

I'm a Quiet Revival Believer. But the real story is outside the church walls.

Graham Miller, Chief Executive of London City Mission, reflects on the growing spiritual hunger among young people in London – and the opportunity for churches to reach those not yet ready to walk through their doors.

“There’s a revival going on Dad.”

My son Sam is quite a thoughtful, serious young man, not prone to exaggeration. So, when he said this to me after school last year, I leaned in to listen. For years Sam had been the only one showing up at the Christian Union of his comprehensive school in southwest London.

He and a friend met with the chaplain and began praying daily for more boys to come. They started a WhatsApp group to share prayer requests. Then they invited others to join them at lunchtime. Fifteen students came. Then thirty. Then it spread into other year groups and the numbers sky rocketed. The chaplain kept back from the meetings, wanting it to be led by the students themselves, but he met with the leaders to continue to pray.

Today, students from Year 9 to Year 13 gather monthly for worship. The caretaker has had to usher them out because they’ve stayed singing and praying for hours.

Sam has seen his Muslim friend come to faith. His atheist friend, too. When Sam was saying there was a revival, he wasn’t getting carried away, he was just stating the facts.

Quiet Revivalist or Quiet Sceptic?

The figure from [the Bible Society’s Quiet Revival report](#), which has got most traction is that church attendance amongst **18-24 year olds going from 4% to 16% in just six years.**

Some church leaders I’ve spoken to say they haven’t seen these findings reflected in their congregations. Some Christians have expressed concern about self-reported church attendance (rather than conversions) being described as a revival.

Like Sam, I too have an analytical mind. I always want to see the data and to determine its robustness, before getting too excited.

And the data is just one of the reasons that when it comes to the quiet revival, you could call me a believer. I believe Sam’s story isn’t isolated. And I am extremely excited.

In fact, the data has been showing a growing spiritual hunger amongst young people for a while. Two years ago, I wrote a blog in response to research showing [an increase in spiritual beliefs as well as an openness to prayer – amongst Gen Z.](#)

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The Holy Spirit is at work

COVID, and the social isolation that came with it, left young people facing a pandemic of mental health issues – which they’re still facing now. They were confronted with death in a way most generations haven’t been. Unlike their parents or grandparents, they haven’t been exposed to a steady diet of liberal Christianity, with its vague sense that “everything will be alright.” Instead, many are looking for meaning, truth, and answers.

There’s other factors, but beyond all the cultural and psychological explanations, I want to be clear: I believe this is God’s doing. The Holy Spirit is at work. What Sam has seen in his school, what our missionaries are seeing across London, what the statistics are revealing – these are signs that God is moving amongst this generation.

In London, we are seeing more young men coming to faith. Especially on council estates, in working-class communities, and in areas of rich ethnic diversity. White working-class lads – long considered the hardest to reach – are beginning to follow Jesus. A few years ago, research suggested only about 1% of them would have described

themselves as Bible-believing, church-going Christians. Now, 21% of young men nationally say they have faith. That's a miracle we've been praying for.

We're also seeing young Nigerian and Caribbean men who are not just going to church because their parents drag them along, but who are actively owning their faith. They're praying with friends, talking openly about Jesus at school, and living it out in their day-to-day lives.

It's brilliant to see more young people walking into churches. But these are the ones who are braving it – the ones who are walking in cold, sometimes without knowing anyone inside. And we celebrate every single one.

But what about the ones who aren't?

It stands to reason that for every young man who has taken the leap of faith to walk into a church service, there are many more behind closed doors – young people who are more comfortable satisfying their spiritual curiosity through online influencers.

Even those that do walk into a church are sometimes put off by what they find and don't come back.

Hungry, But Not in the Pews

The statistics bear this out. While 45% of young people say they believe in God, and more than half say they've engaged in spiritual practice recently, only a fraction are showing up regularly in churches. Many are looking online instead. Some are joining livestreamed services. Others are listening to podcasts. Still others are following the likes of Russell Brand, who one week speaks movingly about Christ, and the next week promotes the power of crystals.

This is both an opportunity and a risk. It shows there's an openness, a hunger. But it also reveals how fragile this moment could be. If young people's faith is shaped only by celebrities and algorithms, it may not last. They need more than curiosity – they need discipleship. And for many, the biggest barrier is cultural: stepping uninvited into a church feels like too big a leap into the unfamiliar.

And yet the door is wide open. [Research shows](#) that 34% of 18–24-year-old non-churchgoers would attend church if invited by a friend. That's one in three. The potential is huge.

What Can We Do?

Firstly, we need to cross cultural boundaries

How can we as Christians and churches be making intentional connections in our local communities? That might mean knocking on the doors of the people who live nearby. It might mean conversations at the school gates. It could be praying for and reaching out to neighbours we've never spoken to. Jesus modelled radical hospitality, and we need to follow his example by stepping across divides of class, culture, and comfort.

This, I think, is the bigger opportunity. Our young people are already in schools, colleges, and online spaces teeming with spiritual hunger. They are the best-placed evangelists for their generation. Research shows that 80% of young people would be open to a friend talking to them about faith. That is an astonishing figure. But many young Christians don't feel confident or equipped to take that step.

This is where the Church can make a huge difference. We can train our young people to share their testimony. We can encourage them to offer to pray for their friends. We can back them up with prayer and support. And we can showcase their stories so the whole church sees what God is doing.

This is exactly what Sam and his friends have been doing in their school. They prayed faithfully. They invited others. They shared Bible verses. And what started with one lonely teenager has grown into a movement that is spreading across year groups, drawing in students from every background, and even leading to times of worship so powerful that the school caretaker has had to shut it down.

The fields are white for harvest. And the harvesters God is calling might be sitting in our youth groups right now.

Seizing the Moment

At London City Mission, we exist to help churches seize this opportunity. Our missionaries are working alongside congregations across London – in estates, schools, foodbanks, and community spaces – to meet people where they are and invite them to discover the life-changing reality of Jesus Christ. We've seen young people from Muslim, Hindu, and atheist backgrounds come to faith. We've seen congregations grow in confidence to cross cultural barriers and welcome those who might never have walked in otherwise.

So yes – I am a believer in the Quiet Revival. But being a believer means more than agreeing with the stats. It means acting on them. It means equipping our young people, crossing cultural boundaries, and making sure that the hunger we are seeing right now finds its home in Jesus Christ and his Church.

The fields are white for harvest. Let's not miss this moment.