generations.

We'll team up and work together saying, we want to see this world reached and we know time is short and there's an urgency in so much of my life is trying to bridge these generations together, saying we've got work to do. We've got to stop with the generational polarization because it's very strong and arguably the generations are more distinct than ever.

But I think if we can bring people together across the generations, it'd be amazing what the Lord could do.

**Josh Yates:** yeah. That right there Jordan is in my, in my sweet spot. That's a conversation I would love to continue diving in. And just, how do we bridge that gap? The intergenerational gap, I think is one of the big challenges that we see in the church today. And so I think you hit the nail right on the head.

And so I don't want to, I don't want to speak more into that because I think what you said was profound and I want to kind of let that set, with our listeners and and for us to wrestle with how do we bridge that intergenerational gap? And I think that's the voice of, I think honestly, gen Z millennial leaders have to figure out how to, how to take the people who are before us and.

But as well as they have something to contribute they need to be willing to adjust and change just as much as younger, younger leaders need to be able to say, Hey, they have something to offer and I'm actually desiring somebody to invest into me. I'm looking for a mentor. And what you've articulated I think is, is actually a pressing issue.

I don't have any solutions just yet. I'm praying and I'm sure you are too. And so that's the kind of question I want to kind of end out with. From here, Jordan, what are you sensing? What's next? What's God doing with how to

life movement and in the months and the years to come then as well as, how can we participate?

How can we join you in this movement?

**Jordan Whitmer:** Yeah. Well, thank you Josh. I mean, a big part of my heart and vision more than anything is I think I we've been able to convey over the course of this podcast is just empowering the next generation. Turning young people loose. When I met you in Texas in 2014, and I spoke at that Accelerate Conference that happened when I was 16 years old, myself, 20 of 2014, I was 16.

I shared a message and in my part of my story, Did the leaders in the room, turn us loose, turn us loose and let us see what happens. And, and I think that's definitely important in a big, and that's always been a big part of my passion, starting as a teenager, myself, and now in my twenties and as a kind of a leader in the gen Z ministry world.

Now trying to find ways to help empower and turn loose gen Z. So as far as how to life, where we want to have more of. Outreach events around the nation, around the world. And and, and if you're a ministry leader listening to this we would love to connect with you. We're really trying to be able to do things as much as possible collaborating and serving the local church in the cities that we are in.

So we're not trying to just come in and do a big Jesus party and then leave town. We're we're, we're trying to help facilitate Christian young people in a city to do something more by coming to. Across your denominations, different churches, different schools and, and seeing what can take place, but all the while empowering and turning loose, the gen Z Christian leaders. And we want to see more outreach events happen. We want to see more digital content. We do a lot of leadership retreats for young Christian leaders and people who need to be trained, equipped, empowered in that way. And



a lot of digital stuff. We, we, as I've talked about, there's a big need in the digital sphere, and there's so much more that we can do.

And if someone wants to get connected with, with how to live movement?

I'd love to invite you to, to reach out to the we have our website, [howtolifemovement.com](http://howtolifemovement.com). Yeah, there's on Instagram. We're very active on Instagram and you feel free to send a message to add how to life movement or, or to me I'm just at Jordan Whitmer and J O R D a N w H I T M E R.

And I would love to chat with you if you have any questions or anything. And then I have my own podcast as well, gen Z today, podcast, where I'm usually interviewing a gen Z leader almost every week from around the U S or England or Canada or different parts of the world, talking with the young gen Z leaders about our generation. And what God is doing and would love to invite you to maybe check that out. But there's, there's a big need in this generation and, and, and my prayer more than anything is that that the Lord might move today as he has in the past. And that young people would be bold and that the older generations would also be bold and to know, Hey, their time is not done yet.

Either we need each other, we need to come together. And that intergenerational partnership, I think, is. Is is so vital in the more that we can pray through what that looks like in our own life will be huge for impacting all the nations of the world.

**Josh Yates:** Yeah, well said. I think with that Jordan, I really appreciate your time and your leadership and paving the way for gen Z, particularly around. The gospel and that Jesus is the hope for gen Z. And so a hundred percent agree. Love, we'll pray for you, pray for the movement. And I encourage all listeners to get connected to the Jordan and his ministry.

Find a way to reach out to him. And yeah. Jordan, thank you for your time.

**Jordan Whitmer:** Thank you, Josh. Appreciate it.

## Closing

**Wayne:** Well, Josh, I could just hear Jordan's passion and enthusiasm throughout that conversation. It was so good to hear about what he's doing and what God is calling him to. What was something that stuck out to you in that conversation?

**Josh Yates:** Yeah, for me, it was a really reminiscing from when I first met him at that Accelerate Conference. And when he was still a high school student talking about this disciple-making movement with his friends and then to hear. The impact seven years later, man was, was really encouraging to hear that started his living room.

And then it just, and it's moved around to waste at 108 different events, 22 different states and around the world. And to see it starting from students, reaching students in that peer led evangelism, obviously it's a heartbeat in our DNA around Sonlife, we were committed to rising up disciples. We make disciples and to see happening.

So for me, that was, that was so encouraging. Then towards the end, when he, when I kind of just opened up some questions that, Hey, For asking these questions around the church, like, what questions should we be asking? And him talking about acts two 17 which says, and it will, it will be in the last day, says, God, that I'll pour out my spirit on all people, then your sons and your daughters will prophecy and young men will see visions.

And your old men will dream dreams. I had never really thought through the kind of that a generation impact of, of disciple-making. And him just talking about the need and the hunger, the desire for mentors and cross-generational disciple-making is something that I'm, that I'm super interested and passionate about.

And so I'd even have to tee that up and he had a.

**Wayne:** Yeah. And as, as somebody being over 40, it's encouraging to hear that there are young people who, who actually want people who are a generation above them to, to walk with them and pour into them.

One of the things I loved is he talks about at their events where it's young people sharing their stories and pointing to the cross.

The students don't have to have it all figured out. They can just share what Christ has done in their life. Sometimes I think we get into like our ministries and we get into like, well, we, we better make sure. That we know everything before we share anything. And we w we want to maybe even equip our students.

We want them to like, go through all this training before they share their faith. But sometimes it's as simple as, as a conversation with a group of friends where they share about what God has done in their life and that powerful story of transformation, even if maybe they don't have all of their theology squared away, maybe they don't know everything they're supposed to.

But the power of sharing their story of what Christ has done. I was so cool to hear. That's a big part of what they're doing with the, how to life movement.

**Josh Yates:** Yeah, I love the simplicity. I love what, they're, what they're about and, and, and equipping students to share their story. And I'm bringing others in that process. So really encouraged by this, this podcast interview with, with Jordan.

Please share it with your friends. Reach out to us at [podcast@Sonlife dot com](mailto:podcast@Sonlife.com) and stick around for Our disciple-making moment.

**Disciple Making Moment**

**Jay Fast:** Hey, my name is Jay fast. I'm Sonlife international ministries coordinator. And I'm excited to be with you today for another disciple-making moment. As I think about Jesus and the way that he teaches one of the things that strikes me is that he, he doesn't always teach in the same way. There are kind of two big, broad strokes categories that I think of when I think of Jesus' teaching style Broad strokes category would be that he, he taught in a formal setting on occasion.

But I think the majority of the time that he taught, he actually taught in an informal way. And that'd be the second broad strokes category that informal teaching style or informal teaching opportunity where we're as Jesus was going he had the opportunity to speak into the lives of. And I think that's probably true for the majority of us as well.

I know many of us have have roles in which we, we get to teach. We have the privilege of teaching in a formal setting. But even those of us that have that opportunity those, those chances are few and far between. Usually once a week, maybe twice a week, something like that. But we have much more opportunity just like Jesus did to, to teach in a way that's an informal setting.

And so I just want to think with you a little bit today about informal teaching and what it looks like to do a good job. As we, as we have those opportunities in mark chapter four, Jesus had one of these opportunities. I think he's by the lake. And he, he begins to teach just in a parable. He starts telling us this story about a farmer who scattered his seed and you know, the parable, the four soils and all this kind of stuff.

And we're not going to get all the way into all the details and the minutia of that. But I do think it's really interesting. That Jesus used this technique and telling stories, and this is one good way for us, I think as well, to teach in informal ways as we have the opportunity as we're hanging out with people, as we're investing in people, as we're spending time discipling people, we can we can tell stories and use stories strategically as, as teaching tools.

I think that sometimes for me, when I think about informal teaching, one of the struggles that I have is that informal sounds like unprepared to me. But I don't think that was the case with Jesus. I think Jesus, even in his informal teaching, he was always prepared. He was always planned ahead for what he would say and how he would say it and the things that he would dive into when he had the opportunity, when those opportunities presented them with.

One of the cool things about informal teaching is that it's, it's the idea of teachable moments. That as we're going, as we're hanging out, as we're spending time with people, sometimes we just get a chance to speak something into someone's life. We, we just have a moment that, that drops right in front of us and we get to speak in and it's important to be ready for those moments.

Just like Jesus. One of the ways that Jesus taught in an informal setting was to ask questions. He was a master question asker. And so he asked I think more than 300 questions, someone once counted during his ministry. And so my question for you today because I want to teach in an informal way here.

My question for you today would be What are, what are the ways that you can think of that you could do a good job of teaching in an informal way? When the opportunity presents itself, when God gives you the chance to speak into someone's life someone who's in your ministry, someone who you're in relationship with someone who you're friends with, or a family member, when those opportunities present themselves, how can you speak in in a way that's prepared and planned, even though it's still in.

That's the disciple-making moment for today.