



Returning to the Third Place: *for Mental and Spiritual Well-being*

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Dedication

To Kevin, my constant, my encourager, and my biggest fan. Thank you for never letting me quit.

To Denise Ward, who saw something in me worth developing and pointed me toward this path.

And to those who walked quietly beside me. You know who you are, and so does He.

FINAL SIGNATURES

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Generation Z's (Gen Z's) digital immersion and post-COVID lifestyle patterns on their interpersonal relationships. The literature shows that anxiety, continuous online connectivity, and pseudo-relationships developed through social media hinder their ability to form and maintain face-to-face connections. Using case studies, visual analyses, and research-grounded graphic design, the project examines how Gen Z utilizes coffee shops as a hybrid space for work and selective social interaction. The analysis shows that this generation is open to in-person engagement when environments feel convenient, low-pressure, and aligned with their values. These findings inform the development of *Percolate*, a simple, accessible tabletop Bible study designed to be hosted in coffee shop settings, providing a practical visual communication and user experience solution for fostering relational, emotional, and spiritual growth through face-to-face interaction.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Problem

Problem Statement

Generation Z (Gen Z) professionals exhibit post-COVID reluctance to engage traditional third-place community environments, which results in diminished authentic relationship formation, perpetuated social anxiety in physical settings, and reduced opportunities for mental and spiritual development through meaningful interpersonal connections.

Personal Motivation

I became interested in the topic as I journeyed through the college experience with Gen Z students navigating life, COVID-19, digital connectivity, and the struggles they face in interacting with others in the classroom and in social situations. At the community college level, classrooms remained silent, and students rarely participated. Students would often ask me questions, and I would ask the instructor the questions for them, modeling how engaging with the instructor was part of learning. During my graduate studies, one of my peers shared that earlier generations, such as myself, do not understand the modern life circumstances of Gen Z's persistent anxiety and how they feel unequipped to deal with life without a roadmap. I had some great conversations and shared that other generations had similar challenges navigating life at their age, so they do not need to let fear and anxiety stop them. They can draw on our wisdom to help them get through their unique circumstances.

Bias Acknowledgment and Mitigation

As older Gen X, we often struggled and overcame life challenges on our own because our parents were not present to show us how. My generation frequently

assumes everyone has the same ability to figure things out. We were also less aware of mental health issues, since we came of age as mental health research emerged. I carefully navigated the research to avoid vilifying and drawing conclusions based on generational assumptions. I mitigated the challenges by finding common ground between the qualities of older generations and Gen Z objectively. I learned that everyone is capable of learning and Gen Z will build their experience as they continue learning and growing. This effort helped me better understand how to support Gen Z and foster generational understanding that creates unity.

Target Audience

The demographic for my research is young Christian professionals, approximately aged 22 to 28, who have recently entered the workforce. They often co-work in their living environment or socialize in their work environment without a clear delineation of a social place other than online social media. My audience is concerned with personal growth, healthy work-life balance, and acutely aware of mental health challenges. Gen Z professionals are digitally immersed and socially anxious in traditional social settings. Yet, they are willing to engage in low-pressure environments, such as coffee shops, to build authentic relationships.

Objectives

Gen Z professionals have been immersed in digital environments since early childhood, which has shaped their preference for efficiency, continuous connectivity, and technology-mediated interaction. The rapid expansion of social media in the early 2000s fostered online communities that created the illusion of authentic relationship-building, allowing users to equate virtual engagement with in-person connection. During the COVID-19 crisis, widespread social disruption intensified reliance on digital platforms as substitutes for physical gatherings. In the post-

COVID era, many Gen Z professionals continue to prefer online communication, viewing it as more convenient and less emotionally demanding than face-to-face interaction. As a result, traditional third-place environments, such as cafés, community spaces, and informal gathering locations, are increasingly avoided, contributing to a decline in relational depth, heightened social anxiety in physical settings, and fewer opportunities for mental, emotional, and spiritual development.

The objective of this project is to develop a pathway that helps Gen Z engage in real-life activities that cultivate authentic relationships and spiritual growth, while aligning with their natural capacity for learning and personal development. In-person interactions nurture soft skills, emotional awareness, and resilience; competencies that digital environments often fail to reinforce. By reintroducing Gen Z to embodied relational experiences, this project aims to support their social, emotional, and spiritual formation within the Christian community.

Research Question

The challenges associated with digitally immersive lifestyles are clear. While we cannot abandon technology, we can create a design solution that integrates technology and encourages people to build relationships. How can I design a Bible study that effectively incorporates visual communication and user experience to invite Gen Z professionals to engage in meaningful face-to-face relationships within coffee shop settings?

Knowledge Gap

Although online relationships can feel genuine, they often inhibit the formation of lasting, embodied connections essential for human flourishing. Gen Z's

adaptability, technological fluency, and desire for self-improvement are significant strengths, yet these strengths coexist with elevated anxiety and limited experience navigating interpersonal dynamics in physical settings. Post-COVID lifestyle changes remain, with many people opting for hybrid working environments. Few studies addressed whether the lines between first, second, or third places as multipurpose places sustain one's mental and spiritual well-being over time. Since Gen Z are not getting married and starting a family as young as previous generations, they sometimes view third places as a place to be alone. Less in-person human interaction affects their development and leads to a lack of skills when encountering relationship challenges with people outside of work and social gatherings. The research also could not answer whether Gen Z is willing to invest in third-place activities if the value improves their overall experience. Answers would inform future pathways for Gen Z and younger generations, with online connectivity-driven lifestyle and behavior changes.

Significance

Scripture affirms that God created human beings for relationship and community rather than solitude. Our primary relationship is with the Lord, followed by the call to live in community with family, coworkers, and neighbors as we carry out the Great Commission. Relationships are central to Christian life, enabling believers to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). God is not surprised by humanity's relational struggles or mental health challenges; these are natural consequences of a fallen world. Yet life within the Christian community remains a vital means of emotional and spiritual growth and support.



Chapter 2: Research Report

Research Rationale

The research examines the post-COVID behaviors, technology use, social media engagement, and third-place activities of Gen Z, focusing on areas outside work and home. Digital lifestyles offer convenience and instant feedback, thanks to the availability of online information. Social media channels enable virtual friendships, fostering pseudo or partial relationships with people who may never meet in person. It is the author's hypothesis is that people avoid in-person gatherings, preferring idealized representations of others, which creates unrealistic views of normal interpersonal relationships and contributes to avoidance in forming in-person relationships.

Research Methods

The literature review examines Gen Z's post-COVID behaviors, including technology use, social media engagement, and third-place activities outside of work and home. Mental health problems continue to rise and are recognized more than by previous generations. Scripture confirms that people are prone to mental health problems, with many passages addressing challenges and how to overcome them by renewing our minds (e.g.: Romans 12:2). The research confirmed the hypothesis, yet also revealed some discoveries that show similar challenges across generations, albeit in different circumstances.

Additional research methods, including three case studies and visual analyses, helped to solve the research problem. Design can address real-world issues to influence audience behaviors by observing and designing for a coffee shop-style event, analyzing a board and card game, and an online devotional Bible study that has adapted to user experience through technology over time. The case studies

helped determine the best solution for identifying practical ways to capture the Gen Z audience. The studies focused on content based on audience behaviors obtained from the literature review, aiming to inform the design solution's content. The visual analyses, focusing on Gen Z aesthetics and behaviors, will help formulate a design approach that best appeals to the audience. Design theories, color, emotion, typography, and other design principles appeal to the Gen Z audience to find an effective solution.

Summary of Findings

Literature Review

The literature review surveys qualitative research on Gen Z behavior post-COVID, their engagement with technology, and their participation in third places. Gen Z's digital lives offer convenience and instant feedback due to the availability of online information. Social media channels enable virtual friendships, fostering pseudo or partial relationships with people who may never meet in person. The hypothesis is that pseudo-relationships exhibit idealized representations of people, fostering unrealistic views of what is normal and contributing to avoidance in forming interpersonal relationships in physical settings.

TECHNOLOGY AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Gen Z's persistent connectivity to technology and social media leads to higher levels of anxiety and depression. In "COVID-19 Information Overload and Generation Z's Social Media Discontinuance Intention during the Pandemic Lockdown," Hongfei Liu from the University of Southampton and his team determined that Gen Z were unable to disconnect from social media because of the "fear of missing out" or "FoMO" (*Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 1).

Research shows there is a connection between anxiety and depression and the use of connected devices and social media. The anxiety and depression foster the desire for isolation, making adulthood more intimidating, because they have not yet learned to navigate challenging in-person social situations. Gabrielle Vultaggio, in her honors thesis project at the State University of New York at New Paltz, asserts that emerging Gen Z professionals understand mental health concerns and receive anxiety diagnoses before college, “the unknown” as the primary concern, leaving college (“The Most Anxious Generation” 4). Technology and social media reliance exacerbate their fears because they worry about whether they will find jobs and support themselves within society. Following world events on social media increases anxiety because instant access to crises with social media feedback is overwhelming (25). Regulating social media connectivity poses a challenge for individuals, particularly those in Gen Z.

Connectivity to social media makes it challenging to know the truth, and their fears make them isolate and avoid social gatherings, resulting in more mental health concerns. In the *International Journal of Humanities and Language*

Research, Taghreed Hassanien notes that we analyze and process what people say through their body language to gain a better understanding of them (“The Role of Body Language” 58). Non-verbal cues are an integral part of communication, making it essential to be aware of

them when interacting with people to avoid miscommunication. While older generations socialize at gatherings, “Gen Z are spending this time alone on social media instead” (Vultaggio 4). Social media presents the lives of others as idealistic and world news as alarming. Meghan Isaf, a Strategic Communications

“Gen Z are spending this time alone on social media instead” of socializing at gatherings.
~VULTAGGIO

student at Elon University, examined the role of social media's influence on casual and serious romantic relationships (“The Role of Social Media in Dating Trends Among Gen Z College Students” 59). Research showed that Gen Z prefers casual relationships and rarely meets in person (Isaf 59). Social media adds to the anxiety of in-person relationships since they do not stop following people once the relationship is over. In the *London Journal of Social Sciences*, Ermine Yildirim and other researchers describe the paradox of social media, “despite the ostensibly ‘social’ nature of these platforms...social media can make individuals less social” (“Exploring the Impact of Excessive Social Media Use on Mental Health and Social Interaction” 159). There were “negative effects of social media use on their emotional well-being, including depression, frustration, and social comparison” (Isaf 61). With those concerns, Gen Z seeks counsel from a professional earlier to support their mental health.

Resilience is also a factor in Gen Z mental health, as discovered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychologists Tali Harari and other researchers published a study in *Current Psychology*, showing that older generations were more mentally resilient (“Gen Z during the COVID-19 Crisis” 24223). Gen Z struggled with resilience during the pandemic, yet were open and flexible to change. The finding is consistent with what researchers from the University of Indonesia have connected to resilience, namely emotional intelligence, which motivates people’s openness to navigating life challenges (Winda et al. 2124). Flexibility helps facilitate resilience, and expression helps overcome struggles. Struggles are part of our broken world; as Christians, we can put our hope in the Lord because “suffering produces endurance” and helps us gain better character (Romans 5:3-5).

“Despite the ostensibly ‘social’ nature of these platforms...social media can make individuals less social.”
~YILDIRIM ET AL.

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

~ROMANS 5:3-5

The Lord uses people in our lives to help us endure challenges and build resilience.

Social media’s design makes us feel more social than we actually are, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, people attempted to adapt. In *Your Brain on Art*, Susan Magsamen and Ivy Ross observed that flexibility helped people adapt to the isolation as shown in their story about David Byrne of the band The Talking Heads who

“created a ‘Social Distance Dance Club’ during the COVID-19 lockdown, and learned that people who joined the group” felt connected while dancing even though they participated together online (226). COVID-19’s challenges of isolation tested people’s resilience, which in turn fostered relationships through online connectivity across all generations, modifying how we interact today. Hebrews 10:25 confirms our need to meet for spiritual and mental well-being and foster biblical unity. The pandemic highlighted the desire for convenience and efficiency, prompting people to adjust their daily habits and lifestyles.

POST-COVID SOCIAL PARADIGM

The pandemic changed how people shop, work, and socialize. In an article for *The Scotsman*, Rosalind Erskine reported that during the COVID-19 lockdown, Gen Z and Millennials developed a new appreciation for good coffee, as they learned to slow down and enjoy the ritual of making it (“How Millennials and Gen-Z Have Changed Your Morning Coffee” 25). Slowing down to participate in a ritual helps us refocus our thoughts and emotions. Scripture has much to say about rituals and we are encouraged to delight in God’s Word and “meditate” or think deeply about it “day and night” (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2). Bryan Dajero of the University of Science

and Technology of Southern Philippines and his research team agree, noting that regular habits that become a daily activity that offers “comfort, connection, and structure” (“Coffee Culture and Mental Health 1). Enjoyable rituals are significant coping mechanisms for stressful circumstances because they help people unwind through delightful activities.

All generations connected online during lockdown to find some sort of sensory engagement. “In challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic, people turn to the arts” (Magsamen and Ross 233). People naturally manage their emotions by participating in some form of the arts. Much of the arts is about sensory engagement, essential for mental health. The Bible affirms humanity’s need to protect our mental health by focusing on positive and praiseworthy things that are honorable, pure, just lovely, commendable, and excellent, so it is not surprising that people discovered the sensory aspect of coffee (Philippians 4:8). During the lockdown, Gen Z gravitated toward specialty coffee and brewing techniques to offset the struggles they faced at home

(Erskine). “The lasting effect is a more conscious and engaged coffee drinker” because sustainability and what makes a quality cup are important (Erskine). Gen Z consumers visit coffee shops regularly, yet they also make coffee at home.

Learning and work habits have also changed since the pandemic. Many Gen Zers were in high school during the lockdown. While their flexibility enabled them to adapt to online learning, they have discovered that they prefer a hybrid working environment today (Harari et al. 24225). Since they are open to change, they can view rapid change more positively than older generations. Their

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

~PHILIPPIANS 4:8

continuous connectivity helped them draw on their flexibility skills and engage during the pandemic.

While social media platforms have both positive and negative effects on well-being, FoMO remains a significant challenge for young professionals. In the article on the "Effects of Social Media Platform on Generation Z in Personality Development," Parul Sharma and Jugesh Mayengbam believe the dual effects have an impact on mental health, "we can encourage Gen Z to leverage the positive aspects," and create coping skills to avoid the negative implications (*International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management* 1).

"Within the realm of social media, every notification, like, share, or comment stimulates an instant surge of dopamine, akin to a pleasurable reward"

~YILDIRIM ET AL.

Image-based platforms foster creativity and positive aspects of life, but can also lead to comparison and anxiety. In contrast, discussion-based platforms foster critical thinking, but can lead to toxic debate and cyberbullying (Sharma and Mayengbam 6). The double-edged sword of social media creates complex

challenges that are difficult to balance.

Social media channels rapidly produce information, creating decision fatigue and information overload, which can negatively affect the "psychological state in users" even if they intend to change social media use (Liu et al. 3). The effects of social media use on mental health have multiple aspects with lasting and potentially addictive impacts on mental health:

"The brain's intricate reward system is hard-wired to seek out activities that trigger the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter linked to pleasure and learning. Within the realm of social media,

every notification, like, share, or comment stimulates an instant surge of dopamine, akin to a pleasurable reward" (Yildirim et al. 159).

Social media usage boundaries were challenging to manage during the pandemic, and it is essential for people to be aware of the profound effects of excessive social media use.

Convenience is more important than ever since the pandemic, since online purchases and local delivery services have made shopping simple. Gen Zers "prefer to use both virtual and physical channels to make purchases" or a combination of both because they can complete transactions over the phone (Harari et al. 24227). Affordances also help make activities more convenient. People adapted social activities since they did not have a third place to gather socially. In "Determining The Needs of Social Affordance in an Open Public Space for Gen Z," A. Almadina and S. Marcillia studied the importance of adapting outdoor spaces to fit the social needs of people. They discovered that "spatial arrangement" influenced the perception of "the affordances of doing certain activities" in park use in social settings (Almadina and Marcillia 9). They interviewed and observed Gen Z participants, determining that they would use the space if it met their needs.

DEFINING THE THIRD PLACE

Ramon Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett defined "The Third Place" in their 1982 study by the same name, revealing that people need a place outside of work and home, the first and second places, for social activity to thrive in their well-being as "a crucial sphere of human experience" (282). Freedom and spontaneity help us build stronger relationships and solve problems more effectively. Traditional third places include community centers, parks, restaurants, churches, and other public spaces where people gather socially. When Oldenburg presented his research in the 1980s, people valued home life as "highly private" to focus on marriages and children (Oldenburg and Brissett 266). People struggle to incorporate the third place into



Fig. 2.1. While Oldenburg's theory values interaction in separate places, post-COVID behaviors show that places are less defined and overlap. Image created by author.

their lives, and the pandemic blurred the lines between them; they relied on social media and video meetings as a substitute for a third-place strategy (see fig. 2.1).

Planning commissions are incorporating tech-driven and lifestyle changes into urban environments because the physical characteristics of places significantly influence their use and appeal. Amenities such as Wi-Fi, park bench locations, shaded areas, and accessibility influence city park visits among Gen Z adolescents and adults

who use parks to retreat and experience freedom while interacting online or chatting with friends (Almadina and Marcillia 8). Aesthetics and location make third places more convenient for people to use (Fisu et al. 15). Young professionals are attuned to pleasing atmospheres and productivity features, and consider efficiency in their multitasking lifestyles.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, employees were reluctant to return to the office, and businesses adapted by incorporating workplace affordances to promote employee well-being. Professors of architecture, S. Firdaus and A. H. Fuad, from the University of Indonesia, believe people can effectively work and engage in social activities in the same spaces ("Coworking Space: Second Place, Third Place, or Both" 1). Stephanie Jones and her research team explain

that Gen Z's workplace values include "constant connectivity, flexible working hours, and work-life values" consistent with their "technology-driven attitude" (*Effective Executive* 39). The idea is to incorporate a relaxing home atmosphere, making a workplace with "the concept of an activity-oriented environment and the needs of workers," providing "elements for working together and socializing" (Firdaus and Fuad 9). Workplaces should have individual, coworking, and social areas with varying levels of division and openness to accommodate different privacy needs. In the "Third Places" chapter in *The Future of Work*, Sina Niehues notes that while "third places were not originally oriented towards productive activities, they are now also visited for work" (62). Workplaces that incorporate a home-like atmosphere create well-being.

"Third places were not originally oriented towards productive activities, [however] they are now also visited for work"

~NIEHUES

Today's professionals still value the third place, though what a third place looks like is changing. Amiruddin Fisu and his research team published an article in the *Cities* journal, examining traditional third places, discovering that "Gen-Z often utilizes their friends' homes as third spaces," often staying overnight ("Gen-Z and Individual Third Spaces" 11). The hybrid working mentality makes it difficult to distinguish between home, work, and socialization spaces. Now, third places include unconventional spaces as lifestyles have evolved.

Gen Z professionals often opt for individual spaces instead of social ones, which could signify that they are redefining the concept of the third place. The 2024 "DTS Reports: Vehicle Ownership and Role as Third Space Remain Important as Consumers Increase Video Consumption" shared that people are beginning to see their car as a third place. The survey revealed that 88% of Gen Z car owners stay

in the car to listen to music, and video consumption has grown “from 31% in 2022 to 47% in 2024” (DTS Reports). The demographic uses their cars to sit alone upon reaching their destination, spending time driving without a specific destination in mind. Car consumers want luxury features, improved infotainment systems, and high-quality sound while consuming social media content in their cars.

The behavior is also consistent with drivers commuting more between work and home. Amiruddin Fisu, an urban planner in Indonesia, published an article in the *Cities* journal with other colleagues, sharing their research that the fluid nature of the first, second, and third places is necessary to create work-life balances (11).

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

~HEBREWS 10:24-25

Fisu’s findings remain consistent with Oldenburg’s conclusions that “the office or shop and the home, joined by the ordeal of commuting, tend to absorb people’s time and interest.” (Oldenburg 266). In cities with poor public transportation, commuting directly affects the time spent in third places. Multitasking places

create efficiency “that cater to social, and productivity needs but also as spaces that mirror social dynamics” (Fisu et al. 14). Urban areas must contain plenty of accessible, flexible third places to meet workers’ needs so they will spend less time in their cars.

The third place is still relevant to human flourishing. Flourishing is about experiencing life satisfaction, purpose, good character and close relationships (Magsamen and Ross 207). As Christians, we must find ways to encourage each other “to love and good works” and that meeting together is essential for encouragement until Christ’s return (Hebrews 10:24-25). Researchers from Pennsylvania State University found that respondents who spend more than 30

minutes weekly in third places experience better self-reported mental health (“Mental Health Status and Third Places Use Among Rural Working-age Adults in the United States” 12). Rural and urban environments do not affect the perception of well-being derived from third-place use. Though people living in rural areas have less access to many services, people who engage in third-place activities have better mental health than those who avoid them (Kowalkowski et al. 11). In the *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* journal Maishwarya Maran and Michael Raj overlapped Oldenburg’s concept of places with Edward Soja’s concept of real space, Imagined Space and Lived space, then contrasted the importance of human well-being with the Mr. Stevens character in the book *The Remains of the Day* (3). The classic story reveals that Mr. Stevens lived and worked in the same physical location, making him vulnerable and hindering his psychological development. People learn and grow to develop depth in their understanding, enabling them to “cope with change, new situations and unexpected challenges” (Harari et al. 24229). Mr. Stevens had no identity outside his home and his employer’s beliefs due to his isolation from outside influence. Once he engaged with people outside of work and home, his new relationships helped change his perspective on life. “Space is generally seen as an abstract entity, whereas place is seen as a physical entity” (Maran and Raj 2). A physical place is concrete, which grounds us as individuals, making the third place vital to our well-being, as opposed to abstract online spaces. Distinct first, second, and third places help shape interactions beyond work and home. In the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, Li Fang, Fmi Adalakun, and Theo Goetemann recognize how the third place enables socialization and friendship development, as well as triggers idea development and collaboration

“Space is generally seen as an abstract entity, whereas place is seen as a physical entity”

~MARAN AND RAJ

“When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying..”

~ACTS 12:12

(“Brewing Entrepreneurship” 1402).

Varying friendships and acquaintances are necessary in people’s lives. If one lives and works in the same place, another space is needed to get away and process thoughts and interactions. Overlapping the classic story and the contemporary third place

connects historical relevance to today’s cultural challenges.

Third-place challenges occur throughout generations, including the early Church. The New Testament does not explicitly define third places for spiritual growth, yet many people gathered together in homes when Herod began persecuting Christians. In Acts 12, an angel helps Peter escape prison miraculously. He immediately went where other believers gathered at “the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying,” to encourage them before going elsewhere (Acts 12:12). The early Church adapted to cultural circumstances by redefining the third place by meeting in homes to encourage each other and develop socially and spiritually. We can creatively adapt the third place concept relevant for today’s generations.

COFFEE CULTURE AS SOCIAL BRIDGE

Coffeeshouses are third places that became popular in eighteenth-century London and Europe as a space to go instead of pubs to relax or conduct business (Oldenburg and Brissett 268). Since the pandemic, Gen Z and Millennials worldwide have been reinvigorating coffee shops as social hubs, driven by their growing affection for coffee culture. While older generations’ coffee home rituals have changed very little since the COVID-19 pandemic, 45% of Gen Z members drink more coffee, and 61% expect better coffee than before the pandemic (Erskine 25). Jennifer Ferreira and other researchers from the Center for Business

in Society at Coventry University, United Kingdom’s in an article in *Geoforum* confirm that coffee shops continue to be social spaces with a wide range of roles facilitating “connection in an increasingly isolated urban lives,” making coffee shops increasingly relevant today (“Spaces of Consumption, Connection, and Community” 21). Younger generations enjoy coffee at home and in public places.

In urban areas around the world, traditional third spaces, such as coffee shops, continue to serve as cultural and creative hubs for Gen Z. “It seems people are also going out for coffee on a regular basis,” and since COVID, “café culture has continued to boom” (Erskine). Ditha Azahra and other political science faculty from the University of Swadaya Gunung Jati, in West Java, Indonesia published an article in the *Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Science* showing that the coffee culture experience is an integral part of Gen Z culture because it enhances their social life for communication and relationship building to help them maintain a good sense of well-being (“Coffee Culture: Gen Z and Coffee Shops” 4). Generational preferences like multitasking also make them feel more productive in places like cafés and coffee shops because they can work and socialize intermittently throughout their visit (Fisu et al. 2). People can find convenient “space quality, locational accessibility” by reading interaction-related online reviews, essential to finding relevant meeting locations (Fang et al. 1409). Urban coffee culture is booming worldwide, and professionals need convenient places to gather.

Gen Z are very “sensitive to emotional changes” and more “prone to suffer from mental health problems than other generations”

~AZAHRA ET AL.

The multifaceted mindset of Gen Z has the potential to foster strong interpersonal relationships in terms of place. In “Spaces of Consumption, Connection, and Community” in the *Geoforum* journal found that relationship building in areas of consumption like coffee shops is growing

because people value multidimensional activities that create both business and personal relationships in a society that tends to isolate (Ferreira et al. 24). Convenience and efficiency lead to Gen Z's ways to engage with people for "facilitating connections, community development, and community enrichment," which makes it easier to engage personally (Ferreira et al. 24). In the coffee shop setting, people often unintentionally connect, which builds long-term engagement skills. Coffee shops that offer a variety of events and have the space and affordances to cultivate local relationships provide the most benefits to people while increasing their business value.

Merging the values of the coffee ritual with the social coffee shop culture creates a unique experience. Numerous accessible craft coffee shops, conveniently located between work and home, offer pleasant third-place opportunities. 85% of the independent coffee shops studied offered events that catered to specific groups, such as book clubs or tastings, not only increasing sales but also having the potential to connect people with similar interests (Ferreira et al. 25). Coffee culture is a respected resource that cultivates social relationships, initiating small talk. In terms of well-being, the mood-lifting characteristics of coffee are highly symbolic because it symbolizes energy, which relieves "emotional strain" (Dajero et al. 7). Coffee is a "symbol of unity and diversity," served "when welcoming guests," at gatherings, and seen as a status symbol, further solidifying its value (Azahra et al. 1). Still, many people use coffee shops to isolate and work, which creates mixed reactions for business owners since space is limited (Ferreira et al. 26). Yet, the opportunities to work, and do business in addition to social activities add business value overall. 80% of coffee shop visitors visit weekly, and 16% stop by daily (Erskine). Though Gen Z multitasks at work, at home, and in social places, they want to build relationships, and their appreciation for coffee culture could help inspire third-place social activities.

MENTAL HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In-person relationships are crucial for enhancing mental health. Researchers who published "No Substitute for In-Person Interaction" in the *Sociology* journal determined that social relationships are essential to our mental health. During the pandemic lockdown, people relied on phone calls and online activity as substitutes for in-person interaction. "Online modes of social contact did not compensate for the restrictions in in-person social contact during the pandemic" (Rouxel and Chandola 330). Substantial social media use is associated with a decrease in the quality of offline relationships (Isaf 61). Attachments to social media increase anxiety and depression and inhibit personal relationship development.

As the first generation with life-long connectivity, Gen Z grew up aware of and concerned about their mental health, and are very "sensitive to emotional changes" and more "prone to suffer from mental health problems than other generations" (Azahra et al. 2). The mental health awareness is heightened by digital immersion. Online relationships are challenging to assess and can lead to miscommunication and conflicts, resulting in uncertainty (Isaf 61). Social media reliance "shines a spotlight on stressors," focusing on everyday struggles and "maintaining a perfect image" (Vultaggio 25). When compounded with the continuous news cycle, national crisis, and politics, social media gives connected people no means of escape. Social media makes it challenging to manage expectations and levels of intimacy within relationships, since it is more difficult to read nonverbal cues on video and is absent in text-only communication (Isaf 61; Hassanien 65). The online pseudo-relationships often present idealized versions of others and themselves,

The human mind is complex, so we need to find ways to improve our minds, learn, and grow through experiences that stimulate "awe, curiosity, novelty, and surprise," which are neurological stimulators and contribute to flourishing behaviors

~MAGSAMEN AND ROSS

undermining the desired authenticity between friends. Social media features and tools that “smooth over imperfections” and create unrealistic comparisons to others (Vultaggio 25). The insecurities add to the desire to self-isolate and impede relationship building. When individuals visit physical places they often isolate, rather than build relationships with unfamiliar people nearby, and still opt to “grow their relationships online” (Fisu et al. 3). Ending relationships does not happen in explicit conversations, making the preferred method one of avoidance called “ghosting,” where people ignore or stop communicating altogether; leading to further anxiety, and isolation (Isaf 9). Online relationships often struggle to translate well in the physical world, and Gen Zers frequently find it challenging to engage in person.

Gen Zers are less resilient compared because older generations have the luxury of more life experience. Gen Z has a burnout rate of 54% compared to the average 45% experienced by other generations (Jones et al. 45). Like previous generations, younger generations will develop resilience over time as they encounter challenging life circumstances and learn coping skills. For now, “they are more vulnerable than older generations.” (Harari et al. 24229). We can refocus on their values of gaining life experience and their devotion to self-improvement. The Gen Z group can utilize these characteristics to build greater resilience.

Experts encourage people to manage their well-being by engaging in activities that lower their stress levels. Many people use coffee culture as an opportunity to fulfill this need due to its unique qualities. Consumers associate coffee with a “sense of refuge” or “sanctuary” because participants drink coffee for more

than just caffeine consumption (Dajero et al. 6). Comforting rituals that provide structure, such as preparing, drinking, or sharing coffee, enhance well-being. Coffee also improves mood by delivering “a temporary escape from stress,” and can play a role in “uplifting emotional states” (Dajero et al. 7). Comforting rituals can improve mental health and well-being.

People can experience well-being through various communal activities, such as social gatherings and art appreciation. The human mind is complex, so we need to find ways to improve our minds, learn, and grow through experiences that stimulate “awe, curiosity, novelty, and surprise,” which are neurological stimulators and contribute to flourishing behaviors (Magsamen and Ross 169). Flourishing interpersonal relationships involve engaging in activities bigger than ourselves and appreciating the things around us. Human interaction is essential, as seen during the pandemic, with people who “never met any family/friends” away from home developed “the highest levels of anxiety” (Rouxel and Chandola 338). Even introverts need social interaction, as noted by David Byrne of the band *The Talking Heads*, who appears to be an extrovert on stage, yet he has learned that he must find ways to connect with people as he is wired (Magsamen and Ross 224). During the pandemic, Byrne created a “Social Distance Dance Club” and discovered that people moving together created a sense of unity (226). While the pandemic made it challenging to generate unity in person, synchronized movement is cathartic in person (225). Interpersonal relationships in physical locations help build unity when people engage in shared activities or pursue a common purpose.

“They [Gen Z] are more vulnerable than older generations.”
~HARARI ET AL.

“there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;”
~1 JOHN 4:18

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN COMMUNITY

Oldenburg listed churches as traditional third places due to their social value; yet, for Christians, relationships with fellow believers are essential for well-being within the community. Christianity had become less popular in the 1980s as people abandoned “the traditional concepts of sin and immorality” and decided that their unhappiness was symptomatic of “inadequate and immature personal development” (Oldenburg and Brissett 266). Humanity’s problems stem from our sin and separation from God (Isaiah 59:2), and only through Christ’s redemption

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

~ROMANS 12:1-2

can we find satisfaction in life (John 3:16; Matthew 6:30-33). God created us for community, a fact evident in the creation. Before the fall of man, God said it was not good for us to be alone (Genesis 2:18).

The Psalms remind us that God is our strength, will save us, and that we should not fear (Psalm 27:1; 46:1-3). Gen Z tends to isolate socially, and they are more vulnerable than older generations (Vultaggio 4; Harari et al. 24229). The Good News of the Gospel is a welcome relief to a world filled with problems that create anxiety. Fear is the opposite of self-control (2 Timothy 1:7) and “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;” and when people understand God’s love, there is no need to be afraid (1 John 4:18). The Holy Spirit uses social opportunities to forward the Gospel and foster spiritual growth to help us deal with anxiety.

The Bible reveals that life is filled with difficult circumstances, and scripture empowers us to continually be transformed and renew our minds when we focus on the Lord (Romans 12:1-2). Non-Christians agree that we can become “stuck in our emotions...where the problems can arise,” making it essential to step out of our own thoughts and share our lives with others (Magsamen and Ross 30). God is not surprised that people struggle with anxiety because scripture continually tells

us not to be afraid, and to “be strong and courageous” (Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:9). As Christians, we can choose to solve problems on our own or rely on the Holy Spirit, who gives us fruit to rely on:

“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” Galations 5:19-23).

The struggles of life are real and overwhelming, and biblical community is the way

people can find what the world says in terms of “mindfulness” and “live with a sense of purpose and meaning, a moral compass, and a sense of virtue” (Magsamen and Ross 169). Additionally, social connections create opportunities to share our life experiences

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

~GALATIANS 6:2

and struggles as a means to “bear one another’s burdens” and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Galatians 6:2; Mark 12:31). Biblical community also allows us to develop soft skills like interpreting body language to help us grow as individuals and build relationship depth (Hassanien 66). While the Holy Spirit nurtures us, the Lord desires us to build relationships with one another for encouragement, good mental health, and spiritual growth.

Understanding Gen Z’s struggles, behaviors, and openness to growth and community provided the foundation for exploring a solution that practically addresses the need. The following case studies and visual analyses examined similar challenges to inform the development of a tabletop Bible study.

Case Studies & Visual Analyses

Browseum Event

The Browseum event is an initiative I researched, designed, and executed through the LU One office at Liberty University, providing an excellent opportunity for a case study and visual analysis (“Events | LU One | Liberty University”). The event aimed to engage Gen Z students in the LU One lounge to encourage community, biblical unity, educate students about coffee, and sample specialty coffee; since Gen Z is “full of creativity, innovation, and a desire to connect with others” they see coffee shops as a suitable gathering place (Azahra et al. 4). The case study analysis focuses on behaviors, the willingness of students to engage in a new social activity, and marketing effectiveness. In contrast, the visual analysis focuses on brand identity, visual appeal, and effectiveness (see fig. 2.2). The event required numerous visuals for the exhibition and marketing, including social media, digital signage, and printed materials (LU | One). The case study and visual analysis inform the atmosphere and design, creating an appealing coffee shop-like



Fig. 2.2. Students experiencing coffee at the Browseum event. Image used with permission by LU One. Image created by Dyson Biagas.

atmosphere. The findings align with my research, suggesting that Gen Z’s interest in craft coffee rituals encourages engagement in third-place activities.

CASE STUDY:

My first question was whether the event attracted the target audience. The LU One Events team predicted that 175 students

would attend the event, and we roasted enough coffee for three hundred people. The event took place on Friday, October 17, 2025, from 1 to 4 p.m., providing attendees with opportunities to visit between classes. The LU One Lounge is situated in the Montview Student Union, located in the corner of the second floor, near the game room, making it easily accessible to many people due to its central location. We captured attendance by having students and staff swipe their ID badges upon entry to the lounge, which is a relatively accurate method. However, some attendees may have slipped through without swiping their badges. LU One recorded 281 total student and staff swipes, 102 of whom were first-time visitors to the lounge (see fig. 2.3). The majority of the guests in attendance were Gen Z students, and attendance numbers exceeded expectations. The event’s attendance indicates that the target audience includes individuals who are willing to gather in a third place for activities centered around craft coffee.

The second question was whether the activities effectively engaged students. Gen Z enjoys craft coffee, as discovered in my literature review, and many students at the event stayed to try various coffee origins and compared the flavors between brew types. Some of the event organizers were concerned that students would want more sweeteners and creamers, and that they would object to trying the coffee samples without additives. Surprisingly, most students tasted the coffee black without adding anything to it. The findings suggest that Gen Z students are willing to try something new in a comfortable setting, provided it piques their interest.

Besides coffee tastings, the event featured educational elements, including museum walls that provided more information on coffee origins, processing, and roasting. Many students took the time to read the walls. They also enjoyed seeing the variety of coffee brewers and equipment, and some students liked the Browseum guide, which served as an interactive tool to collect stamp images as

Browseum Event Data

ATTENDANCE

LU One recorded 281 total visitors and 102 first-time guests to the lounge through ID badge swipes.

MARKETING EMAIL

The email Open Rate (OR) and Click-to-Open Rate (CTOR) are data points used to determine whether a marketing email was effective. The CTOR measures the percentage of people who clicked any call-to-action link after opening the email. We sent the survey to 257 people, and 119 opened the email. Of the 119 people who opened the email, 55 clicked on the survey.

Email Open Rate (OR)

Average:	25–35%
Good open rate:	Above 35%
Excellent open rate:	45%+
OR for Browseum:	46.3%

Click-to-Open Rate (CTOR)

Excellent	30%+
Good/Above Average	20–30%
Average/Acceptable	15–20%
Needs Improvement	Below 15%
CTOR for Browseum:	46.2%

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Respondants answered based on a scale from 1-5, with higher numbers representing higher levels of satisfaction.

How clearly do you understand the LU ONE mission?	4.4
Did the event bring cultures together?	4.6
Did the event provide an education experience?	4.0
Was the event entertaining?	4.4
How would you rate the event overall?	4.4

Fig. 2.3. LU One Browseum Event Data. Image created by author.

SATISFACTION SURVEY

LU One collected data for the Browseum Event. The quality of the event is equal to most LU One events. The Browseum survey was sent to students on 10/21/25, though 11 people found the QR code at the event and completed the survey on 10/17/25.

Survey Responses

Surveys emailed:	257	
At Event Responses:	12	(5%)
Emailed responses:	55	(21%)
Total response rate:	26%	

Marketing Effectiveness

Word of mouth:	25%
Email:	19%
Convocation Announcement:	18%
Social media:	17%
Flyers & posters:	17%
Text:	2%
Tabling:	2%

they engaged in various aspects of the event (see fig. 2.4). People listened and asked questions continuously throughout the event, suggesting that the engagement level was successful. The Browseum experience provides valuable insight for planning a tabletop Bible study in a third-place location.



Fig. 2.4. Student interacting with visuals, stamps, and Browseum Guide. Image used with permission by LU One. Image created by Dyson Biagas.

The event name is a play on words, and my next question was whether the event's purpose was clear. Students lined up at the door before the event started and seemed to know what it was about. Guests primarily wanted to taste and smell the coffee, although they also enjoyed the other aspects. The marketing materials were effective because students understood the purpose of the event.

The next question was what elements made students linger in the lounge. Over the course of the afternoon, the coffee brewing demonstrations and samples kept students in the lounge. For the event we roasted coffee from Ethiopia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil, and brewed it during the event using an antique and modern coffee siphon, a Clever Dripper, an AeroPress, and Turkish brewers. We chose brewing methods that most people could afford, except for the siphon, which is just fun to watch. Since students continued to ask questions about each brewing method and taste various origins, it indicates that students engaged in an interactive process, enhancing their experience in the lounge due to their willingness to experiment and innovate (Erskine). Many groups talked over coffee until they were ready to leave.

After observing students during the event, I identified some elements that can improve engagement. Sometimes we did not brew coffee fast enough, and long lines formed, though the people in line were patient and did not seem agitated. Ideally, we could improve efficiency and simplify the brew types, primarily focusing on brewing Clever Drippers and siphons, as they effectively serve more people more quickly. We had several students assisting with grinding, brewing, and demonstrating the coffee; next time, we would include more volunteers. A better workflow enables us to serve more people in the space, because an “immediate experience has become a way of life” (Jones et al. 39). While they will learn patience over time, efficiency is an essential value for the audience. Another distracting element was the coffee packages we displayed on the counter. People thought the coffee on the counter was for sale, rather than a display, so it would be beneficial to remove anything from the counter unrelated to the demonstrations (see fig. 2.5).



Fig. 2.5. Brewseum Coffee Counter. Image created by author

The final question is about marketing effectiveness in how students learned about the event. Based on the event data, word of mouth had the highest at 25% with tabling events and SMS at the lowest percentages, meaning we chose meaningful ways to advertise, which then encouraged people to

invite others (see fig. 2). LU One anonymously surveys students after each event, which students can access at the event. The University Marketing department then emailed the students who swiped into the event on October 21. While the main event goal was to build LU One brand recognition through attendance, student satisfaction is critical for future engagement. The marketing email was successful

because out of 267 emails, 119 opened the email. Of the 119 who opened the email, 55 clicked on the survey. The total survey response was 26%, which seems low, but people are bombarded with information daily, so surveys often feel irrelevant. Next time, we could encourage survey participation at the event by reminding attendees that the anonymous five-question poll is quick and easy to complete. Overall event satisfaction was 4.4, indicating successful student satisfaction.

Gen Z struggles to go places to interact with others, and the Brewseum was a fun event that attracted people who enjoy coffee. The event demonstrates that a third-place environment, such as a coffee shop or, in this case, a lounge, is an effective gathering place for a Bible study.

VISUAL ANALYSIS:

The visual elements of the Brewseum event included a brand identity featuring a logo, a swirl pattern, a unified color palette, and effective typography. The designs include marketing designs, environmental graphics at the event, printed materials, custom rubber stamps, and a cookie invitation. The target audience is Gen Z students at Liberty University to promote biblical unity across campus in a community setting, providing an opportunity “to socialize and make friends and build relationships” (Fang et al. 1402).

Digital marketing efforts comprised a significant portion of the advertising, including digital signage across campus, digital graphics on the University intranet, and Instagram (see fig. 2.6). The logo effectively conveyed the meaning of the event through semiotics. The large “B” icon is an excellent symbol because it effectively applies the figure-ground principle, a key concept in Gestalt theory. In Universal



Fig. 2.6. Brewseum Digital Ad. Image created by author.

Principles of Design, people can perceive items “as either figure or ground,” helping us focus on the stability of the figure (Lidwell et al. 67). However, when the figure and ground distinction is ambiguous, the symbol can be more dynamic because of equal emphasis. The logo applies figure-ground in two ways. The “B” icon above the wordmark is the background, while the name is the foreground, creating stability in the logo. The icon also contains ambiguity since we visually switch between the positive and negative space to see both the capital “B” and the steaming cup of coffee within the counters in the negative space. The visual dance creates movement, thereby creating a stable, yet dynamic logo. The color palette, comprising red, gold, brown, and teal, combines warm and cool colors, working effectively in all visuals for the event. The color contrast is dynamic and easily readable from a distance, making the event information memorable on digital signage across campus.

The Digital ads incorporate modern elements, appealing to the target audience, and embody both the warmth and energy characteristic of this

age group. We know that “image-based platforms foster creativity and positive life aspects,” making digital platforms a positive marketing approach, so good design is critical (Sharma 6). The tagline “A Coffee Culture Experience” informs the viewer of the event’s purpose. The title and tagline hierarchy in each ad effectively draws the reader in, making the information more memorable and engaging. Relevant information is organized in proximity, such as the date, time, and location, making it more memorable and easier to recall.



Fig. 2.7. Brewseum guide and rubber stamps. Image created by author.

The printed materials worked well overall, and included a flier, pull-up sign, museum walls, and a guide that operated like a passport. We hung flyers on bulletin boards across campus, and we used the large pull-up sign to promote LU One during events and campus activities. The Brewseum guide was distributed during the event, allowing attendees to find answers to trivia questions on the walls and collect stamp images (see fig. 2.7).

Other items, such as the rubber stamps, were made using a laser cutter and engraving machine and then mounted onto wooden blocks. The icons are carefully designed coffee images that make a great impression when stamped. I created the sugar cookie to include the logo and a QR code that linked to an online event invitation (see fig. 2.8). Creative Confections by Heather made the cookies and printed the design in the icing. The cookie was a novel idea to draw attention to the event and share it with others, and was distributed to various leaders to help us inform others of the event.



Fig. 2.8. Brewseum cookie invitation. Image created by author.

Inside the LU One lounge are offices with floor-to-ceiling glass walls, which we covered with environmental graphics resembling museum walls as window clings. I applied the same color palette and continued the swirl pattern to unify the designs with the advertising (see fig. 2.9). The information on each exhibit was distinct, yet harmonious. The design goal was to keep guests moving through the exhibit without creating bottlenecks, as the lounge architecture is for relaxation rather than movement. Guests remembered the information when quizzed during coffee brewing demonstrations, making them effective. MuseumNext emphasizes that museum labels must be concise, which



Fig. 2.9. Brewseum walls covering office windows. Image created by author.

is necessary to avoid “too much information” (Richardson). Since people view the wall at once, I used larger body text, allowing them to read the text from ten feet or more away.

The successful visuals for the event are unified. The brand elements are dynamic and have good contrast through color and typography. The marketing elements follow the brand and carry through to the event visuals. The museum walls can each stand alone, making the flow direction less crucial and allowing for greater flexibility. Titles and labels on the walls were clear and readable. Each wall was interesting, and the visuals were accessible to people of various heights. Overall, the visuals are memorable and significantly contribute to the event’s success.

Mind the Gap Game

The game by SolidRoots, a subsidiary of SpinMaster that researches and specializes “in unique content, products, and experiences that bring people together” (SpinMaster). I examined the 2023 versions of the board game and travel editions to determine differences and learn

to solve problems for the tabletop Bible Study (see fig. 2.10). I chose the game because it aims to bring different generations together to learn about one another. The game’s goal is to foster social activity. It works well in a social place to “socialize, and in the case of some of those involved, reduce isolation,” and build new relationships (Ferreira et al. 27). A case study analysis of the game informs my research into the user experience and interaction methods of Gen Z. Toys, Tots, Pets & More (TTPM) encourages family play by challenging what we think we know (“Mind the Gap”). The visual analysis helped determine design aesthetics and functionality for my theoretical design solution.

CASE STUDY:

My study of Mind the Gap is not about gameplay, but about how the elements’ size and content affect the user interface and experience. The elements work well in third-place environments due to the compact packaging and pieces. The games are easily identifiable from a table or a shelf. The game board size is effectively suited for small tables,



Fig. 2.10. Mind the Gap trivia game packaging. Image created by author.



Fig. 2.11. Mind the Gap game board. Image created by author.

making gameplay accessible and enjoyable (see fig. 2.11). The game cards are easy to keep together, which is essential to prevent losing pieces. The travel version is very compact and works well on a table or in a car, as people can pass the box around and play it directly from the small box (see fig. 2.12). Each card type is held together with a fastener, allowing the cards to stay together and fan out to access the card you need (see fig. 2.13). The travel version includes a spinner instead of a die, which might be helpful when considering activities for the desktop Bible study (see fig. 2.14).

Players are encouraged to build teams with people from each generation, ranging from Baby Boomers to Gen Z, for a balanced approach or to compete among different generations. Five categories are on the playing-card-size trivia cards, with a deck of questions for each generation. Simple instructions called a “Game Guide” provide leeway for variations and “house rules” options to encourage customizable gameplay. If one loses the instructions, the game is intuitive, and the simplicity makes it less intimidating, breaking potential engagement barriers (SolidRoots). The travel version includes five sentences, making it more straightforward and humorously indicating that the spinner is “not a bad fidget toy either” (Mind the Gap: Travel Edition). The multigenerational nature of the game highlights how language and technology have influenced generations through the questions



Fig. 2.12. Compact travel version. Image created by author.



Fig. 2.13. Travel cards. Image created by author.



Fig. 2.14. Travel spinner. Image created by author.

and style, which are essential considerations for designing for a specific target audience. The questions for each category are concise, taking up to three lines of text with answers on the opposite side of the card, and range from one word to two lines of text. Concise text is essential for a card format, and I need to consider card size and the amount of text that is effective for my audience. As expected, the questions are relatable for each generation’s deck; however, the engaging questions are often relatable across multiple generations, making it helpful for me to take scripture and make it relevant to today’s audience.

The games are intuitive, engaging, relatively compact, and appealing for multiple generations. The look and feel are very similar to the travel version, with fewer cards in each deck and game elements simplified, with no game board, markers, or challenge cards. The game helps inform the design of cards and interactive components suitable for casual interaction. Bible study cards need to be larger to accommodate scripture and its application, as playing cards are too small for more than a few sentences. Larger text might draw more attention. The small packaging for the travel version is intriguing and worth considering for a visual solution.

Tactile board games have generally been an analog activity for generations. Mind the Gap does not integrate technology beyond instructing teams to time the opposing team’s answers using a phone timer. However, incorporating other technology is doable, and since Gen Z is digitally connected, it could encourage additional interaction.

Mind the Gap’s form and function are successful for a tabletop game and a good starting point for a Bible study solution. The game design is easy to play mentally and emotionally because the designers took care to avoid intimidating features, such as complex instructions, and allowed users to create flexible rules

(SolidRoots). Instructions encourage the youngest player or team to make the first move, directed to the Gen Z audience. Mild humor in the instructions also helps lower anxiety, creating easier engagement. The instructions state that the Armstrong family, who started the Solid Roots company, values face-to-face human interaction, which is essential in allowing “people to connect through play.” The game contains many valuable elements to consider as I move forward with my solution.

VISUAL ANALYSIS:

The game design features flat illustrations and icon designs that appeal to modern and younger audiences. The neutral, muted colors may seem dull, but they do not detract from the game’s concept. The typography features a single sans-serif type family of varying weights with a high x-height, which significantly enhances readability on the playing cards with small text. The designers researched each generation thoroughly; it would be interesting to discover how they selected the characters for each generation. Developers cleverly avoid copyright problems by referencing John Travolta’s pose in Saturday Night Fever, thereby making the faceless characters a suitable choice for Boomers. Clever designs help eliminate clichés and make ideas more novel.



Fig. 2.15. Iconography aligns with each generation. Image created by author.

Category icons are also creative because each category has a different icon in each generational deck. For example, the icons for TV and Film representations are: for Boomers, a television set; for Gen X, a VHS video; for Millennials, a flat-screen television with an arrow; and for Gen Z, a mobile phone (see fig. 2.15). The representation is clever because it helps players shift their perspective on what each generation knows. Careful iconography

is necessary to attract an audience, as is consistent use of them. The icons translate well on the game board and the generational cards.

The generational card boxes for the board game identify the generations and cleverly note the birth years in the designs (see fig. 2.16). The generational card boxes include the year spans of each generation. The years of older generations are in a larger font, while the years of the two younger generations are in smaller text. The application of birth years becomes more subtle with each generation, especially with Gen Z cards, which represent the birth years as notification bubbles next to phone app icons (see fig. 2.17). The subtle nuances suggest that Gen Z can discern details and not overlook them, which is a method worth considering for a design solution.

Some design limitations I considered primarily relate to the board game elements. The game board folds neatly into a square, and when opened, divides the Gen Z character in half (see fig. 2.18). At first glance, it creates visual tension, but I later noticed the seam makes the armless character appear to be walking. The flat characters avoid faces, a popular design style, although any area representing skin is missing from the image. One interpretation is that the faceless characters allow each generation to project into the narrative, while another is that it creates avoidance or sends a message that some generations are less important than others. If human figures are part of my design, I will avoid an ambiguous design style and seek a trend that evokes positive feelings to incorporate into the design.



Fig. 2.16. Generational trivia cards. Image created by author.

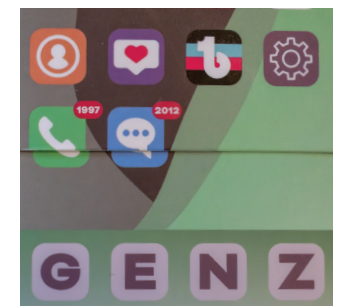


Fig. 2.17. Gen Z birth years. Image created by author.



Fig. 2.18. Game board design challenges. Image created by author.

While muted color palettes were popular in the past, trends are shifting towards brighter color selections. The low-contrast color palette makes the design appear more monochromatic, except for the Gen Z character's muted golden hair. However, the intentional choice brings attention to the character. On the packaging, the Boomer character's clothes have the same visual color weight, thereby drawing all four generations together. The color palette for my solution must pull everything together, and the palette colors can vary in visual weight, creating variety and intention.

The travel version uses the same design elements, with a more straightforward application, creating consistency. The varied applications of design elements are beneficial across multiple media, including print and digital platforms such as websites. The compactness focuses on the essential game elements. Each generational card has a slot in the box and is clearly labeled, so they remain in the correct location. Portable designs require efficient use of space. Compact designs with slots and clear labels are a good design possibility as they cater to Gen Z's desire for convenience and efficiency. Much about the game incorporates good design features, such as incorporating a lot of text in small spaces and utilizing a single font family with various typographical weights. Successful designs feature elements that focus and enhance the purpose.

Mind the Gap showcases content and design elements for consideration in my design solution. Content drives the design, and the elements appeal to my target audience while including other generations. The elements and features work well in a third place, such as a coffee shop. Simple colors and typography enhance the game's focus, which translates well to a portable Bible study concept. Consistency in the design elements across media is critical for unity and continuity. Including online and printed elements could improve content solution possibilities.

Utmost.org

The classic devotion, published in 1927, is a successful and relevant example of a transition to a useful digital format ("My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers").

The daily devotions are simple, and modern versions include additional scripture support,

applicable to today's audience. Our Daily Bread Ministries published Oswald Chambers' daily devotions on a website, and presents an excellent opportunity to analyze user experience and interface, identifying which elements work effectively and refining those that need improvement for my audience.

CASE STUDY

Utmost.org is a free resource offering daily devotions that align with the calendar. The content came from Chambers' book, compiled from "copious notes" his wife Bidy Chambers took "during his sermons" ("My Utmost for His Highest"). Each devotion references a short Bible passage, followed by a few paragraphs connecting the scripture to one's life. Since Mrs. Chambers compiled notes, she succinctly captured the main message in fewer words, making the passage easy to read. Today's generations experience information overload through connectivity and social media overload, making it crucial for materials to be concise (Liu et. Al 10). The brief narrative of each devotion is engaging because it feels personal, like interacting with social media posts. Unlike websites, social media posts are relatively short, which has trained people to consume information and scroll quickly. Multitasking media channels, work, and other activities creates focus and time management challenges, so short

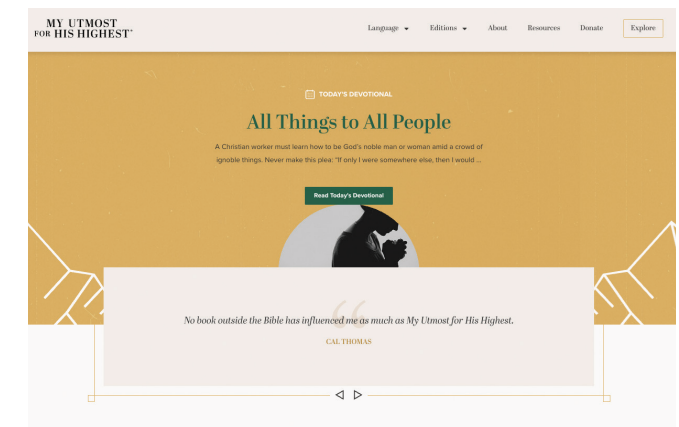


Fig. 2.19. "My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers." Landing Page. Screenshot image created by author.

devotions could make it easy for people to develop Bible study activities. CJ and Shelley Hitz recommend keeping devotion length between 150 and 500 words, noting that “a 150-word devotional will take more thought” to get the point across (Hitz and Hitz). Concise messages will be more engaging and keep the word count manageable and meaningful. The devotionals on Utmost.org fall within the suggested word count range and provide a good direction for my tabletop study.

The featured scripture is quoted and often paraphrased, with a link to the passage on the Bible Gateway website, which contains the entire Bible in multiple translations, paraphrases, and languages (BibleGateway.com). Additional content linked to the primary source keeps the clutter down on the web page, contributing to the conciseness of each devotion. The links inherently provide citations, eliminating copyright issues. Additional content can be handled similarly, following each devotional entry. The MyUtmost website includes additional Bible passage links and a quote from Oswald Chambers.

Three editions of Chambers’ devotion are accessible in the navigation. The Classic version is from the 1935 publication, the Updated from 1992, and the Modern Classic from 2023 (“My Utmost for His Highest”). Each edition features an increasingly modern vernacular, which aids in understanding, since more modern language requires less interpretation. The Modern classic incorporates more scripture links in line with the devotional content, which better helps reference and connect to biblical concepts, and will work well for my project approach.

Digital and analog combinations align with Gen Z learning characteristics, as they enjoy hybrid resources that incorporate both “face-to-face and online components” (Harari et al. 24230). Online components are essential today and will have a lasting impact, combined with a tabletop study, as they can facilitate further reflection. Furthermore, opportunities to engage in a face-to-face study help people continue

to develop an understanding of nonverbal body language, which is essential in relationship development (Hassanien 67). The online devotional is a helpful resource that has remained relevant across several generations and has also transitioned to an online format.

Utmost.org is also successful because God’s Word is relevant to all generations throughout history. Generational circumstances and language meanings may change, however, Isaiah said that even though grass and flowers die “the word of our God will stand forever,” which is consistent with Jesus’ teaching that “Heaven and earth will pass away,” but His words will not (Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35). Isaiah and Christ lived in different times, and Christ’s confirmation that the Lord is consistent will guide the Bible study concepts. The daily devotional format helps people develop good study habits because it allows for daily engagement without requiring a significant amount of time.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

The Utmost.org website features a clean, modern design that appeals to Millennials and Gen Z audiences, and functions seamlessly on both small devices and desktop browsers. Having multiple viewing options is crucial because the organization wishes to engage a broad audience encompassing all generations. It is essential to consider the aesthetic preferences of younger audience groups for relevant and successful solutions, while also incorporating classic elements that appeal to older generations. Interestingly, the site appears identical in both small devices and desktop formats, apart from the navigation. Viewers can easily change the date and edition, an essential function for people accustomed to good connectivity. The modern yet classic website design is a successful example designed to attract a broad audience.

The soft gold, forest green, tan, dark violet, blue, and black color palette keeps the site clean and organized (see fig. 2.19). The muted colors of nature improve mood and a sense of well-being as well as tie people to history, which is part of what makes Oswald Chambers interesting. Designers chose to use fewer colors on the devotional pages to provide clarity and focus. The photograph choices are mainly nature and landscapes, with some human silhouettes and images that do not include faces. The scenery helps invoke feelings of serenity and allows the reader to place themselves into the devotion. The contrast between light and shadow is also refreshing because it symbolizes the beginning or end of the day, which can help viewers feel like they are starting something new or have made it through another day, which would encourage vulnerable Gen Z audiences who have “increased anxiety and depression” (Harari et al. 2022). When people feel vulnerable, relaxing elements help promote engagement.

The half-moon-shaped photo at the top of each devotion behaves as an icon reminiscent of traditional arched cathedral windows, which adds a sense of reverence as readers take in God’s Word (see figs. 2.20 and 2.21). The shape is also

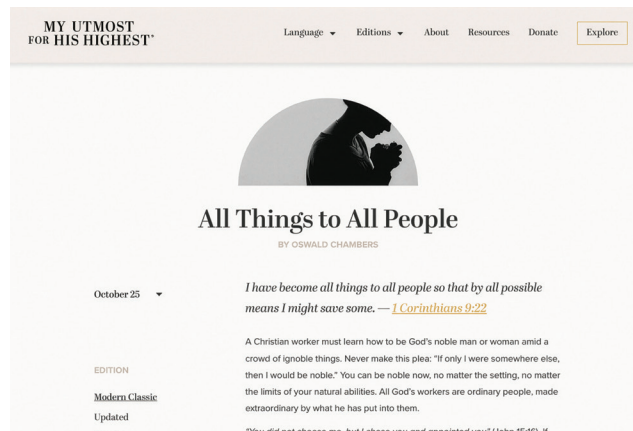


Fig. 2.20. Utmost.org October 25 Devotion from a desktop browser. Used with permission. Image created by author.

effective for younger audiences since the shape is a unique element on a text-driven page. The line represents the horizon and adds to the feeling of stability. The Lord is “the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge” (Isaiah 33:6). Stable elements are engaging when people are concerned about stressful situations.

Good typography is essential for engaging design. The headings are a serif typeface, which makes the content feel more stable and trustworthy. The body text is in a sans-serif typeface with added leading, making it more readable. Both typefaces include other treatments, such as italics, bold, or all-caps usage, creating variety and an element hierarchy. A recognizable hierarchy and readability help readers connect and develop a sense of order. The website elements would also translate well to a printed solution.

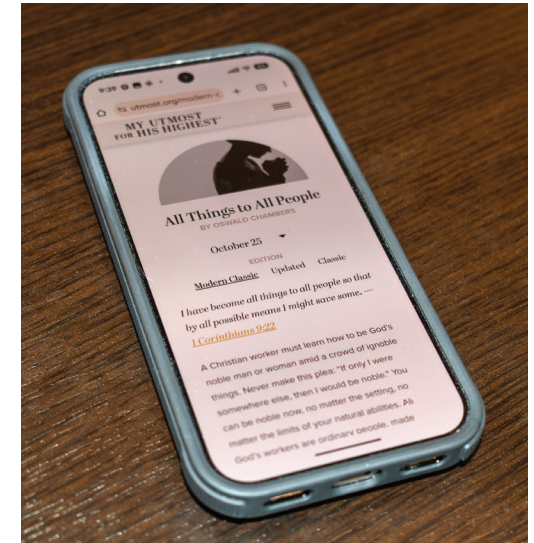


Fig. 2.21. Utmost.org October 25 Devotion mobile website. Used with permission. Image created by author.

The design choices are successful because bright color palettes and dynamic elements would be too energetic for the classic devotional. Some of the devotional photographs are bright, yet natural elements, such as landscapes, create a sense of solidarity, and the colors add variety throughout the year. Other successful elements are the hierarchy and color choices, which are consistent for each day’s devotion. The repetition helps bring unity to the site and gives readers a sense of continuity, which is essential for building good habits.

One consideration for the analysis is that Utmost.org is intended for individual use rather than group use, as evident by the photos of nature in morning or early evening scenarios when people might typically find seclusion. My solution will be for small groups, which must be both relaxing and fun to engage people who might prefer not to engage in person. Utmost.org is an excellent example of security and calmness, elements I would like to incorporate into my solution to encourage interaction and allow people to reflect individually after the meeting.

Research Conclusion

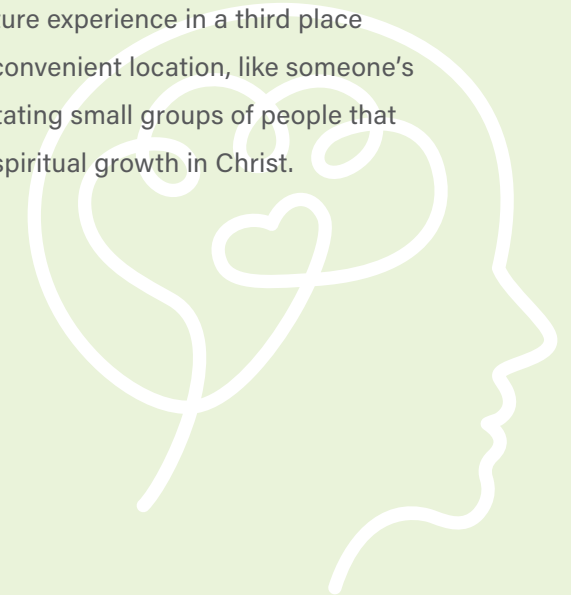
The research suggests that reliance on technology and continuous connectivity through social media can create partial representations of personalities and relationships. God designed us to have a relationship with Him and with other human beings to improve and maintain our well-being and mental health. While some studies link resilience to the overconsumption of social media and digital interactions, they clearly highlight the problematic issues people face with reliance on digital communication, as well as the reality that resilience becomes stronger with life experiences.

Post-COVID lifestyle changes remain, with many people opting for hybrid working environments. Other studies indicate that an increasing number of people are multipurposing their homes, workplaces, and social spaces. Evidence shows that businesses contribute to the combined places by providing remote work options and gathering places at the office. Specialty coffee shops in urban settings successfully connect groups of people who need multifunctional places, which attracts Gen Z because they value sustainability, convenience, and efficiency. None of the studies explain why many Gen Z professionals seek solitary areas, such as their cars, to escape from people. They are “much less likely to be homeowners and family-oriented” than Boomers (Jones et al. 39). Further research can examine the factors causing Gen Zers to avoid home ownership and family relationships, whether it be the cost of living driving people to share living spaces, relationship avoidance, or other cultural and spiritual shifts. Familial relationships and shared living spaces with acquaintances can create a need for Gen Z to view third places as private spaces.

Further research should investigate the impact of the blurred lines between home, work, and social activities. Are multipurpose places acceptable

replacements for segmenting various relationships, or do they have a long-term impact on mental and spiritual well-being? Can combining home, work, and social functions be beneficial if people engage in interpersonal relationships outside of work and home? Answers to the questions could inform future pathways for Gen Z and younger generations, with online connectivity driving lifestyle and behavior changes.

Human interaction is essential to mental well-being because “online modes of social contact” do not compensate for “in-person social contact” (Rouxel and Chandola 331). Coffee culture can bridge the gap for the social third space. A solution could be to combine coffee culture, community, and spiritual well-being in a way that attracts small groups of people together. Coffee culture inspires feelings of well-being through ritual in daily routines. It fosters positive effects on “physical and psychological dimensions of stress and anxiety” (Dajero et al. 13). Participating in communal activities like the rituals of brewing and drinking coffee offers mental and emotional support. Convenience and “a relaxed atmosphere with fast internet connectivity,” is an attractive catalyst to bring people together (Fisu et al. 4). The coffee culture experience in a third place atmosphere could be a coffee shop or other convenient location, like someone’s home, that is a welcoming environment facilitating small groups of people that can develop interpersonal relationships and spiritual growth in Christ.





Chapter 3: Methodology

Design addresses real-world issues, and the design solution must consider audience behaviors. Every design decision I document in this chapter correlates to my findings in Chapter 2, and the project itself is live research. Like writing, research, and graphic design are not linear processes. Each step requires backtracking as one learns what works and does not work. The project itself was a research method, as I learned which elements worked and which needed to change. Discoveries in the literature guided every step of the process. My process included feedback from Gen Z adults in the target audience by observing how they handled and reacted to the project. Anxiety in social situations was a design constraint that shaped every decision. Another constraint was to make the Bible study compact enough not to be obtrusive in a coffee shop setting.

Bible Study Content

The first step in the process was writing the twelve group devotionals and activities for each session. I mostly used the scriptures from my research to write the sessions. The goal is to help them understand the importance of community in third-place social settings and build confidence in those settings through practice. It is also important to acknowledge their anxiety and encourage them to improve their well-being by engaging in third-place settings. The Bible study length is crucial to the project, and the content must be gentle and accessible. It took a couple of weeks to write the sessions and narrow the topics. Initially, I thought that each session should stand alone; however, a progression is essential for people to build confidence. I also struggled to keep the content concise since the literature review revealed that good devotionals are “500 words or less in length” (Hitz and Hitz). The rough drafts for each session were 120 to 130 words, which was a great place to start. Once I had an idea of the study elements, I could

change gears and work on the Bible Study design and format. I continued refining the “Reflection” content until it was between 80 and 90 words.

SESSION TITLES AND KEY VERSES

1. Made for Connection — Ecclesiastes 4:9
2. Don't Be Afraid — Isaiah 41:10
3. The Cost of Isolation — Hebrews 10:24-25
4. Renew Your Mind — Romans 12:2
5. Suffering & Anxiety — 2 Timothy 1:7
6. Courage to Show Up — Joshua 1:9
7. Strength in Numbers — 1 Thessalonians 5:11
8. Walking Together — Galatians 6:2
9. Beyond Comparison — Galatians 2:20
10. Practicing Presence — Psalm 46:10
11. Growing Together — Galatians 5:16
12. Living Out Love — Mark 12:31

Fig. 3.1. Bible study session titles and key verses. Image created by author.

Brainstorming Process

Visual Research

I spent much of the week conducting visual research, focusing on Gen Z's color preferences. The Gen Z audience doesn't like gimmicks and wants meaningful visuals (Afzal). I also learned that brands are tapping into Gen Z's values of a maximalist aesthetic with dopamine colors, which are bright colors that make them feel good, and have psychological meaning (Medda). They don't think bright colors are as childish as previous generations. I spent time searching for ideas online and created a Pinterest board for reference, which can be found here: <https://pin.it/2DW5HibYs>. I also created a representation of the mood board to get a feel of the aesthetic (see fig. 3.1).



Fig. 3.1. Mood board representation. Image created by author.

Along with bright colors, Octet Design shows that retro styles, fun typography, and interesting shapes interest the Gen Z audience (Ochwani). Bright colors also appealed to Gen Z college students, as evident in my case study and visual analysis of the Brewseum event. I settled on a broad palette with lots of fun colors and showed several Gen Z students as I progressed, and their reactions matched the research.

Ideas and Sketches

Next, I sketched a few pages of project design and logo ideas. The Bible Study sketches helped me see various ways to break the content into smaller sections to make it more interesting (see fig. 3.3). The logo ideas did not



Fig. 3.2. Color palette. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.3. Bible study layout sketches. Image created by author.

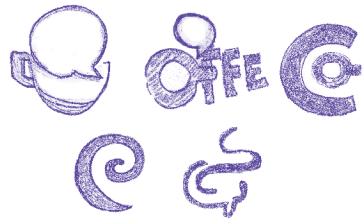


Fig. 3.4. Logo element ideas. Image created by author.

work because “Coffee Conversations” was too long a title. I took a few weeks to choose a name while I worked on other aspects of the project. Several names I tried were Coffee Chats, Swivel, Java Jabber, Off Script, and Real Talk. I asked Gen Z students in the LU One student lounge for their thoughts, and some names resonated with them, while others did not. I

realized I was veering away from the coffee shop theme, and that the sensory activity called “Coffee Moment” needed to tie to the brand. After a few weeks working with the stand, card design, and colors, I landed on *Percolate* (see figs. 3.4-5).

Brand Identity

Percolate resonated with my target audience, who enjoy coffee. The few people who did not understand the name were an international student unfamiliar with the term and another person who did not drink coffee. According to Merriam-Webster, percolation is a coffee-brewing method originally tied to agriculture, characterized by water seeping through the soil (“Definition of Percolate”). The term was later adapted to refer to coffee and the 20th-century percolator that many Gen Z grandparents used. Percolation also applies to pour-over, mocka pot, and other methods that require water to pass through the grounds.



Fig. 3.5. Percolate logos and icon. Image created by author.

Typography

Good typography is in itself a design element. The typeface choices are critical for communication, evoking the appropriate emotional response, and functionality, so it was essential to find the best combination to achieve all the directives. I knew a sans-serif font would be best for the body text, and the titles needed to be visually fun. One person thought the DoubleBass font I chose for the titles was a fun choice, yet, because it was in all caps, it made the titles feel like they were yelling at them. I landed on Variex OT for the titles and brand name, and on Oswald for the body, because the shapes were both fun and efficient for the space in the cards, which is the main application for the typography (see fig. 3.6). Oswald is available for free from Google Fonts and will work well for the companion website.



Fig. 3.6. Percolate fonts. Image created by author.

Tabletop Bible Study

The study needed to be compact enough to fit on a table in a coffee shop, intuitive, and quick to complete. Since the Bible study is for people who do not engage in group studies, it must be interesting enough that people are willing to interact with it without prompts. Another goal of the tabletop study is to keep it on a table for informal use so that individuals and impromptu groups can interact with it on demand; this means it should be water-resistant and easy to move around for cleaning and spills. Size also matters because coffee shops tend to have small tables, so the footprint must be small enough to allow guests to use their computers, keep beverages on the table, and still have room for others to work or socialize.

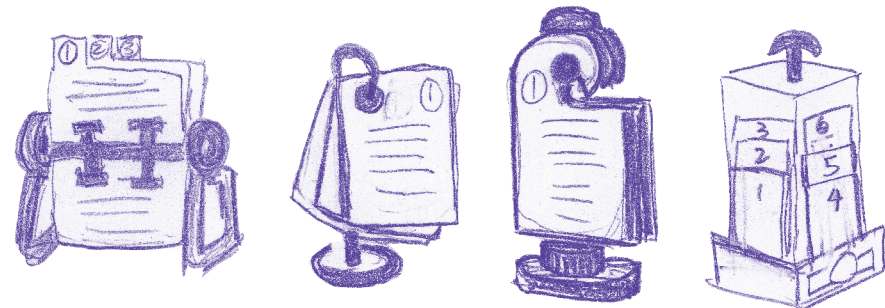


Fig. 3.7. Bible study stand sketches. Image created by author.

Bible Study Stand

I did some thumbnail sketches of some stand ideas to find a viable stand solution. Initially, I thought removable cards would be more accessible and more tactile (see fig. 3.7). Three ideas stood out, and a modified Rolodex could be a potential solution since Gen Z loves retro ideas. The cards could then be removed and returned. I 3D-printed a Rolodex stand I found on the Thingiverse website to gain insight into how to design one that works with the Bible study, put some cards

in it, and realized that, even if I made the cards shorter and wider, the simple study still contained too few cards for that format (3DPrinty). I also realized that removable cards would be problematic: they might get lost easily, be inefficient for keeping the tables clean, and be messy when people scooted the stand around. I also realized that the design needed more space for branding to visually explain the product without people having to dig for instructions. The newly realized constraints helped me narrow down the stand idea to something where the cards could hang, rotate, and remain attached.

The travel version of the “Mind the Gap” game from my case studies and visual analysis uses a grommet to keep the card decks together, while remaining usable. I decided to redesign the stand so the card swivels up out of the stand.

I was simultaneously designing the card shape as the stand idea was solidifying, so I used a die-cutting machine to cut a makeshift stand out of poster board (see figs. 3.9-10). After the second attempt, I had a rough mockup of the cards and stand. The grommet hole is 3/8" to keep the cards stable as they rotate, and my proof-of-concept mockup fastener is a threaded laser cutter stand-off, which worked in a pinch since I did not have a 3/8" dowel on hand. Next, I needed audience feedback, so I went to the LU One student lounge and asked several people for their thoughts. I was surprised by how many people could envision the project with such a low-fidelity design and by how much they loved it. Some students did not realize they needed to rotate the stand to

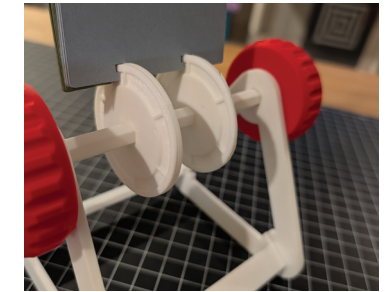


Fig. 3.8. 3D printed Rolodex. Image created by author.

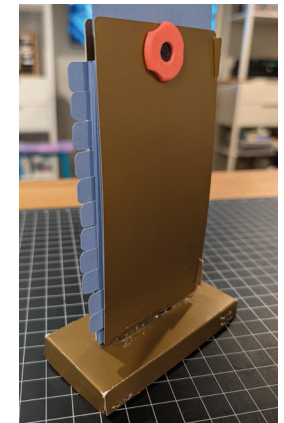


Fig. 3.9. Bible stand low-fi prototype. Image created by author.

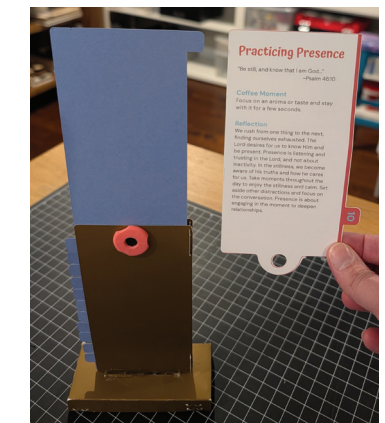


Fig. 3.10. Low-fi prototype stand and test cards. Image created by author.

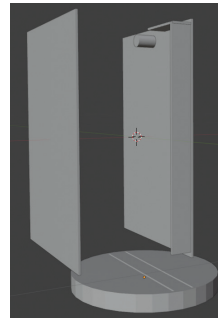


Fig. 3.11. Initial 3D stand design in Blender. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.12. First 3D print. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.13. First successful 3D print without adhesive. Image created by author.

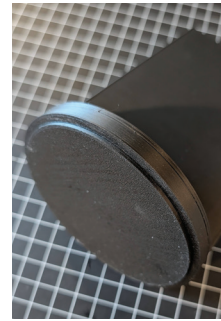


Fig. 3.14. 3D printed lazy Susan. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.15. Spacers between cards. Image created by author.

view the content on the back side, so I decided to add a Lazy Susan to the bottom of the stand. I also noticed that the cards need a place to rest when rotated to the top, so I added a short ledge.

Next, I designed the stand in Blender and 3D printed it to test with the cards (see figs. 3.11-12). I was new to 3D printing, and the first design did not print as intended. The print still provided valuable information and helped me learn that the ledge was too high, and I saw other ways to make the cards fit better. I also needed to find a simpler design so it would not need glue. I decided to make the stand one piece, with a separate

Lazy Susan piece and a removable dowel for adding the cards (see figs. 3.13-14). The overall design worked significantly better, and I kept printing modified versions of the stand, learned what print settings looked the best, and showed my target audience the progress. The 3D-printed Lazy Susan did not glide as I wanted, so I opted for one I purchased online because it rotated more smoothly, felt heavier, and felt well-balanced. Once I cut out all twelve cards, I knew that the stand needed to be deeper so the cards could rotate freely. I also cut out some spacers to go between each card to ensure they had enough space (see fig. 3.15). The tabs did not lie straight because, with each card, the tab goes lower, altering the card's weight balance. To counter the

effect, I added a small stop inside the stand to keep them visibly level. In all, there are eight major versions of the stand, and every rendition provided valuable insight. The stand takes approximately four hours to 3D print.

Stand Cover Label

The Bible study stand looks like a hardcover book on a round base that swivels. It seemed appropriate to wrap the label for branding. I made the edges of the label with approximately 1/16" of clearance from the stand edges showing in case the oils from people's hands cause the edges to lift. My testing revealed that sanding the stand first will help the vinyl label adhere better, and the small edge helps unify the design. I went through a few versions of the label and made the cover similar to the interior cards, but added an extra texture to set it apart. When people handled the first completed prototype, I noticed that older adults did not understand that the card rotated to the top of the stand. Gen Z did not seem to have the same issues, but I was not sure if it was intuitive to them or if I accidentally prompted their response, so I opted to add the information to the front cover in the top corner and on the stand (see figs. 3.17-18).

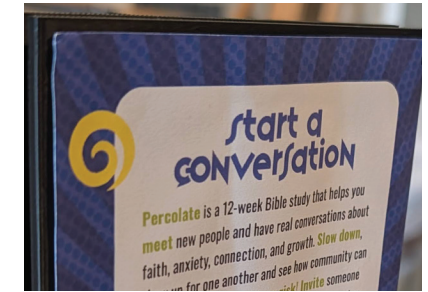


Fig. 3.16. Cover label with 1/16 inch clearance. Image created by author.

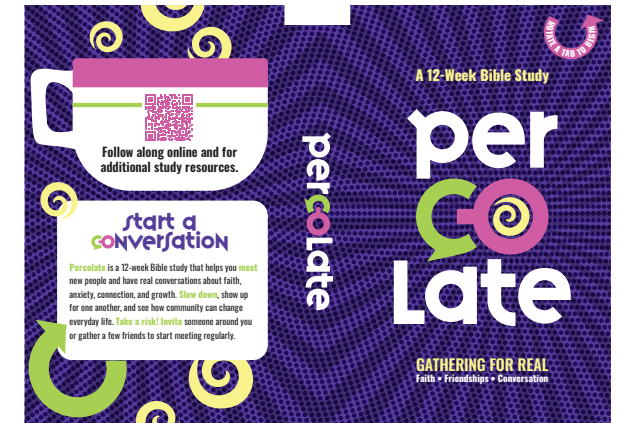


Fig. 3.17. Card label with swivel indicator on top corner. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.18. Stand rotation arrow indicator. Image created by author.

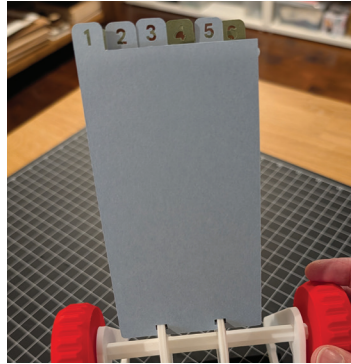


Fig. 3.19. First card style with notches. Image created by author.

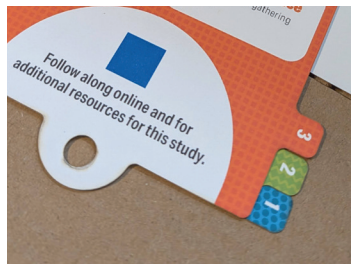


Fig. 3.20. Early version of the final card format. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.21. Cards neatly nested in the first successful prototype. Image created by author.

Bible Study Cards

Each study includes a title and seven sections: a coffee moment, a key verse, a reflection, discussion questions, a prayer, a personal practice, and additional reading. Initially, I thought an index card (3"x5") would be a great size, so I created an initial design at that size with notches like a Rolodex card, so it could be removable and tested as an option if I used a stand similar to a Rolodex (see fig. 3.19). The cards had numbered tabs at the bottom, spaced ¼ of the card width apart, which would divide the cards into three rows. Since there are only 12 study sessions, the bottom tabs were difficult to use. I also realized that the long, narrow shape would not work with a Rolodex and that removable cards would get damaged with consistent use. The cards do need a long side and as many tabs as possible showing at once. I kept working back and forth between the card shape and the stand design until I found a workable solution for the card, and then I customized the cards to fit the content and my audience's interests (see fig. 3.20).

The card hides well within the stand, with all 12 tabs visible as they rest within it (see fig. 3.21). The final size of the card is closer to a 4"x6" index card, with content on both sides. I was able to keep the text at 10 points and placed the copyright information required by the English Standard Version (ESV) for use on printed and online studies. I chose textured elements like halftone dots and stars, as well as coffee-themed elements, to unify the content. The informal nature

of online chats I added to create familiarity with an online idea in a tactile format. All of the elements work together to create a maximalist design that appeals to my audience.

When I finished the first successful prototype of the stand, I noticed the cards would not fall in the right place and would get stuck on the cards next to them. The tabs also bent easily as people handled the Bible study, so I reworked the card's shape so the corner leading back into the stand would not stick to the cards around it (see fig. 3.22). I rounded the corners near the hole and made the slope on one side shallower. I knew I needed to find a better material for the cards, especially since they were not water-resistant.

The first study prototype meant it was time to work on the website. After the website went live, I created a QR code for the home page to place on the outside of the stand, and a QR code for each of the 12 studies so that study participants could read along with the facilitator and access additional reading for further reflection. I tested the QR codes to verify. I printed a set of the cards, laminated them with the adhesive laminating sheets on both sides, and then cut them out with a laser cutter.

The cards were good enough at this point, but the laser cutting was not as accurate as I had hoped (see fig. 3.23). After completing the website, I decided to 3D print the tabs and apply matte-finished stickers on each side (see fig. 3.24) I discovered an easier way than taking the Illustrator



Fig. 3.22. Refined card shape adding gentle slopes around the hole. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.23. Laser cutting the tabs created inconsistent alignment results. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.24. 3D printed cards. Image created by author.

design through Blender, and extruded the tabs inside Illustrator. I then exported the tabs in a format the 3D slicing software could read. I also rounded the corners around each tab since removing sharp corners fixed other movement problems in earlier designs. 3D-printed tabs solved all the problems: the cards are now rigid, have a nice weight, and return to the inside of the stand more freely. The sticker alignment was easier than double-sided printing, and I reduced the sticker shape by 1 mm to give me extra space when applying them. The stickers are also water-resistant, which meets the final design goals.

Packaging

The goal for *Percolate* is to get the Bible study in coffee shops. With that in mind, simple packaging is a helpful solution that can keep the overall cost down and prevent waste. A drawstring bag with a screen-printed logo is a great solution because it takes up little space if the business decides to keep it. I looked online for inexpensive black drawstring bags and decided to try sewing one first. YouTube has many video tutorials on how to make a drawstring bag, so I watched “A Simple Trick for the Perfect Unlined Drawstring Pouch,” and sewed one out of some black swirl fabric (Kan). The first bag was too large, so I cut it apart and made it smaller so the stand would fill the bag better. Once I had one made, I decided to make a few more in case it took a few screen prints to get a good logo image. I made four bags in total, and decided to add the drawstrings after printing to avoid any additional thickness.

Next, I used Lightburn to position the logo and engrave a screen. I cut a cardboard jig for screen alignment, then laser-engraved the screen. I mounted the screen in the screen printer stand, added a generous amount of white ink to the screen, flooded it, and tested a print on a scrap of cardboard. I spent

some time measuring to align the image with the bag. I inserted cardstock into each bag to avoid bleed-through. I wanted the image near the top of the bag so most of the logo would be visible between any natural fabric folds. The second bag printed the best, but all bags produced usable prints. I allowed the ink to dry completely over a couple of days, then cured them with heat, and added the drawstrings. The drawstrings were light enough that they might not have affected the printing process.

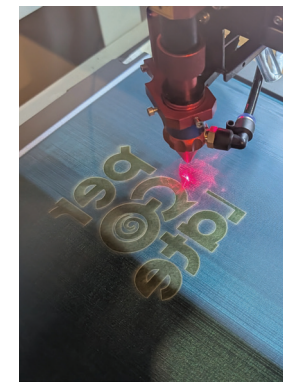


Fig. 3.25. Laser-engraving the screen. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.26. Engraved Screen. Image created by author.

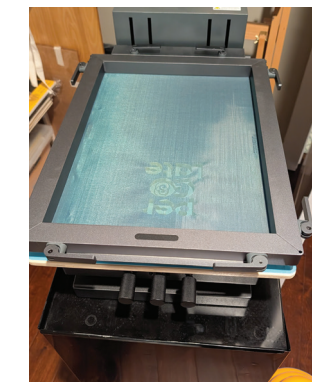


Fig. 3.27. Screen mounted in the stand. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.28. Ink applied to screen. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.29. Cardboard test print. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.30. Finished drawstring bag. Image created by author.

Materials

The stand is made of Polylactic Acid (PLA) filament (see fig 3.31.). While I considered laser-cutting acrylic or wood, I thought a 3D-printed stand would be easier to make and cheaper to reproduce, especially with a Lazy Susan in the design. I tried adapting a lazy susan 3D file, but ended up buying some acrylic ones with bearings that moved more freely. PLA wipes down easily, meets the water-resistant requirements, and is durable.



Fig. 3.31. Final stand and cards made with PLA filament. Image created by author.

Cardstock is what I used for much of my testing, but it is not water-resistant. It bent easily and started to look bad fairly quickly. I purchased a couple of different kinds of water-resistant paper, but their weight was more about paper quality than about water resistance. I wanted to use Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) cards, but it is not safe to use in a laser cutter, and the material is cost-prohibitive to die-cut through an online vendor. I tried various cardstock weights and discovered that adhesive laminating sheets are made of polyethylene, which will safely cut with a laser. Ultimately, I opted to 3D print the tabs and apply stickers because the cardstock wears out too quickly. The stand and the cards take approximately six hours to 3D print.

The cover label also needed to be waterproof. Paper was not a durable solution, though it was sufficient for testing. I used a few different types of sticker paper, and chose a glossy sticker vinyl for the outside cover and matte sticker vinyl for the inside tabs. Printing and die cutting require patience because it takes time to print, let them dry, and calibrate the digital die cutter. I was pleasantly surprised by the sticker quality, which is great and suitable for the project.

Companion Website

Website Design

The website is a critical part of the Bible study for my audience because they are always connected online. Once the physical card design was completed, it was easy to move the elements to a web page. I first designed a landing page and the 12 sessions in Adobe Illustrator (see fig. 3.32). The website's look and feel matched the cards. I created 13 backgrounds for the physical study and exported all graphic elements as PNGs and JPGs for the website. I added the Additional Reading section to the designs. Since I only use the Variex font for the titles, it made more sense to turn the titles into graphics, name the files after the titles, and incorporate them into the ALT Text for accessibility and web search functionality.

Website Build

Since the website is a companion item, I decided to host it myself. Recently, web hosts have been using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to quickly code your site the way you want, rather than traditional WordPress tools. I used the Claude AI desktop app to see if I could build my website with AI

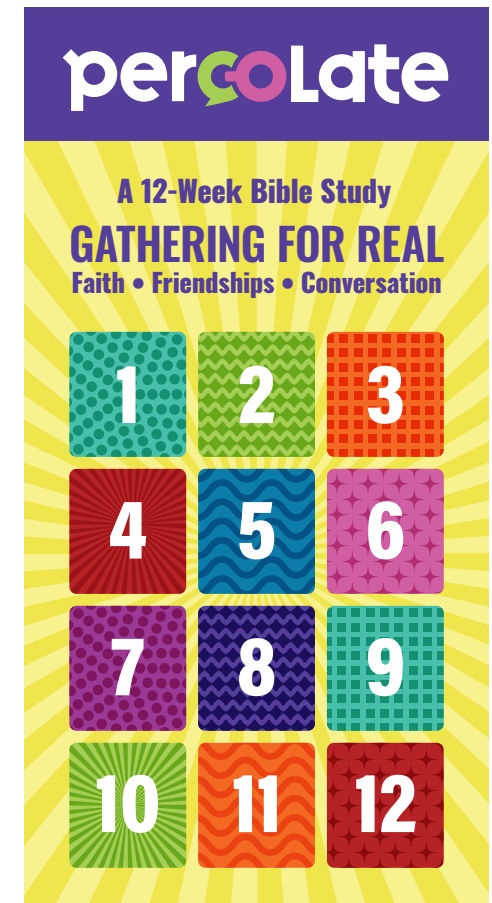


Fig. 3.32. Early website landing page designed with Adobe Illustrator. Image created by author.

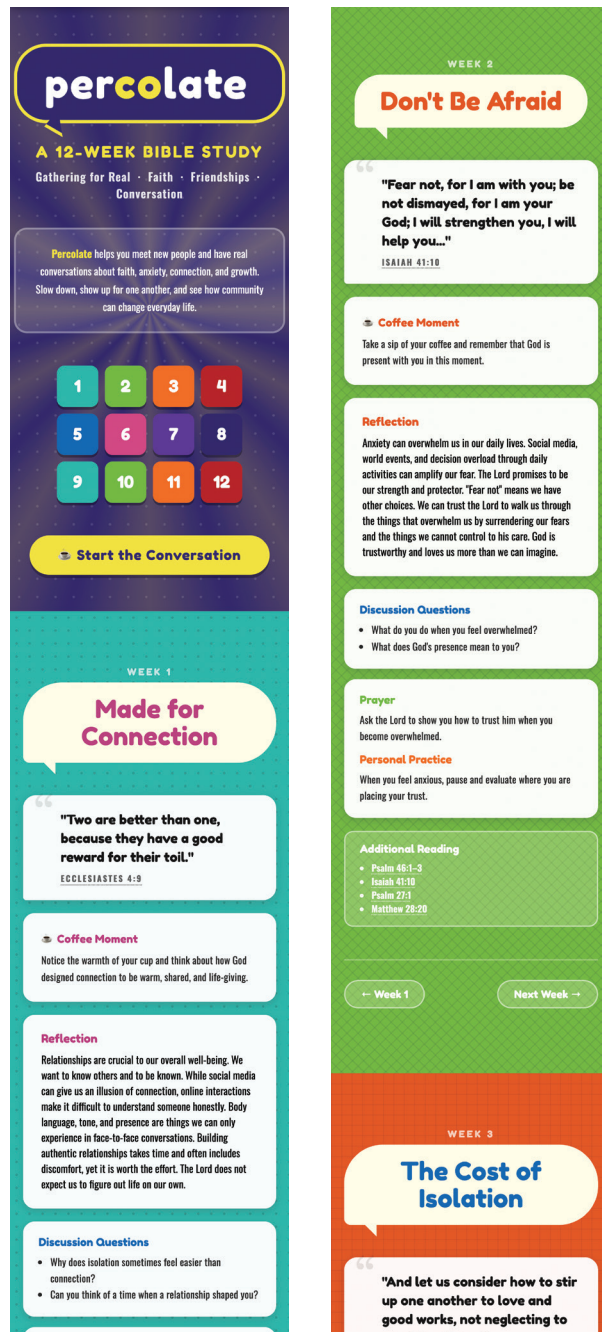


Fig. 3.33. Claude AI's first website attempt as one continuous study page. Image created by author.

assistance (Anthropic). Since I have little AI experience, I supplied the Adobe Illustrator PDF with the website design, a PDF with the brand colors and logos, a Word file with all of the Bible Study content that matched the Illustrator file, the Google fonts for web, and asked Claude to code me a website using the PDF to see what it would do. Claude's first attempt had some of the correct fonts and color scheme, but did not look like my design (see fig. 3.33). It also made the website one continuous page. Claude explained that it could not extract images from the PDF. Next, I provided all the graphic elements, backgrounds, title graphics, fonts, copy, and anything else it needed to code the site the way I wanted. With that prompt, I also asked it to create modals for the additional reading that pulls scripture from the ESV website, so viewers would stay on my website. I told Claude that the website would mainly be used on mobile devices, so

it is important for it to look good there. The next coded website looked as I envisioned, but the modals did not work properly. Claude explained I needed to go to ESV's website and apply to use their API so I could get the token. Once I acquired the token, Claude was able to make the modals appear on phones and even brand them in the *Percolate* color scheme (see fig. 3.34). I discovered other problems, like misnamed study button files (see fig. 3.35). Interestingly, Claude renamed the files after I explained that the number icons were in the wrong order on the home page and the navigation. Overall, the website came together quickly, and we continued to make simple refinements until it looked great. The AI model incorporated JavaScript and APIs, making it mobile and accessible. The website is very responsive and has the look and feel of the physical tabletop study. I uploaded it to <https://www.angelacreason.art/percolate-study>, and tested it on my phone.

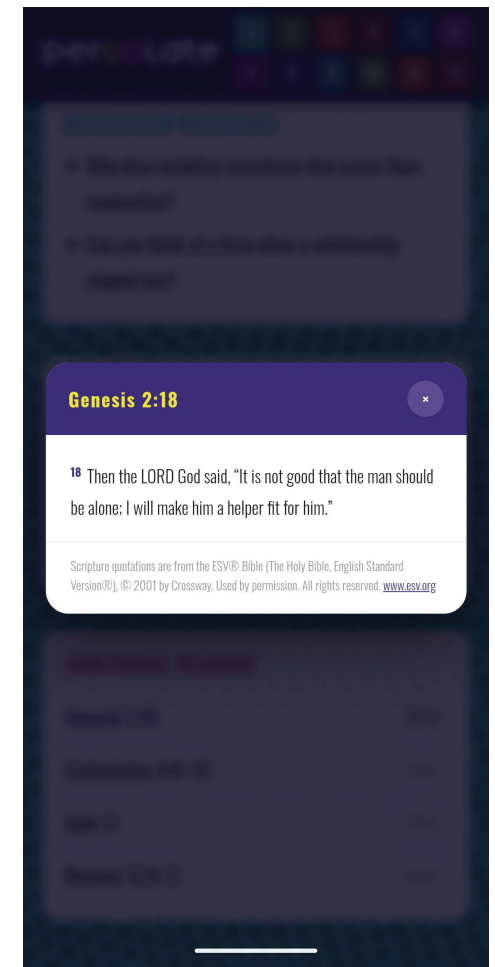


Fig. 3.34. Screenshot of home page. Image created by author.



Fig. 3.35. Mislabeled file names for some of the number icons that Claude AI later renamed. Image created by author.

Posters and Social Media

Posters are excellent visuals and can work nicely in various locations within a coffee shop. I designed two posters in Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, each featuring distinct elements that align with the *Percolate* brand's visual identity. I used the "CO" icon to reinforce the brand in a fun way into the text (see fig. 3.35). I took photos of people interacting with *Percolate* and used Photoshop to layer in effects and to generate the background fill where the image ended.



Fig. 3.35. Incorporating the "CO" Icon into the text. Image created by author.

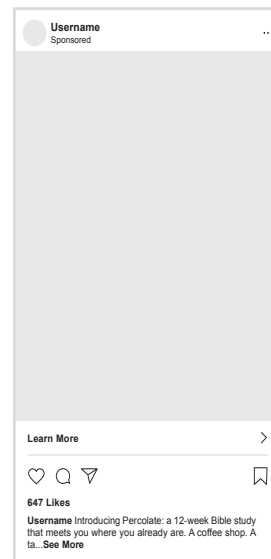


Fig. 3.36. Editable Social Media Template. Image created by author.

For the Instagram ads, I used Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop for the designs. I designed an Instagram post template in Adobe Illustrator because I couldn't find a high-resolution template I liked that was easily editable (see fig. 3.36). The customizable design worked for all three ads. One ad is for the *Percolate* brand, promoting the *Percolate* Bible study to coffee shops and other third places. I used a photo of the Bible study on a table with coffee cups. The other two ads are for coffee shops to use to promote their Bible study nights. The ads do not have dates, so businesses can promote their events in the captions.

User Feedback

Throughout the process, I informally handed out different versions of the study to approximately 12 people, half of whom were Gen Z peers who knew something about the project, to see their reactions to the design. My audience helped me identify the design's functional problems with the tabs sticking. After moving to 3D-printed tabs, people did not struggle with the cards and loved how easy they were to move. The response to the final version was surprising. Three of the students mentioned that they loved the idea and would engage with it in a coffee shop. One person said the study topics were relevant to their struggles. The stand moved freely, and many people said they could not stop messing with it, confirming my research that physical engagement is cathartic.

I also shared the project with approximately 6 people outside my audience to observe different perspectives on how it would work in a coffee shop environment. The people thought it was a great idea, and they could see additional use cases for the stand. Both groups commented on how they loved the fun colors and that the stand was not something they had seen before. Many took the time to read some cards and liked the sensory activity. A few people said they would use it when alone because it would help them get away from their phones.

The informal testing of the design and continual refinements were invaluable to the process since user experience is crucial to its success. The lazy Susan encourages engagement and indicates there is content on the back side. The tabs move smoothly and keep people engaged. *Percolate* is a compact, accessible solution for people who experience social anxiety. The final design of *Percolate* is examined in detail in Chapter 4.



Chapter 4: Solution



Fig. 4.1. Final Solution of the Percolate Bible Study. Image created by author.

The design goal for *Percolate* was to create a natural visual solution that encourages social activity and human flourishing in a coffee shop setting (see figs. 4.1-3). Every design decision is rooted in elements that will encourage human flourishing. People flourish through activities that help them experience life satisfaction and purpose, develop good character, and build meaningful close relationships (Magsamen and Ross 207). A physical product counters the reliance on online connectivity, often prompting Gen Z to avoid in-person socializing (Fisu et al. 3). In-person relationships can be tough to navigate, so they often choose isolation in public places. A Bible study in a coffee shop is the kind of third-place setting where social activities can provide mental health benefits (Kowalkowski et al. 11). *Percolate* ties good mental health rituals with spiritual growth.

God created us for community, and he often uses other Christians to help us develop our character and to grow spiritually. In community, we can “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Scripture and Christian friendships help us work things out because we need biblical ways to renew and improve our mindset, which contributes to flourishing behaviors (Romans 12:2; Magsamen and Ross 169). God designed us to flourish as we develop our relationship with him and others in spiritual community.



Fig. 4.2. Back side of *Percolate*. Image created by author.



Fig. 4.3. *Percolate* packaging. Image created by author.

Audience Analysis

Gen Z has ongoing mental health concerns, so the design must be accessible to people with heightened anxiety. The anxiety levels for this generation are notably higher than those of earlier generations, making them feel more vulnerable (Vultaggio 4; Harari et al. 24229). Lowering anxiety for this audience is critical to encouraging their engagement. The feelings of vulnerability grow with constant online connectivity and pseudo-relationships on social media, as people tend to socialize online and isolate from in-person gatherings (Isaf 59). Practice is essential for building resilience in social situations, as it takes time to build confidence and learn social cues as people encounter new social challenges (Hassanien 65; Harari et al. 24229). *Percolate* is designed to give people the opportunity to build confidence in social situations and grow spiritually.



Fig. 4.4. Gen Z adults interacting with the Percolate Bible Study. Image created by author.

Coffee Shop Context

Oldenburg’s third-place theory still holds today. However, the blurred lines between first, second, and third places, because people overlap personal, social, and work activities, mean we need to find creative ways to find social locations where Gen Z works or goes to be alone in a crowd. Coffee is a sensory experience that provides a “sense of refuge” and “a temporary escape from stress” and explains why coffee shops are a great location for *Percolate* (Dajero et al. 6-7). Coffee shops are convenient gathering places with warm atmospheres and are often visited by the Gen Z audience. *Percolate* encourages ritual and has an unobtrusive footprint that works well on small tables (see figs. 4.4-5). Rituals help encourage “comfort, connection, and structure,” and Gen Z loves how the coffee ritual slows them down enough to enjoy the moment (Dajero et al. 6-7; Erskine 25). Incorporating familiar rituals alongside a new one, such as a Bible study, is a helpful way to show how to learn social practices through group study and to build relationships that encourage one another “to stir up one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Coffee shops are a great way to bridge comforting routines with social activities.

The Brewseum event case study was an excellent proof of concept that coffee is an attractive way to combine something people enjoy consuming with social activities. The turnout was excellent for the space and time allotment, with 281 attendees and 160% of the projected attendance, and students were genuinely interested in learning about coffee brewing methods and techniques. The social aspect was



Fig. 4.5. *Percolate Bible* has a small footprint and is practical on tables. Image created by author.

successful too, as many people mingled, lingered over their coffee, asked questions, and enjoyed socializing. Coffee is a great way to attract people.

Coffee shops are also natural work locations and social locations for Gen Z. Another benefit of coffee shops is the affordances, like Wi-Fi, places to sit while they work in “an activity-oriented environment” with design elements that make it easy to work and socialize in the same location (Almadina and Marcillia 9; Firdaus and Fuad 9; Fisu et al. 2). With Gen Z choosing third places as individual spaces, they can also use the study as a personal devotional, since its focus is on community. The study then becomes a steppingstone for them to choose social activities.

Percolate Brand

Coffee is a centuries-old ritual that continues to grow with the Gen Z audience worldwide. Coffee culture is perceived as a “sanctuary,” and comforting rituals help ground us mentally (Dajero et al. 6). *Percolate* is closely associated with coffee machines and brewing methods, yet Gen Z also appreciates deeper meanings in branding, and the logo implies conversation and coffee in the central icon (see fig. 4.6). *Percolate* is associated with careful thought and deeper consideration, as it lets

ideas bubble up, which also appeals to their coffee fluency (Erskine 25). A coffee-named product signals a sense of welcome and belonging to this audience because it is a “symbol of unity and diversity” (Azahra et al. 1). The name helps unify the coffee shop concept and the warm feelings associated with coffee with the Bible study, making the product more accessible.



Fig. 4.6. *Percolate icon.* Image created by author.

Color Palette

Thoughtful communication is critical, and color is integral to the design. The *Percolate* colors are energetic colors that make people feel happy, designed to recognize the emotional stress people experience in their daily lives (Azahra et al. 2). The broad dopamine color palette includes bright colors that can be energetic when presented in complementary or split complementary combinations, creating the energy that coffee symbolizes, which directly mirrors coffee culture (Dajero et al. 7). Bold colors are the right visual language because they foster creativity and positivity to an audience that values authentic design and fun aesthetics (Sharma and Mayengbam 6). Stimulating colors can aid experiences and inspire “awe, curiosity, novelty, and surprise,” which can contribute to flourishing neurologically (Magsamen and Ross 169). Bright color palettes, combined with a maximalist aesthetic, unite energy and authenticity, appealing to the Gen Z audience.

Typography

Text appearance communicates as much as the language and content. Variex OT is a great solution for the brand name and titles because the rounded, mostly lowercase letterforms communicate friendliness, making them more approachable, whereas all-caps text can convey aggression (see fig. 4.7).

Approachable fonts lower barriers for an anxious audience, much as body language can help us process the full meaning of a social situation (Hassanien 58). Oswald, for body text and subheadings, is very readable, making it an efficient typeface choice because it allows content to be consumed quickly. Quick consumption helps lower decision fatigue and information overload, which can negatively impact the user’s mindset (Liu et al. 3, 10). The



Fig. 4.7. *Variex OT typeface used for study titles.* Image created by author.

hierarchy creates design stability, so while the title is situated at the bottom of the cards, the novel location and title size allow the reader to distinguish where to look first, since people naturally distinguish between “figure or ground” (Lidwell et al. 67). The typographic elements on all visuals communicate accessibility and are designed to lower anxiety.

Tabletop Stand

The physical format is necessary to encourage tactile interactions and connect with social interactions outside digital social media, since many have lost the desire to interact in person after the pandemic (Rouxel and Chandola 330, 338). Coffee shops are more likely to leave *Percolate* on tables if it has a small footprint, can be cleaned, and is durable. Guests are also more likely to leave it on a table and interact with it if it is not in their way. Gen Z feel comfortable in coffee shops because of “the relaxed atmosphere,” productivity, and conveniences like WiFi (Fisu et al. 2, 4). *Percolate* is a novel Bible study design that encourages interaction ideally in a coffee shop setting.

The spinning stand and cards swivel to the top of the stand are intentional design mechanisms that encourage interaction by creating curiosity (see figs. 4.8-9). Tactile elements are neurological stimulators that facilitate a sense of unity and encourage human flourishing (Magsamen and Ross 169, 226). A self-guided study that does not require a facilitator is also an important factor for the Bible study. Intuitive designs help remove the anxiety barrier of the unknown for user interaction (Vultaggio 4). If it takes too long to figure out, then people are less likely to use it. Gen Z will likely engage with it because it appears to be for them (Almadina and Marcillia 9). Overall, the format, design, and affordance of the location show Gen Z that *Percolate* is for them.



Fig. 4.8. Cards swivel to the top of the stand. Image created by author.



Fig. 4.9. Stand spins freely for access to the back side of the card. Image created by author.

Bible Study Content

Coffee Moment
Notice the warmth of your cup and think about how God designed connection to be warm, shared, and life-giving.

Reflection
Relationships are **crucial** to our overall well-being. We want to know others and to be known. While social media can give us an illusion of connection, online **interactions** make it difficult to understand someone honestly. Body language, tone, and **presence** are things we can only experience in **face-to-face** conversations. Building **authentic** relationships takes time and often includes discomfort, yet it is worth the effort. The Lord does not expect us to figure out life on our own.

Made for connection

Builds hope through scripture (Romans 5:3-5)

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.”
ECCLESIASTES 4:9

Sensory activity to enhance focus and well-being (Dajero et al. 6)

Compact central idea (Hitz and Hitz)

Meaningful title & maximalist design aesthetic (Afzal; Medda)

Helps to lower anxiety about prayer because “God is our strength” (Psalm 27:1)

Discussion Questions

- Why does isolation sometimes feel easier than connection?
- Can you think of a time when a relationship shaped you?

Prayer
Lord, show us ways we can embrace community.

Personal Practice
Look for a time this week when a connection made your day better.

Follow along online and for additional study resources.

Encourages interaction and authenticity for building relationships (Vultaggio 25; Fisu et al. 3)

Encourages participants to “be strong and courageous” by practicing new habits (Joshua 1:9)

Appeals to curiosity (Magsamen and Ross 169)

Fig. 4.10. Percolate Bible study card contents at 90% of the original size. Image created by author.

The Bible study content is designed to build confidence in social situations through practice, thereby strengthening resilience. Gen Z are open to change and growth, and how they navigate life's challenges can be strengthened through experience and practice (Winda et al. 2124). They know that life is hard and the content is meant to ultimately build hope through scripture and building relationships with others (Romans 5:3-5).

Each study includes a meaningful title, an individual sensory moment, a reflection, two discussion questions, a prayer prompt, and a call-to-action activity for the coming week (see figs. 4.10-11). Each session's QR code links to the online version of the study session with additional reading. The coffee moment taps into the coffee shop atmosphere and coffee ritual to help participants tap into the ritual and "sense of refuge" to enhance their well-being and help them focus on the time together (Dajero et al. 6). The reflection is the central part of the devotional, that contains one main idea of 80-90 words, as documented in the *Utmost.org* case study and visual analysis in Chapter 2 (Hitz and Hitz). Continual online connectivity means the audience is bombarded with content throughout the day, so succinct reflections help keep their attention.

The two discussion questions help start conversations and allow people to be authentic rather than presenting an idealistic image of themselves and allow themselves to build offline relationships rather than isolating themselves from others (Vultaggio 25; Fisur et al. 3). The prayer prompt helps lower anxiety about how to pray because "God is our strength" (Psalm 27:1). The call-to-action for the week allows participants to "be strong and courageous" by trying something new and build new healthy habits through practice (Joshua 1:9). Each element in *Percolate* purposefully connects to the research in Chapter 2.



Fig. 4.11. Percolate Bible study cards at 20% of the original size. Image created by author.



Fig. 4.12. Percolate companion website landing page. Image created by author.



Fig. 4.13. Percolate companion website created by author. Mock up by SdecoretMockup and licensed through Adobe Stock.

Companion Website

While *Percolate's* goal is to encourage people to socialize in person, one cannot ignore digital connectivity (see figs. 4.12-14). Gen Z is always online and continues to research topics. The companion website fills the need for hybrid interactions between digital and face-to-face elements, and the QR codes bridge the gap (Harari et al. 24230). Unlike *Utmost.org*, which is designed for individual study, the website allows for concurrent participation. Participants can read along with a facilitator and have opportunities for later reflection, which meets both needs. The website design mirrors the look and feel of the cards, which helps build muscle memory to continue moving through the study in subsequent weeks. The website's additional content supports the main concepts and points directly back to scripture.



Fig. 4.14. Percolate companion website Bible study pages. Image created by author.

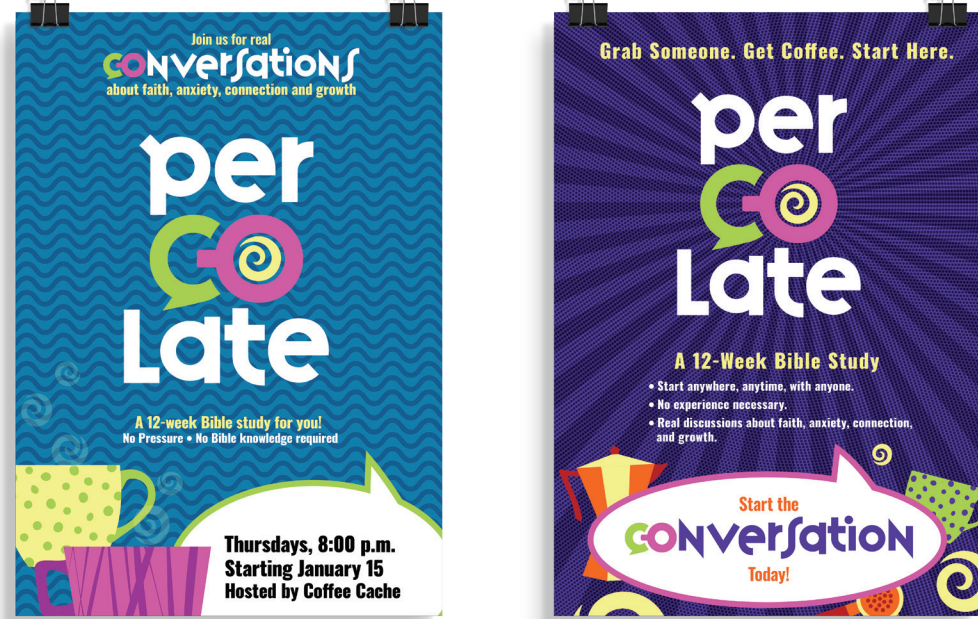


Fig. 4.15. Percolate posters created by author. Mock up by SdecoretMockup and licensed through Adobe Stock.

Posters

The posters can be used to promote a planned Bible study night hosted by the coffee shop and encourage people to gather for their own study at their convenience (see fig. 4.15). The designs are consistent with the *Percolate* brand identity and reference the stand cover for brand recognition. Marketing images in physical locations are effective because bold images work for this audience (Sharma and Mayengbam 6).

One poster promotes a Bible study night facilitated by the coffee shop or local volunteers. The other poster encourages people to take it upon themselves to complete the Bible study with friends whenever they want, providing an easy way into the study and gathering. The content on the posters is designed for an anxious audience, as it is a “No Pressure” study, and no experience or Bible knowledge is necessary, which lowers barriers to engagement.

Social Media

The social media ads are designed for two audiences (see fig. 4.16). One ad is for product promotion from the *Percolate* brand, and the other two ads are for local promotion for the coffee shop hosting the studies. The local ads promote a specific hosted event, giving the audience a reason to attend in a low-pressure way. The product ad uses a photo of the product in context, promoting authenticity rather than polish, which aligns with Gen Z aesthetic preferences. Social media is a critical marketing distribution channel because people look for positivity and creativity there (Sharma and Mayengbam 6). The “CO” icon solidifies brand recognition across the ads.

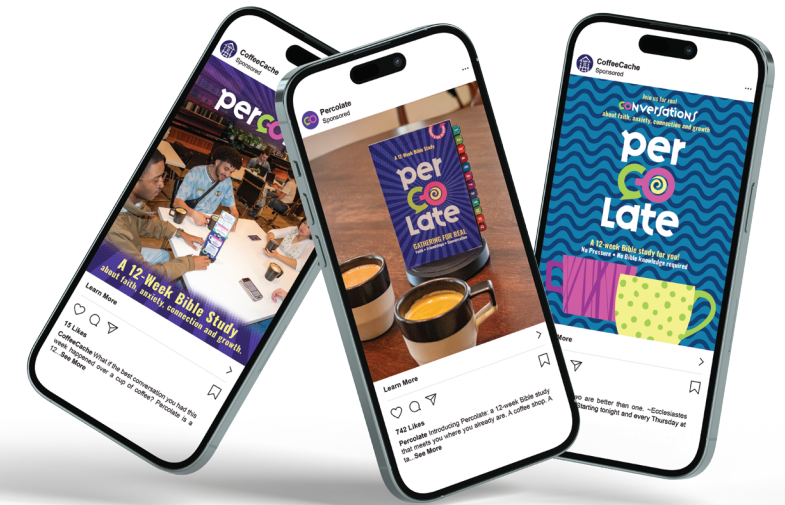


Fig. 4.16. Percolate social media ads created by author. Mock up by SdecoretMockup and licensed through Adobe Stock.

Returning to the Third Place

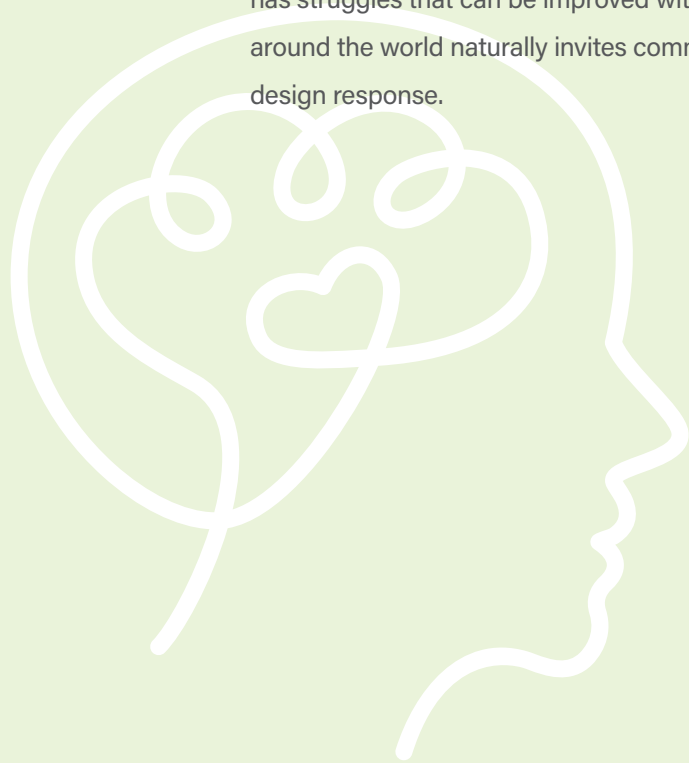
Percolate is a tabletop Bible study product designed for human flourishing, easy to use and accessible, and coffee-shop-ready. The design solution encourages Gen Z to move past isolation by fostering relationship-building in social situations. The design is low-pressure, self-guided, sensory, and tactile, removing barriers to showing up and participation. The project underscores the importance of community and of building confidence through practice, encouraging human flourishing, growing in faith, and returning to the third place.



Chapter 5: Conclusion

Response Summary

Since the pandemic, Gen Z professionals have been reluctant to engage traditional third-place community environments. Research shows that the lack of face-to-face human interaction makes it difficult to form authentic relationships, and complete digital immersion makes it difficult to discern the truth since information overload is prevalent which makes people prefer to retreat and keep their relationships online (Liu et al. 3; Fisu et al. 3). Anxiety levels are higher than those of other generations, which makes it very challenging for them to engage socially in real life because of their vulnerability and emotional sensitivity (Harari et al. 24229; Azahra et al. 2). Scripture confirms that humanity has mental health struggles, and God designed us to build relationships with him and others for our well-being. Every generation has struggles that can be improved with practice to build resilience. Coffee culture around the world naturally invites community and ritual, making *Percolate* a great design response.



Reflection

The design process allowed me to put the research into action and made many choices easier because every choice had a valid reason. Gen Z loves novelty, so it was an excellent opportunity to express creativity in the *Percolate* design. The need for a creative, novel solution showed that one can veer from tradition to convey similar emotions. For example, many demographics prefer soft, muted colors to lower anxiety, while Gen Z finds bright, happy colors comforting. The cards in the stand created the biggest challenge, and 3D printing takes time and requires planning. The informal design testing with individuals from various generations was invaluable because the design would not have worked utilizing one person's perspective. Still, *Percolate* would benefit from additional study from formal focus groups and coffee shop testing.

Future Research

In addition to refining *Percolate* through formal focus groups, future research could include a full marketing strategy for both coffee shops and Gen Z consumers. *Percolate* could also become a series of Bible studies and possibly branch out into other content, such as financial literacy. Further research could help us discover ways to adapt to Generation Alpha's emerging preferences, since they have never experienced life without smartphones and digital assistants. Their relational experiences may require different design solutions than Gen Z. Combining coffee culture, low-pressure environments, and tactile design establishes frameworks in this research that may serve as a foundation for Generation Alpha as they enter adulthood. We live in a broken world full of life struggles that are similar throughout all generations, even though the circumstances change. We must share the Gospel and adapt to how each generation hears and sees in order to reach them. God's truth does not change.

Production is another area worth exploring following this thesis project. The current *Percolate* prototype was designed and produced by hand using 3D printing, screen printing, and vinyl sticker application, a process well-suited for a proof of concept but not for wide distribution. Two production paths warrant consideration in future research. The first involves approaching a larger organization or publishing house with the concept, particularly a Christian ministry or nonprofit already working in the Bible study or young adult space. The second would be pursuing a crowdfunding campaign through a platform such as Kickstarter, which would allow *Percolate* to be market-tested with real consumers before committing to full production. Either path would require a more developed cost analysis, manufacturing process, and distribution strategy than what this stage of work allowed.

An intentional marketing strategy would naturally accompany either production path. The current thesis explores marketing in relation to the design solution. The posters and social media ads are components of a marketing framework, but a full strategy still needs to be developed. For a publishing house partnership, the strategy would focus on institutional outreach and ministry alignment. For a crowdfunding campaign, the strategy would prioritize direct-to-consumer engagement through social media, influencer partnerships within the Christian community, and coffee shop pilot programs in select markets. Developing an in-depth strategy is a meaningful next step following this research, as it builds on this foundation.



Appendices

Permissions

Subject: Re: [External] Re: Permission Request for Academic Use of Website Images
Date: Monday, March 23, 2026 at 12:32:41 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Carol Waltman <permissionsdept@odb.org>
To: Creason, Angela Marie (LU ONE) <acreason1@liberty.edu>
Attachments: image001.png, image002.png, Outlook-uvp5zjdv.png

Dear Angela,

If you are using the work in the manner you've described, we are happy to grant you **non-exclusive permission** to use both the images and the text.

That said, because you are referencing the **classic edition of the devotional**, please note that this work is **in the public domain**. As such, you are free to use it without requesting permission.

God bless.

Carol Waltman, MLIS
Rights and Permissions Manager

 Our Daily Bread Ministries.

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(616) 974-2662 | carol.waltman@odbm.org

Acts 17:28a

From: Creason, Angela Marie (LU ONE) <acreason1@liberty.edu>
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 12:23 PM
To: Carol Waltman <permissionsdept@odb.org>
Subject: RE: [External] Re: Permission Request for Academic Use of Website Images

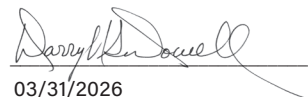
Hi Carol,

Thank you for getting back to me so quickly. I've attached an excerpt from Chapter 2 that shows what I have now. Figures 17-19 are similar to what I want to do, except instead of screenshots of the web pages, I would like to take a photo of all three pages on a computer, tablet, or phone. The goal is to show the continuity and, hopefully, make readers of my Thesis interested in the classic devotional. Right now, the first two images are a screenshot of the home page and October 25 in the web browser. I am reshooting each web page on my computer or tablet.

Authorization to Use Event Materials

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D. Gregory Dowell
Senior Vice President, LU | ONE

Signature: 
Date: 03/31/2026

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