

gifted for leadership

How to Mentor Millennials

Young people are longing
for authenticity and direction.



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Introduction

Stay One Step Ahead

By JoHannah Reardon



Years ago when I was first challenged to mentor someone, I felt completely overwhelmed. I was a fairly young Christian with not a very good grasp of Scripture. It was daunting to me to try to guide someone else. But the person who challenged me told me that I only had to stay one step ahead of the person I was mentoring. In other words, if I had one thing to teach them, it was worth the effort. So I dived in enthusiastically and mentored several people over the years, always challenging myself to stay one step ahead.



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Now it's a little different, though. The people I mentored earlier were peers. Now I am more likely trying to mentor someone quite a bit younger than I am. And to do that I have to understand the world they live in. This training tool hopes to help you do just that—and to stay one step ahead.

In mentoring younger people, we may need to find a new way to tell the old story that we love so much. James Choung suggests some ways to do that. Although Kyle Rohane admits that Millennials are often absent from our churches, he has some ideas for how to woo them back. "Keepin' It Real" suggests that the language for reaching postmoderns may be different, but the basic needs are the same. Skye Jethani thinks a missing piece is vocation in making Christianity relevant as we mentor young people. And the last two articles give practical steps in mentoring Millennials.

Blessings,

JoHannah Reardon

Contributing Editor for GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM

Leader's Guide

How to use this download for a group study



This download can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the Reflect questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**

A New Way to Tell the Old Story



James Choung has found a way to tell the old, old story to a new generation.

Interview by Andy Crouch

James Choung, who now serves as the divisional director for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in San Diego, has spent his life in ministry on and around college campuses, where Christians today are met with a paradoxical and perplexing combination of suspicion and openness. Choung is working to persuade skeptical students—and their Christian friends—that Christianity is relevant to them.

Can you summarize the “Big Story” that your four-circles diagram is designed to tell?

I call the diagram the Big Story because it sums up the plot points of the larger story in which we live and breathe. The



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most essential parts are the phrases: designed for good, damaged by evil, restored for better, and sent together to heal. They follow the biblical narrative: creation, fall, redemption, and mission.

As I'm drawing the four circles, I tell a story like this: The world, our relationships, and each of us were designed for good, but all of it was damaged by evil because of our self-centeredness and inclination to seek our own good above others'. But God loved the world too much to leave it that way, so he came as Jesus. He took everything evil with him to death on the cross, and through his resurrection, all of it was restored for better. In the end of time, all will be fully restored, but until then, the followers of Jesus are sent together to heal people, relationships, and the systems of the world.

The diagrams you use in your book, True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In, join a long line of evangelistic tools. What motivated you to create a new one?

I used many of those tools when I became serious about my faith in college and found that I was the only practicing Christian in my fraternity. When someone was either curious or drunk enough, I wanted to have something ready to share. Sometimes the conversation would go nowhere. But other times, one of these diagrams would actually help someone make a decision to follow Jesus for the first time. And we'd both be surprised!

These tools obviously aren't magic wands that will automatically cause someone to pledge allegiance to Jesus. But they are aids that offer a clear explanation in a memorable format. And when we're nervous, having something to hold on to will help us be clear in what we present. Even if we don't use the tools themselves, they give us helpful reminders to know what's



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essential in a presentation and what's not.

I think of them as modern-day iconography. Icons and stained glass windows helped preliterate Christians understand biblical stories and themes. Evangelism diagrams have the same function today: they help us understand the core message of the faith.

Your version, though, has a different emphasis from some previous diagrams.

Well, what was missing from the diagrams I had learned was anything substantial about one of the most important themes in Jesus' own preaching: the kingdom of God. I was reading a lot about the kingdom of God, in the Bible and in recent scholarship, but when it came to sharing the core message of the faith, I'd always fall back on an evangelistic diagram that didn't include it. And it dawned on me: Even though there are tons of books out there about the kingdom of God, very few people will be able to share it with their friends unless they are given some tool or aid—some icon—that will help them remember the key points. So even though I'm not a fan of canned presentations, I felt that creating a diagram was essential to help us understand a bigger picture of the gospel that Jesus taught.

Are you also reacting to a change in the religious landscape, especially among college students?

College students today seem really different from when I was in college. In the early 1990s, most of us were marked by a high level of distrust. So campus ministry meant building trust. It was not easy. I had to beg people to hang out with me even to start a mentoring relationship. And evangelistic approaches back



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then focused on authenticity and community. The overriding spiritual question of the day was: What is real?

But the so-called Millennials (Generation Y) seem much more trusting. Freshmen come in looking for mentors. And they're a civic generation. They're ready to volunteer, because they really think they can change the world. They're far more optimistic. And our evangelistic approaches that have worked are far more civic as well, such as dealing with the AIDS pandemic or sex trafficking. Our best approaches mix global concerns with spirituality, and many people come out for it.

The overriding spiritual question today is: What is good? What will really help the planet be a better place? And our faith better have an answer for it to be relevant today.

At the same time, my sense is that culture has turned against Christians. People seem more negative about Christians than at any time I can remember since the scandals of many Christian television personalities in the 1980s. We are perceived by many as intolerant, over-political, and homophobic. We have to work hard to overcome that.

Wheaton College evangelism professor Rick Richardson has observed that the best evangelistic strategies challenge contemporary idolatries—for example, Campus Crusade's "Four Spiritual Laws" challenged the idol of the autonomous self. What idolatries does the Big Story take aim at most directly?

In our field tests we found that many people want to jump right to the mission of healing and restoring the world. They say, "We want to be about healing the world, but why does it have to be with Jesus?"



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But we say, "No, you can't do this without Jesus. We need Jesus to help us become the kind of good we want to see in the world. Only he can fully help us put to death our self-centered ways so that we can truly live. So if you really want to be a part of healing the world in a way that lasts, you have to go through Jesus." It's at this point that we may bring up Christian history that many have forgotten—that Christians have been at the forefront of lasting social change, such as the abolitionist movement and women's suffrage and the civil rights movement.

But it's here that people will walk away from us and say, "I like everything you've said, but I still don't see why Jesus needs to be a part of it." The postmodern idolatry is that all spiritual ways of life lead to the same place. Any local truth is a valid truth. In the postmodern mind, they're all paths to being good and doing good.

But we are asking people to "repent"—literally, to change their mind or to have a new way of thinking, to see that they need to let their selfish lives die with Jesus—so they can have a new life of loving him and their neighbor. That's a huge call to faith for this generation.

How does sin—a central part of the biblical vocabulary—enter into your presentation of the gospel in the Big Story?

Evangelicals have traditionally assumed that we have to start every gospel message by helping people see they're sinners. If we don't, then we can't move on to salvation or how Jesus gives them assurance that they will be in heaven when they die.

It's not that this message isn't true, but the approach is



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jarring. We haven't created any common experience or authority so that our message will have any weight. We just come out and say it's the truth. And in a postmodern setting, that sounds arrogant. How do we know it's the truth? Have we ever been to heaven?

So at the beginning of the Big Story, we instead talk about our common perception: the world is not the way it's supposed to be.

We all agree with that. And we all agree that it makes us sick to our stomachs when we think about it. No one thinks that our world is great as it is. We hunger for a better world. And up to this point, there is no disagreement. We all experience this.

It's from this point that we can move on and say that our hunger actually must be evidence that a better world did exist, or will someday. Because our hunger points to food, and our thirst points to water—shouldn't our hunger for a better world point to something? And then we can share that the world was designed for good.

But we still come back to the concept of sin in the context of a broken world. Each person contributes to the mess. We all do. And when we present sin in the context of the results we see in the world (instead of, to a postmodern, an arbitrary set of rules that one tribe happens to live by), then our sinfulness is much easier to accept. It's still sin: our failure to love our neighbors is ultimately our failure to love God. And then sin seems much deeper and more real. And our need for a Savior becomes stronger, not weaker.

Jesus' invitations into the kingdom seem to be summed up in a couple of words: "Follow me." Jesus didn't always require people to see the depths of their sin before they started a journey with him. They just needed to be willing to change.



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How do you hope this tool will change the way Christians themselves think of evangelism?

I hope we will move from decision-oriented presentations to ones that have more to say about transformation. As we were developing the Big Story, we wanted a diagram that wouldn't just be binary—in or out—but would represent the journey that all of us are on.

We also wanted to move from an exclusive focus on the afterlife to the mission-life. Immediately after Jesus' invitation, "Follow me," he added, "I will make you fishers of men." From the outset, he gave his disciples a mission. Without the mission in our gospel presentations, we do people a grave disservice. We imply that they can be Christians without being on a God-given mission to love others in his name. And that's just not true. In Jesus' summation, we are all called to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. In Micah's version, we are called to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We need to allow the reign of God to continue to grow in us and around us.

That's not to say that life after death isn't important. But it's not the whole story. It's the final chapter, but there are still many chapters to be lived out.

Tools are pragmatic things, so here is a pragmatic question: Has this tool worked?

We have been field-testing it for several years, and the answer is yes, it has. We have had people come to follow Jesus through this. One of my favorite stories comes from another student, who had met a self-proclaimed atheist. After sharing the diagram, the atheist said, "I knew God would be like that." And



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they met together to study the Scriptures after that. A skeptic became a seeker.

In partnership with InterVarsity, World Vision, and La Jolla Presbyterian Church, we were able to put up massive tents on our eight San Diego campuses to raise awareness about the AIDS pandemic and how spirituality fits into the picture. We presented the Big Story at the end. If we had come with a more traditional approach, it would've felt like a bait and switch, but instead, the Big Story felt very much in line with the global concerns we were exploring.

Equally important, this tool has a message that Christians are proud to share. We see Christians who don't fit the stereotype of an evangelist and haven't really shown any previous interest in sharing this story share this message immediately with their friends and even strangers after being trained. For them it finally feels like good news, so they share it.

Ultimately, I don't think I'm saying anything new here. If it were new, I'd be a heretic. This diagram has come out of my love for Scripture and the desire to share the whole story that I've found in it. It's the same old gospel truth, the one we embraced when we first started walking with Jesus. None of us fully grasped the whole truth when we started our spiritual journeys, and if we're honest, we still don't. But each day, we see something more fully and more clearly. And we'll find that it's the same gospel that's been in these pages of Scripture for a long, long time.

This interview was adapted from one that first appeared in
CHRISTIANITY TODAY.



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Reflect

- *Although this article is about explaining the gospel to unbelievers, what principles transfer just as well to helping to mentor Millennials?*
- *Why is it so important to emphasize the kingdom of God when we are mentoring younger people?*
- *How can we equip younger people to live in a post-Christian society?*

Searching for the Lost Generation



Here are some insights for those trying to mentor Millennials.

By Kyle Rohane

When I first left home for college, I was finally able to search for a church on my own. I'd attended a single church up till then, and I was anxious to find a new body of believers. I quickly found a college group at an established church, but I was shocked by how detached the group felt from the rest of the body. In the years since, most of the churches I've attended don't know what to do with my generation, the Millennials. As Millennials leave the church in droves, church leadership scrambles to find ways to retain the few that stay and hope that the rest will eventually return on their own.



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David Kinnaman and a number of guest speakers address this very issue in the conference series, *You Lost Me. Live!*, presented by the Barna Group. I attended the conference in Chicago and found myself in the company of Baby Boomers, Generation X-ers, and many Millennials. Here are a few points that stood out to me:

The world is becoming more complicated.

We've given people a cultural vision of Christ, but not the tools to live in this increasingly complex culture. Millennials are coming of age in this new culture, so it defines them in a unique way. While Baby Boomers are constantly astounded by new ways to communicate and access information, Millennials were born connected.

Boomers may have learned about Paul's tent-making side-job in seminary, but many Millennials fully expect to hold multiple jobs at once and change careers throughout their lives in pursuit of a single calling.

They may not automatically return.

Many people assume Millennials who have left the church will come back as they get married and have children. But research shows that people are taking longer to settle down, get married, and have kids than in previous generations. Are we really willing to wait until a young adult is 35 to reconnect? It's also a bit presumptuous to think that marriage and babies will automatically bring young adults back.

It is different ministering in Babylon than in Jerusalem.

As the West continues moving in a post-Christian direction, churches must recognize that our culture is starting to resemble



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Babylon more than Jerusalem. But Christianity has flourished in many cultural contexts. As we acknowledge the changing world, we shouldn't fear it.

This generation wants to connect science with faith.

Fifty-two percent of Millennials are interested in science-related careers. However, when youth pastors were surveyed, less than one percent claimed to have taught on science-related issues in the last year. Perhaps this is the type of disconnect that leads many young thinkers to conclude that the church is anti-science.

Millennials seem ready to take great risks for their values.

But many may be unprepared for the failure that comes with risk. They want to be heard, and they want to see the impact of their work immediately—just look at their immersion in responsive technologies such as smart phones and tablets. Millennials are far more concerned with the objective worth of their ideas than the value of experience or time served.

If churches are going to attract young adults, they must connect them with Jesus.

Churches want to involve young adults in meaningful ways. But often churches misfire by either (1) presenting Jesus as a means to an end (to health, to wealth, to better relationships, to the "good life") or (2) presenting the church as merely about service or mission. If the church can only offer a "benefits package" or service opportunities, then it really doesn't have anything unique to offer in the cultural marketplace. But thankfully the church has something that no other organization does: Jesus. We should promote relationship with Christ first; fruit and acts of service will flow from this relationship.



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A few personal thoughts on this topic:

First, the stereotypical Millennial doesn't depict the true breadth of this generation. Not every Millennial owns an iPad, is on Twitter, or wants to start a business. This is the danger of only catering to trends: sometimes the significant minorities are lost for the sake of the presumed majority. As important as it is to learn about the stereotypical Millennial, it is equally important to hold a flexible missional style.

These quibbles aside, churches are indeed failing to reach this age group. Whether this stems from a lackadaisical hope that "they'll come back on their own," a blindness to the changing culture, or an ignorance of the issue entirely, churches must actively pursue lost sheep, just like the Good Shepherd.

Church leaders need to learn about the changing culture: the good, the bad, and the trendy. We shouldn't dismiss culture entirely, but we also shouldn't automatically appropriate cultural norms. Thankfully, Jesus is incarnational: his truth transcends, dwells within, and transforms culture. All of the service projects and tech-savvy pastors in the world will prove worthless if they aren't for the sake of true relationship with Christ.

*Kyle Rohane is an editorial resident with LEADERSHIP JOURNAL.
This article is adapted from one that first appeared on OUT OF UR.*



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Reflect

- *What difference does it make in our mentoring that the world is a more complicated place?*
- *Why does this generation need older members to mentor them? How can you connect the two in your church?*
- *If Millennials are used to instant gratification, how can you help them to be patient with the slow process of spiritual maturation?*

Keepin' It Real

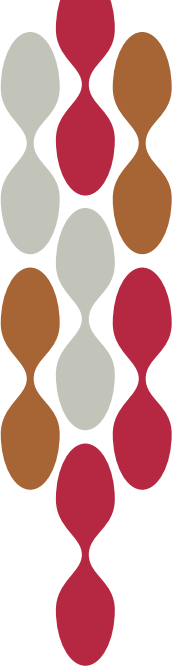


The language for reaching postmoderns may be different, but the basic needs are the same.

By Mike Shepherd

When I joined in leading a postmodern church, I became close friends with the founding pastor. I studied and read every church and book I could find about connecting with postmoderns. I went to the leading conferences like FutureGen and Soularize. I extensively interviewed many pastors leading successful postmodern churches. I started hanging out in coffee shops (though I am not a coffee drinker) and bookstores developing relationships. I started three home groups reaching postmoderns. And I began planting a church with these home groups. Our target group? Yep . . . those postmoderns.

And you know what I learned? This is the "keep it real" generation. Authenticity and community are huge core



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values to postmoderns. But what I have learned is that there is not a basic difference in the core competencies that are critical for mentoring postmoderns as compared to older generations. Oh, the words, setting, and style may change, but the basics are still the basics.

Real Acceptance

We use the term *grace* a lot in church lingo. That word taught us that everyone matters to God and should matter to us no matter what his or her struggle is in life. One thing postmoderns do is freely admit their struggles. It can be pretty raw and shocking at times as they share their struggles from homosexuality to maxing out credit cards. Sometimes four letter words are used. But that's okay. Remember, you are there to mentor them. Our goal is to take them from where they are in life when they come to us to where God wants them to be. It takes patience, genuine care, and real acceptance to walk with them on that journey. It can take years. But that real acceptance will lead to trusting relationships that can then lead them to trust Christ and become followers. We must extend love and grace to all regardless of where they may be in life and provide a safe place during life's challenges.

Real Community

God made us to crave this whether we admit it or not. He made us to want to "do life together." This is demonstrated in many ways, from hanging out at a home together, going to a movie, camping, fun stuff, and so on. Perhaps it is best seen when group members need a meal, a bill paid, clothes, a place to



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sleep, a job, help, etc. If we jump into that need with all that we have and do whatever it takes to meet it and care for that individual or family, it creates powerful community.

Real Bible Study

The Bible is God's perfect guide, inspired by him and given to us. We value sharing this within our community to help each other navigate the journey of this life and to prepare for the life that comes after this one. We strive to uphold this value by providing forums for teaching, learning, and discussing God's truth. Some who come to us do not believe the Bible or they attribute it the same value as the Koran. It can be tough leading a Bible study with someone who does not accept it as truth, but still they come and engage. They respect a diligent study and quest for truth and someone standing firm on what they believe. Gradually over time, the blinders come off and they see the truth. The Spirit of God moves in and guides them on the journey of being set free from sin.

Real Life Change

Talk is cheap. People do not want to be a part of a spiritual community unless it makes a difference in their lives. There is a lot of spirituality in the postmodern world that leaves one empty and unchanged. We desire to help individuals experience real life changes that come from a connected life—connected with God and people who genuinely care for them. Postmoderns, like generations before them, really cannot stand the hypocrisy they see in organized religion. They want to experience a real faith that connects them to a real God and real community. It does take a village. Life coaching and mentoring are valuable tools here.



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Real Impact

God has us here for a reason; to serve each other. He gives us skills and abilities to do this. We desire to live a life of service. We strive to uphold this value by providing environments to share Jesus and serve others through impact events, parties, local service projects, and global missions. Postmoderns do not respect a faith that does not give back in its own community. Whether through soup kitchens, addiction classes, or Habitat for Humanity, we seek to invest our lives locally and make a difference.

At a recent event, an unchurched person (who will remain nameless) came and took the first steps in getting connected. This person attends a home group and sent me the following statement in a recent email.

Hey, I just wanted to say, as someone hugely skeptical about The Church and its legacy—(be forewarned: I have Pagan tendencies and I have to confess I only came to your event because I wanted to carve out some time with my good friend)—the evening was great! I loved that you took the walls out of conventional church stuff, and I also appreciated that you were subtle in your message, so that all of us could access it. Great to see a kind of talk-show style with chairs and a conversation on stage, great to hear a wonderfully talented band (I think I even kind of hummed along to some holy stuff at one point—what was I thinking?) . . . All this to say, I've had many colorful conversations about religion, and though I have my own beliefs, what you're out there doing is wonderfully creative and effectively touching my life. Thought you should know.



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This is why we are doing what we are doing—to see the power of Christ work through relationships to bring people to himself. There is not a week that goes by that this person referred to above does not experience authentic community with us. The person has not become a follower yet but is getting closer.

What I have learned is that if we do not get serious about living and doing authentic biblical community in whatever context God puts us, we will not reach the present or next generations. It is that important. So let's get after it and work hard at depopulating hell and populating heaven.

Mike Shepherd helps lead a postmodern church in Denver. This article is adapted from one that first appeared on SMALLGROUPS.COM.

Reflect

- *Do you think the younger generation needs acceptance more than older generations? Why or why not?*
- *Why is community generally more important to the younger generations?*
- *Explain why presenting the truth of God's Word is just as important as ever. Does that presentation need to be changed at all for Millennials? If so, how?*

Back to (a Theology of) Work We Go. . .



Why the church must talk about vocation and not just mission if it hopes to engage young adults.

By Skye Jethani

Newsflash . . . Young adults are leaving the church. Okay, it's not really news to anyone familiar with church attendance trends. For generations we have seen young people raised within the church depart during their later teens and twenties. But most returned once they married and had children. It's sometimes called the "driver's license to marriage license hiatus."

What is new is the mountain of recent research by respected groups like Barna, Lifeway, and Pew indicating young people who leave are no longer returning. The hiatus



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has become an exodus. Why? David Kinnaman at Barna outlines six reasons in his research. And others have pointed out that young people are waiting much longer to get married than in the past, thereby delaying the felt-need to return to church.

Books and blogs are filled with recommendations about how to reverse the exodus of young adults, and I have no silver bullet solution to offer here. But I do want to explore one area I believe many churches have overlooked—vocation.

Our religious lives, our communion with God and formation as his people, primarily plays out in two spheres of our lives—family and work. Our closest relationships (marriage, children, parents) are where we experience the joys and pains of life most acutely. They are where we practice, or fail to practice, love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and so on. So it would make sense that we utilize family relationships as a key context for discipleship, or learning and applying the teachings of Christ.

For the last few decades the church has readily accepted the centrality of marriage and family. In fact, most churches have organized their entire philosophy of ministry around the nuclear family with age-segmented learning, marriage enrichment courses and retreats, and biblical instruction geared toward healthy household relationships. The evangelical church has learned to indeed "focus on the family." And while there are problems with the way this is sometimes executed, which I will not address in this article, for the most part it makes sense if you are married with children.

And that is the problem.

With more young adults delaying marriage longer, and with most churches implicitly or explicitly designed to serve families, there is little reason for a single 28-year-old to engage. Realizing they cannot rely upon family felt-needs, but still



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wanting to reach young adults, some churches reach for the only other tool in their box—mission.

We've been told that Millennials are the "activist generation." They want to make a difference in the world by wearing (red) products, singing U2 songs, and going to banana republics as short-term pigeonaries. So we try to engage them in our churches with missional rhetoric and projects. And at times this can be effective, until compassion fatigue sets in and securing social justice proves to require more than a text donation.

But the missional approach relies on a young adult's spare time, extra resources, and expendable energy. It doesn't capture a core identity issue the way family-based ministries do. When a church helps a 40-year-old mother with her struggling marriage and anxiety-driven parenting, it is applying Christian faith to the center of her life and identity. Missional ministries that try to engage a single 30-year-old don't accomplish this because they ignore what's at the center of his life to nibble at the margins. And what is at the center for most young adults? Vocation.

It is the second significant venue (after family) in which our lives and beliefs are exhibited, and for those without spouse or child it is usually the venue. Despite being a significant focus of Reformation theology for centuries within the Protestant tradition, contemporary churches are largely silent on the issue. How does Christian faith impact my relationship with my wife? How can Scripture inform my parenting? What does Christianity say about sex, managing in-laws, or household finances? Most churches could probably answer these questions relatively quickly and comfortably. But what about these:



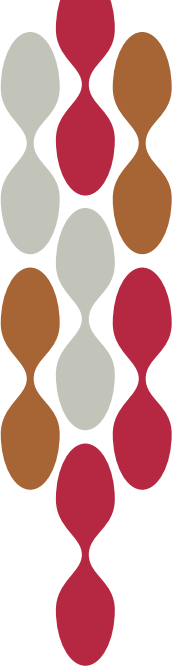
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- What does it mean to be in business to glorify God and bless others?
- How does Christ want me to engage the health care sector?
- Does being an artist matter to God?
- How do I serve in the public school system as a follower of Christ?
- Apart from not being dishonest, does it matter how I run my business?
- I've been offered two jobs, how do I discern which one to take? Does it matter?
- Can I be a soldier and be a Christian?
- Does my work have any meaning apart from the money I earn and give to the church?

My guess is most church leaders would have to think a lot longer to answer any of these questions. We have not been trained or conditioned to consider a person's vocation as a central part of their lives or spiritual formation. It is not a venue most churches value or equip their members for. But work is where most adults (young and old) spend most of their time and what occupies most of their identity. Without the ability to connect faith to either family or work, there is little remaining to engage young adults other than entertaining gatherings or a celebrity in the pulpit.

The challenge we're facing was discussed by Brandon O'Brien in a series of posts on Out of Ur about his experience



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teaching a religion class at a local community college. The diverse religious backgrounds of the students allowed Brandon to explore how they felt about their faith. He writes:

In one assignment, I asked the students to reflect on how religion might hinder or help them attain their personal and career goals. This is where I found the biggest surprises. Predictably, students who weren't sure about their spiritual convictions found the question hard to answer . . . But those students who do consider themselves religious—most of them Christians—saw their religious beliefs having very little impact on their personal or professional goals . . . Students were stymied to come up with a way religion could play any role at all in the parts of their lives that really matter.

We shouldn't be surprised that most of these young adults drop out of church. Earlier in his posts, Brandon notes that none of his students reported having negative experiences in the church as kids. In fact, most recalled generally positive memories. But the church simply had nothing to say about their vocations. Faith, even for the faithful, didn't impact their work.

No, developing a theology of work and vocation-based discipleship is not a silver bullet to slow the exodus of young adults from the church. But I am increasingly convinced that it is a significant blind spot for much of the Western church that must be remedied.

Skye Jethani is an editor-at-large for LEADERSHIP JOURNAL. This article was adapted from on that first appeared on OUT OF UR.



How to Mentor Millennials

Back to (a Theology of) Work We Go. . .

Reflect

- *Why is it so important to help anyone (not just Millennials) in our churches to understand how their Christianity should affect their vocation?*
- *How would you answer the questions posed in this article? Take time to answer each one now.*
- *Consider how you can incorporate the ideas in this article with those whom you wish to mentor.*

Bringing Millennials into Leadership



This is a bright and upbeat generation.

By Jim Schmotzer

Baby Boomers dismantled and reassembled the church structures created by their parents, often in the contemporary and seeker-sensitive models. Then some of their Gen-X successors began making their own contribution to American Christianity. The "emerging church" leaders introduced postmodern worship with indigenous music combined with ancient rites and emphasis on sensory experience.

Millennial generation leaders are beginning to take their places now. This next generation is optimistic, globally aware, entertainment hungry, and communal. They have been affirmed and busy since they were born,



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and they have high self-esteem. They are the "everyone gets a trophy" generation.

As with earlier generations, new styles of leadership and organizational expectations will develop.

For pastors still struggling to figure out ministry to postmoderns, it may be helpful to focus on Millennials, perhaps the first generation native to the postmodern era. How can we welcome the Millennials as members of our ministry teams?

1. Create cooperative organizations. Think "us." In working with Millennials, I find a higher sense of being together in the work. These young adults focus more on what we can accomplish together, as opposed to the tension that can arise from turf wars and ego competition. That's influenced my language. I speak of "working with" people, not their "working for" me. They respond to open leadership that is inclusive and patient. While I grew up in a time of not trusting anyone over 30, today's young adults seek supportive mentoring relationships with older leaders.

2. Plan safe risks. Create ways young adults can learn their limitations without placing your organization in peril. Safe risks are situations that won't sink the organization but offer opportunities for growth and learning.

Young leaders need to know that they are not being evaluated as much for the results as for their ability to understand and work in ways that reflect our mission and values.

One evening when we were sponsoring a concert, two interns were responsible for overseeing admissions, taking



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pre-sold tickets and selling door tickets. After an early rush, they ran out of change. The two, both college graduates, became frustrated and started to turn students away. I was off to the side watching to see how long it would take for the two to realize they could solve the problem in a variety of ways, including having one of them stay at the table while the other went and got money. It was painful to watch people giving up on the concert. But it was a valuable lesson in problem solving and leadership.

3. Understand the family connection. Previous generations established themselves in their twenties. This group appears to have a new, extended connection with their families. Parents may be significantly involved in decision making and problem solving.

While talking to young people I frequently ask, "If you had 24 hours to be anywhere you wanted with one person and money was not an object, what would you choose?" I am no longer surprised by the number of young people who choose to spend their dream day with one of their parents.

Are cell phones the cause of increased connection or simply the tool that facilitates it? I know older students who talk to their parents almost daily, just keeping in touch. Young Christians are certain their parents will "support" them. This may mean emotional encouragement of decisions the parents would not choose for their children, or financially supporting them in a prolonged transition or while they undertake full-time volunteer service.

4. Make it fun. Doing ministry should be a source of shared joy. That is even more important for a fun-loving, entertainment-driven generation. Coordinate activities that



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enhance a sense of team. Celebrate successes. Remember to reward risk taking. Our ministry is characterized by a hectic, irregular schedule with long, intense hours. We go out of our way to incorporate fun as part of planning retreats and quarterly team days. We plan lots of recreation at these events, and I encourage times when people shift into extended, relaxed conversations. We will get the job done as needed and enjoy the community experience in the process.

Millennials will become significant participants and leaders in most ministry settings. This generation's unique personality will become a dynamic force in tomorrow's ministry.

This article was adapted from one that first appeared in LEADERSHIP JOURNAL.

Reflect

- *How can you create a sense of cooperation as you mentor?*
- *What safe risks can you plan to help those you mentor grow?*
- *Why do you think the family connection is so important to this generation? If the one you are mentoring doesn't have that close connection, what might they be looking for from you?*
- *How can you make your mentoring experience fun?*

Developing Future Church Leaders



Seven principles for mentoring the next generation

By Scott Thomas

Paul told Timothy, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul wanted to ensure future followers of Jesus would be vibrant and faithful. We should have a similar desire. Here are seven principles for building up the kind of leaders that will champion the faith well into the future.

Nurture their inner lives.

We can't just train people to employ tried-and-true methods to achieve the objectives of long-standing



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committees. Focus on the things that don't change: teach them how to commune with Christ and how to love his mission and his church. Methods vary, but future young people will always need an authentic and deep faith to sustain them through the journey of ministering the gospel in a rapidly changing culture. Paul expressed his relationship with Timothy as a beloved child (2 Tim. 1:2; 2:2). We should adopt the same caring attitude toward those we mentor, equipping our spiritual children with parental love for their spiritual wellbeing.

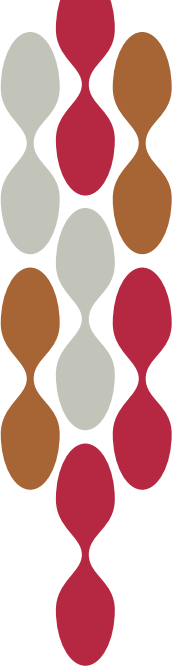
Focus on their potential.

Jesus took a risk on all 12 of the disciples, including the leader, Peter. When Barnabas chose Paul, a former persecutor of the church, it was a huge risk. In both cases, the risk was based on the transforming power of the gospel. A pastor took a risk on me. When I was 19 years old, he let me preach my first sermon. I still have a copy of that sermon. It was an exegetical nightmare! But he didn't focus on my current skills, or lack of them. He saw in me the leader I could become.

Let them lead (and fail) and lead again.

Jesus called Peter "Satan," and then later rightly predicted Peter would deny him three times. Yet after these failures, Jesus still commissioned him to lead again by feeding and tending his sheep. The rest, as they say, is history. After the ascension of Jesus, Peter preached at Pentecost and 3,000 people were saved.

The grace of God toward failed leaders is ubiquitous in Scripture. It's easy to write people off because of early



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missteps. But those who train up leaders have eyes to see past a new leader's flaws and foibles.

Encourage innovation and risk taking.

We often prefer young people in our churches to be more like mules than stallions. Mules are great at carrying heavy loads over long distances. And they're not as spirited as stallions. Stallions are designed to run. They don't like being penned up in a stable. The problem with mules is that they are almost always sterile.

Timid, safe, risk-averse people rarely lead radical movements of God. Don't get me wrong: we need mules. They're consistent and reliable and excellent at keeping things running smoothly. But we need stallions, too. We need those next generation leaders who will gallop into new projects and find daring, new ways to present the never changing good news of Jesus.

Think long-term and short.

Every organism, including the church, has a lifecycle of birth, growth, maturity, reproduction, maintenance, decline, and death. The lifecycle of a fruit fly is only 30 days. The lifecycle for some church plants, unfortunately, isn't much longer. Churches that become too focused on the present have shorter lifecycles. We should do our best to address present needs, but they should be addressed with future-oriented solutions.

Almost every goal can be accomplished in 20 years. Most people, however, are not conditioned to think that way. They're not disciplined or focused enough to persevere. Investing time in young people is a surefire sign that we're thinking about the future and not content with mere short-term success.



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Help them create life plans.

I encourage those I mentor to draft a "Gospel Life Plan." This is a tool to identify one's calling, goals, steps of action, and stewardship. It starts with helping the young person discern God's calling. Tim Keller offers three "tests" to discern a call from God. These tests involve passion, people, and place. What are you passionate about? What credible people have confirmed this calling? And what place do you have to exercise this passion? Keller suggests that all three need to be in place to confirm a calling.

Once a person's calling has been recognized, help them identify what God has called them to do. Many people set goals based on their own ambition or just on a whim. But these goals should align with God's calling on their life. They should be big-picture items and limited in number.

But to stop here would be disastrous. As Thomas Edison said, "Vision without implementation is hallucination."

Those we mentor must develop specific action steps to complete their goals. If, for instance, God has called a person to start a small group in the church, encourage that person to determine specific steps they can make toward making that goal a reality.

The final step of a Gospel Life Plan is whole-life stewardship. The gospel reminds us that we are all managers of the gifts God has given us.

We need to help Millennials identify and remove distractions that keep them from accomplishing their God-given goals. Often this will even mean advising them to stop doing some things they are successful at in order to fulfill God's calling in their life.



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Model humility.

Biblical leadership is saturated in humility. Jesus was explicit about the way his disciples were to lead: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you" (Matt. 20:25–28).

Mentoring others demands we be humble. Often our protégés will possess greater skill and potential than we do. But if we see our role in parental terms, we will joyfully serve and cheer for our spiritual offspring to surpass us in every way.

Of course Jesus was the greatest at developing leaders. He poured the vast majority of his time into a handful of people. He taught them to be disciple-makers and trusted that future generations would hear the Good News because of their witness.

We are a part of that great plan of God, and it spans the generations. Let's tirelessly train others. Through God's grace and our guidance, they may witness God do more than we could ever imagine.

This article was adapted from one that first appeared in LEADERSHIP JOURNAL.

Reflect

- *How can you nurture the inner life of the one you are mentoring?*
- *What potential do you see in that person? How can you bring it out and help them to recognize it?*
- *How can you help the one you are mentoring to create a Gospel Life Plan?*
- *Are you modeling humility? If not, how can you better do so?*

Additional Resources

Articles, books, and Bible studies to help you further



Articles

How to Be an Effective Mentor—*Tips on making devoted disciples. By Erik Johnson, available on BuildingChurchLeaders.com*

The Ten Commandments of Mentoring—*How to create relationships that help people grow. By Paul Stanley & J. Robert Clinton, available on BuildingChurchLeaders.com*

Three Kinds of Mentoring—*Different types of relationships require different kinds of skills. By Fred Smith, available on BuildingChurchLeaders.com*



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Additional Resources

Books

Mentor Like Jesus by Regi Campbell (B & H, 2009). For years, businessman Regi Campbell has been mentoring. It was only recently that he realized his method of mentoring was the same Jesus used. By spending more time with fewer people, Campbell saw a greater impact. This book is Campbell's revelation of what he now calls "Next Generation Mentoring." In this book you'll learn how to become a mentor and teacher by walking in the footsteps of One who has had lasting and dramatic impact on our world.

Transforming Together by Ele Parrott (Moody, 2009). A revealing look at the unique partnership between mentor and mentee. Offering a blueprint for genuine spiritual guidance, Parrott helps you understand the personal and biblical dynamics of the special supportive relationship between mature and young believers. Discover how to be an active listener and stand firm with one another in Christ.

Bible Studies and Online Resources

Mentoring Pack—Four resources for the church that is ready to nurture the next generation of leaders. Available from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**.

Finding a Mentor—As a ministry leader, you try to discern God's call on your life and then, as best you know how, obey his specific directions for carrying out this call. Sometimes it's hard to make sense of it all. You need perspective; you need a guide. You need a mentor. Available from **GiftedForLeadership.com**.



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Additional Resources

Help 20Somethings to Step Up—Baby boomers are quick to decry the lack of leadership we see among Millennials. But if we are going to take it beyond just complaining to helping the next generation to step up to leadership, we have to study them and figure out how to speak their language. Available from GiftedForLeadership.com.

Cultivating the Next Generation of Leaders—This resource will be a helpful tool as you seek to develop, share, and implement a vision for your workplace or ministry. Available from GiftedForLeadership.com.

Growth Through Mentoring—This Bible study examines the biblical basis and implications for mentoring. Available from ChristianBibleStudies.com.

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