

# Mission Ready: Engaging a Culture of Doubt Church Leaders Conference – February 16, 2019

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**Session Webpage** (with Slides, Recordings, Handouts, and More)  
[www.worldvieweyes.org/leaders2019.html](http://www.worldvieweyes.org/leaders2019.html)

**Room For Doubt** creates an atmosphere to encourage questions, address doubts, and strengthen faith. It features a resourceful website, a mobile app, and a six-week message and curriculum for churches, Christian schools, and campus ministries.

## Introduction & Live Survey Questions (answers in next section)

- A. The **“Nones”**: Those who do not identify with *any* religious group.  
What is the percentage of Nones in America? \_\_\_\_\_%.

See my article, “Understanding the Engaging the ‘Nones,’” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 21 (Fall 2018): 217-237.

- B. **“Atheists”**: In 2018, those who claimed to be atheist:  
**All Adults**: 6%; **Gen X** (b. 1965): 6%; **Millennials** (b. 1984): 7%  
What is the percent of **Gen Z** (b. 1995-) who claim to be atheist? \_\_\_\_\_%.
- C. **“Churched Youth”** (Those who attended at least twice per month):
1. What percentage of “churched youth” say that have “significantly doubted” their faith?  
\_\_\_\_\_%
  2. What percentage of “churched youth” will become “disengaged” from church in their twenties? \_\_\_\_\_%
- D. How much is DOUBT about faith a problem in your church?

## I. Some Stats: A Culture of Doubt

- A. The **NONES**—the Religiously Detached.
1. Adults: 1990 8.1%; 2007 15.3%; 2012 19.3%; 2014 \_\_\_\_\_ **22.8%**.
  2. 18-29 year olds: 2007 22%; 2012 32%.
    - a. 2014: Older Millennials (25-33): \_\_\_\_\_ **34%**.
    - b. 2014: Younger Millennials (18-24): \_\_\_\_\_ **36%**.
- B. **Atheists**: 13-18 year olds (see the 2018 “Gen Z” report by Barna)
1. “Atheist”: 6% of all adults; 6% of Gen X; 7% of Millennials.
  2. “Atheist”: \_\_\_\_\_ **13** \_\_\_\_\_ of Gen Z.
- C. **Churched Youth** (Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*).
3. Significantly doubted their faith? \_\_\_\_\_ **38%**.
  4. Can’t ask their most pressing life questions at church? \_\_\_\_\_ **36%**.
  5. At some point, felt like rejecting their parents’ faith? \_\_\_\_\_ **32%**.
  6. No longer active in church in their 20s? \_\_\_\_\_ **59%**.

## D. High Information Seekers

“We found that the presence of doubt much more strongly predicted leaving Christianity for high information seekers .... **[H]igh information seekers with doubts are about two to four times more likely to disconnect from Christianity than other doubters who are not high information seekers....** According to our research, high information seekers are not intrinsically more difficult to disciple, but only when they have unanswered questions or unresolved doubts about Christianity’s truth claims.” (Larry Barnett at [www.projectnextgen.org](http://www.projectnextgen.org)).

## II. Some Statements

- A. Excerpts from submissions on [www.roomfordoubt.com](http://www.roomfordoubt.com).
- B. The Cultural and Theological “CRUNCH.”

## III. Some Strategies

- A. Diagnose the doubts.

- B. Dialogue with the doubters.

- C. Some DON'Ts with doubters.

- 1. Don't be so           **DOGMATIC**          .

- 2. Don't be so           **SIMPLISTIC**          .

- D. Give           **ROOM**           for doubt.

**Dallas Willard**, *The Allure of Gentleness*: “... the great problem facing the gospel of Jesus Christ is not the doubt that is outside the church; it is the doubt that is inside the church. **We need to be able to deal with doubt lovingly, helpfully, and especially without ever scolding or shaming anyone for doubting.** We must allow people to be who they are and then be able to meet them where they are” (25; emphasis added).

**Irene Cho**: “FYI’s research reveals that providing young people **with safe spaces to ask difficult questions, express doubts**, learn how to integrate with their world and engage with internal struggle is absolutely crucial to cultivating faith. **Doubt is not what kills faith; silence is....** Instead of silencing young people, it’s imperative that leaders and parents help young people develop critical thoughts about faith and life. Sadly, many young people in our research shared that church was the last place they felt safe as they wrestled with their identity, future and life” (Irene Cho, Fuller Youth Institute; cited in Barna, *Gen Z*, 33; emphasis added).