

Engaging and Communicating with Youth

How do we reach the young generation with the Gospel where they are—in the digital world? Julia co-leads the largest national evangelistic youth-outreach in Germany that reached half a million people through a YouTube-format in 2020, has 10K follower on Instagram, and a wide TikTok reach. In this session, she will share experiences, principles, and ideas for how to effectively engage and communicate with youth.

Julia Garschagen is a theologian and serves as the director of the Pontes Institut for Science, Culture and Faith in the German-speaking region. She speaks at universities and in business contexts across Europe and loves to be in dialogue about a faith that is both intellectually credible and existentially satisfying. Julia co-leads the biggest evangelistic youth outreach in the German-speaking world and teaches apologetics at a theological seminary. She is also co-founder of the charity Dios te ve, which helps young people in Peru to get a higher education. Julia lives in Cologne, Germany and loves the mountains.

I. Introduction

- a. In groups of 2 or 3:
 - i. What are 3 good things you can say about young people/GenZ in your context?
 - ii. Name 2 things you can learn from them?
 - iii. Name 1 challenge in reaching young people in your context?

- b. *“What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the law. [...] Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?”*
-Plato, 4th cent BC

- c. God has a different view:
 - i. “3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your children, and my blessing on your descendants. 4 They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. 5 Some will say, ‘I belong to the Lord’; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and will take the name Israel.”
-Isaiah 44:3-5

II. Big changes in society that affect young adults: From Modern to Postmodern Mindset

	Pre-modern	Modern	Postmodern/pluralistic
Concept of truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one truth • It is evident what the truth is • You cannot discuss truth, you can only fight for it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one truth • But it's not evident what is true and what is false • We need to strive for truth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is truth. • But not just one truth – there are many truths. • Every individual has got their own individual truth. • It is morally wrong to strive for truth
Source of knowledge	Tradition/ Authority	Reason, Logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual experience • → can hold seeming contradictions together • Scepticism against authority
Nature of truth	Truth is external	Truth is external + factual → <i>What is true?</i>	Truth is wholistic + relational → <i>What helps?</i>

III. Humility

- a. 1 Peter 3:15
 - i. Always be ready *BUT* with respect and humility
 - ii. Gen Z is highly sensitive for authenticity and humility. Gen Z is allergic to powerplay and critical of authority and institutions
 - iii. People who are humble, authentic, and real can earn the right to be listened to
- b. Listen and Ask
 - i. Listen well!! You don't know them. Their world is radically different!
 - ii. Eye-level conversation and dialogue
 - iii. *“Although I do not agree with the faith of CU, I'm convinced their members are among the friendliest students on campus. I have sat with the Christians of St. James College, eating cookies, and had the best and deepest conversations I've ever had at uni. Few others would be so willing to sit down with a complete stranger to know more about him with such openness and enthusiasm. (Jack Harvey, History and Philosophy undergraduate. In: The Yorker, Student Paper of York Uni)*
 - iv. Use dialogue-methods, allow for questions, give space to exchange opinions

- c. Differentiate and Value
 - i. Christians are well known for what they are against
 - ii. Gen Z is sensitive to generalizations and stereotypes
 - iii. Look behind the motives (e.g., ethical views)
 - iv. Talk about their topics
 - v. Why is the Gospel good news to their generation?

- d. Admit and Apologize
 - i. A generation that values people who admit their flaws
 - ii. The best apologetic can be an apology
 - iii. Truth is always personal and wholistic
 - iv. Show your weakness
 - v. Humor! Be able to laugh about yourself!

IV. Social Media

- a. Digital and analog world merge
- b. Become “a Greek to the Greek” and enter this world with the Good News
- c. Platforms:
 - i. Insta – still most teens (in DACH)
 - ii. Tiktok
 - iii. Watch out for new platforms
- d. @ Truestory