



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 2, 2020

65,000 College Students Celebrate Jesus and New Year at Passion Conference in Atlanta

What were 65,000 college students from all 50 states and 81 foreign countries doing at the Mercedes Benz stadium in Atlanta this week? [This twitter from the Passion Conference explains:](#)



We [are saying] goodbye to 2019 and hello to 2020. Imagine what God will do through you in the new decade; what opportunities will He lead you to, what challenges will He overcome on your behalf?

The 20s are overflowing with possibilities, and we are ready and willing, full of expectation.

Since its founding in 1997 by Louie Giglio, pastor at Passion City Church in Atlanta, more than a million college students age 18 to 25 have been lifted up at his conferences. Giglio says his purpose is clear: to promote a spiritual awakening among college students all across the United States and around the world. He encourages attendees “to live in such a way that their journey counts for what is most important in the end. For us at Passion, that’s the fame of the One who rescues and restores, and the privilege we have to amplify His name in everything we do.... Passion is you and me saying goodbye to lesser things and saying yes to Jesus, the One Whose Name is above every name.”

To assist in this massive undertaking, Giglio invites Christian leaders and singers to join him. This year those students are hearing uplifting messages from Tim Tebow, John Piper, Ravi Zacharias, and Sadie Robertson, among others. Worship leaders and Christian bands include Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes, Crowder, Hillsong United, Elevation Music, Social Club Misfits, and Sean Curran.

The students bought every seat in the stadium, and in the process challenged the popular perception that most college students are wastrels, druggies, socialists, and troublemakers. In addition to celebrating their faith, they are raising millions of dollars for various charities and other worthy causes.

This event flies in the face of pollsters reporting on dwindling church attendance, especially among young people. Pew Research Center reported in October that a “smaller share of adults identify as Christians, while religious ‘nones’ have grown.” It said that, based on telephone surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019, “65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade.”

Gallup reported that among Millennials (born 1980-2000), the decline was even worse. Twenty years ago 62 percent of Generation Xers belonged to a church, while among Millennials today just 42 percent say they belong to a church.

But as *The New American* noted last April,

Glenn Stanton, the director of family formation studies at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, says these polls prove no such thing; that on the contrary, the church of “real believers” has never been stronger:



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Religious faith in America is going the way of the Yellow Pages and travel maps, we keep hearing. It's just a matter of time until Christianity's total and happy extinction, chortle our cultural elites. Is this true? Is churchgoing and religious adherence really in "widespread decline" so much so that conservative believers should suffer "growing anxiety"?

Two words: *Absolutely not.*

Most polls are asking the wrong question. They ask about church affiliation. Instead they should be asking about faithful behaviors, including "Do you attend church more than once a week? Do you pray daily? Do you accept the Bible as wholly reliable and deeply instructive to your life?" The results from asking those types of questions, according to Stanton, reveals "the percentage of [such] Americans ... has remained absolutely, steel-bar constant for the last 50 years."

Added Stanton: "Those who take their faith seriously are becoming a markedly larger proportion of all religious people. In 1989, 39 percent of those who belong to a religion held strong beliefs and practices. Today, these are 47 percent of all [of them]."

Passion Conferences are a healthy antidote to the perception that today's college students have lost their way and are sinking into secularism and atheism. More than a million of them are claiming otherwise, thanks to Giglio and his Passion Conferences.

Image: screenshot from [Passion 2020 website](#)

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American, writing primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelmann@thenewamerican.com.

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