

# The Holy Spirit, the Image of God and Generation Z

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## Abstract

Members of Generation Z struggle to cope with the challenges of life, resulting in fear, anxiety, depression and loneliness – all exacerbated by excessive screen time. Recovering the biblical teaching on the personal, dynamic, creative work of the Holy Spirit in transforming believers into the image of Christ can help the members of Generation Z experience hope and freedom in the very dimensions of their lives in which they feel the most hopeless

Twenty years of listening to college freshmen raised in conservative Protestant churches has convinced me that the Gospel they have internalized goes something like this: “Jesus died for your sins so you can go to heaven when you die.” While this minimalist understanding of the Gospel has not changed in twenty years, the members of Generation Z seem to be struggling more than previous cohorts with fear, anxiety, depression, loneliness and a lack of relational support – all exacerbated by excessive screen time. They want to believe that they are “enough,” but find it hard to convince themselves. Many find a way to thrive, but it is increasingly rare to find a college freshman who is not struggling against at least one, if not several, major life challenges. The pandemic showed just how close many are to sinking under the weight of one too many burdens.

What if we saw their struggle as a theological problem? What Dallas Willard called the gospel of “sin management” and its attendant “miserable sinner Christianity” are inadequate

for making disciples among the members of Generation Z.<sup>1</sup> Instead, they need to experience the Good News that the Father has sent the Spirit to transform them into the image of his Son. The Spirit's work is personal, dynamic and creative. The Spirit generates hope even in the midst of suffering and creates *koinonia* among believers that enables them to grow up together into Christ. Because the Spirit's work of transforming us into the image of Christ is personal, dynamic, creative and communal, the Spirit can bring freedom to the members of Generation Z in the very dimensions of their lives that make them feel the most hopeless. But for that to happen, we need to help them understand and experience, in community with others, what God's Word promises them through the Spirit.

### **Challenges to Generation Z Discipleship**

Like all human beings, young people today are created in the image of God and have many gifts and strengths. Their shared generational traits present both opportunities and challenges to discipleship.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, who God has made them can become the raw materials with which the Holy Spirit can paint compelling portraits of Christ to the glory of God. But that will not happen if they remain stuck or hopeless. Understanding the characteristic challenges facing this generation of young people can help us know which dimensions of the Spirit's work they most urgently need to experience.

Members of Generation Z are especially tempted to give into fear. Coming of age during the recession of 2008 and living through a global pandemic has made them anxious about their finances, health, and emotional well-being. Although we don't know all of the reasons, anxiety, feelings of excessive stress, and depression are on the rise among younger Americans when compared to earlier generations at the same stage in life. Entering college

students in 2016 were more likely than their counterparts in 2009 to rate their own emotional health below average (up 18%), to report feeling overwhelmed (up 51%), to expect to seek counseling (up 64%) or to report feeling depressed (up 95%).<sup>3</sup> The percentage of undergraduates who “felt overwhelming anxiety” in the past 12 months rose from about 50% in 2011 to just under 60% in 2016.<sup>4</sup> Self-reported physical and emotional health among college freshmen has been on a downward trend for some time.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, 42.7% of college freshmen reported “frequently” or “occasionally” feeling “overwhelmed by all I have to do” and 37% reported feeling anxious. Both percentages were up slightly compared to the same survey from 2016.<sup>6</sup>

Many feel lonely, isolated, and wonder whether they matter. The percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> graders who are satisfied with their lives as a whole and with themselves dropped dramatically between 2012 and 2014, reaching an all time low since 1976.<sup>7</sup> Even more troubling, the percentages of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who agreed “I feel like I can’t do anything right,” “My life is not useful” or “I do not enjoy life” began rising around 2012.<sup>8</sup> Between 2011 and 2015 loneliness went up 31% among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 22% among 12<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>9</sup> Depressive symptoms and suicide risk factors have also risen relative to previous generations.<sup>10</sup>

In their struggle for a sense of personal worth, members of Gen Z are drawn to the phrases “I am enough” or “you are enough.” The concept of “enough” seems to be used in various ways, ranging from an affirmation of one’s value despite brokenness all the way up to a declaration that you can achieve your dreams no matter what they are.<sup>11</sup> The phrase has become widespread probably because it addresses the angst many young people experience regarding whether they have value and are worthy of love. Paralympic swim champion Jessica

Long recalls growing up struggling to believe that she was “enough,” which for her meant questioning that she was worthy of the love of her birth parents or her adoptive parents. She poured herself into swimming as a way to bolster her sense of worth, drove herself so hard that she developed an eating disorder, and remained angry with God for years. Her story has a happy ending that came when she finally surrendering to God, but many members of Generation Z still struggle mightily to believe they are “enough” in God’s eyes.<sup>12</sup>

The constant use of screens and social media seems to be exacerbating anxiety, depression and the search for a sense of personal worth among today’s young people. A number of teenage behavior and mental health indicators made rapid changes around 2011-2012, just the time when the majority of teenagers first owned smart phones. Twenge tracks trends in teenagers’ use of time and finds that screen time is stealing from face to face relational activities and sleep. Decreases in those two factors are known to increase risk for loneliness, depression and anxiety.<sup>13</sup> Gen Z 10<sup>th</sup> graders who visit social networking sites every day are more likely to agree “I feel lonely” or “I often feel left out of things”<sup>14</sup> In contrast, teenagers who spend their time on in person social interaction, sports, religious services, work, or even print media are less likely to feel lonely.<sup>15</sup> Eighth graders who spend 10 or more hours per week on social media are 56% more likely to be unhappy and 27% more likely to be depressed.<sup>16</sup> Numerous researchers find that social media use promotes negative comparisons with others, creates fear of missing out, and pressures young people to project a perfect image to others and to stay in constant connection with friends.<sup>17</sup> The pandemic further reduced opportunities for in person activities and increased the use of online communication.

Preliminary studies of the impact of the pandemic on Generation Z show that young people are less optimistic for the future than they were in 2019 and are continuing to experience high stress levels, even after returning to in person activities.<sup>18</sup> In addition, adolescents who experienced more pandemic related stressors, such as an ill family member, a family member who was an essential worker, job loss from a family member, or even just lack of a daily routine in the home were more like to experience behavior problems or emotional distress.<sup>19</sup>

These empirical studies could be supplemented with anecdotal evidence from any teacher, professor, or youth pastor. For example, for the past 20 years I have been asking students in a freshmen theology course to write a spiritual autobiography, simply asking them to describe the most important people and experiences that have shaped their spiritual lives. This general writing prompt always results in students describing their church involvements in a way that implies that when they are going to church and enjoying it, their relationship with God is good. They also typically mention times of suffering as important in their spiritual life story. In recent years, more and more students are reporting significant major life challenges and even traumas such as the suicide of a friend or sexual abuse. More students are reporting anxiety or depression and associated physical symptoms than in the past. During the pandemic, more first year students than ever before seemed unable to manage the multiple demands of the transition to college.

How is their faith helping members of Generation Z who are professing Christians cope with these challenges? In my conversations with young Christians, I see them trying to believe that they are “enough” in God’s eyes. They long for reassurance that God loves and values them as they are, in all of their weakness, brokenness, and incompleteness. Yet they seem to

struggle to live in that reality. The Gospel as they understand it does not seem to sustain them when suffering comes their way. In my students' spiritual autobiographies, many describe getting angry at God and distancing themselves from him because of the suffering they have endured. Why do they do this? Their implicit theology seems to be that God should protect them and their loved ones from all harm, and if harm comes, then God is not doing his job.

While this reaction to suffering is nothing new and is even to some extent understandable, what is striking is how their beliefs about God and the Gospel seem either inadequate or untapped in their struggle to cope.

Many young people today are facing high stress, trauma, and confusion. Yet they may think that God's job is to keep them from experiencing such things, and they accuse him of not doing his job when suffering comes. These young people are not experiencing peace, joy, and hope in the Holy Spirit. They struggle under mental and emotional burdens and are not experiencing enough progress to believe that Jesus can help them. Instead of a transactional, "when you die" salvation, we must proclaim a personal, life-transforming salvation. Jesus came to give us new life, and that new life is brought to us personally by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God personally bringing all that God has promised us in Christ "over to our side of the relationship" in Tom Smail's memorable phrase.<sup>20</sup> It is urgent that we help members of Generation Z understand and experience the Holy Spirit's personal, dynamic, and creative work in their lives.

### **Personal, Dynamic, Creative: The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus and the Life of the Church**

Before we specifically examine how the Holy Spirit works to form believers into the image of Christ, we must pause to investigate how the Holy Spirit's relationship with the Father

and the Son shapes everything about how he works. When we look at the life of Jesus, we see that the Holy Spirit interacted with him in a way that was personal, dynamic and creative. The Spirit worked in a similar way in the life of the New Testament era believers and their churches.

It is a theological commonplace to say that the Spirit points to Jesus, not to himself. But it is also true that we cannot fully understand who Jesus is for us if we do not understand who the Holy Spirit was for him. And we won't fully appreciate how the Holy Spirit can work to form Christ in us if we don't understand what the Gospels teach about the Holy Spirit's role in the life of Christ. In what follows, I will make use of the argument made by Tom Smail in his book *The Giving Gift*, but his theology of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of Jesus is not unusual in the history of Christian thought. In his magisterial work, *The Holy Spirit—In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today*, Anthony Thiselton finds a consensus among New Testament scholars that supports Smail's approach.<sup>21</sup>

First, the Holy Spirit was involved in producing the humanity of Jesus in the womb of Mary. In a parallel but not identical way, the Holy Spirit regenerates us and re-creates us as believers in Jesus. We are "born from above" and born "of water and Spirit" (John 3:3-6).<sup>22</sup> The Holy Spirit is God in person giving us new life, new birth, making us a "new creation" in Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Second, the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus as Messiah at his baptism. All four Gospels note the importance of the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus at his baptism. In these important Trinitarian passages we see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all present and active, personally interacting with each other. At his baptism, Jesus was anointed by the Spirit for his role as messianic deliverer.<sup>24</sup>

The Spirit was active in Jesus' messianic ministry. After his baptism, the Spirit led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The Holy Spirit was at work in the ministry of Jesus, empowering his teaching, miracles and exorcisms.<sup>25</sup> For example, Jesus says "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God . . ." (Matthew 12:28). While preaching the Gospel to Cornelius and his household, Peter highlights Jesus' anointing with the Spirit as crucial to his miraculous ministry, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Spirit and with power and how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). Similarly, believers can experience the Holy Spirit anointing and empowering them for mission. Smail notes that Jesus' use of Isaiah 61 to describe his ministry (See Luke 4) shows that liberation at all levels and the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit should go together: "It is within this context of Spirit-anointed servanthood that sends you to others to set them free at every level, that the charismatic dimension of the gospel and the right exercise of the gifts of the Spirit can alone be properly understood and healthily experienced."<sup>26</sup> The Holy Spirit anoints both Jesus and his followers for ministry to broken humanity in all dimensions of human need.

The Holy Spirit was personally involved in raising Jesus from the dead. Paul connects the Holy Spirit with Jesus' resurrection and with our resurrection as recipients of Jesus saving work. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through is Spirit that dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). Jesus' resurrection and ascension in turn are connected to the sending of the Spirit. Peter says of Jesus in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, "Exalted at the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." (Acts 2:33). The risen and ascended Christ "received" the Spirit from the



Father and poured the Spirit on his disciples. This marks yet another dynamic interaction between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this time intimately connected with Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension.

We too have the Spirit as "first fruits" (Romans 8:23) or down payment (Ephesians 1:14) of our eternal, resurrected life. And by the Spirit we have full assurance, both objective and subjective, that God will complete his work of glorifying us to be like Jesus and with Jesus forever, incorruptible. The Spirit will give us full, resurrected, eternal life so that Jesus may be the "firstborn in a large family" (Romans 8:29). In the meantime, we, like our Lord, must suffer on the path to our glorification (Romans 8:17-18; 2 Corinthians 4:8-12, 16-17).

What can we conclude about the way the Holy Spirit interacted with Jesus? Smail summarizes what these passages collectively teach:

The life of the Son in his interaction with the Father and the Spirit is not lived in the still immobility of static perfection but in the dynamic of constant interchange and mutual giving. He is given in the Spirit exactly what is required at every step of his incarnate career. Not that he had more of the Spirit, in a quantitative sense at one time than at another. He had all of the Spirit from the start, but the Spirit in him responded creatively to the ever changing and developing demands that his life and death made upon him at every point.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, even for Jesus, the Holy Spirit was not a static possession or impersonal power. Instead, the Spirit was God in person dynamically and creatively providing Jesus in his humanity all that he needed in order to be and to do whatever God the Father sent him to do. The same pattern holds for the Spirit's work in disciples of Jesus. Again, Smail provides a helpful summary:

The fullness of the Spirit, both for him and for us, is no immediate possession of a static completeness, but a continuing dynamic self-giving by the Spirit to the person he is filling, which is relevant to where that person is and what he has to

do and be. What Paul in Ephesians 5:18 urges upon us, was first of all true of Jesus: he went on being filled with the Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

Further, it is crucial not to separate what the Spirit does in relationship with Jesus from what the Spirit does in us. Smail continues, “The Spirit, whom we receive from him [Jesus] is the Spirit who has perfected all his work in Christ’s humanity and, on that basis, can do his work in us in whatever order and way his love for us directs.”<sup>29</sup> It is especially worth noting that Smail, who was personally influenced by the charismatic renewal and sees his work as building on its positive contributions, is nevertheless in this passage also arguing against a “second blessing” view of the reception of the Spirit in the believer’s life. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is both sovereign over how he works and sovereignly capable of giving the believer, in a dynamic, personal way, just what the believer needs in each stage of his or her life. Unfortunately, both those who look for a “second blessing” encounter with the Spirit and resulting dramatic manifestations and those who are wary of such experiences can sometimes be found neglecting the personal, dynamic action of the Holy Spirit.

The personal, dynamic, creative work of the Holy Spirit continues in the church as portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles. By the Holy Spirit Jesus gave instructions to the Apostles (Acts 1:2). Through the Old Testament prophets the Spirit “foretold” (1:16) and “predicted” (11:28) the saving work of Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost, the believers spoke with other languages as the Spirit “gave them ability” (2:4). The Holy Spirit spoke to believers on many occasions (4:24; 10:19; 21:11; 28:25). The Holy Spirit witnessed to the truth of the good news as did the apostles (5:32). The Holy Spirit “called” Paul and Barnabas and “sent” them on their mission work using the members of the church at Antioch to do so (13:2, 4). The Holy

Spirit was personally involved in the council of Jerusalem: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials" (15:28). The Holy Spirit personally forbade Paul and his party from going to certain locations to preach (16:6, 7). The Spirit took Paul "captive" and sent him to Jerusalem (20:22-23), "testifying" to him of the imprisonment and persecution that awaited him. The Holy Spirit made some people "overseers" for the churches (20:28). On Paul's journey to Jerusalem, the Spirit told some believers that Paul was headed for trouble so they urged him not to go. But he disregarded their advice, showing that hearing the Spirit speak is not the same as discerning the correct response (21:4). We see several occasions in Acts where individuals or groups of believers who had already "received" the Spirit are in a special moment "full" or "filled" with the Spirit leading to bold proclamation, healing, or inspired prayer (4:8, 4:31, 13:9). The book of Acts also describes Barnabas, Steven, and his fellow leaders appointed to care for the widows as "full of the Holy Spirit." Luke used this same phrase to describe Jesus as he went from his baptism into the wilderness and it means "an endowment of some duration . . . to mark the person concerned as one in whose life the Spirit was regularly and powerfully felt."<sup>30</sup> A believer's life can be characterized as "full of the Holy Spirit" in a steady, ongoing way, yet that same believer can experience special moments of the Spirit's perceptible activity. In Acts we see the Spirit personally responding to the situation of every believer and every church to creatively help them be all that Jesus is calling them to be in that moment.

Even those who insist that some of the specific manifestations of the Spirit reported in Acts, Galatians and 1 Corinthians might not be normative for believers today should carefully consider what it means that the Holy Spirit continues to work personally, dynamically and

creatively in the lives of individual believers and churches. From this list of examples in Acts we can see that the Holy Spirit works through disciples for the sake of the kingdom of God, that the same action can be said to be an action of the Holy Spirit and the action of an individual or a group of disciples. We see the Holy Spirit exercising agency, guiding, revealing truth, giving ability, comforting, etc... We see the Spirit doing different things in different people responding to different situations, in dynamic interaction with the church.

We must ask what difference it makes to view the Bible's teaching on the Holy Spirit as teaching about a person who works dynamically and creatively in the lives of God's people. As many have noted, if the Spirit is not a person with a unique personal role in our salvation, then we are effectively denying the doctrine of the Trinity and collapsing the Spirit into the Son or into the Father and the Son.<sup>31</sup> And this is not just a technical point for theologians who like such puzzles. Without intending it, we might find ourselves proclaiming "another Jesus," a "different gospel" and "a different spirit" than the one we have received (2 Cor 11:4). When we misunderstand or neglect the Spirit's work we get out of step with him and do not make effective use of the gift that he is to us from the Father. And not fully embracing the Spirit as God's personal gift to us, we might fail to receive the full blessings he wants to give. Tom Smail puts this connection between the personhood of the Spirit and our experience of God's love and salvation especially well:

The indwelling of the Father and the Son in us is the Holy Spirit, who is their personalized self-giving to us. The Spirit is the originating love of the Father and the responding love of the Son given to us in personal form. The Spirit of the Father and the Son comes to us to enable our reception of and our response to what God has done in Christ.<sup>32</sup>

If we firmly believe that the Spirit works this way and begin to experience it, we will expect more help from the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. We will experience more hope for the completion of the Spirit's work on the last day. We will be encouraged to actively cooperate with the personal work of the Spirit as he brings the life of the Father, Son and Spirit into our life. We will be more likely to remember that God is personally present with us and in us, not distant or uninvolved in our lives. Believing that the Spirit works in these ways helps us overcome the challenges and suffering that come our way as we serve Jesus' mission and grow in holiness. We will cope better, have courage to serve the Gospel, and will experience the kind of growth in Christlikeness that encourages hope. Without becoming triumphalistic, we will expect more and experience more of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And of course, the Holy Spirit's work is to take what belongs to the Father and the Son and make those things real in the life of the believer. Clearing the way for a more robust working of the Spirit in our lives can help us have more of God and all that he promises us in his Word. And it is not hard to imagine how experiencing the Holy Spirit in these ways might be just what the members of Generation Z need. How can we help them experience this kind of life in the Spirit?

### **The Holy Spirit Transforms us into the Image of Christ**

Having established that the Holy Spirit's work is always personal, dynamic, and creative, we must now consider how the Holy Spirit transforms believers and how we can experience that transformation more fully. First, it is important to remember that part of the Good News of the Kingdom of God that Jesus taught was that his disciples would become like him. They would love one another the way he loved them (John 13:34), display kingdom character and values (Mt 5:1-16), become people who lived the moral law the way he did (Mt

5:17-48), fast and pray like him (Mt 6:1-21), trust God's provision like him (Mt 6:25-34), bear witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mt 10), cast out demons and perform miracles (Mt 10), suffer persecution like him (John 15:18-25, 16:2-4), train others to know and follow his teachings (Matt 28:16-20), lead as servants (Luke 22:24-27; Matthew 20:20-28), and even share the same kind of communion with God the Father that he enjoyed (John 14:23, 17:20-21).

Everyone in Jesus' day expected that if a rabbi trained his disciples well, they would become recognizably like their him in their character and teaching.

Jesus taught that it was the combination of his training (Luke 6:40) and the work of the Holy Spirit "abiding" within the disciples that would equip them to be like him (Luke 14:15-17, John 20:21-23). The Holy Spirit would teach them and remind them of what Jesus had taught (John 14:26). He would "testify" on Jesus' behalf and help the disciples to do the same (John 15:26). The Spirit would continue Jesus' work of showing unbelievers that they are on the wrong path, headed toward judgment and showing them an alternate path, the path of Jesus' righteousness (John 16:8-11). We could ask how the Spirit shows the world God's kingdom the way Jesus had done while on earth. The Holy Spirit can speak directly to the hearts of unbelievers about Jesus. But the whole thrust of Jesus' teaching in John 14-17 is that the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the disciples will keep them "abiding" in Jesus and through their resulting love for one another and witness to Christ the world would know that God had sent the Son (John 17:23).

Finally, the Spirit "speaks what he hears" from the Father and the Son and in so doing glorifies the Son. Jesus teaches that the Spirit will take "what is mine" which is "all that the Father has" and declare it to the disciples (John 15:11-15). The Holy Spirit takes all truth, not

just information, but “all that the Father has” and makes it real in the lives of disciples. In one of his post resurrection appearances, Jesus tells the disciples “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Then he “breathed on them” and said “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21-22). The disciples were able to do what their Teacher did not just because they had been “companions of Jesus” (Acts 4:13) but because they were “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-8).

While the focus in the Gospels and Acts is on the full equipping of the disciples by the Spirit to do what Jesus did, other New Testament writers emphasize the disciples’ ongoing and future transformation into Christlikeness. The writer of Hebrews and Paul emphasize that Jesus is *the* image of God, the perfect representation of God (Hebrews 1:3, Col 3:15, 2 Cor 4:4). Therefore, when we receive new life in Jesus we are recreated or reborn and enter into a process of being “renewed” (Ephesians 4:23-24; Col 3:10) to more and more accurately reflect God as his image bearers. All human beings are created in the image of God and remain in the image of God, despite sin. That means that they belong to God, are valuable to God and possess a dignity from God that is not to be violated. But being created in God’s image also means that human beings have a glorious destiny to reflect God’s character in how they rule and care for the earth and one another. Sin did not remove the image of God. But sin damaged human beings such that they could no longer reflect God, relate to God, and rule over creation as God intended. It is this latter “reflection” dimension of the image of God that is progressively restored in Christ.<sup>33</sup>

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in this process of transforming disciples into the image of Christ who is *the* image of God. When Jesus breathed on the disciples and said

“receive the Holy Spirit” he was most likely intentionally re-enacting God breathing life into Adam in Genesis 2. As “the Lord, the giver of life” the Holy Spirit is intimately involved both in our original creation and in our re-creation in Christ. Once we are alive in Christ by the Spirit, the Spirit continues the work of transforming us into the image of Christ. According to Paul, this transforming presence of the Spirit in believers is one the distinctive elements of the New Covenant: “Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Although this is a central passage for understanding how the Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ, it does not stand alone. By synthesizing the teachings found in the most important passages on the subject (2 Corinthians 3-6, Romans 8, Colossians 3) and supplementing with related clarifying passages (Galatians 5; Ephesians 4) we find several recurring themes. The following themes can be found in both ancient and modern theological reflection on the Spirit’s role in transforming believers to look more and more like Jesus.<sup>34</sup>

The work of the Holy Spirit to transform us into the image of Christ is a direct consequence and evidence of the Gospel. To neglect this dimension of the Gospel creates misconceptions about what Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection and leads to believers expecting and experiencing less transformation. In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is defending his Gospel ministry against detractors by showing the New Covenant Gospel he preaches is superior to what his opponents teach. The believers in Corinth are his “recommendation letter” that could be “known and read by all” because through his gospel ministry they changed



to become “a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor 3:1-3). In other words, Paul thought the Corinthian believers themselves were evidence that his Gospel ministry was valid because the Holy Spirit was using him to produce hearts that looked like Christ, as everyone could see. Later in this extended passage about his ministry, Paul says that what we “see” when we see Jesus and are transformed by the Spirit (3:17-18) is “the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (4:4). Similarly, in Romans 8 Paul is reaching a conclusion regarding what he has been teaching about the Gospel in chapters 1-7. As a result of hearing and believing the Gospel and receiving new life in Christ, believers come under the authority and dominion of the Holy Spirit and are no longer under the dominion of sin and death. They can “live according to the Spirit” be “led by” the Spirit and think the way the Spirit wants them to think (Romans 8:1-13). Their current life and transformation in the Spirit is a direct consequence of God’s plan of salvation found in the Gospel that moves from foreknowing to justifying to glorifying (Romans 8:28-30). In both 2 Corinthians 3 and Romans 8, the new life in the Spirit is presented as one of the most important benefits of the Gospel that sets it apart from the Old Covenant or anything else that humans might pursue as a path to life and wholeness.

Since it is part of the Good News about what Jesus has done, this transformation into his image is both an ongoing reality in our lives and our future destiny. Currently the Holy Spirit is transforming us “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor 3:18), meaning that we really start looking more and more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit really does rule our thoughts and behavior and empower us to “put to death the deeds of the body” (Romans 8:1-13). And the

Holy Spirit causes those who “live by” “walk in” and are “led by” him to produce the “fruit of the Spirit”: “love, joy peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:16, 18, 22-23). The Corinthian believers were a “letter of Christ” that everyone could read, written by Paul and the Holy Spirit. Paul and the writer of Hebrews felt justified in correcting their readers for not yet being “mature,” that is, for still looking like spiritual babies rather than looking enough like Jesus to be recognizable as trained disciples (Hebrews 5:11-6:2; Ephesians 4:11-14 1 Cor 3:1-4). Real progress in Christlikeness is possible in this life.

Yet we also have this treasure of the “glory of Christ” in “clay jars” (2 Cor 4:7). Even though we have the Spirit in us, we struggle with many human weaknesses (Romans 8:26). We suffer and we groan (2 Cor 4:7-12, Romans 8:17-18, 23, 35). We long for the full glory of the image of Christ which we will reflect when we are raised from the dead on the last day (Romans 8:11, 18, 30; 1 Cor 15:42-49). The full image of Christ includes a resurrected body like his. Interestingly, some of the Church Fathers believed that this progression in Christlike perfection would continue through all eternity since our communion with and reflection of a limitless God is also limitless.<sup>35</sup>

By showing us ongoing progress in Christlikeness and by giving us a foretaste of an “eternal weight of glory” (Romans 8:18, 2 Cor 4:17) the Holy Spirit inspires hope. Paul says that his experience of transformation into the image of Christ and seeing within himself even a bit of the “glory” of Christ makes it possible for him to “not lose heart” but instead to endure suffering for the sake of the Gospel (2 Cor 4:1, 16). Indeed, the Spirit is the “first fruits” (Ro 8:23) and “down payment” (Eph 1:13-14) of all that God has promised. Both images teach us

that we already have some of what we will receive and can be guaranteed that God will give us the rest on the last day. So more is at work here than just accepting some ideas. The Spirit is in us and has brought these realities into our hearts. We can be confident that God is using all circumstances to accomplish his purposes for us (Romans 8:28) and his purpose is that “those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). The Holy Spirit’s work in us now shows us that God is already doing what he has promised to complete. People who are alive in the Holy Spirit are people who can experience hope.

The Holy Spirit is personally and dynamically involved in creating hope in us. First, he creates hope by reassuring us of the Father’s love. After talking about the life ruled by the Spirit and our resulting struggle to “put to death” our sinful deeds, Paul writes “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a Spirit of adoption [or the Spirit who gives adoption].<sup>36</sup> When we cry ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, the heirs, heirs of God and join heirs with Christ” (Ro 8:14-17). The Holy Spirit adopts us into God’s family and gives us the experience of a relationship with the Father and each other that is like the one Jesus enjoyed. The most likely reason for Paul to introduce the Aramaic word “Abba” here is because Jesus himself was known for addressing the Father that way.<sup>37</sup> And we must remember that the Spirit was personally, dynamically and creatively at work connecting the Son to the Father at every stage of his earthly ministry. So it is with us. The Spirit takes away our fear, reassuring us that our place in God’s family is secure. So the hope, assurance, and closeness to the Father that the Spirit brings into our lives is not only a truth to be believed, it is a relationship to be experienced.

Second, the Spirit helps us cope with suffering and persevere in hope by praying for us from within us. “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit prays to the Father in just the right way at all times so that from within us is coming prayer that helps us in our weaknesses. We also pray as best we can, but here we have a promise that part of the personal, dynamic, creative work of the Spirit is to pray to God, from within our hearts, for just what we need – even when we don’t know how or can’t. Commentators are divided on whether these “sighs too deep for words” with which the Spirit communicates to the Father on our behalf can be perceived by us. Similarly, it is not clear whether our “groans” in verse 23 are somehow connected to the “sighs” of the Spirit.<sup>38</sup> Yet the overall promise of this passage is that by the Spirit those who are in Christ can experience hope in the midst of suffering and weakness. So it is likely that on at least some occasions, the believer will have some conscious and reassuring experience of the Spirit praying from within her. On other occasions, especially when I am too buffeted by weakness and suffering even to pray, I can trust that the Holy Spirit is praying from within me. Prayer is a gift of the Spirit, not just a human task.<sup>39</sup> Believers need to pray, but they don’t rely on their prayers alone. The Spirit prays for them from within them, especially when they are at their weakest, helping them endure suffering with hope.

The Holy Spirit transforms both individuals and communities into the “image of Christ.” The key passages all use “us” and “we” language. “We all with unveiled face” are being transformed into the “same image” (2 Cor 3:17-18). Of course this language means that

each individual believer is being transformed into the image of Christ. But these and other Scriptures also consistently describe the image of God in corporate terms.<sup>40</sup> In Ephesians 4, Paul makes this corporate dimension of the image of Christ explicit when he writes, “until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Working together, believers must “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body . . .” grows (Eph 4:15-16). Paul expects that the church in Ephesus will collectively look more and more like Jesus over time.

Although we have seen some hints already, we must now ask “how does the Holy Spirit transform us?” What are the processes or means he uses? First and foremost, the Holy Spirit gives us the very life of God. He is the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” who gives us “freedom” from condemnation (Romans 8:1) and from the Old Covenant that brought “death” because we couldn’t keep God’s good law (Romans 8; 2 Cor 3:6-11). The Spirit makes us able “see” Jesus for who he really is, the Son of God and our savior, and by gazing at his face “in a mirror” (i.e. indirectly) we can be transformed (2 Cor 3:15-18, 4:4, 6). Because we are now alive in the Spirit, we are under the “law of the Spirit,” that is, the rule, dominion, authority of the Spirit. We can “walk according to the Spirit,” meaning live a way of life dominated and “led” by the Spirit. The Spirit comes to rule our minds more and more. Our life is no longer dominated by sin and death, but by life, peace and righteousness (Romans 8:2-8). Although we are no longer ruled by the “flesh,” that is, our sinful human inclinations, our struggle against sin is not over. But even here, the Spirit helps us. By the Spirit we can “put to death the deeds of the body” (Ro 8:13).

The Holy Spirit helps us see Jesus and the Gospel in all their glory which keeps hope and transformation alive in our hearts. We have already seen the connection between seeing Jesus and the Gospel and being transformed into his image in 2 Corinthians 3-4. But as many have noted, it is by the Gospel that we are saved and by the Gospel that we are sanctified. The Holy Spirit keeps making Jesus and the Gospel real and powerful in our lives. We come to “know” Jesus more and more, in the full sense of the word – relational, intellectual, experiential. And to “see” or “know” Jesus is to be transformed into his image.

The Spirit equips the members of the body of Christ to build each other up into the image of Christ, to maturity (Eph 4, Col 3). The Spirit gives gifts and offices in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12, Eph 4) for the purpose of building up the body into the image of Christ. As leaders in the church equip the members of the church, they in turn serve each other, “speaking the truth in love” and doing whatever other “work” is necessary so that all are built up in love (Eph 4:15-16). Paul’s defense of his ministry in 2 Corinthians 3 – 6 presupposes that he and his readers were involved in a relational process by which the Spirit was forming Christ in them. Like Paul and the Corinthian believers, we give ourselves to each other in loving, gospel-suffused relationships by which the Holy Spirit sinks deeply into our hearts and writes Jesus there so that the whole world can see him (2 Cor 3:1-3). Paul presupposed that local bodies of believers, with all of their weaknesses and flaws, could be genuine means of grace through which the Holy Spirit could form Christ in us. Paul’s image of a “body” also suggests that there is something about the spiritual and relational connections among the members of the body that contribute to the body’s growth (Eph 4:12-16). It is the Spirit who brings “unity” (Eph 4:3) and

*koinonia* (1 Cor 13:13) and this spiritual connectedness between believers and between believers and God (1 John 1:3) is a pathway that the Spirit uses to transform us into the image of Christ.

Disciples of Jesus can participate in the transforming work of the Spirit by making use of the means of grace he has appointed. The Spirit transforms us through the truth of God's word and the good news of the Gospel, which is the primary way we "see Jesus" (2 Cor 3:18, 4:4).

The image of "unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord . . ." (2 Cor 3:18) implies that prayer and worship are also means of grace by which the Spirit transforms us.

By the Spirit we must "put to death the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13). We must "put off" the old nature and "put on" the new nature which has been created and is being renewed in the image of Christ (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:5-14). And we do this by stopping our sinful behaviors and replacing them with their positive opposites (Eph 4:25-32; Col 3:5-14). Many of the sins we are putting off are sins that damage the love and unity in the body of Christ, such as lying, stealing, and fighting. And the opposite virtues, like love, peace, and patient forgiveness are both the "fruit of the Spirit" and the result of our "effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Gal 5:16-26; Eph 4:1-4). By living in the body of Christ and doing our part to love each other and build each other up, we become together a means that the Spirit is using to transform us all.

Suffering is also a means that the Spirit uses to transform us into the image of Christ. It is significant that both Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 3-4 stress the relationship between our transformation into the glorious image of Christ and our current sufferings. Those who follow Christ will suffer, but their suffering will not derail the Holy Spirit's work in transforming them into the image of Christ. On the contrary, those sufferings become a way for the glory of Christ

to grow in us and be revealed to others through us. Some suffering comes from living in a fallen world and groaning against the current perishability and weaknesses of our pre-resurrection humanity (Romans 8:18-23; 2 Cor 4:16-18). Other suffering results from serving the Gospel and so sharing in the sufferings of Christ on behalf of the world (2 Cor 4:7-12). Whatever its source, suffering cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:35-39) and cannot thwart the Father's eternal purpose to conform us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). We can even "boast" in our sufferings because suffering leads to endurance, character and hope. And that hope does not fail us because "God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:1-5). The Holy Spirit is God's love in person taking up residence in our hearts. And his personal presence with us can actually grow our perseverance, character and hope, even in the midst of suffering.

In addition to these means of grace, the Church Fathers often mentioned baptism and eucharist as ways that the Holy Spirit works to transform us into the image of Christ and help us become "participants of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Gregory of Nazianzus reminds baptized believers that they "have the means" to conquer the devil because they can now "defend yourself with the Spirit."<sup>41</sup> Cyril insisted that receiving Christ in the eucharist is one way we "come to bear Christ in us" and begin to "reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord and proceed from glory to glory" (a clear allusion to 2 Cor 3).<sup>42</sup> The Church Fathers explicitly connected baptism, eucharist, and the biblical passages that teach about the Holy Spirit transforming us into the image of Christ.

Pentecostal and charismatic Christians add to this list of "means of grace" practices that help believers receive a conscious experience of special "filling" or "baptism" in the Holy Spirit.



These renewalists typically acknowledge that all who have received the gift of salvation in Christ have also received the Holy Spirit in keeping with the clear teaching of Romans 8:9. Nevertheless, they maintain that the Bible promises a more full or experiential presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Praying with others to be “filled with” or “baptized” in the Holy Spirit, they believe, can result in a spiritual breakthrough. Many of those who have been filled with the Spirit in this way testify that they have more desire to pray, read the Bible, and serve their brothers and sisters in Christ. They experience either sudden or more quickly progressing freedom from besetting sins and even addictions. They hear God speaking to them through the Bible and in prayer and report more consistently experiencing an awareness of his love for them and presence with them. None of these benefits are unique to Pentecostal or Charismatic Christians. Yet the experiences of these believers, combined with what we have discovered about the personal, dynamic and creative work of the Spirit in the life of Jesus, should push all Christians to seek a richer ongoing relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

At this point, whatever our theological beliefs about how believers become “full of the Holy Spirit” we have some important questions to ask ourselves. What am I teaching the members of Generation Z about the Holy Spirit’s work of transformation into the image of Christ? What is my list of the “means of grace” by which the Holy Spirit works? How well is the body of believers of which I am a part doing at helping each other grow up into Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit? And, of course, we must begin with ourselves. What is *my* current experience of being transformed by the Holy Spirit to look more and more like Jesus? As

Poemen, one of the Desert Fathers, once said in the context of talking about the Spirit's work of sanctification, "Teach your heart to keep what your tongue teaches others."<sup>43</sup>

### **Portraits of Christ: The Holy Spirit's Creative Work with Generation Z**

As "the Lord, the giver of life" the Holy Spirit is personally creative. His activity is not generically running in the background of our lives. The way he transforms us into the "same image" that is Christ produces unity, not uniformity. He uses the raw materials of our individuality and our particular Christian communities to fashion unique portraits of the one image of God who is Jesus Christ. Thinking in terms of creativity helps us appreciate what the "life" "freedom" and "glory" that are connected to the work of the Spirit can mean in our lives. Tom Smail writes, ". . . think of the Spirit much more personally and creatively as an artist whose one subject is the Son, and who is concerned to paint countless portraits of that subject on countless human canvasses using the paints and brushes provided by countless human cultures and historical situations." Smail continues,

No one portrayal can ever capture such a subject completely. But in them all Jesus is the model; the Spirit is the artist who is totally dedicated to do justice to that model and who has such unity of being with the model that he knows him through and through. Christian churches and people, sharing the concerns, the language, the questions, the achievements and sufferings of the lands and times in which they live, are the raw materials he uses to fashion ever new portraits of Jesus. They will all show him in his basic self-identity and continuity, but they will all make explicit something that was implicit from the first but that now the divine artist highlights and offers to our faith and love with new clarity and emphasis.<sup>44</sup>

We should expect the Holy Spirit to be using the "raw materials" of individual young people and their shared generational experiences and traits to create "portraits" of Jesus. We can be free to think about generational traits not as liabilities to be feared, but as the materials the Spirit

wants to craft into beautiful portraits that reveal the infinite riches of who God is in Christ.

When Jesus, by his Spirit, transforms the members of Generation Z from fear to faith and courage, from brokenness and isolation to the unity of the Spirit, God will be glorified. When they suffer and show their “clay pot” limitations, the power of the Spirit can show the glory of Christ more fully.

As teachers, parents, pastors and friends of today’s young people, what can we do to help them experience the Holy Spirit’s personal, dynamic, creative work? We must search the Scriptures and teach them about the Holy Spirit’s work of transformation. The Good News is that God has saved us through his Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit brings what Jesus did and makes it real inside us and in the world through us. The Holy Spirit is making each of us more and more like Jesus every day. We are created in the image of God, and so we are “enough” just on that basis. But our status as God’s image bearers also sets us on a glorious destiny. Dallas Willard insists that disciples of Jesus can truly come to believe that “I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God’s great universe” and that as they view themselves more and more that way they will grow into spiritual and emotional maturity.<sup>45</sup> The Spirit keeps hope alive in our hearts both by directly praying with us and for us but also by joining us to a body of believers through whom he sends his life and strength into us. The Holy Spirit is using you and your local body of believers as the raw materials to paint uniquely beautiful portraits of Jesus. Both our dignity and our destiny as image bearers are secure gifts of God through the Holy Spirit. God does not just create us “enough,” he re-creates us as more.

We must show young people from God’s word that the Holy Spirit is personally, dynamically and creatively at work in each of our lives, just as he was in the life of Jesus. We

can expect the Spirit to give to each of us just what we need, when we need it in our work for the kingdom. This dynamic provision by the Spirit will not take away suffering and sometimes might not even make us feel any better in the moment. But we can expect the Spirit to create a deep and abiding hope that pulls us through our sufferings. And this teaching on the personal, dynamic and creative work of the Spirit will be most effective not just as a separate topic, but integrated into how we teach about the Gospel and the Christian life.

We must introduce young people to the means that the Holy Spirit uses to transform us as we understand them in our theological tradition. We might want to explore some of the means that the Church throughout the ages has modeled for us, even if those means are not as emphasized in our tradition. For some of us, that will mean exploring how baptism and Holy Communion are described in Scripture and Tradition as means by which the Spirit sustains and grows our life in Christ. Others of us will need to explore better ways to guide young people into a Holy Spirit illuminated encounter with Scripture by which they see “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” We will do well to pray with one another for the full release of the Spirit in our lives, for us to be able to see the Holy Spirit so active in us that he becomes like “rivers of living water” flowing out of our hearts (John 7:37-39).

The members of Generation Z struggle to feel connected to others, to believe they are “enough” and to have hope in the midst of suffering. These are the very things that the Holy Spirit promises in the context of the body of Christ. Yet as Dallas Willard often stated, and as every pastor knows, many Christian churches do not facilitate as much transformation into Christlikeness as we would hope. Some have made their theological peace with this reality, while others remain discontent. Our exposition of the biblical teaching on transformation into

the image of Christ suggests that we can expect more from the Holy Spirit within our hearts and in our Christian communities, without becoming triumphalistic. So we must take a hard look at the relationships and practices in our congregations and bring every resource we can gather to bear on this problem. I conclude with two such resources that hold promise for making our Christian communities more transformative.

Recent advances in neuroscience are supporting the particular importance of the right kinds of relationships with the right kinds of people for character transformation. People who find themselves “stuck” in destructive patterns of feeling and reacting, such as those who have experienced trauma, need to find loving attachments within a community of people. In that context, they need to learn and repetitively practice “relational-brain skills” that connect them with God and others in the midst of suffering and pressure. These practices informed by neuroscience connect people to God and each other, facilitating a different mode of transformation than what we can experienced through spiritual disciplines alone.<sup>46</sup>

Our Christian communities can also become more transformative by drawing on insights from the growing body of work on how practices form people. For example, Moon notes that the digital revolution creates learners who are similar in some ways to learners found in oral cultures. After many years of communicating the Gospel in oral cultures using symbols, rituals, stories, proverbs, music, dance and drama Moon believes that similar methods should be used among today’s young people in western countries. Perhaps this is a place where revitalized or reimagined rituals surrounding baptism, Holy Communion, and laying on of hands could be used to help the members of Generation Z experience greater freedom and life in the Holy Spirit. Moon’s insights also push us to reconsider the value of repetitive worship

songs. In oral cultures, repetitive songs help believers remember and implement biblical teachings in their daily lives.<sup>47</sup> Although Moon did not incorporate the influential work of James K. A. Smith, both authors push us to carefully consider how people's deepest loves are learned and shaped, noting that the real mechanisms involved may be different than we have thought.<sup>48</sup> We would all do well to evaluate our communal practices in light of how well they are forming us as people who are living under the dominion of the Spirit in *koinonia* with the Father, the Son and each other. Does our congregational life together help us live into the personal, dynamic, creative work of the Holy Spirit? Or could someone live our congregational way of life for some time without ever thinking much about the Holy Spirit, let alone experiencing much transformation into the image of Christ through him? What are the competing daily life practices that are forming us all into people who are out of step with the Spirit and walking according to the flesh? How can we make even small changes in our individual daily practices that would re-orient our hearts toward the Spirit and toward one another? These are the questions that will shape our next steps as we seek to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit's personal, dynamic, creative work in our life together.

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Wilder, *Renovated: God, Dallas Willard and the Church That Transforms* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2020), 2, 102. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 79-80.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed description of Generation Z discipleship challenges and opportunities, see Thomas E. Bergler, "Generation Z and Spiritual Maturity" *Christian Education Journal*, Apr. 2020, Vol. 17 (1): 75-91

<sup>3</sup> Jean M. Twenge, *iGen* (New York: Atria Books, 2017), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Twenge, 104.

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<sup>5</sup> Ellen Bara Stolzenberg, Melissa C. Aragon, Edgar Romo, Victoria Couch, Destiny McClennan, M. Kevin Egan, Nathaniel Kang, *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2019* (Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, 2020), 16-17. Accessed 9/9/2021 from

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<sup>6</sup> Stolzenberg et. al., 40. Kevin Egan, Ellen Bara Stolzenberg, Hilary B. Zimmerman, Melissa C. Aragon, Hannah Whang Sayson, Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2016* (Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, 2017), 71. Accessed 9/9/2021 from <https://heri.ucla.edu/publications-tfs/>

<sup>7</sup> Twenge, 96.

<sup>8</sup> Twenge 101.

<sup>9</sup> Twenge, 97.

<sup>10</sup> Twenge, 109.

<sup>11</sup> Marisa Peer, "What does I am Enough Mean?" Retrieved 9/9/2021 from

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<sup>12</sup> "Paralympian Jessica Long's Greatest Triumph" May 17, 2020 retrieved 9/9/2021 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luOX\\_qxvM6g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luOX_qxvM6g) Long repeated her use of "enough" in an NBC mini-documentary that aired during the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics.

<sup>13</sup> Twenge, 93-118.

<sup>14</sup> Twenge, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Twenge, 69-88.

<sup>16</sup> Twenge, 78.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to Twenge, see Barna Group, *Generation Z: the Culture Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 2018). Tim Elmore and Andrew McPeak, *Marching off the Map: Inspire Students to Navigate a Brand New World* (Atlanta, GA: Poet Gardener Publishing). Donna Freitas, *The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Deloitte, "A Call for Accountability and Action: The Deloitte Global 2021 Millennial and Gen Z Survey" Retrieved 9/9/2021 from <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>

<sup>19</sup> M. L. Rosen, A. M. Rodman, S. W. Kasperek, M. Mayes, M. M. Freeman, L. J. Lengua, K. A. McLaughlin, "Promoting Youth Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Study" (2021) *PLoS One*, 16(8)  
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<sup>20</sup> Tom Smail, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 15-16.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit—In Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 33-48.

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<sup>22</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>23</sup> Smail, 99-102.

<sup>24</sup> Smail, 89-99, 102-104. Thiselton, 33-35.

<sup>25</sup> Thiselton, 37-42.

<sup>26</sup> Smail, 104.

<sup>27</sup> Smail, 96-97.

<sup>28</sup> Smail, 97.

<sup>29</sup> Smail, 107.

<sup>30</sup> Thiselton, 34.

<sup>31</sup> Smail, 12-22, 144-165. Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 247-271.

<sup>32</sup> Smail, 162.

<sup>33</sup> John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 233-310.

<sup>34</sup> In addition to Smail and Thiselton, see Joel C. Elowsky, ed. *Ancient Christian Doctrine 4: We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2009), 137-216.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Gregory of Nyssa quoted in Elowsky, ed., 198.

<sup>36</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 518-526.

<sup>37</sup> Moo, 518-526.

<sup>38</sup> Moo, 545-549.

<sup>39</sup> Smail, 201-213.

<sup>40</sup> Kilner, 238-241.

<sup>41</sup> Elowsky, 207.

<sup>42</sup> Elowsky, 182-183.

<sup>43</sup> Elowsky, 209.

<sup>44</sup> Smail, 77-78.

<sup>45</sup> Wilder, 23-24.

<sup>46</sup> Wilder.

<sup>47</sup> W. Jay Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

<sup>48</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).