

## **Developing an Emerging Leadership Culture**

**Ryan Moore**

### **National Young Adult Ministries Coordinator**

There are currently over 50 million people between the ages of 18 - 35 in the U.S. with energy, ideas, creativity, and passion. This is the largest generation in US history. It must be the priority of the Church to empower this generation to use their gifts for the benefit of people and the purposes of God. George Barna reports that 8,000,000 "twenty-something's" alive today who were active church-goers as teenagers, will no longer be active in a church by their 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. In addition, the USA Today suggests that 7 of 10 Protestants ages 18-30 who attended church regularly in high school, quit attending by age 23. Ministry to young adults is a challenge; however, we are responsible to build an atmosphere and culture that nurtures young adults into a higher level of leadership development and participation. What are the challenges? What do we do about them?

#### **Common Challenges of Young Adult Leadership**

**1. The challenge of developing an integrated ministry.**

What happens when the young adults in your ministry enter a certain stage in life or hit an age where your model of ministry no longer meets their needs? Typically, people outgrow their loyalty and move on. We want to grow our ministry, but we often lose sight on the importance of the growing the church.

**2. The challenge of developing a ministry that is supported.**

Children's ministry, youth ministry, music ministry, and even ministry to senior adults often gets more attention and more support than young adult ministry. It is important, however, to not allow what you cannot do keep you from what you can do. Focus your attention and your conversation around what you can do and around the support that you do have. Try not to recruit support, but rather create a ministry that people want to support. Is your ministry known for what it can't do, or for what it can do?

**3. The challenge of developing a maintenance-driven ministry.**

Defense may win championships, but offense wins wars. A protection style of ministry goes nowhere. Communicate to your young adults what they can do. Righteousness is doing something right, it's not the absence of doing something wrong.

**4. The challenge of developing a proper theology of God.**

We serve a big God. Let your young adults know and experience a God that is big enough to handle their challenges, questions, and doubts. Don't put God in a box, He will just get himself out of it anyways.

**5. The challenge of balancing discipleship and evangelism in ministry.**

There are seasons when more attention may be placed on one more than the other; however, a healthy ministry incorporates both. If you're not super passionate about discipleship or evangelism, then find someone who is to lead it.

**6. The challenge of reproducing yourself.**

It is never too early to reproduce yourself. Coach the leaders around you and place them in an area where they can succeed. Don't be intimidated by young adults who have the potential to be great leaders. The security of the ministry is more important than the security of your job. The greatest resource to help your young adult ministry grow, are the people in your young adult ministry. I've heard John Maxwell say several times that, "great leaders reproduce themselves."

I don't know about you, but I get tired of hearing all the negative characteristics of this generation. Our current generation of Young Adults is a fascinating contradiction. At times they are somewhat selfish, but also the most selfless. They can be non-committal while also being the most committed. They are the most relational and the most alone. They often won't commit to being at an event until they actually show up. However, they will also hop on a plane and work in Haiti for a year without pay. I love this generation!

I recently read an article referencing eight negative characteristics of this generation. Well, I took their eight and raised them two by listing for you ten positive characteristics of this generation. Enjoy...

### **10 Great Characteristics You May Not Know About Young Adults**

#### **1. Young adults learn faith if they can learn from competent leaders.**

We may not always know what we are doing, but we must always know who we are following. Continue to place yourself in situations where you must depend on the Holy Spirit. Allow people to see you in difficult situations.

#### **2. Young adults will act on what they hear and see and will speak up when they don't understand.**

Give them permission to speak and ask questions. This is the most observant generation that has ever lived and they see things in a way that will stir up great discussion that could lead to opportunities of them building their faith.

#### **3. Young adults are eager to change and are committed to personal growth.**

Communicate with "journey motif" while expressing the importance of transformation. Remember, it is a process and we are all on this journey together.

#### **4. Young adults, if given a chance, will attempt great things for God.**

Give them a vision that is bigger than themselves and provide opportunities for young adults to do great things for God. Examples...missions trip, outreach, preaching, teaching, leading worship, etc.

#### **5. Young adults are called to every field of society. Don't box them in.**

Let them know that they can make a difference right where they are. They don't need to be "called into ministry" to change their world.

#### **6. Young adults have enormous amount of drive, energy, and willingness to use it.**

Take advantage of their willingness to serve. Young adults must take ownership of what they are involved in. It is our responsibility to give them something to own.

**7. Young adults are grateful and will give back to their leaders.**

Ministry is a challenge, but it is also very rewarding. Young adults appreciate leaders who pour into their lives.

**8. Young adults are optimistic and realistic about the future.**

Help the people in your ministry set challenging, but practical goals.

**9. Young adults feel a call to social justice and have great ideas on how to help society.**

If you ever need any suggestion on how to pull off a successful outreach event, ask your young adults.

**10. Young adults are real and care less about social status and more about authentic relationship.**

The search for authenticity is a predominant theme among young adults. It's important to be careful in your quest of trying to be unique and relevant because young adults can sniff a fake a person from a mile away. They much rather see you than you trying to be relevant. Be your real, flawed self 100% of the time. Young adults can see right through you, so you might as well be transparent to begin with.

The bottom line is that if you desire young adults to become leaders in your ministry, than be the best leader you can be. Appreciate and value every young adult you come in contact with. Validate their feelings and try to understand where they are coming from.