

the
Message
of
the **Cross**

**How can we influence youth
and young adults' beliefs about
wisdom and power?**



1. Where do youth and young adults get their wisdom or truth?



“Most Students Don’t Know When News Is Fake, Stanford Study Finds”

“Some 82% of middle-schoolers couldn’t distinguish between an ad labelled ‘sponsored content’ and a real news story on a website, according to a Stanford University study of 7,804 students from middle school through college. The study ... is the biggest so far on how teens evaluate information they find online. Many students judged the credibility of newsy tweets based on how much detail they contained or whether a large photo was attached, rather than on the source.”

Wall Street Journal – 2016

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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A 2023 study by NZ on air showed many 15-24 years old consumed no factually based news at all.

“TVNZ came in at a quite distant eighth, behind YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, Netflix, TikTok and Snapchat.”



“But it is not a level playing field: RNZ, TVNZ and other media organisations have to make sure what they carry is factually correct and they have to comply with standards set by the Media Council or Broadcasting Standards Authority.

“User-generated content—the stuff you see on social media—doesn’t.”

NZ on Air - 2023



KEY FINDINGS

WHERE ARE THE YOUTH AUDIENCES?

Irirangi Te Motu
NZ On Air



YOUTH MEASURED AS ALL NEW ZEALANDERS AGED 15 - 24

DAILY REACH OF ALL MEDIA



SOCIAL MEDIA
89%



ONLINE VIDEO
79%



MUSIC STREAMING
79%



SVOD
67%



ONLINE GAMING
43%

HIGHEST REACH AMONG 'TRADITIONAL MEDIA' IS RADIO ON 30% AND TV ON 28%

MINUTES SPENT CONSUMING MEDIA DAILY



SOCIAL MEDIA



ONLINE VIDEO



MUSIC STREAMING



SVOD



ONLINE GAMING

MOST MINUTES SPENT ON 'TRADITIONAL MEDIA' IS 29 ON RADIO AND 32 ON TV

DAILY REACH OF MOST POPULAR CHANNELS, SITES AND STATIONS



YOUTUBE
65%



FACEBOOK
65%



INSTAGRAM
62%



SPOTIFY
62%

NETFLIX

NETFLIX
57%

DAILY REACH OF MOST POPULAR LOCAL CHANNELS, SITES AND STATIONS



18%



15%



10%



10%



9%

CHOICE OF CONTENT IS DRIVEN BY:



A DESIRE FOR
SELF-IMPROVEMENT



AN APPRECIATION
OF CONTENT
PRODUCTION



A NEED TO FEEL
REPRESENTED &
UNDERSTOOD

Some keys to consider

KEY FINDINGS

WHERE ARE THE YOUTH AUDIENCES?

YOUTH MEASURED AS ALL NEW ZEALANDERS AGED 15 - 24

Iirangi Te Motu
NZ On Air



Discuss:

- What was most interesting there?
- What concerned you the most?
- What is one thing your church can do, or is doing, to address this?



Dangers to this type of 'truth consumption':

Misinformation and Disinformation

The ease of sharing information means falsehoods can spread quickly, sometimes more effectively than verified facts.



Confirmation Bias:

Youth might seek information confirming their beliefs, leading to a skewed understanding of truth.

Lack of Critical Thinking:

Not all youth have the skills to critically assess the information they encounter, particularly from entertaining or charismatic presenters.



Discuss:

- What other dangers are you aware of?



2. Where do youth and young adults get their power (self-worth/identity)?



1.Social Media and Online Presence:

Platforms like X, TikTok, or Instagram give them a megaphone.

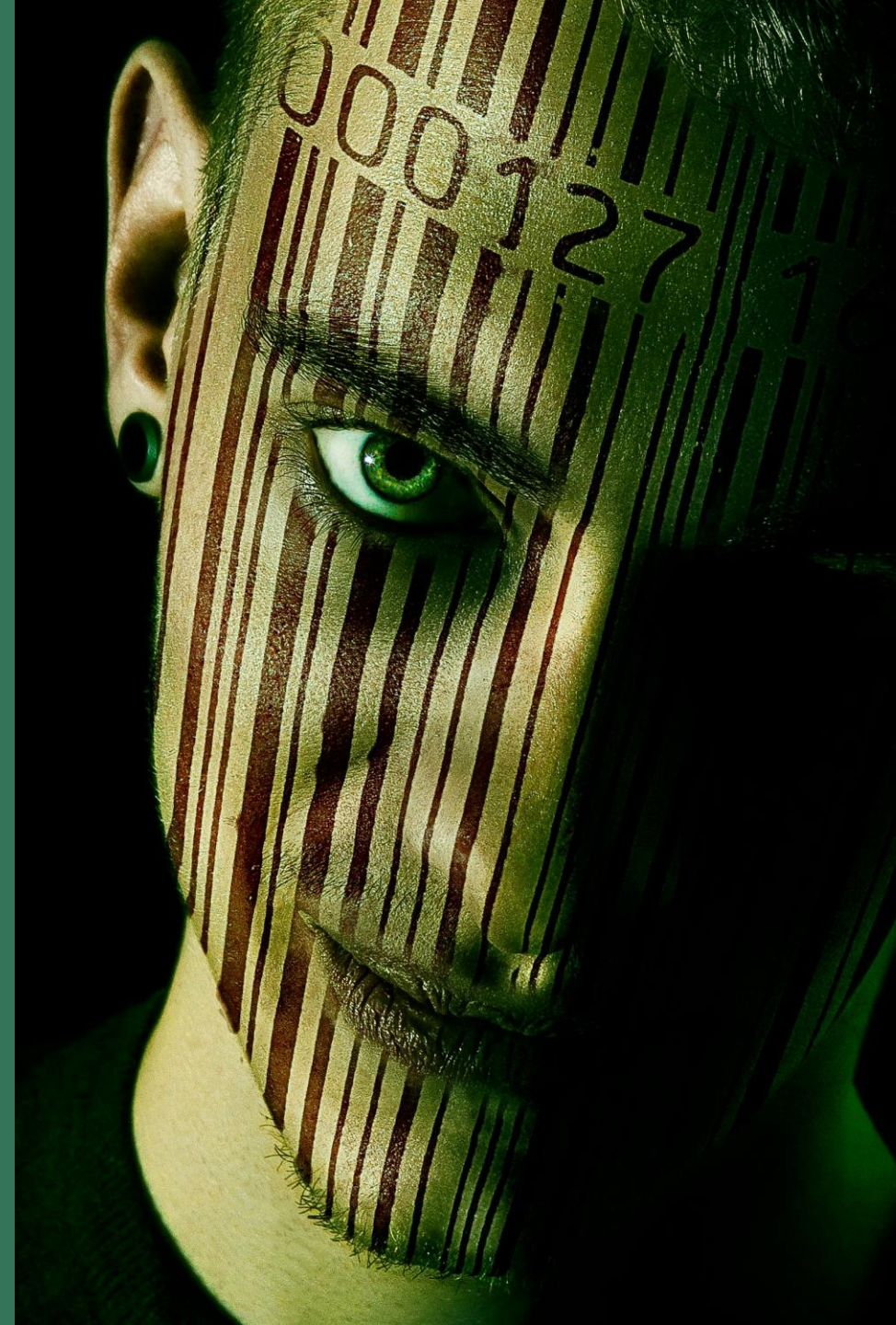
2.Communities and Subcultures: Whether it's gaming (like Discord servers), fandoms, or niche interests (e.g., K-pop stans), belonging to a group gives them collective strength.

3.Knowledge and Hustle: With access to endless info online—YouTube tutorials, Reddit threads, or ChatGPT-style tools—they empower themselves by learning fast.



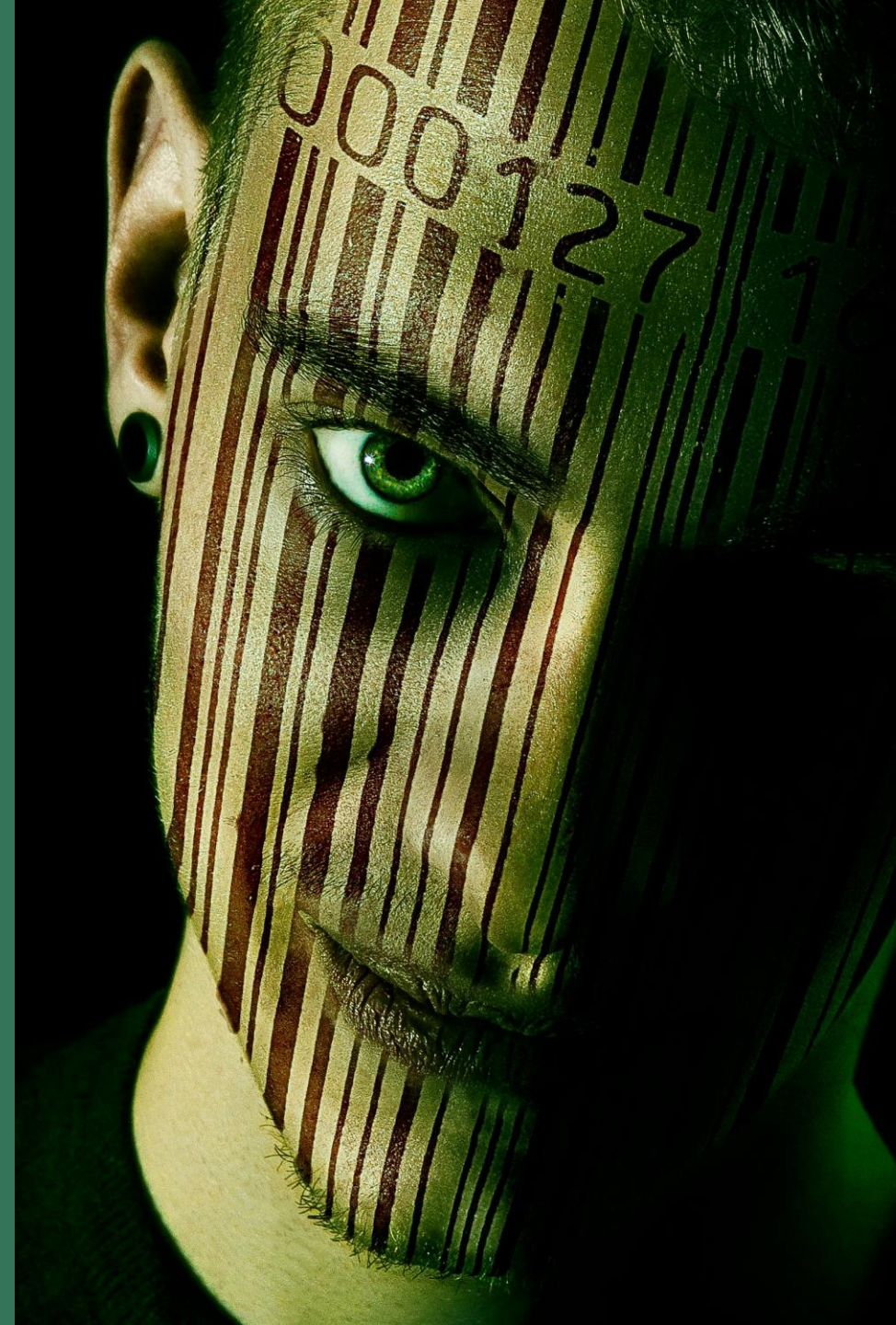
4.Identity and Voice: Many find power in owning their story—gender, race, mental health, whatever. Speaking out, especially on SM, can feel like taking control in a world that often dismisses them. It's less about authority and more about defiance.

5.Tech and Tools: They're digital natives. Coding, AI, or even mastering a new app gives them an edge over older generations.



Some disturbing stats on social media:

- Excessive use—often defined as more than three hours daily—has been linked to increased anxiety, depression, and loneliness.
- About one in three teen girls report worsened body image from Instagram use
- Cyberbullying affects 10-40% of youth
- Sleep disruption from late-night scrolling



The U.S. Surgeon General's 2023 Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health notes that teens spending over three hours daily on social media double their risk of anxiety and depression. It calls for more research but emphasizes the urgency of addressing harms.

A 2022 Pew Research Center survey found 32% of U.S. teens see social media as mostly negative for their peers, though 32% also report personal positive effects.

A longitudinal study in Nature Communications (2022) tracked 17,400 teens and young adults, finding social media use tied to lower well-being during puberty (ages 11-13 for girls, 14-15 for boys).

A study, published in Pacific Health Dialog in 2024, reviewed the impacts of social media on the well-being of Pacific youth in New Zealand. This literature review, spanning 2012-2022, found that Pacific teens face higher risks of cyberbullying, online exclusion, and exposure to disturbing content compared to other ethnic groups. There were many advantages as well – connection with community for example.

Netsafe - a NZ online safety organisation. Their 2021 survey of Kiwi teens showed 40% use five or more social media platforms, with a third spending four-plus hours online daily.

Suicide - a 2019 study in the Journal of Youth Studies by Jessica Stubbing and Dr. Kerry Gibson analysed NZ teens' explanations for youth suicide. Social media emerged as a factor, with teens pointing to cyberbullying and pressure from online comparisons as contributors. Another related piece from 2019 in Crisis by Ali and Gibson analysed posts on a NZ social media suicide prevention forum, finding youth often cite social media as amplifying feelings of isolation or despair.

Discuss:

- Overall: What do you think of all this?
- Apart from God and the Bible—we are getting there 😊—what other sources of wisdom/truth do you see for youth and YA's?
- Thinking of your youth and young adults, where are they getting their power, or their sense of worth and identity?





3. So! What are some simple ideas CCCNZ/OBH churches are doing in this area?



First - The Bible is clear that
true wisdom comes from God
alone.

Proverbs 3.13-14ff

Ecclesiastes 7.12

Colossians 1:28-29

Colossians 2.2-3

Colossians 3.16



1. We have got to get our youth and young adults into the Bible.

- Right Now Media
 - Has great studies on social media
 - Bible and question guides
- Word of Life – lots of great studies
- Ask your group what topics they want to look at



1. We have got to get our youth and young adults into the Bible.

- Many youth groups run Bible studies separate from the social/fun night around the country.
- More and more one-to-one/two Bible studies



Some simple Bible Study ideas:

- Attention span. Use lots of discussion.
- Be authentic. Admit you don't know, and admit your struggles.
- Simple—one or two key points (don't overload them with theology)
- Consider the translation—NLT, NIV



- Safe space—no dumb or judged questions
- Application—to THEIR real world.
 - When thinking of the study, have 3-4 names on your page.
 - Don't water this down, especially with young adults.

Discuss:

- How is your youth community using the Bible?
- What other ideas do you have about Bible study?
- How can you incorporate youth and young adults in the Bible at other times—Sunday morning, Prayer service, etc?





2. We have got to help our youth and young adults experience God.

- Ephesians 3.18-19
- How are your youth and YAs experiencing and enjoying the presence of God? Or is all of 'church' orientated for adults?



3. Mentoring

“Countless lives linger in the shadows, hoping for just one soul to see their worth and invest in their potential.”

Grok 🙄

"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own."

Benjamin Disraeli



3. Mentoring

“One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination.”

John C. Maxwell

Discuss:

- Identify two or three key ideas from this.
- What is one change you should implement?



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Forum Discussion:

1. How do we address habitual sin among our youth and young adults in light of salvation and the cross? Are there certain sins we consider more serious than others? Doesn't the cross of Christ offer forgiveness for all sin—past, present, and future? What is the balance of grace, love, and truth? What example does Jesus provide in this?
2. "What are you doing, or what can you do, to ensure that youth and young adults feel included in the church just like older members? They are often separated from the rest of the congregation, whether intentionally or unintentionally. "

