



Gen Why's Search for Meaning

By Dennis Howard and Anne Reisner

A wise man once wrote, "He who has a reason to live can endure almost anything, overcome almost anything, achieve almost anything."

That's something that today's younger generation needs to consider to avoid becoming another "lost" generation. Finding a generation's meaning is the key to its greatness.

The best example is "the greatest generation" which survived the perils of the Great Depression followed by tragic defeats at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, and yet managed to marshal its resources and defeat the combined forces of one of the most evil alliances in history.

We still call it "the good war" because they were willing to endure almost anything and overcome almost anything to win it. They believed in something – human rights and human freedom – and they were willing to fight and die for it. And they won.

They also believed in their future. They returned from the war, went to school, worked hard, launched a baby boom and with it the greatest period of prosperity in our history.

By comparison America today seems sadly adrift. We have shipped most of our manufacturing and millions of jobs overseas. We are no longer viewed as the leader of the whole free world. We have grown weak in our response to threats to freedom every bit as serious as any we have faced before.

Here at home, we are far more caught up in the pursuit of pleasure and entertainment than we ever were in our search for meaning and achievement. The average American today spends 52 hours a week watching television or on the internet. Add an average of 9 hours a day of cell phone use, and it's a wonder young people even have time left to eat or sleep. No wonder our labor participation rate is hitting new lows.

Even more serious, our courts treat life itself as something with so little meaning that in the U.S. alone we have mindlessly discarded 58 million lives through abortion as if they were worth nothing in terms of moral, spiritual, social or economic value.

That's five times as many people as died in Hitler's concentration camps. And yet, after the war, the world proclaimed "never again." But here we are doing the very same thing far more efficiently than Hitler ever did, and we are doing it to ourselves.

Sadly, the full impact of that has fallen on today's younger generation. Fully 30% of Gen X, Y, and Z have had their lives snuffed out even before they could take their first breath. And then we wonder why so many in this generation feel lost and adrift – with no real meaning in their lives. If life is so cheap, how can it have meaning?

Earlier, we called on Gen Why to start applying its critical thinking skills and start questioning why we are following destructive practices like abortion. If they want a better future for themselves and their children, they'd better start asking "Why?"

In his talk to the youth of the world in the Philippines, Pope Francis had some great advice for today's young people when it comes to confronting the world's problems. He called on them "to think, feel, and then act" if they wish to find meaning in their lives.

First, we have to wake up and pay attention. We need to stop and think at what is happening to us and to our world. Going on two billion lives have already been taken worldwide by abortion. That's equal to the entire population of the planet in 1930. And yet we make far more noise about climate change, which has taken few if any lives.

Over 100 million more people have been killed in useless wars started by power-hungry men driven, not by a search for meaning, but by their own will to power. Yet today we are barely two minutes to twelve on the nuclear clock before countries like Iran get nuclear weapons despite their repeated threats to "wipe Israel off the face the earth."

Millions more have had to flee for their lives in places like Syria and Iraq or risk being killed, tortured, crucified, beheaded or enslaved if they refuse to submit to radical Islamist terrorists. People who have been Christian for 2,000 years are under attack simply for their faith.

Pope Francis has asked us to engage our emotions as well. As St. Augustine once said, we have to get angry at what is wrong and then develop courage enough to change it. We also need to mourn for those who have been lost and to show compassion for those in need.

Here at MBA, we know that the survivors of this modern holocaust are often young people themselves. A third of all abortions occur to young women before age 19, half occur before age 25, and fully 88% are under 35. Women who have had abortions often carry the emotional, spiritual and physical scars with them for years. They need hope and healing, too.

The fact that a teen comes from a religious background is no assurance of protection against abortion. Yvonne Williams, director of a crisis pregnancy center at the University of Colorado in Boulder, told us that "half the students who have abortions come from religious backgrounds, and 90% of the time, their parents never hear about it."

In our experience, we've had cases involving students from well-known Catholic high schools and still others where Catholic college students were referred for abortion by the nursing staff of the same college. That ended well when an angry parent turned the place upside down and a genuinely evil policy was reversed. If she hadn't acted, nothing would have changed.

There was the 18-year-old who was "madly in love" until his girlfriend got pregnant. He quickly became the villain of the piece when her mother insisted she abort. He came to us in tears over his lost love and lost baby. We helped him resolve never to put himself in that situation again.

Or the girl who graduated from a local high school despite two abortions and a trip to a rehab for a drug habit. We heard from her again a dozen years and two more abortions later. She was still battling drugs and her marriage had failed. For those who have fallen this far, there is still time for hope and healing, but only if they surrender completely.

More reassuring are those young women who have courageously gone ahead and had their babies and simply needed help and encouragement to continue doing the right thing. Such young women are among today's real heroes.

These cases support our view that the best time to get young people thinking and learning about the life issue is well before they have to face the issue, and that's a lot sooner than many parents and religious educators think. Planned Parenthood goes after kids as young as kindergartners. We have to reach them before it becomes too late.

In short, the best time for pro-life education is when young people are ready to hear the facts of life from their parents or teachers, and certainly by the time they start dating or socializing with members of the opposite sex. By age 12 to 15 at the latest. For Catholic teens, Confirmation is often the last, best chance to prepare teens for young adulthood.

Without preventive education, it is far too easy to become just another sad statistic.

This brings us to Pope Francis' third recommendation: We need to act before it is too late to prevent young people from experiencing the heartache of abortion. That's why preventive education is the key to the success of our Celebrate Life seminars.

Our teen seminars encourage young people "to think, to feel, and to act" in ways that will enable them to avoid the pitfalls that lead to abortion. We feature speakers with first-hand experience who can educate teens about the long term emotional, spiritual and physical impact of abortion. We also prepare them to defend their pro-life views with their peers. Teens need to know how to see through the nice-sounding lies used by Planned Parenthood to promote abortion.

We always close with a positive message of hope and healing. At the end of each seminar, we give each teen a candle and ask every third teen to come forward to represent the 1 out of 3 members of their generation who have been lost to abortion. This helps young people to visualize and experience what abortion has done to their generation.

We light the candle of every third teen, who in turn light the candles of all of the others. We encourage them to be a light to their generation by sharing the pro-life message with their friends and families That's how pro-life values are spread. We catch them from each other.

Based on surveys taken pre- and post-seminar, we regularly see a 75% increase in those with strong pro-life views, a 40% decrease among confused kids in the middle, and a 15% reduction among those who are pro-choice. We know of no other program with this kind of success.

To find out more about our Celebrate Life seminars, or to schedule one for your church, just write to us at Movement for a Better America, PO Box 472, Mount Freedom, NJ 07970-0472. To help us continue this important work, kindly send us a supportive donation today. Or visit our donation page at <http://www.movementforabetteramerica.org/donate.today.html>

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