



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 1: Affirmation

Suggested Week of Use: December 7, 2025

Core Passage: Matthew 3:13–4:11

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### News Story Summary

Research from the Barna Group has revealed a shift in church attendance among young adults. Members of Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and the Millennial Generation (born between 1981 and 1996), now attend church more often than older generations. In 2020, these younger groups attended only one weekend a month. The research shows that Gen Z adult attendance has nearly doubled in five years, to 1.9 weekends a month. The same is true for Millennials at 1.8 weekends per month.

At the same time, attendance rates among older generations, such as Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964) and Elders (born from 1928-1945) has declined. Attendance for Generation X (born 1965-1980) has remained steady.

These generational shifts likely represent a desire for connection and purpose with Gen Z and Millennials. Researchers have stated that new opportunities exist for church leaders, but those opportunities must be stewarded well. The primary challenge is discipleship. Church leaders must identify ways to move younger generations from regular attendance to active faith.

For more on this story, search “Barna Young Adult Church Resurgence.”

### Engage

To supplement the Engage activities, hang photos of young adults, middle aged adults, and older adults on a focal wall. Ask: *Which of these generations do you think attends church most often? Why?* Discuss responses, then share the information from the Barna Group research. Ask: *What impact could this have on the churches in our area? How could it affect our congregation?* Point out that some younger adults could feel apprehension, especially if they have not been raised in church. Say: *They need affirmation and encouragement as they begin interacting with the Christian community.* Explain that today’s session, the first in an extended study of Matthew’s Gospel, focuses on the affirmations Jesus received as He began His ministry.

### Challenge

To supplement the Challenge activities, remind adults about the Barna Group research. Ask: *How can each generation support one another in spiritual growth and discipleship?* Remind adults that opportunities for each generation need to be stewarded well. Encourage them to make a list of ways they can support members of another generation, whether younger or older. Close in prayer, thanking God for His affirmation and asking Him to help them be sensitive to the opportunities He provides to affirm other believers in their faith.