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# Faith For Exiles

Experiencing Jesus means clearing the religious clutter for closeness with and joy in Christ.

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# Faith For Exiles

Cultural Discernment means taking part in a robust learning community that is under the authority of the Bible in order to wisely navigate an accelerated complex culture.

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# Faith For Exiles

**Meaningful Relationships** means being devoted to fellow believers we want to be around and become.

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# Faith For Exiles

**Meaningful Relationships**

"When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So, Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord." (Acts 9:26-28)

"... For a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people." (Acts 11:26)

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**Meaningful relationships . . .**

1. The church is a place I feel like I belong. (88%)
2. There is someone in my life who encourages me to grow spiritually. (85%)
3. I am connected to a community of Christians. (82%)
4. When growing up, I had close personal friends who were adults from my church. (77%)
5. I admire the faith of my parents. (72%)
6. I feel emotionally close to someone at my church. (64%)

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**The Emotional Climate of Church . . .**

- 1. I feel loved and valued. (83%)
- 2. I feel like I am part of a family. (78%)
- 3. Connected with those older than me. (65%)
- 4. Relief from the anxiety of daily life. (63%)
- 5. Understood for who I really am. (54%)
- 6. Judged by others. (9%)

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# Faith For Exiles

**Vocational Discipleship** means knowing and living God's calling, especially in the arena of work, and right-sizing our ambitions to God's purposes.

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# Faith For Exiles

**Martin Luther on "vocation":**

Work is no longer simply a job or occupation; it is a calling, a vocation. It is a summons from God . . . in humble service to my neighbor . . . On the surface, we see an ordinary human face — our mother, the doctor, the teacher, the waitress, our pastor — but, beneath the appearances, God is ministering to us through them, and to them through us.

The church can help integrate faith, work, calling.

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**Vocational Discipleship . . .**

- 1. I want to use my unique talents and gifts to honor God. (94%)
- 2. I believe that all the work I do is important to God. (82%)
- 3. My church does a good job of helping me understand how to live out my faith in the workplace. (72%)
- 4. I do not have to work in a ministry to work in God's kingdom. (69%)

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# Faith For Exiles

**Countercultural Mission** means serving as a faithful presence by trusting in God's power and living differently from cultural norms.

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**Resilient Disciples Have a Deep Sense of Mission . . .**

- 1. I want others to see Jesus reflected in me through my words and actions. (90%)
- 2. I personally have a responsibility to tell others about my religious beliefs. (76%)
- 3. I am excited by the mission of the church in today's world. (67%)
- 4. A major part of my purpose in life is to serve others. (66%)

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**How Churches Contribute to Countercultural Mission . . .  
(Building Courage and Readiness)**

- 1. Courage to live my faith in public. (73%)
- 2. Courage to tell others about what I believe. (64%)
- 3. Wisdom for living with people who believe differently from me. (56%)
- 4. Prayer specifically for the challenges of living faithfully in a post-Christian culture. (55%)
- 5. Preparation for having difficult conversations with others. (49%)

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**How Churches Contribute to Countercultural Mission . . .  
(Building Compassion)**

- 1. I better understand the needs of the poor. (65%)
- 2. I have found a cause or issue that I'm passionate about. (53%)
- 3. I better understand social justice. (44%)
- 4. I better understand the needs of marginalized people. (37%)

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**What Kind of Churches?**  
Help to Shape Resilient Disciples

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**Digital and hybrid ministry is here to stay**

- 63% of churched adults believe churches should use digital resources for spiritual formation and discipleship
- 87% of churched participants of digital discipleship feel that digital forms of discipleship provide a safe space to speak openly

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**Social media is social ministry**

- ask questions
- *engage in communication*
- help take the next step

Content curation will matter just as much, if not more, than content creation.

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A fantastic church online presence drives demand for in-person experiences because the line between what happens online and in real life gets thinner every year.

Having a robust online presence isn't a threat to your in-person experience. Done right, it fuels it.

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**“Making Sense of Ministry in a Digital World”**

- Digital world versus the analog world
- Evangelism and engagement
- Teaching and Bible study
- Pastoral care and relationships
- Worship and proclamation
- Community and congregation

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**The culture of a community that fosters such faith**

- Safe
- Adaptable
- True
- Positive
- Transforming
- Reflective

Are these descriptive or aspirational of the church today?

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**What can we learn from exiles?**

- They live for the sake of others
- They take great risks for the sake of what is right
- They make prayer a mission
- One mandate is faithfulness and holiness
- God is at work for good, even in exile
- They find their home in God Himself

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# What Kind of Spiritual Practices?

Help to Shape Resilient Disciples

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## Encouraging open conversations

- 2 in 5 non-Christians say they would be open to participating in a spiritual conversation about Christianity if the experience felt friendly
- Majority of Christian Gen Z are having faith conversations with non-Christians
- Gen Z say the best outcome of a spiritual conversation is to better understand one another

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## Whole life discipleship

- Spiritual growth and development
- Financial well-being
- Mental and emotional well-being (an emotionally connected church)
- Vocational/career well-being
- Relational well-being

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