



WINNING
YOUNG ADULTS
in our
HARVEST FIELD

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank the leadership of the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board (TBMB) for allowing me the opportunity to put this book together. This resource focuses on assisting our churches in the process of winning young adults in Tennessee for Christ.

I am fortunate to personally know the pastors listed below. Their years of service makes them uniquely qualified to share their invaluable wisdom in this book to help churches reach young adults.

It is my sincere prayer that everyone who reads this book will feel reenergized and ready to do the work to share the Gospel!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Winning TN...A Compelling Urgency—Randy C. Davis	4
Winning TN...A Practical Strategy—Roc Collins	6
Intro—Winning Young Adults in TN Matters—Ryan Keaton.....	9
Chapter 1—Prayer Matters—Ryan Keaton	13
Chapter 2—People Matter—Andrew Cross.....	20
Chapter 3—Relationships Matter—P. J. Dunn	25
Chapter 4—The Gospel Matters—Jake Dorak.....	33
Chapter 5—Love Matters—Jon Bingham.....	42
Chapter 6—Discipleship Matters—Brasher & Hardy	50
Chapter 7—Multiplication Matters—Ben Baxley	60
Conclusion—Every Church Matters—Mark Miller	69

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FOREWORD

Winning TN...A Compelling Urgency - Dr. Randy Davis

A Compelling Calling Personally

In 2010, the Lord radically changed the direction of the ministry that Jeanne and I had been involved in for 34 years, that of the local pastorate. We loved the calling that God had placed on our lives and had been blessed to serve four great churches. We were preparing to start our tenth year at First Baptist Church of Sevierville when the Executive Director Search Committee of the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention asked me to pray about succeeding Dr. Jim Porch. It was one of the most difficult decisions I had faced as a follower of Christ. More than anything, we yearned to discover His perfect will, and once discovered, to follow.

During this season of intense prayer, we asked God for a clear call and a compelling reason to leave the wonderful church and community we served to move into a role for which I felt very ill equipped. But “where God guides, God provides”. The call was overwhelmingly clear to us. We were flooded with peace to step down as pastor of First Baptist Church of Sevierville and become servant-leader of Tennessee’s Baptist Mission Board.

A Compelling Reality in Our State

It was only weeks after we moved to the Nashville area that I learned that the number of people saved and baptized by Tennessee Baptist churches had declined by over 30% since 1950. From 1950 to 2010, the population of the state more than doubled. This compelling reality imbued an understanding of my call to this work. Through many sleepless nights I grappled with a brand-new burden placed upon my heart by the Holy Spirit. An alarm needed to be sounded. It was a call for Tennessee Baptists to realize and engage Tennessee as the mission field our beloved state had become.

In 2014 we created a scoreboard of Five Objectives that would guide our work for the next decade. These objectives were adopted by the Tennessee Baptist Convention Meeting in Brentwood:

1. Seeing at least 50,000 Tennesseans annually saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship by 2024.
2. Having at least 500 Tennessee Baptist churches revitalized by 2024.
3. Planting and strategically engaging at least 1,000 new churches by 2024.
4. Realizing an increase in annual church giving through the Cooperative Program that reaches at least 10 percent by 2024.
5. Realizing an increase in annual giving for the Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions that reaches at least \$3 million by 2024.

Of course, Objective 1 is the scoreboard of scoreboards. If we do not see lives transformed by the gospel, it doesn’t matter how many churches are planted or revitalized or how much money is raised to support these efforts. Eternity hangs in the balance. We must utilize every tool possible to reach the spiritually lost of Tennessee.

During 2019, I visited 21 different areas of our state to simply listen to pastors and ministry leaders about the opportunities they saw, the burdens they carried, and the needs they could articulate. One of the common themes, throughout these listening sessions, centered around the need of effective tools to evangelize and disciple the people in their communities. I heard this question consistently: “How can we equip our people to reach our communities, especially the next generation?”

The WinTN strategy, outlined in *Winning Our Harvest Field: What Really Matters*, attempts to answer that passionate plea for assistance in the areas of that single two-sided coin of evangelism and discipleship.

A related matter expressed by pastors and ministry leaders across the state is, “How do we reach and win young adults and emerging generations?” This is a real, weighty, and personal burden: we were desperate to reach our children and grandchildren with the gospel. *Winning Our Harvest Field* offers solid help and encouragement for reaching this demographic.

WinTN is an urgent call, and the strategy presents a Christ-centered, field-focused, and user-friendly approach to reaching the spiritually lost and discipling the saved. This work can and should be used to equip fully devoted followers of Christ to win our Tennessee neighbors to Jesus.

Let’s get busy!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy C. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'A'.

PREFACE

Winning TN...A Practical Strategy - Dr. Roc Collins

Winning Tennessee Matters!

Tennessee is a beautiful state! I love Tennessee from Mountain City to Memphis and all points in between. From the Mississippi River to the Smokies, there is something special about Tennessee. Our history gave us our name as Volunteers, and that legacy is still a characteristic of the citizens of Tennessee who are willing to volunteer in service to their neighbors.

I could go on and on about all of the good to be found in our beloved Tennessee. However, the sad truth is that many in Tennessee are lost without Jesus. We boast a population of nearly seven million in our state, and our most recent statistics tell us that nearly four million do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. My heart breaks as I consider the lostness around us.

WinTN is not just a slogan or a theme but it is a necessity. **This is an urgent call!** Our neighbors all across the state are dying without Jesus Christ. **How will we WinTN?**

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board is unapologetically seeking to win Tennessee for Jesus. Our number one objective is to see at least 50,000 Tennesseans saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship annually. Since we have a population of nearly seven million people, we have plenty of prospects. Having plenty of prospects means there are opportunities but our challenge is to witness, win, baptize, and disciple. We can talk about it, but the stark truth is that the number of Tennesseans we are baptizing each year is in the low to mid 20,000 on an annual basis. We must do more!

The steps necessary will be discussed at length in this book. In fact, these are the same steps I took as a pastor to see people saved, baptized, disciplined, and mobilized to fulfill the Great Commission. **These steps represent a church-based strategy to WinTN.** The task is great, but these are a few simple actions we can take to see Tennessee won for Jesus.

STEP 1

Harness the Power of Prayer

First, Pray! In chapter one, David Evans, Pastor of Springfield Baptist Church in Springfield, Tennessee, challenges every church and every pastor to “Harness the Power of Prayer.” If we are to win Tennessee, we must begin with prayer and end with prayer. Pray the Lord of the harvest to raise up laborers for the task. Pray for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to draw people unto Himself. Pray that we will be burdened, broken, and willing to be His witnesses.

STEP 2

Intensify Efforts to Identify and Reach People

Second, Connect! Step two focuses on connection. We need to be intentional in creating relationships with people who need Jesus. To simply stay locked within our four walls with “our” people is not an option. We must seek the lost. Jesus was accused of and criticized for eating with sinners. Let it be said of us too! In chapter two, Clay Hallmark, Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Lexington, Tennessee, demonstrates the necessity of intensifying our efforts to identify and reach people, as well as, some practical actions for getting it done. Before we can win four million lost Tennesseans, we must identify them and connect.

STEP 3

Boost Involvement in Worship and Groups

Third, Invite! Churches across Tennessee must be open to whosoever. Inviting the lost to church and lovingly welcoming them to a fellowship of believers. Tennessee churches must be a place where everyone can come and find hope and help in Jesus and be loved through the process of discipleship. We cannot just sit on our comfortable pews, enjoy the fellowship with our friends, and rest in the salvation we’ve been given while the people all around us are slipping into eternity with no hope in Christ.

In chapter three, Mark Caldwell, Pastor of New Providence Baptist Church in Loudon, Tennessee, encourages every church to boost involvement in worship and groups. The focus is on relationships. And groups and worship are the primary relational strategies in every church. Connection begins with identifying people and discovering prospects but culminates by inviting people into a relationship: a relationship with Jesus and His church.

STEP 4

Heighten Personal Evangelism through Group and Member Involvement

Fourth, Witness! Intentionality in evangelism is absolutely necessary to win Tennessee to Jesus. There must be an intentional drive to witness to people. We cannot afford to just wait and see if there is an opportunity to witness but under the power of the Holy Spirit we must seek out those occasions and make the most of them. In the words of Charles Spurgeon, “Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor.”

In chapter four, Sam Greer, Pastor of the Red Bank Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee shares the importance of challenging every member to have a gospel conversation every month.

STEP 5

Implement Actions to Serve Your Community

Fifth, Serve! We must serve our communities if we are to win Tennessee. Matthew Greer, Pastor of Missionary Grove Baptist Church in Camden, Tennessee, tells how his church was transformed when they began to serve their community. The fields are white unto harvest. We must see Tennessee and tell Tennessee. Such actions open doors to share Jesus with people.

STEP 6

Build a Disciple Making Culture

Sixth, Disciple! Winning people to Jesus is only the first step in disciple making. Growing new believers into multiplying disciples is the second step. Both steps are essential to win Tennessee.

In chapter six, Tim Key, Associational Missions Strategist for the New Duck River Baptist Association in Shelbyville, Tennessee, offers helpful direction to build a disciple making culture. As a pastor, research shows that we must challenge every member to read their Bible daily and to get involved in a group.

STEP 7

Strengthen Next-Generational Ministries to Reach and Disciple Preschool, Elementary, Middle and High school Students and their Families

Finally, Multiply! The next generation is at stake. There has never been a more critical time to do all we can to reach the current and next generation for Jesus! We must multiply.

To win Tennessee, we must not only reach the kids but their parents. Every generation matters and must be reached.

Let us not grow weary but rather be invigorated to win Tennessee! The Winning Our Harvest Field Book will provide a foundational understanding of this strategy. This book will be a blessing to you and a guide for how to take the Winning Our Harvest Field Strategy so we can Win Every Generation in Tennessee for Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Ryan Keaton

Winning Young Adults in Tennessee Matters!

Is my church effectively reaching young adults? Churches across our state are asking this same question. Churches can seek to focus their efforts on being intentional in reaching, engaging, discipling, and sending young adults. The “magic bullet” for reaching young adults does not exist. There is not a quick-fix solution to turning the trajectory of your church around, or even fine-tuning the ministry your church may already have. Each church must put their finger on the pulse of their community as they strategically develop a ministry plan that aligns with their church’s mission to reach young adults.

In the *Winning Our Harvest Field* Book, seven steps were shared that churches are utilizing to see people saved, baptized, and discipled in Tennessee. These seven steps provide a ministry pathway that takes young adults from attraction to the church to being sent through outreach ministries of the church. Each step of the *Win Tennessee* strategy provides connecting points for churches to engage young adults in growth opportunities through discipleship and service.

This book will demonstrate how the seven steps in the *Win Tennessee* strategy assist churches to reach young adults in your harvest field: **prayer, people, relationships, the gospel, love, discipleship, and multiplication**. Each chapter was written by young adult leaders across the state of Tennessee. Each author gives practical insights and tips on how these areas shape young adults in their community and how this impacts the ministry of churches.

Understanding Young Adults in Your Community

Young adults are comprised of Millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z). Statistics on both groups have encouraging and discouraging aspects churches should consider. In *The Connected Generation*, Barna researchers shared: 29% of young adults feel satisfied with their life choices, 39% are optimistic about the future, 31% feel able to accomplish their goals, 53% of young adults in the United States claimed to be Christians, 12% claimed another faith, and 35% claimed atheist/agnostic/no faith.¹ These generations struggle with issues of faith, identity, and a hope in their future.

In 1980, 65% of young adults (ages 18-34) who lived in Tennessee had been married. In 2013, 40% of young adults (ages 18-34) who lived in Tennessee had been married.² Young adults are waiting longer to get married. This impacts the number of children young adults are having. The delay in marriage also impacts the way churches approach their single adult ministry, as the population of singles in Tennessee communities continues to rise.

¹Barna Group, *The Connected Generation* (Dallas: HPB Inc, 2019), 12-9.

²US Census Bureau, December 2013, <https://census.socialexplorer.com/young-adults/#/report/full/state/47>.

Young adults are also waiting longer to move out of their parents' house. As of 2020, it is estimated that 17.8% of young adults (ages 25-34) lived in their parents' household during the last year.³ Young adults statistically are a migratory group that move on a consistent basis, but these findings show Millennials and Gen Z are staying at home in larger rates than generations before. This new reality could potentially help churches with retention of young adults who stayed in their home communities after high school or returned after college.

Young adults have a rising belief in helping others and giving to altruistic causes. Studies show 52% of young adults in the United States were concerned about the welfare of others, 53% find it important to give of their time to help others in need, and 46% find it important to give of their own resources.⁴ Young adults could be the untapped potential your church could use to minister to the needs of your community.

Becoming Young Adult Friendly

Before we get out of the introduction, let me offer a word of encouragement. The principles in this book do not require a pastor on staff, a dedicated young adult ministry, or even a vibrant young adult presence in your church for your church to make an impact on the young adult population in your community. Focus on becoming young adult friendly and attracting unchurched young adults with the resources and people you have right now.

The word "attraction" can be an uncomfortable buzzword among some evangelical circles in terms of outreach models. The reality is that attraction does not have to equal compromise. Churches can (and should) attract young adults while still holding a firm stance on biblical values and teaching. Church leaders need to ask themselves intentional questions about their processes to see how they are being perceived from young adults who are not affiliated with their church.

What will young adults find before they arrive at your church building? If someone who was not familiar with your church were to type the church name into Google, what would they find? Does your church have an updated website that is easy to navigate? What information is on your church's website, and how easy is it to find that information? How long does outdated information stay on your church's website? Does your church have a social media account? What does your church post from the social media account? Does your church provide online, spiritual resources?

³John Creamer, "More Adults Lived with Their Parents in 2019," *US Census Bureau*, September 15, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/09/more-young-adults-lived-with-their-parents-in-2019.html>.

⁴Barna Group, *The Connected Generation* (Dallas: HPB Inc, 2019), 39.

These questions might seem like unnecessary hurdles for churches to ask. Keeping up with a website and/or social media page is tedious, time consuming, and foreign to many church leaders, but it is an important aspect in attracting young adults to your church. A 2013 Barna Research article reports, “About one-third of Millennials are using online search to scope out a church, temple, or synagogue online. This increases to over half (56%) of practicing Christian Millennials who do the same. It may be that for Millennials, checking out a faith community online, from a safe distance, is a prerequisite for the commitment of showing up in person.”⁵

Plan for the experience when a young adult arrives at the church, but remember the process starts long before they ever pull into your parking lot. Your church’s virtual presence and reputation matter. The digital world around us is changing, and it is critical for churches to learn to adapt.

Can young adults find what you want them to know about your church before they attend? In the same study, Barna Research also reports that 54% of practicing Christians and 31% of all Millennials watch online videos about faith or spirituality. Additionally, 59% of practicing Christian Millennials and 30% of all Millennials search for spiritual content online.⁶ Young adults are searching for answers on the internet. How is your church providing the answers to the questions for which young adults are seeking? How is your church reaching young adults through digital platforms like social media outlets or YouTube? What are young adults finding out about your church before they even attend? Your church has a reputation. Whether your reputation is perceived or reality, a young adult has an assumption of what they will experience before they ever attend.

Becoming Young Adult Friendly

Your online presence often precedes your church’s influence, but the relationship with your community matters, as well. Is your church’s reputation in your community attractive to young adults?

While your perception of your church’s reputation may be positive, young adults in your community, who do not attend, may not have the same opinions. A 2020 Barna Research article reports, “while practicing Christians firmly believe that Christian churches have a strong impact (66% positive, 28% somewhat positive), the rest of the U.S. population is not as quick to sing their praises. Only about a quarter (27%) agrees that churches have a positive impact- the same percentage (27%) who say it has no affect at all. Non-Christians, meanwhile, are inclined towards indifference (39% no impact) or more willing to see harm in churches’ local contributions (8% very negative, 10% somewhat negative).⁷

⁵Barna Group, “How Technology is Changing Millennial Faith,” *Barna Research*, October 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/how-technology-is-changing-millennial-faith/>.

⁶Barna Group, “How Technology is Changing Millennial Faith,” *Barna Research*, October 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/how-technology-is-changing-millennial-faith/>.

⁷Barna Group, “Meet Those Who Love Jesus but Not the Church,” *Barna Research*, March 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/meet-love-jesus-not-church/>.

These statistics are alarming. There is a disconnect between the perceived impact a church makes in their community depending on the audience. According to these statistics, 94% of churchgoers would say their church is making a positive impact in their communities, while 57% of non-Christians would say the churches in their community have an irrelevant or negative impact. What is your church doing to bridge the gap of disconnect in your community?

A quote attributed to German theologian Karl Barth states a pastor should “keep the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.” Pastors should remain tied to God’s Word while keeping their finger on the pulse of the community around them. Pastors can bridge the gap of perceived negligence as they foster relationships with the very ones they are trying to reach.

Becoming Young Adult Aware

Where are the young adults in your community? Churches must equip their members to be evangelistically focused. We often attribute the lack of young adult presence to several issues, but the reality is that the problem is not with reaching young adults. The problem is with reaching anybody. If churches are not raising up members, of all ages, to live evangelistically, they cannot expect to attract anyone, of any age. Having a poor reputation, then, is not so much a public relations problem as it is an evangelism and discipleship problem. We do not have churches living out what they claim to believe.

Tom Crites, in his book *Why They Stay*, alludes to this issue when he states, “Millennials are peeling away external layers and fluff of the church to discover the ‘anchor’ that helps them live the lives they are living. Young adults seem to be searching for moments with God. Interestingly enough, they are searching for these moments detached from the traditional landmarks of faith. Why? Maybe it is a matter of applicability. They are trying to see how faith applies to their lives. This search for a significant moment is in response to their perceptions of a church that is culturally and spiritually irrelevant.”⁸

You can attract young adults by providing ministries within your community that reflect your beliefs while also meeting their needs. Authentic outreach techniques that show you are willing to apply theological truth through daily interactions provide avenues for church members to have conversations with nonbelievers in their everyday environments. Churches can provide training opportunities that equip their members with the tools they will need to have evangelistic conversations at the schools, coffee shops, sporting events, and businesses in their community.

Do you have a real presence in your community? Does your presence reflect your mission? Does the influence of your church stop outside of the confines of the address of your church building? What opportunities does your church provide to interact with young adults before they attend? Your reputation will either help or hurt the chances of young adults attending your church. Are you winning young adults in your harvest field? The following pages of this book will be a valuable resource on how you can win young adults in Tennessee for Jesus.

⁸Tom Crites and Steve Parr, *Why They Stay* (Bloomington: WestBow Press, 2015), 12.

CHAPTER 1

PRAYER MATTERS

Ryan Keaton



Prayer may be the most talked about but least implemented tool in a Christian's life. No leader in your church will argue against the importance and necessity of prayer. Sunday school teachers/small group leaders teach about it, preachers preach about it, and deacons support it. So, why are people in our communities not being saved? Why are the needs in our communities not being met? Are we truly praying for God to move in our homes, churches, and state? Do we stop at simply praying for opportunities as we enter the mission field of our towns with closed eyes to how God wants to use us to make change? Do we pray with unbelief thinking we already know the outcome of our petitions?

God is doing a work in Tennessee. He is still calling us to join Him in these evangelistic efforts. God wants to see young married and single adults be saved, baptized and set on the road to discipleship. When our focus leaves God and His mission and turns to other things, we get distracted from the task at hand. David Evans, pastor of Springfield Baptist Church in Springfield, Tennessee, wrote in *Winning Our Harvest Field*, "When a believer stops praying, the posture of the believer changes in a way that will no longer be evangelistic."

Let's take a moment and stop right here and pray. Throughout the course of this chapter there will be practical prayer prompts to help you realign your thoughts and focus.

Thank God for who He is. What attribute of God are you thankful for? Tell God the attributes you are most thankful for today.

Prayer and Evangelism are Linked

Evangelism and prayer are divinely married to one another. King David communicates the desperate need for being close to God in Psalm 63, "God, you are my God; I eagerly seek you. I thirst for you; my body faints for you in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water. So, I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory."⁹ Ministry is hard and draining. The Bible wouldn't give the encouragement to "not get tired of doing good"¹⁰ if there was not the real possibility of us doing so. Do you relate with David in Psalm 63? Do you feel dry, desolate, or spiritually frustrated? Most of us are probably so busy that we do not even realize how spiritually empty we really are. Timothy Keller, in his book *Prayer*, states, "we are so used to being empty that we do not even notice it until we start to try to pray or read the Bible."¹¹

⁹Psalm 63:1-2, *Christian Standard Bible*.

¹⁰Galatians 6:9, *Christian Standard Bible*.

¹¹Timothy Keller, "Prayer," (London: John Murray Press, 2014).

Pray for spiritual renewal in your own life. Ask God to renew the joy of your salvation as He reignites your passion to reach lost souls for the Gospel. If you are spiritually dry, ask God to fill your cup again.

Our hearts are realigned to see the needs of others as we seek the face of God through prayer. Are you ever cynical when it comes to reaching young adults in your community? You may not understand their values, worldview, actions, thoughts, or anything about them. This disconnect could lead you to isolate yourself from a growing population in this state. You will never enter an evangelistic encounter that could lead to a discipleship relationship if your heart and attitude are against that person. It is easy to see the symptoms of someone's life and forget the root cause of their issues. We cannot expect a lost world to think or act through a Christian perspective. I find myself too often focusing on the wrong things. When I operate from a place of emptiness, I tend to focus more on what lost people are doing versus who they are. They are a lost child of God who needs help finding the way back to their Creator.

Pray for a lost young adult in your life right now. Pray for the opportunity to share the gospel with them. Pray for God to soften their heart to the moving of His Spirit. Pray for them to come into a saving relationship with Him.

Was this second prayer prompt harder than the first? We cannot truly pray for someone we do not know. We can generically pray, but our prayer becomes more intimate with the depth of relationship we have with that person. Could it be that our churches are not reaching more lost young adults in our communities because we have not identified them?

Pray for God to give you and your church opportunities to meet lost young adults in your community. Pray for a fresh vision on how to intersect your life with theirs.

How often do we train ourselves and others to pray evangelistically? We do a great job of praying for members of our church and for physical ailments, but how often do we fall on our faces before God in earnest prayer for specific lost people that we know? Training in these areas can be more than a specific, blocked off time titled "HOW TO PRAY EVANGELISTICALLY." While this extra dedicated time may be beneficial, training your church and leaders to pray evangelistically can be caught rather than taught. Leaders who pray specifically for lost people by name, in the appropriate settings, show how they are personally trying to reach lost people in their community. There are times where you cannot pray for the person by name to save the relationship. When these times occur, pray in ways that protects the hopefully evangelistic encounters while still praying for the person in public settings. This way of praying still guides by example. What the pastor

and leaders celebrate and champion is also what the members of the church celebrate and champion.

Pray for God to stir the hearts of your leaders to pray. Pray for specific, focused times where leaders can pray together about reaching the lost in your community. (Yes, sometimes you need to even pray about prayer).

Prayer is an important topic that young adults expect to hear about and practice. Among young adults who attend church at least once a month, 80% report they pray on their own and 52% pray with others. For those who attend more frequently, those numbers rise to 94% who pray on their own and 78% who pray with others. Close to 20% of young adults struggle with significant doubts when it comes to unanswered prayers.¹² How is your church modeling prayer for young adults? How do you hold them accountable in praying? How do you help your members better understand this tough topic of unanswered prayers?

Pray for young leaders who you can invest in at your church. Pray for their struggles with doubts and inconsistencies. Pray that God will reveal ways your church can minister to young adults who struggle in these areas.

Have you identified the top five greatest needs in your community? Do you think your list of needs would match a list made by a nonbeliever? Young adults are sensitive to the needs in their community, and they want to see their lives make a difference. Forbes magazine notices this value when they state, “Many millennials choose careers that are cause-focused, rather than employer-specific, leading to a cultural corporate shift that pushes companies to give back. These employers understand how to position their value to passion-focused candidates, espousing a philosophy of global impact. This business priority has now evolved from a philanthropic niche to a crucial part of core business strategy, presenting a unique set of opportunities for philanthropic organizations and the financial institutions that serve them.”¹³ If the business world recognizes this key value and is implementing ways to mobilize young adults, certainly churches should!

Pray for God to reveal to you the true needs of your community. Pray that God would give your church the vision and resources to meet those needs.

¹²Barna Group, *The Connected Generation* (Dallas: HPB Inc, 2019), 21-7.

¹³Joe Fisher, “How Millennials and Gen Z are Revolutionizing the Philanthropic World,” *Forbes*, August 20, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/08/20/how-millennials-and-gen-z-are-revolutionizing-the-philanthropic-world/?sh=35af943b562d>.

¹⁴Barna Group, *The Connected Generation* (Dallas: HPB Inc, 2019), 27.

Prayer helps us understand our purposes here on earth. Barna Research reports 60% of young adults believe their church has helped them better understand their purpose, 48% believe they are given a real chance to contribute to their church, 44% believe they have learned how the Bible applies to their field or interest area, 44% believe their church has helped them better live out their faith in their workplace.¹⁴ How are we helping bridge the gap between head knowledge of the Bible and real-life application?

Pray for God to use your church to bridge the gap between the knowledge of truth and the practice of truth. Pray for God to use you in helping young adults discern their life's purpose.

What resources can you use to harness the power of prayer?

Several resources are available on the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board Website for churches to consider. Resources for prayer walking, developing a prayer ministry, having a prayer service, and information on how to pray evangelistically and for spiritual awakening, and upcoming prayer conferences are some of the resources provided. Two suggestions for obtaining names of people:

- **Lists generated by local church and group.**

Encourage Sunday School classes and groups to develop an evangelistic prayer list equal to the number of those participating. Ask leaders and members to share the names of young adults in their circles of influence that are unchurched and possibly unsaved. Sunday school roles will help you identify potential leaders and others engaged and not engaged in a biblical community.

- **Lists of neighbors utilizing the Bless Every Home Strategy.**

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board partners with Bless Every Home on a strategy to adopt every household in Tennessee for prayer. The strategy is for members to sign up to become lights to their neighbors and churches to become prayer outposts. Members who sign up on the Bless every home app or on the Bless Every Home website will receive a list of 100 of their closest neighbors. Churches are encouraged to consider becoming Bless Every Home Church Partners or outposts for a small fee.

TO SIGN UP AS A LIGHT: <https://www.tnbaptist.org/pray4tn/>

TO SIGN UP AS A CHURCH: <https://www.tnbaptist.org/pray4tn/>
Use the promotional code: TENNBAPTISTPRAY2.

- **Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions Monthly Prayer Guide**

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board provides daily prayer focuses through the GOTM website that churches and individuals can follow to pray for specific areas each day. These prayer guides can be found at <https://www.tnbaptist.org/gotm>. Once at the website, click on the *resources* tab and then *the monthly prayer guide* tab.

God has placed you in your community for this time and for His purposes. In the next chapter, you will learn about how people matter.

Chapter 1 Discussion Guide

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about your prayer life?

What does this chapter tell us about God?

What does this chapter call me to do?

How does this chapter change the way I relate to people? (How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?)

Who are the people in your life you need to intentionally pray for to come to a saving relationship with Christ?

Create an evangelistic prayer list equal to the number of young adults in your church. How can this list help you start evangelistic ministry to these names?

Consider praying daily by name for the unchurched, lost people around you.

CHAPTER 2

PEOPLE MATTER

Andrew Cross



My purpose in this chapter is to clarify why people matter to God and why they should also matter to us. Then I will share how you can make intentional efforts to show the people in your church and community that they matter to you and the God you serve and represent.

Why People Matter

I appreciate the illustration that humans are like works of art that have the artist's signature written on the canvas. And so, it is with every man and woman on this earth. We bear the image of God and have enormous value to God. Have you seen the climate activists splashing paint on priceless works of art lately? These recent attacks diminish ancient works of brilliance and beauty. The image of God came under a similar attack in the Garden when man and woman rebelled against their Creator.

Because Jesus died for the sins of the world (John 3:16), every person has the potential of being restored. No matter what sin has done to damage the image of God in any man, woman, or child, they are works of art that can be made presentable once again by way of the gospel.

Do People Matter in Your Church?

Your church is looking to you to see how to treat people. Do people matter to you? We have seen that they matter to God, but do they matter to you? I remember interning for a church in Kentucky during my seminary education. The pastor I mentored under emphasized his love for people. And he did not just say it, he lived it out. He was constantly in homes, coffee shops, and school campuses visiting members of the church. Jury duty, the Department of Motor Vehicles, or the grocery store were just opportunities to share the gospel. He truly did love God's people and the people God wants to become His people. People mattered in his church. Do they matter in yours?

Know Who Your People Are

I serve as the Young Adults Pastor at Bellevue Baptist Church, and was hired in January of 2020. Two things happened in March of that year. First, our world was struck with a pandemic that completely altered our lives and disturbed our rhythms. Second, I began to keep a record of who was in our ministry by name. I called it the "Young Adults Ministry List."

The list contained a few categories: My People, My Prospects, and My Ministry Partners.

Here's an example:

My People: Holly Boone, Ellen Combs, Peter Erickson, Clark Hull, Diane McGuire

My Prospects: Jasper Dixon, Johnny McKinney (M), Alan Moss Faith Richards (M), Lydia Skinner

My Ministry Partners: Andrew Cross, Anna Cross, Kristen Dunlap, Connor Knowles, Sonny McClain

Every week I review my list by printing it out and check checking names off who attended our groups and gatherings. After a few weeks, I can see who is attending and who is not. Rather than doing a headcount and calling it a day, I become intimately aware of who was there and who needs to be contacted.

Names listed in **My People** required that the person was both a member of the church and frequently attended any of our ministry items. Members on this list had formally gone through Bellevue's church membership process and had a record of attendance in their groups. This category routinely grows when our new member class occurs or if one of our formerly stagnant members begins attending with some frequency again. And it can dwindle as some simply stop attending and do not respond to our attempts to reach out. That is when I demote them to My Prospects.

My Prospects often include stagnant members, active attenders who are not yet members, and recent guests to our Sunday morning small groups or Wednesday night gathering. To keep track of why someone is in this category I include some helpful indicators. I highlight recent guests who have visited and just been added to the category. I also type an (M) next to members of the church who are in My Prospects so if I see them attending with frequency, I know I can promote them to My People with ease. If they are on My Prospects without an (M), then they may need the membership class, baptism, or even salvation. As long as they keep attending our ministry items, I keep them on My Prospects and let the Holy Spirit lead me and my team into conversations that shepherd them from My Prospects to My People.

My Ministry Partners is a category that helps me keep up with the staff and volunteers who frequently attend our ministry activities. These are usually our small group teachers and mentors who sit in on classes. I include myself and my wife along with various leaders and their wives who contribute heavily to the work our ministry. These leaders equip and empower the young adults in our church. These people are categorized based on the shared understanding that the only purpose they are in our ministry is to serve.

“What about prospects that are not interested in membership but want to attend our events?” In my experience the toughest conversations are not with new followers of Jesus, but with those who grew up in a denomination other than Baptist. What do you do with a Presbyterian who does not want to be baptized as an adult and cannot become a member? What do you do when a faithful young woman was baptized in a church in Africa that holds to the prosperity gospel and does not want to move forward with membership, but wants to serve in the church? I have another, much smaller category for them called ***Ecumenical Friends***. These are my dear Christian friends who want to be a part of our ministry and church, but disagree with us on important doctrines. I do not give up on them. I do my best to minister to their needs regardless.

The only other section on my list is what I have labeled, ***Removed***.” These are people who have been removed from the list for a variety of reasons. I move people to this category when I see they have moved, when they have not attended in over three months, or when they transition to another church. Occasionally, these individuals are contacted to see how they are doing and invite them to an event and encourage them to return.

Learn and Retain Names

Keeping a list of people’s names is beneficial. First, it helps you learn people’s names and retain them. Second, it enables you to retain names far better than you would be able to otherwise. As you update your list of names, type them out, copy and paste them to other categories, you get familiar with these names and start to look forward to when you’ll see them next. You can check Facebook or Instagram to learn more about them and assist you in engaging a casual conversation that leads to a gospel conversation.

Names are important to me because people are important to me. Every person in your church or ministry has a spiritual destination. They matter to God, and they should matter to you. Learn and retain their name, keep track of their spiritual progress, and minister to their needs. Young adults in your community bear the image of God and they exist for His glory, just like you. May you show them that they truly matter and may you do so to the glory of God.

Chapter 2 Discussion Guide

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about the people God has placed you around? What does this chapter tell us about God?

What does this chapter say about discovering those far from Christ?

How does this chapter change the way our Group/Class should relate to people?

Consider a weekly prayer time for the unchurched, lost people your Group has discovered.

How can you incorporate learning the names of your people into your daily routine?

Which of these strategies should our Group/Class consider adopting?

What church-wide event could you volunteer to serve in that would allow you to meet more unconnected people?

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

PJ Dunn



Understand the Goal and Develop an Overall Strategy

Authentic relationships require each of us to be a friend worth having. As churches attempt to connect to our communities, we must find a way to reach young adults. This is hard to achieve without an authentic relationship centered on Christ's love. We know we need to reach young adults, and the question of how to reach them is not as hard as the answer.

Authenticity is the currency of young adults. Without it, we are empty in our efforts to influence and engage a lost and dying world. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul used his evangelistic efforts as a model to engage a generation far from God. Paul authentically became a part of each unique context to win people to the Lord. He did all this for the sake of the Gospel and reached each unique community. Are we willing to do the same for young adults to connect in our churches?

Reflecting God's love needs to look more like a hug than a bullhorn. There is a misconception about describing love as a hug. It could appear to suggest this approach softens the idea that God's Word is infallible as it is communicated. Quite the contrary. A hug is not softening a relationship with someone, but pulls young adults closer and allows sharing the truth in love to transform lives through the power of the Gospel. 1 John 4:7-21 type of authentic love for young adults is required to reach and win young adults. We love because Christ first loved us, and we love others so they will see God's transformational love in our lives. This generation of young adults is no different than every generation before. **They will not see God's love if we do not authentically love them as Christ loved us.**

To connect our congregations to young adults, we must invite them into authentic relationships, not programs. Programs are not irrelevant. We must boost involvement in groups and worship. Mark Caldwell wrote in *Winning Our Harvest Field*, "The New Testament church reached out to people with the gospel through small and large groups... but always with the desire to see them saved, baptized, and set on the road to discipleship." Our programs should help us align our mission, vision, and strategies to achieve a replicable outcome. However, the issue with a program is that it needs the same input to get the same output. An inflexible program input means something built for a prior generation or specific task is not made to receive a new variable. In this case, the current generation of young adults may not be the input your program was built to accept. **Stop blaming young adults that do not fit our programs and find a way forward.** Be as flexible as Paul to be all things to all people so some may come to know Him as their Lord and Savior.

Pastors, church leaders, and disciple makers reading this chapter are looking for a way to engage young adults. Be a friend worth having, and authentic relationships with young adults will follow. For authentic relationships to permeate our congregations, let's explore young adults and their relationship with the church.

See Young Adults Beyond Your Eyesight

Saul was "still breathing" threats and murder in Acts 9 against Christ followers. His mission and strategy focused on the wrong things. Then Saul encounters Jesus. He is blinded and sitting in Damascus when a faithful follower, Ananias, comes and delivers a message to Saul. His sight was restored, and he shared the Good News.

Leaders, we must be humble enough to know when we are not seeing people the way God wants us to see them and ask for our eyesight to be restored. Just as Saul needed new eyesight, we often only see what is in front of us instead of who we are called to reach. Our churches are aging. In fact, churchgoers are now twice as likely to be 65 and older in 2021 than in 2008.¹⁵ To be healthy, we need to be congregations of all generations and backgrounds, but we are challenged to find the way forward to reach young adults.

Along with aging congregations, our pastors are aging, and over half are over 55.¹⁶ Pastors and leaders, age is not our weakness. In fact, it is often our greatest strength and source of wisdom. **Age does not dictate your vision; your mindset does.** Our weakness is our inability to see beyond our aging pews and ourselves into the community that tends to be younger. The challenge before the church to reach young adults is not where they are in our communities but if we even see them in our local community.

Young adults are single adults. Regardless of your community being rural or urban, when we look at adults under the age of 40, there are more single adults than any previous American generation. Single-person households have increased from 7 million in 1960 to 37 million in 2021.¹⁷ The average age for marriage is 30 for men and 29 for women and has increased significantly since 2007.¹⁸ Adults 18 and older now comprise over 53% of all adults in the United States.¹⁹ While we will not dive further into singles for this chapter, you can explore them on www.tfministries.org and find resources and coaching to help your church be single-friendly. Pastors and leaders, for your church to reach young adults, it must include a culture welcoming to single adults, not just families.

¹⁵ <https://research.lifeway.com/2021/11/01/americas-pastors-and-churchgoers-are-getting-older/>

¹⁶ <https://research.lifeway.com/2017/03/09/how-old-are-americas-pastors/>

¹⁷ <https://usafacts.org/articles/7-days-of-pie-2022/>

¹⁸ <https://tfministries.org/single-adult-statistics-in-america/>

¹⁹ <https://www.census.gov/topics/families.html>

Young adults are one of the loneliest generations our country has ever seen. "We live in the most technologically connected age in the history of civilization, yet rates of loneliness have doubled since the 1980s," wrote Dr. Vivek Murthy, former United States Surgeon General. 63% of adults who report being lonely are under 45.²⁰ To see young adults, we must recognize their loneliness and address it in our strategies. Often this comes to light in words from young adults like "community," "being real," or even "going deeper." This desire is the same challenge that led prior generations to reach their community through strategies like Sunday School and Training Unions.

With a renewed eyesight of who young adults are in our community, we must have a deliberate vision and strategy to connect young people to our congregations. **We will find young adults if we are looking with a fresh vision.** Saul, with his new eyes, went forward and shared the Gospel. Reaching and engaging young adults will require a new starting point. Said another way, your church has a unique calling from God to meet young adults where they are.²¹

Shame is an excuse, not a strategy. Church leaders, congregants, and pastors verbally acknowledge the need to reach young adults. They use phrases like: "young people just do not come to church anymore," or "growing up, we never missed a Sunday," or maybe even "we have a lost generation, Lord come quickly." Listing why people do not attend church discourages them more to not attend church. Ultimately, it is why we cannot reach them. Many of the frustrations of not reaching young adults are less about them and more about us.

People do not fear change; they fear loss.²² Our frustrations reveal our insecurities that if we were to reach young adults, what would we have to change to do so. That change is not initially what our congregations and leaders fear. Church consultants offer solutions and resources to find ways to engage young adults. Those solutions may involve facility updates, communication strategies, and discipleship options. Those changes are easier to accept than the idea of what will be lost if accepted. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky's loss aversion principle gives the science behind this fear.²³

Pastor, you need to lead your congregation to reach young adults, but that comes with frustrations. You will need a vision and strategy to get there, but before we look at a strategy, remember you are leading people. Your flock is in your care, and while the change and loss that comes with it are challenging, we must value people first. That same value of reaching people also drives your motivation to reach young adults. Now equipped with new eyesight, you can see them. Building authentic relationships with young adults is a strategy to change the frustration of not reaching them.

²⁰ <https://info.cvoutreach.com/loneliness>

²¹ <https://info.cvoutreach.com/loneliness>

²² <https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2015/01/gains-losses>

²³ Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky, Loss Aversion Principle, 1979.

Authentic Relationships Require Love

"Without love, your ministry efforts are worthless."

– Brandon Guindon, Disciple Making Culture.

At the heart of building authentic relationships is love. This quote is powerful and reaches the core of discipleship, relationships, and reaching young adults.

Without love, our efforts are momentary. We have events that only a few weeks later, we forget we attended, and no fruit is seen from its efforts.

Without love, our efforts are a weapon. We shout out people's answers instead of listening to their answers and guiding them into a relationship with Jesus.

Without love, our efforts are just programs. We operate programs out of tradition and habit without regard for their effectiveness.

Without love, our efforts are silent. Did our communities notice when churches closed in 2020 due to covid-19?

Without love, our efforts are un-motivational. We use shame as an invitation into something we value and ignore the actual need in a person's life.

Love is shown to us in Scripture over and over. 1 John 4:1-12 articulates the love we need to show each other. We must love one another as followers of Christ because He loved us by sending His son as an offering for our sins. Because of that, we have no choice as followers but to love one another. No one has seen God, but verse 12 is an action command. His love is seen in a lost world if we love one another.

Authentic relationships are being God's love. Scripture gives us a strategy to reach and engage young adults and the world. It would be easier if the answer was to get a new logo or update the building so people would come. Those things may attract, but it is your church's culture of love that will connect. A culture of love to build authentic relationships needs compassion, inclusiveness, sacrifice, and vulnerability. Here are some reflective questions on the culture of love in your church:

- **Compassion**

- o Do we sincerely care for one another?
- o Do we place the needs of others above ourselves?
- o Do we treat people as family and not as projects or goals?

- **Inclusiveness**

- o Do we share the Gospel with ALL people in our community?
- o Do we value "we" over "me"?
- o Do we always feel safe inviting anyone to our church?

- **Sacrifice**

- o Do we only do the bare minimum to gather with one another?
- o Do we have trust in each other to offer sacrifice to each other?
- o Do we allow interruptions to be our ministry to others?

- **Vulnerability**

- o Do we have environments that offer different levels of transparency?
- o Do we have a culture that shares its flaws with one another?
- o Do we open ourselves to hurt for love to win?

Love is inefficient but highly effective. A culture of authentic love takes time, and it is not a sermon to be preached or a book to discuss. Reflecting Christ and sacrificial love through fellowship is intentional, like friendship. This friendship has a focus on evangelism and discipleship. These friendships may be the missing piece for your church to reach young adults.

Exponential growth comes through authentic relational communities. It addresses the loneliness young adults have and offers the transparency they desire. The church is uniquely equipped across America to handle loneliness in its context.²⁴ These communities create friendships that reach young adults in your community.

"Friendship ... is born at the moment when one man says to another, "What! You too? I thought that I was the only one!"

– C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

Boost involvement in groups and worship. Sunday School still works. Home groups still work. Community groups still work. Life groups still work. Care groups still work. Groups that meet in the church still work. Groups that meet at home still work. The name or location of the program/strategy is not the issue. It is the elusive definition of authentic. Authentic relationships in any method can be God's love found in 1 John 4. Authentic is relative to the context of the person but not entirely undefinable.

For young adults in this generation, authenticity in relationships is a matter of belonging. When young adults are asked how they articulate a sense of belonging, it comes down to three levels of engagement.²⁵

²⁴ <https://info.cvoutreach.com/loneliness>

²⁵ *Belonging: Reconnecting America's loneliest generation*, Springtide Research Institute, 2020.

Am I Noticed. In an era of social media where being noticed is measured in reactions, it is in-person relationships where young adults feel engaged. The same interaction in the Garden of Eden still works because it is how God wired us. We can have relationships outside of in-person interactions like Paul did writing to churches. However, anchor relationships in our lives are primarily in-person.

Am I Named. Names immediately create a heart connection. Your name is valuable to you; throughout Scripture, names are essential, including the names of God. This next level of interaction with young adults initiates a friendship connection and a deeper level of communication.

Am I Known. Nearly one-third of young adults say they have no trusted relationships in their lives.²⁶ Young adults do not want to be a goal, a plan, or a project. They desire intentional connections with one another for their interest, passions, and challenges. Just one genuine relationship that reaches the level of being known can multiply into a culture of disciple making.

You need a unique strategy. Strategy keeps us on a mission and fulfills it but is flexible in how it accomplishes both. Young adults desire to be engaged beyond academic studies, including opportunities to serve and be on mission. Your church can reach young adults in your own unique way.

Pastors and leaders must be as flexible as Paul to reach a world far from God. We need renewed eyesight for our community to know who to reach. We must reflect authentic love to others, which may take time but yield exponential results. Lastly, if we intentionally help young adults belong to our churches, then we will reach young adults.

We can fail, but we cannot be mediocre. Your pathway to connecting young adults is much like the generation before it and the generation before. They feel hard to communicate with and are distant from how you currently do things. The sacrifice seems daunting to have a mindset to see young adults and engage them. Friend, you are not alone. The challenge is not unique to this generation; it has happened every generation since Jesus gave the Great Commission. Relationships always have and will always be the center of what binds us to share the Gospel and reach a lost world. It has been done before, or you would not have the ministry context you serve in as you read this chapter. Go and make disciples and be a friend worth having.

²⁶ <https://www.springtideresearch.org/research/belonging>

Chapter 3 Discussion Guide

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about your intentional relationships with people who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

What does this chapter tell us about God?

How can your church be more “single-friendly?”

What does this chapter say about the importance of Groups/Classes and connecting people?

How does this chapter change the way our Group/Class should work to train and send out new leaders? Consider a weekly prayer time for the God to call someone from your Group/Class to start a new Group/Class for their unchurched friends and neighbors.

How can our group/class celebrate a new group start this year?

CHAPTER 4

THE GOSPEL MATTERS

Jake Dorak



What is the Gospel?

The word “gospel” means “good news.” When Christians talk about the gospel, they are simply telling the good news about what God has done through his son, Jesus. This good news is clearly stated by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. “For the apostle Paul, this message was of first importance and needed to be passed down from generation to generation because we are always one generation away from losing the fluency of this gospel message. John Dickson states that “in the ancient world the noun ‘gospel’ (evangelion) and its verb ‘telling the gospel’ (evangelizomai) were media terms. These words were used to tell of happy or important events. The closest modern term to describe what ‘gospel’ originally meant would be the term: newflash.”²⁷ This news report would become one of the church’s earliest Christian creeds. What Paul records in 1 Corinthians 15 is an early church creed and was written months after Jesus’s resurrection. This creed outlines the absolute fundamentals of Christian faith and on which Christian identity is built after the experience of salvation. Paul admits he did not create this creed but that he received it from an earlier source handed down to him. Most likely, Peter and James passed this creed on to Paul during his initial visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:13–20).

Connect the Gospel to Everyday Life

David Allen states, “God, because of His love, by means of Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice for all the sins of all humanity on the cross, coupled with His resurrection, creates the situation whereby humanity is objectively reconciled to Himself.”²⁸ The substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus is a literal and historical moment that makes the salvation of mankind possible. Often young adults who have grown up in the local church have twenty-plus years of Bible stories and head-knowledge of the scriptures. Yet, we hear numerous stories of how they have difficulty understanding how the gospel connects to the larger context of the Bible or to their everyday lives.

Luke 24:13–32 tells a story that illustrates where many of our young adults are in their walk with Jesus. They have grown up in church. **They have heard the stories. They have listened to countless sermons that explain, illustrate, and apply the gospel message, but they still fail to have a fluency in the gospel that connects to their everyday life.** In this text, two followers of Jesus—one named Cleopas and the other unnamed, but most likely one of the 120 disciples—were walking home on the road to Emmaus from Jerusalem.

²⁷John Dickson, “Gospel as News: Evangel from Aristophanes to the Apostle Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 212.

²⁸Allen, *The Atonement*, 120.

These disciples heard the teaching of Jesus, grew up in Jewish homes, and witnessed miraculous moments of Jesus' public ministry. While they were traveling the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus after a traumatic weekend, the two disciples began to discuss and argue about the events surrounding Jesus's death, burial, and the report of an empty tomb. The text states in verse 17 they "looked discouraged." The events of the week had emotionally drained and discouraged these disciples. As they are walking, another traveler interrupted their conversation. Luke 24:15 states, "Jesus himself came near and began to walk along with them." The disciples did not recognize Jesus because "they were prevented from recognizing him." Jesus asked the two disciples about the discussion they were having, and his question created some irony because the one asking for news was himself the news they were sharing. Jesus asks a question that shocked Cleopas and his friend because the death and burial of Jesus was so public and widespread no one could be unaware of these events.

The two travelers responded to Jesus by summarizing the events of the cross (Luke 24:19-21) and empty tomb (Luke 24:22-24). Their summary indicated that they had unmet expectations of Jesus. Cleopas states in Luke 24:19 that Jesus was "a Prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people." The disciples most likely expected Jesus to emulate the prophet Elijah, a worker of miracles. However, the disciples failed to recognize Jesus as the suffering servant that the prophet Isaiah had foretold. Furthermore, the absence of words like "Lord," "Messiah," or "Son of God" reveals they appraised Jesus as no greater than a prophet. In Luke 24:21, Cleopas states, "We were hoping that he was the one who was about to redeem Israel." The "we" in Greek is emphatic and shows the universal human response when God does not fulfill people's hopes: people feel all hope is lost.

The conversation shifts as Jesus began to rebuke the disciples in Luke 24:25 for failing to understand the Scriptures. He stated they were "foolish" and "slow to believe." Jesus aimed this rebuke at the failure of the disciples to orient themselves fully around his teaching. Jesus's main criticism is that the entire prophetic witness was intended to point them to the coming of the Messiah. Jesus states in Luke 24:26, "Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" This text shows that it is possible to honor the Scriptures yet read and use them incorrectly by failing to see the big picture God has designed. Jesus then correctly explained the Scriptures to these two travelers: "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). The Greek word for "explained all the Scriptures," *diermēneusen* (διερμήνευσεν), is the word from which "hermeneutics" derives. This word literally means "to translate or interpret." In the statement "the things concerning himself," Jesus identifies himself as the Messiah and traces how the Old Testament points to him. The word "all" appears three times in Luke 24:25–27 to emphasize all of the Scriptures point to Jesus. Leon Morris states, "We should perhaps understand this (explanation of Scripture) not as the selection of a number of proof-texts, but rather as showing that throughout the Old Testament a consistent divine

purpose is worked out, a purpose that in the end meant and must mean the cross.”²⁹ The two disciples had a wrong understanding of the grand story of the Bible, and thus, they had wrong ideas about the cross and its message. I bring this up to show how young adults can grow up in the church, know common Bible stories, but miss the grand story of the Bible.

According to Jesus in this text, to understand the Old Testament rightly means that one will see a unified message climaxing in Jesus as the Messiah.

In Luke 24:31, God opened their eyes, and they “recognized” the stranger as the risen Jesus. Dane Ortune states, “Luke 24:31 alludes to Genesis 3:7 in the shared statement ‘and their eyes were opened, and they knew.’”³⁰ After Jesus revealed himself to these two disciples, he immediately disappeared from them. Cleopas and his friend reflected on their emotions from their encounter with Jesus. They recognized that when Jesus taught them, “Were not our hearts burning within us?” The disciples knew the truths of the Bible; however, when Jesus explained the grand story of Scripture, the words of the Bible became clear. Jesus’s exposition of the word had stirred them deeply, and for the first time, they understood the Bible’s storyline and purpose.³¹

Luke 24:13–32 clarifies the Christian worldview. Andrew David Naselli asserts, “Redemptive history is a worldview story, and we analyze that story by studying the literary features of the unified canon.”³² The Christian worldview provides a metanarrative (big story) to understand the origin and systems of this world. The Scriptures start with God and creation to reveal how the world has gone wrong. From there, the Bible shows the reason God sent Jesus and how he can make people right with him. Going backwards and understanding the overarching storyline allows Christians to uncover God’s mission and purpose through the gospel.

Luke 24 shows why young adults need gospel fluency. What we believe impacts how we live. The entire Bible focuses on Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. The gospel provides a worldview. It provides a lens for what Christians believe and that impacts how Christians live. A worldview is an interpretive framework by which one makes sense of the data of life and the world. Michael Goheen and Craig Bartholomew state the concept of a worldview traces back to Immanuel Kant’s term *Weltanschauung*.³³ *Weltanschauung* is our intuition of the world. In other words, a worldview is a set of glasses through which we see, interpret, and understand the world. Worldview expresses a set of beliefs that are foundational and formative for human thinking and life. Our worldview is the larger, life-explaining story that gives all smaller stories meaning.

²⁹Morris, Luke, 358.

³⁰Dane C. Ortland, “And Their Eyes Were Opened, and They Knew,” An Inter-Canonical Note on Luke 24:3, *JETS* 53/4 (December 2010): 717.

³¹Morris, *Luke* 359.

³²DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, *40 Questions About Biblical Theology*, 19.

³³Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 11.

A worldview provides a larger story through which one interprets reality. Lesslie Newbigin argues, “The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story.”³⁴ Bartholomew and Goheen state, “At the very center of the gospel is the man called Jesus in whom God has revealed his fullest purpose and meaning for the world.”³⁵ A gospel worldview contains the belief that there is a God who exists in three persons, who has entered into human history in the person of Jesus Christ, who died, rose again, and has ascended to heaven. The Bible tells a story that serves as a meta-narrative shaping believers’ grasp of the entire Christian worldview. The question is not whether the whole of our lives will be shaped by some grand story. The only question is which grand story will shape our lives. The human heart is captured by stories.

Every human is being discipled. Satan makes disciples through the things of this world just as Christians make disciples of Jesus through the local church. Young adults are always being discipled by someone or something. This is why gospel fluency built by a gospel worldview is so important. Through the remaining of this chapter, I want to lay out a strategy to shape the worldview of young adults with the gospel message so that they will see all of life through the gospel and multiply disciples with the message that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and rose again.

³⁴Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in Pluralist Society*(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 15.

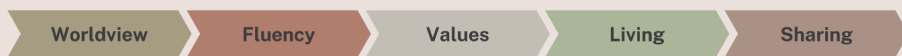
³⁵Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 20.

A STRATEGY TO EQUIP YOUNG ADULTS WITH THE GOSPEL

The strategy to equip young adults with the gospel is a seven-step process of applying the gospel from the inside-out. A gospel-centered worldview will lead to a gospel fluency where all of life is reinterpreted by a gospel-centered lens. This fluency in the good news leads to a value system that is rooted in the message. Our behavior is naturally shaped by our values because what we value becomes the operating system of our lives. As the gospel affects how we live, it will also affect what we talk about which will lead to sharing the gospel. The higher frequency of communicating the gospel will lead to greater opportunities to make disciples. And finally, as the gospel sharing increases and disciple making efforts are increased, this will lead to the multiplication of Jesus-followers in our world. To state this strategy in short:

A Gospel Strategy for Young Adults

How the Gospel shapes us:



How the Gospel directs us:



Gospel Worldview: The worldview that the Bible integrates a four-part story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. People can understand creation through the Hebrew word shalom. According to Trevin Wax, at creation the “Earth was full of God’s shalom, the kind of peace in which everything works according to God’s intention.”³⁶ Adam and Eve rejected God’s design and intention for shalom in creation. Their act of rebellion against God’s created order is known as “the fall.” Adam and Eve represented all of humanity, and their rebellion brought death into the world. God’s redemption is the plan for redeeming the world and rescuing fallen humanity. Wax states, “in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself comes to renew the world and restore His people. The grand narrative of Scripture climaxes with the death and resurrection of Jesus.”³⁷ The big story of Scripture finds its’ climax with God promising to renew the whole world. Restoration will come about through the judgment of sin and evil, and Jesus ushering in righteousness and peace. This is the worldview of the Bible: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

³⁶Wax, *Counterfeit Gospel*, 31.

³⁷Wax, *Counterfeit Gospel*, 35.

Gospel Fluency: As young adults view all of life through the big story of the Bible, they will begin to immerse themselves into filtering every facet of their life through the message of the gospel. What comes out of this gospel filter is a gospel fluency. Gospel fluency is being able to apply the good news of Jesus to specific situations in our lives and the lives of others. As we learn to see God’s big salvation story as the defining story of our lives, we can learn to live, communicate, and make decisions in a way that consistently points people to Jesus. To become fluent in a new language, you must immerse yourself in it and commit to practicing it, over and over again. You must use it every day until you actually start to think about life through it. Becoming fluent in the gospel happens the same way—after believing it, we have to intentionally rehearse it (to ourselves and to others) and immerse ourselves in its truths. Only then will we start to see how everything in our lives, from the mundane to the magnificent, is transformed by the hope of the gospel. As stated earlier, young adults can miss the big picture and often come to a place where they do not see the gospel, understand why they need the gospel, nor how to apply the gospel to everyday life. In this lack of fluency, there is failure to speak the gospel in a way that others can understand and believe. But through a gospel worldview, fluency in this new lens can be implemented and life can be re-interpreted, leading to a fuller understanding of the gospel in all of life.

Gospel Values: This then leads to forming values that are shaped by the gospel. The gospel goes past our behavior and looks at the heart. In other words, the gospel goes to the root of our problem. Our problem is not that we need to change our behavior. Our problem is that our behavior shows where we are not believing the gospel rightly. Just like a tree, the roots of the tree lead to the fruit of the tree. When we see the fruit of sin and other issues in our life, we can trace from the fruit to the root. Therefore, the reshaping of our worldview leads to a fluency in a new way of life that then shapes our deeper value system in our hearts. As Proverbs 4:23 states, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Gospel values come from the fluency of a worldview shaped by the good news.

Gospel Living: When there are problems in your marriage, first and foremost, you do not need a book with 10 steps to fix it (although practical advice is always helpful). You need Jesus and the power of the gospel. You need to address the roots of unbelief that are causing these problems in your marriage. When you get a glimpse how your marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church, and how Christ laid down his life to love and serve his Church, then the gospel empowers you to deal with issues at a root level. Every single question we have, every problem we face, every single situation we seek counsel through, can be dealt with in the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When the gospel penetrates every facet of our life to the point that we see the world differently—that we see the Kingdom of God in every part of our broken world—this is when we can live out the gospel in everyday life. To go back to what Cleopas and his friend experienced, their hearts will burn within them because they saw the plans of God through Christ and their purpose within that plan. Our heart too will come alive when we are living the purpose we were meant to live. This is the goal of a gospel-shaped worldview, it leads us to live out the gospel in every facet of life.

Gospel Sharing: A young adult once asked his pastor to please teach him how to evangelize. The wise pastor replied— “tell me about the time you first met your wife to be.” The young man told his story with amazing detail of his first date, he was animated and joyful, and 20 minutes later... the point had been made. He was able to share fluently about the love of his life. He knew her so well; he did not have to stop and think about the words. His whole-hearted love for her flowed generously. This is the starting point for sharing the gospel—that we talk about what we love, or perhaps better put, we talk about Who we love.

Disciple Making and Multiplication of Jesus followers: As the gospel shapes our hearts, it also directs our steps. When the gospel is shared the supernatural result will be disciples being made. Romans 10:14-15 makes this clear, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and **how shall they hear without a preacher?** and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!” When God’s people share the good news, God works to move people from death to life. The one glitch in the system is us. When we share the gospel, disciples are made and through disciple-making there will be a multiplication movement of Jesus-followers.

WHAT IF?

Millennials have surpassed Baby Boomers as the nation’s largest living adult generation, according to population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. As of July 1, 2019 (the latest date for which population estimates are available), Millennials, whom we define as ages 23 to 38 in 2019, numbered 72.1 million. Pew Research finds that only 19% of this generation hold to an evangelical Christian worldview. These numbers suggest great lostness and great opportunity. What if God were to use your church to lead a movement in reaching young adults with the gospel? What if you led your church and your young adults to fluently see the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in every angle of life. With the rise of young adults who are now deconstructing from the faith, it is time for a gospel movement among our people. We need more than just knowledge of stories and information. Our young adults need to see how the gospel applies and transforms all of life.

Chapter 4 Discussion Guide

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter say about personal gospel conversations?

Where do you have opportunities to have gospel conversations?

When was the last time you had a personal gospel conversation? How do you follow-up after having those conversations?

How does our church train us to have personal gospel conversations? In what areas do we need to do a better job with these trainings?

How can our church show young adults the need for the gospel in life transformation?

CHAPTER 5

LOVE MATTERS

Jon Bingham



1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13 “If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.² If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing.³ And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.¹³ Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love.” Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 13 are almost cliché at this point. We hear them so much in the mainstream, at weddings, in common vernacular that we glaze over and forget how poignant and direct Paul speaks to us. Truly nothing is accomplished or will ever be accomplished if we do not have and show love.

As I prayed through how to approach winning young adults in our harvest field with love, I kept coming back to 1 Corinthians 13. Sure, the Bible is full of scripture about love, but I was drawn back to these verses as I feel it gives the perfect outline for reaching, winning, and retaining young adults in Tennessee. Before we take a deep dive into love as the driving force at reaching young adults, we need to look at the importance of reaching this generation.

The Importance of Reaching This Generation

So, who are young adults? For our discussion, we define young adults as persons in their late teens, twenties, and thirties. They represent diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, educational, vocational, social, political, and spiritual backgrounds. They are college students, workers, and professionals. They are single, married, divorced, or widowed; they are with or without children; they are newcomers in search of a better life. While this generation of young adults have been portrayed as a lost generation, it is a generation full of passionate, cause-driven individuals who will make lifelong commitments when presented in the proper way.

When discussing the importance of attracting and retaining young adults, one may have the question, what is the big deal about this age group? Unfortunately, the future of the church largely depends on how we effectively reach this group. “The Barna Group, in a 2018 study titled *Americans Divided on the Importance of Church*, paints a bleak picture of the future of the church in America, telling us that “Young adults stand out as least likely to value church attendance; only two in 10 believe it is important. And more than one-third of young adults (35%) take an anti-church stance.”³⁸

Of course, statistics from this past year show that number getting worse, not better. The research is sobering in the fact that if we do not find effective ways to attract young adults into the church, we will be faced with a generation of unchurched people who will in turn not teach their own children the value of a relationship with Jesus Christ and the joy of a

³⁸Devlin, 2018.

lifetime of service to his word. While we sometimes struggle to find ways to reach young adults, all hope is not lost. I believe one of the most important methods for reaching young adults center around the word LOVE!

Love is the Driving Force!

Later in this chapter I will offer suggestions to not only effectively reach young adults, but also retain them. Before we get there, though, it is imperative we understand the often-overlooked aspect of Love when it comes to young adults. In verses 4 and 5 of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul details many aspects of what love is and is not. I want to highlight a few of them and discuss how they pertain to young adults. While I will not cover each topic a few stand out as areas that can produce struggles and present opportunities when dealing with young adults.

First, love is patient. This will not come as a shock but reaching out and retaining young adults is difficult. Maybe you are in an area that had a thriving church student ministry, and you have a ton of young adult disciples that are connected to your ministry already, kudos if you do. The reality is most of us are starting to think of how our church can be better young adult friendly with very few people or prospects. It takes time and patience to build this ministry. Often, young adults take almost a one-to-one interaction to build a relationship. They will have crazy schedules, need to change meeting plans, and sometimes flake out. The key is patience through love during all the ups and downs and building a collection of leaders in your church to help. We use the term “young adult ministry” but I think the term should be “ministry to young adults”. We must have people willing to work and cultivate these relationships and love young adults through all the struggles of life they face.

Next, love is not rude or self-seeking. Not to ruffle feathers or upset anyone, but did you know on occasion church leaders and members can look down on or ignore young adults. My hope is that none of you have faced this at your home church, but I have had discussions and interactions with young adults with firsthand accounts of this behavior. It hurts me when I hear this because it can turn someone from the church quickly, and possibly undo months or even years of ministry work. The answer though is love. It seems too simple really, but loving young adults is so simple. Most often they crave it. Imagine you have graduated high school and you are your first year of college. You are in a new place, with new people and it is scary. What you are missing is the love and security of someone who cares for you. You make your way into a church after discussions with an on-campus minister and instead of being met with a warm welcome, and a feeling of care, you are met with snarls and stares, or worse ignored completely. Sadly, this is the way a lot of young adults are treated when they come to church, and frankly it must stop. We must embrace a generation of young adults who may talk, act, and love different than we do, but they deserve the same level of love and kindness we exhibit to other members and generations in the church.

Thirdly, love hopes and endures all things. As already stated, reaching, growing, and retaining young adults takes time, and commitment. To achieve these goals, we must lean into the hope and endurance that comes from Christ. Even the most optimistic Christian may struggle when it comes young adult ministry. You'll have an event expecting 15-20 young adults to show up, and only have 1-2 attend. I remember having a night for our young adult bible study. We had been averaging 10-15 people each week, and I had prepared the same way this week as I had the previous weeks. The night of the study two people showed up. I felt so defeated, I went home and selfishly thought of quitting. What was the point? I was working so hard but getting nowhere and the love and passion I had for young adult ministry was fading. Thankfully, my wife reminded me of the endurance it takes to build any ministry and reminded me that discouragement was an opportunity to reset and refocus on the promises from God. I did that and God began reminding me of my purpose in this ministry. My purpose was to love and help young adults, whether it is two or 100.

Ideas to Help Your Young Adult Ministry Grow

What would happen in your church or community if the largest section of new growth and membership came from young adults? If we begin to employ the strategies discussed in this book and in *Winning Our Harvest Field: What Really Matters*, I truly believe churches across our state will be filled with young adults. Are we ready to serve them with love? It is time churches became intentional about reaching young adults. For years and years, we have poured time and resources into children's ministry and student ministry. We invest time and effort to getting kids to and through high school, then we have zero strategy to help them take the next steps into adulthood. The reality is some young adults are not adults! They are still learning, maturing, and trying to figure out their purpose and path in life. If we are to grow the young adult generation in our churches we must evaluate and refocus our efforts with new, fresh ideas and direction. With that in mind, let's look at different thoughts and ideas that will help our young adult ministry grow.

First, when developing a strategy through love to attract and retain young adults, we must focus on the importance of honesty and transparency. Young adults, by nature, struggle with trust and they are challenging to reach with just blanket statements. They will spend time researching a particular ministry. They will consult friends and family to get their input all before ever considering walking through the doors of a church. In fact, a Washington Post article offered the following statement "The lack of trust in longtime pillars of society among young adults is striking both for its depth and its breadth."³⁹ With the lack of trust and need for transparency, the church must rise up and take a new direction. One way to move in this new direction is to emphasize passion in the word of Jesus and passion in following Him.

³⁹Cillizza, 2015.

In an article by Carey Nieuwhof, he stated, “When it comes to reaching the next generation, passion beats polish. It is not that polish is bad, but I think it is increasingly trumped by a raw authenticity that exudes from leaders who will do whatever it takes to reach people with the Gospel. Smaller facilities and stage sets were more than compensated for by preachers, worship leaders, and team members who exuded passion for the mission.”⁴⁰

While slick marketing, impressive facilities, and super light shows are great; if you really want to attract and retain young adults, your focus should be more on preaching the raw, authentic gospel of Jesus Christ and the love Christ has for all. Young adults know when someone is faking it, and the one thing you cannot fake is genuine love for people. Young adults are much more interested in a better understanding of the teachings of Jesus and of the truth of His word. Therefore, the first step in attracting and retaining young adults in our society is to offer the truth and transparency of the Bible, and to get away from the bait and switch model so often used today. We need less smoke and mirrors and more gospel preaching.

A second way to effectively attract, and retain young adults is to create an environment that is interactive and offers hands-on experience. Young adults are driven by engagement, and they love the idea of being able to interact, to ask questions, and to be engaged with each other and the spiritual leaders. I feel this is a struggle in many of our churches. We say we love everyone, and we seek to retain young adults, but after they come from a youth group or their teenage years, they are placed in an environment that is not cultivating or loving. How many of our churches carve out space for 18-30 years old? Often, they are placed with groups much farther down the road and they become disengaged. The creation of life groups, Sunday school classes, or in-depth Bible studies based around the 18-30 age range goes a long way in retaining young adults in the future.

In a study conducted by Barna Research “We asked Young adults to select an aspirational image for what church should be in the world and found that, by and large, young adults respect the potential of organized religion. Almost half chose the image of a small-group Bible study (48%), which combines the social and intellectual aspects of Christianity.”⁴¹ These studies prove that to retain young adults adequately, we must have a strong sense of in-depth teaching and conversation available.

⁴⁰Carey Nieuwhof, “5 Surprising Characteristics of Churches That Are Actually Reaching The Next Generation,” June 2016, <https://churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/264023-5-surprising-characteristics-of-churches-that-are-actually-reaching-the-next-generation.html>

⁴¹Barna Research, “What Millennials Want When They Visit Church,” March 2015, <https://www.barna.com/research/what-millennials-want-when-they-visit-church/#:~:text=We%20asked%20Millennials%20to%20select,and%20intellectual%20aspects%20of%20Christianity.>

The importance of the small group Bible study cannot be over exaggerated.

We can market and attract young adults with all kinds of programs, but when it comes to retaining young adults, our efforts will be moot if the church does not offer active classes for deeper Bible learning and understanding. Young adults do not want to just hear about the gospel of Jesus Christ; they want to understand it more profoundly, to discuss it with others, and to have an area where they can ask questions and learn. We must be sure when we minister to young adults that we display the fact that we not only have a church set around preaching the gospel message but also classes and meeting times to help them understand the Bible and their relationship with Jesus much deeper.

Finally, to attract and retain young adults, the church must tap into young adults' desire to be engaged in the spread of the gospel to others in the world. Brian Schroder described young adults in this way “Socially conscious: They believe they can change the world in a pseudo-optimist/realist kind of way. Young adults are pragmatic in supporting causes and will give their all to whatever that may be.”⁴² Likewise, when discussing the opportunities of service Kristine Miller describes providing young adults chances to volunteer this way, “Whether in person or online, young adults love being a part of a community. Last year, young adults volunteered, on average, 40 hours. Community service was a part of their teen years and is an important value for young adults.”⁴³ In order to be proactive in retaining young adults, we must incite their passion for the love of Jesus Christ and in turn, give them the opportunity to volunteer and serve their community.

Young adults are extremely socially conscious, and if the church can provide chances for them to see service in action, then the likelihood of retention skyrockets. The ability to serve not only helps retain young adults also helps to market to others in the community. Young adults love to have the support of friends when they are serving and what better way to market your church than to have an engaged millennial bringing friends to help serve alongside them. When marketed effectively, the passion of service for the millennial will pay huge dividends in the overall growth of the church.

Love is Essential

1 Corinthians 13:13 “13 Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love.” Love is not a strategy; it is a way of life. Reaching the next generation is supremely important, and it will not happen without love in in our hearts and in our actions. Young adults, in the context of social status, carry a stigma of a narcissistic generation only worried about themselves and their own personal preferences. The church has struggled for years with how to correctly market, attract, and retain young adults. Although the methods are different, young adults, just like the generations before, are still

⁴²Brian Schroeder, 2019.

⁴³Miller, 2018.

searching for the answers only provided with the knowledge and understanding of the Bible and of the teachings of Jesus Christ. We can effectively attract and retain young adults by offering the truth of God's word in an authentic manner, offering engagement in smaller groups to understand deeper meanings of God's word, and by offering opportunities to serve others in the same spirit in which Christ served the church. When we effectively engage young adults with the truth of God's word, we enlist an army of people determined to spread the gospel message of hope, grace, love, and peace to everyone they associate with, and we will no longer have to worry about how to reach young adults as they will be walking and talking billboards for the church and Jesus.

Chapter 5 Discussion Guide

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter teach you about love?

How can our church demonstrate God's love in tangible ways to young adults?

How are our groups/classes displaying love on a weekly basis?

How can you love people on your street? In your community? At your local schools?

Who in your group/class can become the missions champion and lead out with projects for your group/class?

CHAPTER 6

DISCIPLESHIP MATTERS

Joseph Brasher & Danny Hardy



Defining Discipleship

Imagine for a moment that you are sitting at home. Then all of a sudden there is a knock at your door and when you open the door there is a guy standing there and he looks at you and simply says, “Follow me.” How would you respond?

In our world today, we would probably say, “Excuse me?” or even, “I am not interested in buying anything!” Then we would call the homeowner’s association or post on Facebook, “There is a guy soliciting in the neighborhood, be aware.” For some of us, we wouldn’t even open the door. We would peek through the blinds to see who it was and if we did not recognize them, we would just sit in silence, hoping they would leave soon.

Or consider if you were sitting at your desk at work. Suddenly, a random guy comes to your workstation, and you ask, “How can I help you?” He simply looks at you and says, “Follow me.” And then he walks out, expecting for you to follow. How would you respond?

Maybe we would laugh and think it was a prank. We would maybe call the man a crazy customer, call security, and write up an incident report. We would call the other stores and say, “Be ready there is this guy walking around asking people to follow him.”

Now imagine over 2000 years ago, when a 30-year-old man comes walking up the coastline on the Sea of Galilee and looks at some guys that were fishing and tells them, “Follow me.” And immediately, they dropped everything, and followed Him. They even left their family on boats while out on the sea to follow this man. No one “googled” His name, no one checked His credentials, and no one called security. He called and they followed. They all followed when Jesus came calling!

The importance of these moments sets the tone for our approach to discipleship, particularly of young adults! Now when we hear the word “discipleship” used in our culture today, it has tones of being a “churchy word.” We do not use it in our common language except, most often, in church settings. Yet during the days that the Bible was inspired to be written, the word was commonly used and visibly seen.

To be sure that we are all on the same page, let’s state the formal definition of discipleship. Merriam-Webster Dictionary states the definition of a disciple as 1. One who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. 2. A convinced adherent of a school or individual. 3. A follower. Even in dictionaries they state how it is a reference to the 12 disciples that followed Jesus. Therefore, discipleship is the act of discipling. It is how we help one accept doctrinal truth. It is how people learn to adhere to the teachings of Jesus. It is how people follow Jesus in their lives.

It is important to know though that during the days that Jesus arrived there were disciples that existed already. In the 4th century BC, in the Greek culture, you could become a disciple of Socrates and then later Plato and then Aristotle. They were called disciples of each other even though they had their own thoughts on things. In the New Testament

times (and even before then), there were Jewish rabbis, and they had their own schools and disciples. Thus, when Jesus arrives on the scene, discipleship was already a common thing, but as we can see He was about to totally redefine what it meant to be a follower of Him.

What Do We Mean When We Are Talking About Discipleship?

First, discipleship involves learning. There were teachings, principles, and interpretations that the rabbis taught their students. Even today, many Jewish young men can quote the first five books of the Bible verse by verse. Imagine that for Bible drill! The key principle for us to see is how there were things to be learned in the discipleship relationship. There is learning that occurs at the individual level as you engage God's Word through reading, memorizing, and studying its truth. But we will also see that learning involves not just knowledge but biblical wisdom, which is the application of knowledge. It is seeding the truth of God's Word in our hearts. It is embedding truth in every fiber of who we are. Therefore, discipleship involves more than just gaining knowledge.

Second, discipleship involves lifestyle. In the Jewish culture, disciples embraced not just the principles being taught but also the lifestyle of the rabbis. In fact, you can still see today some Jewish people wearing tall hats and some do not. What they are doing is looking like their rabbi and the teachings of their sect. For these disciples, they want to look like their main rabbi, even to the point of dressing like him. Now while we are not asking you to put on garments from the first century, the principle means that our lives should reflect everything about Jesus. Disciples should desire to look more like Jesus in every part of our lives, not just when it is convenient. A lifestyle is something that is embraced and changes us. It is reflected by how you remove more of your identity of self and seek to show the identity of being someone in Christ. Therefore, you learn how to surrender your entire life to Jesus; your mind, your desires, your life completely to Him!

Finally, discipleship involves trusting and following. Trust us, the world and circumstances of life are going to push against you to seek to walk like Jesus did. His way of living is radical to this world that can seem hard to embrace, especially in difficult seasons of life. Yet, when we understand that at the heart of discipleship is trusting and following Jesus, and not looking to the trials or temptations in front of us, we begin to see how our story matters and can be shared with others. And that is what we want to present to you, the opportunity to make an impact on generations of believers. Consider for a moment some of the great revivals and awakenings that have happened in the last 2000 years. Think about how it began when generations of young adults caught a glimpse of what it meant to repent and by faith trust in Jesus. When young adults no longer lived for their own selfish desires or ambition and lived on mission with the gospel. There truly is an opportunity for impact that can be made when you embrace truly following Jesus i.e., being a disciple of Jesus!

Now that we have defined discipleship, let's take a moment and see what discipleship looks like in our lives. And the place that we see that discipleship occurs is at the individual and collective parts of our lives.

At the **individual** level, there are going to be truths for you to embrace regarding following Jesus. Your life is to look more like Jesus everyday while living in the wonders of His grace. Our minds are to be different; our beliefs are to be different, the world around us is to be different when we look more like Jesus. And we will see how it comes when we embrace the gospel and allow it to transform our lives. That sounds churchy as well, but basically, we are saying that when we accept and embrace God's plan perfected in Christ, then we are ready to surrender and follow!

We will also see how discipleship occurs at the **collective** level, i.e., groups! A long time ago, there were men that thought they could just remove themselves from all the worries of the world and go and follow Jesus. Yet the place that they would go to were often caves in the desert. When we look at the life of Jesus, He had His moments of solitude, but He did not stay there. He came back and interacted with the world and particularly with His group of disciples. Therefore, a part of our discussion is for us to understand how following Jesus is to look within our groups. Thus, we begin to see our discussions differently, we begin to see our group meetings, whether on or off campus differently, and we see the call to grow groups for more people to be connected to this call of discipleship.

Young Adults in the Church Today

Now here is the reality. We are in a discipleship crisis. **For too long churches in Tennessee have struggled to connect young people to discipleship.** We have relied for too long on the programs of the past to be the answer to today's issues. Strategic programs with a vision and purpose work effectively. Often though, we have tried to put vain substitutes in the place to create authentic relationships. Then, our last resort is often to criticize a generation that is absent in our gatherings. Thus, our pulpits end up being filled with grandeur of the good ole days, and yet more and more young people are leaving the church (and their faith) every day. What if instead of us taking a moment to criticize, we took a moment to empathize and understand the life of young adults.

The 20's and 30's of someone's life potentially has more transitions, circumstances, and situations that happen than any other time in their life. These occurrences can make it incredibly difficult for an individual to be discipled or disciple someone. Therefore, they struggle in making sense of what it truly looks like to drop everything and follow Jesus as the young men did 2000 years ago. This causes a shift in thinking and practicality of how we can meet young adults where they are and challenge them to take steps to looking more like Jesus every day. Many young adults are not losing interest in the church but looking to find authentic relationships that are meaningful and serve a purpose. When a young adult

looks around and does not see someone their age, it can be intimidating or even make them feel lonely. Young adults do not need another worship service to attend during the week/weekend, but what they do need are relationships with peers and those who are seasoned that deeply care about their generation. Therefore, giving young adults the opportunity to feel like they are just as much a part of the church as any other demographic is vital. Like we said earlier, discipleship involves learning, lifestyle, trusting, and following. In order for these to happen, intentionality, consistency, and authenticity need to take place. **The most important of what happens in the discipleship process is trusting.**

Imagine you were invited over to a friend's house to watch the Super Bowl. You arrive, ring the doorbell patiently waiting for your friend to open the door. They come to the door and let you in, they do not say a word, and proceed to go and sit down. You are now standing at the front door wondering what to do. Do I go sit? Can I use the restroom? I thought there would be food. Sounds to me like a terrible host has invited you to join them at their home.

This can be what some young adults see when they show up at church. Church can become a place that they attend and go home after sitting in service and looking around wondering, "What do I do now?" We get to be great hosts for young adults who walk in our doors, by pointing them to Jesus, making them feel welcome, and loving them right where they are. From my experience with young adults, they know when there is authenticity and when there is a desire to fill a seat. When we see the opportunity to disciple a young adult, it is an opportunity to disciple a future parent, a future influential person in the community, and a future individual who will impact others. **Will that individual impact others for the glory of God, or will they continue to live as the world does, and in turn, pass down all the world has to their future kids, and for generations to come?**

You may be thinking, that is a little much and irrational. Well, to see a young adult for who they are, there needs to be an understanding of what is at stake, not just for that individual but for generations to come. They may never become a parent, or get married, but I guarantee they will encounter other people who do not have a relationship with Jesus and are destined to spend eternity separated from Jesus. **One young adult can be used by God in a mighty way, and a community can be completely turned upside down for the glory of God.**

Now, imagine being invited over to a friend's house to watch the Super Bowl, you are incredibly nervous. This is out of your comfort zone to simply show up to a house that you have never been before. You knock on the door and patiently wait for the door to open, as anticipation builds, you feel like you are going to throw up. Too much? Maybe I am the only one who feels that way. The door opens, and you are greeted with a contagious smile. "Come on in," says your friend. "The food is set at the table, we have the game on, everything in the fridge is fair game for you to enjoy. Oh! Also, the restroom is down the hall to the right, make yourself at home!"

As silly as this may seem, being a good host can go a long way when building trust and beginning the discipleship process with young adults in our world. It is not as simple as being a good host, but it is a solid start. In order to minister to young adults, they need to feel welcome, and at home at the church they are attending. From there, the fun begins in the process of showing them what it truly looks like to drop everything and follow Jesus. Lastly, to think about it this way. As people get older, it seems to become more difficult to find friends, especially friends that point us to Jesus. A young adult in the life of America has a few options of friends, the people they work with, people they meet at a bar, or people they grew up with, and from my experience, there is a very slim chance that these friends are following Jesus, or even pointing us to Jesus. I know that is not the case for everyone, but when we see the likelihood of this possibility, we see the need to create spaces where young adults can find other young adults in the church to be encouraged by. It only takes one for it to change. Think about who is a young adult that can be discipled and challenged in your church?

How Do We Connect to Young Adults?

So, how do we begin to develop a discipleship strategy and create opportunities to engage young adults in our church?

First, be intentional. Young adults want to serve a purpose, they want to be a part of something greater than themselves, and when they catch a vision, they will run with it to the ends of the earth. We often ask people to serve based upon a need. And while there is always an endless need of serving opportunities within the church, a greater step to help connect young adults to serving is by leading with the vision.

There are many ways to include young adults in serving in the church i.e., greeters, production team, parking lot, and many more! Being intentional will take time and being aware of who is around you. When a young adult is present, make it known that they are seen and loved. This goes for everyone in the church, but specifically a young adult who is making an effort to be at church and find authentic relationships.

The next time that you want to recruit young adults, say something like this: We want to make every person feel welcome here at _____ (insert church name). Why? Because when people feel welcome, their hearts are softened to hear the gospel. And when people have an opportunity to respond to the gospel, true transformation occurs. And so, we need people to greet new people in the parking lot. When you greet people with a smile in the parking lot and help them to find their way, their hearts will be softened to hearing the gospel.

Now that sounds totally different than, “Hey, we need you to stand in the parking lot and greet people.” Why? Because it is tied to vision, and it is intentional in what we are doing.

Second, be consistent. Consistency removes uncertainty and leads to trust. Trust, in turn, leads to influence towards those in proximity to us, especially young adults when discipling them. Consistency builds a rhythm, and young adults can begin to trust and see what it looks like to follow Jesus.

Consistency is shown best through the care that you provide. Care happens the best through small groups. Providing an ongoing group experience specific for young adults, gives them a place to grow spiritually and connect in those authentic relationships. Whether you have two or twelve young adults in your church, provide a regular meeting time and place for them to connect. Provide consistent mentors that will help them to navigate their questions of life. And provide a consistent message that the church desires to see them here and values them in the church.

Lastly, be authentic. Do not try and be someone or something that was never meant to be. Authentic relationships are what young adults desire and want to be a part of. Too many times young adults have chosen authentic relationships over solid doctrine taught at a church. We need to provide both for young adults. When we are authentic, we speak the truth of who Jesus is, we love like Jesus, and we show what it looks like to walk like Jesus. We cannot do it perfectly, but we can take it one step at a time, follow Jesus' example, and beg him to move in the hearts of young adults in our community in a mighty way for his glory, and he might graciously allow us to be a part of it.

The Mess of Discipleship

Have you ever played mud football? When I served at a church in West Tennessee, we took our student ministry to a church member's field, and they had laid it out where we could play mud football. And it was a huge mess. I still remember slipping and falling. I remember just trying to run and going nowhere. I remember trying to catch the football and it slipped through my hands. It was amazing the difference that mud made in playing the game of football.

Embracing discipleship and the journey to disciple others in a lot of ways is like playing mud football. We sometimes think that discipleship is this clean process that everyone just does everything exactly perfect and then BING there you have it, a disciple! Let me take down any misconceptions that you have, even as someone that has disciplined others for years, it is a messy process.

Why is discipleship messy?

First, discipleship is messy because it involves people. We all have this virus running through our bodies, thoughts, and actions, called sin. Because you have flesh, congratulations, you are a sinner! Sin causes us to do some crazy things. It causes us to say things that we regret, to think thoughts that we never want to think, to do things that we

shouldn't want to do. Yet, it is there! Therefore, because people sin and are sinners, when we are discipling others, we are dealing with sinners not perfection. Jesus said, "It is not the well that need a doctor, but the sick."⁴⁴ When we embrace people, we are living out the heart of God. We disciple people because that is who Jesus died for! He died for the sick in need of grace, mercy, and eternal life! And Jesus was great at seeing the true needs of people more than they could see it themselves. Let's embrace in leading people in discipleship and helping them to see how we need more of Jesus in our lives, not less.

Second, discipleship is messy because it is personal. I remember one of my mentors asking a group of pastors to say what the perfect church would look like. Every time someone would give a statement, he would write it down on a large chalkboard so we could all see the responses. One after another of us threw out answer after answer. He would write each one down. Then, suddenly, he stopped, and he took his hands, and furiously rubbed his hands over all the answers on the board, when all you saw was just the swipes of hands and the answers removed. He looked at us and showed us how hands, that are covered in chalk, and said, "Everyone, the perfect church does not exist, and remember that discipleship is a mess." What a great truth to remember! When we do get into discipleship you are going to get personal. So, as you begin to embrace discipling people, we are going to get into each other's mess. We are going to expose what we have hidden in darkness. We are going to recognize and deal with each other's shame. And we are going to learn how to embrace our identity as children of God!

Finally, discipleship is messy because it is humbling. We hope that every person would embrace discipling others, just as they would in sharing their faith. We hope that every time, a group is formed, that another group forms, and then another. We also recognize that in baseball that we are not going to hit a homerun every time you take a swing. But here is what you can do, take a single. Go for a double, a triple, and then see how God opens each door with each person's heart to lead towards hitting a homerun. What does this look like? It may be as simple as John. John came to church because their friend started to come. He was from a background that believed salvation was purely about following the right traditions and was based on how they performed instead of the saving work of the Lord. John started to come to a young adult group. He heard about the work of Christ on the cross in the group and before long, he realized that he needed to surrender to Jesus! Soon, John was baptized and set on the road to discipleship. John has continued to be in groups and to see the power of God in his life and those around him. And we see how John moved from someone that was totally on the outside, to being someone that is growing as a disciple of Christ. John's story could be the next young adult's story in your church.

At the same time, we see Jack's story. Jack has been at church for five years. He heard a sermon about discipleship and community and desired to see if Billy, who worked at

⁴⁴Mark 2:17.

the same job, would be open to meeting together to begin to discuss the Bible. When Jack reached out to Billy about the idea, they both were excited. Yet when it came to meeting, Billy did not show up. Jack was hurt and really wondered if he should ever try to disciple someone again. He continues to pray for God to open doors for someone to be open to meeting.

At the same time, Jill is a single mom. She has struggled to connect to other mothers because her life is not like those that are married. Yet, Jill hears a sermon about discipleship and reaches out to other single moms to see if they would be interested in meeting. She prepares her home. She has cookies made. One mother shows up. While Jill thought there would be more, she also realizes that the other mother is a little apprehensive and the conversation is, at first, awkward. Jill questions if she is really meant to disciple her, but then she is reminded that discipleship is messy and starts to be reminded that God has put her there for a reason. Slowly the other mother speaks of how she struggles with depression and has been desperate to talk with someone about what the best steps to take. Jill was there at the right time in the right place, even though she couldn't see it at first, and that the mess was worth it all!

What I wanted you to see is that there are going to be moments of success and failures in discipleship. Yet, give yourself the grace to keep pushing forward. Just as in a battle there are moments when we retreat but there are moments when we push ahead and see how it is worth it through all the messes, even our own, that we encounter. The goal is to keep going! Do not let the messes overwhelm you. Then you will see how God put you and people in the right time and the right place.

When we put this all together and consider the strategies, opportunities, and messes of life, discipling young adults, the real test for us as a church is to see if we are going to take the step to change or let another generation pass us by. We believe that the greatest pandemic occurring in the church today is insanity. Meaning that we keep trying to do the same thing and expecting different results. While the gospel message does not change, if we are not willing to embrace the generation of young adults that are both within the church and outside of the church, we will miss the opportunities that are right in front of us!

Chapter 6 Discussion Guide

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

What does this chapter teach us about discipleship and disciple-making?

Who has been the biggest disciple maker in your life?

What was one of the biggest growth seasons in your life as a disciple?

What is your Group's/Class's disciple making plan?

What stage of discipleship do you feel you are in right now?

Who are two people God is calling you to invite on a disciple-making journey?

CHAPTER 7

MULTIPLICATION MATTERS

Ben Baxley



Zeke (names changed to protect privacy) came to our church as a single 20-something guy who had just moved to town. He was looking for friendships and was also a little confused about where he stood in his relationship with God. In his words, he was looking for a church with a more modern vibe but ended up landing with us because of a small group of young adults that met in an apartment on Thursdays. That discipleship environment led to him growing in his faith and building healthy relationships with other believers. He began dating and eventually married a girl from that group, and presently they serve every week, leading high school groups on Sunday mornings. They are also a part of a group of young couples that kicked off this year on Sunday mornings. I had the privilege of watching Zeke and Abigail's relationship develop from a distance, doing marriage counseling with them, and then performing their wedding ceremony. They are such an encouragement to me and many others.

In our discussion about ministry to young adults, many factors contributed to Zeke and Abigail's story. There was a focus from our church leadership on starting new groups in strategic age ranges. A young leader in his 20s was willing to host the group in his apartment and lead them weekly in Bible study. A helpful friend group formed and worked to care for one another. And there was a willingness from both to respond to God's leadership in various steps of obedience. They have become vital leaders in our church as a result.

I'll go ahead and admit it. Not all my ministry stories play out like this, but there are enough to keep me fired up about seeing young adults stepping into all God has for them where I serve at First Baptist Hendersonville. You are reading this because you have a passion for young adults in Tennessee and beyond, and I am so glad to be a part of this conversation.

The different contributors to this book, many of whom I know and admire, have helped us understand these critical components of prayer, a focus on people, relational ministry, and clear Gospel proclamation. We have said that loving people well matters and talked about the need for and how-tos of healthy discipleship.

Where Do We Want Them to End Up?

I want to focus on this question: Where do we want them to end up? What is the end goal of that discipleship process? Well, in some ways, it never ends. We are all on the way to looking like Jesus, and most of us have a long way to go. But in other ways, it is pretty simple. **Our end goal for young adults is *their obedience to Jesus' calling*.** When young adults (or any adults) have been changed by Christ and formed by discipleship, they build Christ's kingdom! It is as natural as breathing. At our church, we have called it service and said that this is the end destination of our discipleship process. In our thought process today, we are going to call it multiplication. We are praying for the multiplication of young adults pursuing Kingdom impact in Tennessee and beyond.

A Season of Opportunity

I am passionate about this age range, particularly, for many reasons. This is a crucial season for character formation and spiritual development. This is a time when young adults increasingly wrestle through their faith. They live in a culture that challenges their preconceptions and forces them to come to terms with what they genuinely believe and if they are willing to live that out.

I love young adults because of their passion. They desire to jump on board with a cause that is worth pursuing. They are creative and hungry to grow. They respond well to challenges. They are open to sacrifice and taking significant steps of faith. They have big questions and are hungry to live with a profound purpose. They have been entertained more and ingested more information than any generation before, and there is some weariness with facades and big shows. Whether they will articulate this or not, I believe they are not looking for hype and fads as much as genuine relationships and straightforward truth. That sets us up with a significant opportunity. I am convinced Christ offers the most straightforward truth and compelling cause. As leaders, we are responsible for inviting them into a compelling community, an authentic relationship with Truth Himself, and the mission of Christ's kingdom work.

How is it Going?

I am also concerned about multiplying young adults for the sake of the church. There is an expiration date on today's leaders, and we have got to be in the business of forming more. **Multiplying young adults is about launching the leaders of the next few decades.** But we cannot launch what we do not have. And this book is being written because of a lack of young adults in our churches in Tennessee. I hear and constantly read that the smallest demographic in the church is 18-30-year-olds. There is no social pressure to be part of a church anymore. All kinds of things compete for time and attention with the church. It is undoubtedly a challenging area of ministry.

Most churches also feel they are ill-equipped to reach young adults because they lack people or resources. I hear ministry leaders constantly say that this is the most challenging age range to serve in the church today. There is often a preconception that the church must have a large worship service and a staff member dedicated to this age to be successful. Most churches affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention cannot hire someone to serve young adults, and it is one of many areas' pastors are passionate about but cannot serve personally. You might have very few young adults in your church currently. **I want to encourage you that your church can have an effective ministry to young adults and that there is someone in your church now who could be the champion for this age range.**

What Could it Look Like?

The good news is that the principles we are discussing are not that complex. This is not rocket science. And young adults are not exotic and remote. They are the kids you have watched grow up in your church family and community. They are known by and connected to someone in your church already. They are just stepping into a new stage and wondering what their purpose looks like. **It just takes a heart for these people, a willingness to love and serve them, and a plan.**

I served Bear Cove Baptist Church in Sparta, Tennessee, as a worship and discipleship pastor for several years. We were a medium-sized church with around 200 people in worship in a small county-seat town. We had quite a few parents in their 30s, but a significant gap with few people from high school to age 30. We had a strong student ministry at that point and had four to five (a lot for us) students graduating and going to college locally. This allowed us to form the beginnings of a ministry to young adults in our context. We started an 18–25-year-olds Sunday School class with about six college students and young adults, and a leader couple in their 30s who had been serving in student ministry. Those students reached out to friends and pulled other recent graduates in, and before long, that group saw 10-15 young adults there weekly. We planned some hangouts and spent much one-on-one time with them, but I believe the sticking point for them was their relational connection to their leaders and their engagement in overall church ministry. Every one of them jumped in to serve somewhere. Some played music in the worship band or orchestra. Some served in kids' ministry or the nursery. Almost all of them went on a mission trip while I was there.

I was called away from Bear Cove five years ago, but many of those young adults have gotten married, started families, and continued serving faithfully in that church or others. We did not get everything right, but I believe that we were able to make significant progress with young adults. Joseph Brasher, Discipleship Pastor at New Vision Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, has just written about processes for discipleship, so I do not want to belabor this point. But most of us do not need an overall young adult ministry as much as to start with one group as a place for young adults to land, and some key focuses on moving them into service and multiplication.

A Focus on Community

More than anything else, your young adults seek a community for which to belong. They desire to be discipled and need to be studying Biblical content, but their felt need is to be known, loved, and cared for. It does not have to be flashy, but someone must be focused on caring for them, mentoring them, and helping them grow. This often extends to practical skill development (career planning, dating advice, money management) as much as to deep spirituality. I would argue that obedience to Christ in these areas is a part of deep spirituality.

A Focus on Scripture Engagement

The single most significant factor in a person's spiritual growth is whether they read the Bible daily. Help your young adults form spiritual disciplines in their lives. This might be through providing accessible Bible reading plans (I recommend a chapter a day) and possibly reading alongside them. Meeting regularly to talk about what God is teaching them personally is helpful. One could even streamline a teaching plan to go along with that. There are many other strategies, but our young adults will not form a love for serving Jesus without hearing from Him regularly.

A Focus on Involvement in the Local Church

My heart is that our young adults at First Baptist Hendersonville are not nearly as excited about having a College Ministry or a Young Professionals Ministry as they are about having a church family. We intentionally stress involvement and service in the overall church over constant activity in young adult ministries. Our college gatherings happen after our children and student ministries so our students can lead in those spaces.

We do some college worship services and large group teaching with our young professionals, but we have worked hard to push engagement in corporate worship with the rest of the body as that critical gathering and teaching time. Our pastor recognizes this and celebrates their involvement publicly. Our college-age and the young adult crowd mostly sit together on one side of our worship center. He often addresses them directly in his preaching with encouragement and affirmation (or takes a moment to pick on them).

We seek to involve them in our worship teams at every level and in our choir and orchestra, and we share their stories from the platform. All of this is meant to give them a sense of ownership. The blessing here is that they bring life and energy to our worship gatherings. They are the quickest to respond to calls to prayer and often the quickest to volunteer in service opportunities. It is a joy for our church to see.

A Focus on Mission and Individual Gifting

Our young adults need a wide-angle view of God's kingdom plans and the fact that they have a specific, vital part to play in it. They will catch whatever vision your church has for engagement in Kingdom work. This can happen through exposure to mission offerings, mission trips, serving alongside other churches in your area, and offering sending opportunities. This is not dependent on church size or resources but exposure and taking advantage of opportunities.

I advocate encouraging our young adults to take spiritual gifts inventories and offer teaching and opportunities to experiment with how God has wired them to serve. This is the time frame, especially if single or married without kids, to spend time serving in areas of passion and developing leadership muscles for the years to come. This includes areas of ministry in our local church, region, and church planting through North American Mission Board, and international contexts through the International Mission Board.

What would happen if you had ten new young adults becoming heavily engaged in the overall life of your church? What kind of energy and culture change could that bring? Even more than that, what would it look like if two hundred (out of 3,200) of our Tennessee Baptist churches started one new group for young adults with the commitment of moving them into service? I think that is a movement that pours life and energy into our convention and has global consequences!

What-Who-How (critical areas for multiplication)

As a pastor, church staff member, or key leader who cares about ministry to young adults, what steps do you need to take to move young adults toward service and leadership? You are the expert at your church, and I hope I have been able to frame some possibilities that work in your context. Everyone writing these chapters or reading this book will flesh this out in unique ways that are right for them. Through the lens of your context, I want to encourage your work in four areas for multiplying young adults in service and leadership.

Multiply Leaders

I often think about multiplying leaders with a thought process like pro baseball teams. As the ministry leader in this area, *you are the coach and the talent scout*. It is your job to identify and recruit the key leaders you need in this ministry. I constantly have to be on a prayerful lookout for leaders who can move this work forward, and often that will start with some older leaders who can disciple and encourage young adults. They need to be able to teach, lead, relationally connect with, and mentor this age range.

Once you have identified someone, I want to encourage you to approach them face-to-face and share your heart for this ministry, your belief that they could be critical leaders, and a clear picture of how they can help. Then follow up promptly after they have had some time to consider. You will be surprised how God brings the right people into play when we pursue them in the right ways.

I would also encourage you to set up a *farm team system*. Just like professional minor leagues are great training grounds for young players, there are different areas of ministry that young adults can engage in to grow their leadership skills and ability to teach. I would love for young adult groups to be peer-led, but they often will not be successful if they have not led in other spaces. For our church, our middle school and high school ministries are great training grounds for our college-age and 20-somethings, and they bring energy and vitality to those ministries. By the time our college students have graduated, they are much more confident leaders for having served in these areas. At the same time, do not be scared to move young adults into leadership positions within your ministry as you see their maturity develop. A large percentage of young adults should take ownership and leadership in different ways. This is helped by using an ongoing curriculum that gives hands-on tools for teaching.

In the meantime, *spot the free agents*. People are coming into your church or have been there for a long time with experience leading or teaching. They often wonder where they should be plugging in and need a little encouragement. I love to engage empty-nest couples in leading my young adult groups. They have wisdom, time, resources, and a heart for this age because it is close to their kid's age. Moreover, they have often led in various contexts and are ready to hit the ground running. Then they will mentor young adult replacements and eventually start another group.

Finally, once you recruit them, *coach them well*. Constantly encourage them with your presence and through different means of acknowledgment. If they are inexperienced, they will need more input and direction; if not, they need a pat on the back now and then. Either way, they accomplish much more than one person can.

Multiply Groups

Secondly, *multiply groups*. You might need to start the first group for young adults in your church, and that is ok. I cannot stress the power of starting a new group enough. Statistically, across most churches, every open group that is formed healthily sees ten new people connect to the church (not necessarily all in the group) in a year. If you are starting a group with parents of children, you will often see more significant growth than that. I know of no surer method of growing ministry than creating new groups. This makes sense because each new group means a new leader has stepped in to love and minister to people, and a church's reach is extended. It is a multiplication of force. Additionally, every group has its personality, meets needs, and builds relationships that others cannot. It has long been proven that people are much more likely to stay in a church if they are involved in a group over attendance in worship alone.

You can know where and for whom to start new groups by looking at who is involved or whom God is bringing as well as different gaps in age groups and affinities that are not being served. There might be a need for a group for college students, single adults in their 20s, newlyweds, or parents of preschoolers. There might be an opportunity for a group of young men or young women. There is also the need to look at times that work better for different age groups. Our college students and young professionals love to meet at night when there is more time, while our young parents gravitate to Sunday morning groups when there is a ministry for their children. You are the best judge of your church's ministry and know where the Lord might reveal an opportunity. I encourage you to work to multiply groups for kingdom growth.

Offer Service Opportunities in the Church

As you see young adults connect, continually work to move them into areas of gifting and service in the church. Find out what they are personally good at or interested in. Constantly preach involvement and highlight opportunities to serve. They are hungry to get involved and jump on an important cause. This is where they find a sense of calling and grow in making this their faith and their church. This is also something that will energize

your church. Your young adults, especially those teaching, will experience more growth through leading others than they will in any classroom.

Offer Kingdom Opportunities (Send Them Out)

This is a crucial time for our young adults to sort through their vocational direction and how God shapes them to be growth agents for His kingdom. Expose them to opportunities to get their feet wet in kingdom work beyond their church. Many of them are in a flexible season where they can serve in different ways, go on mission trips, or even give a semester or more to mission work in another area. This gets their feet wet, and their hearts touched for Kingdom causes and may well be God's catalyst to call them somewhere permanently.

We have some young adult-specific mission trips but also work hard to send them on our mixed trips throughout the year. We want our college ministry to have the highest percentage of sending in the church. Both the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board offer longer-term opportunities for summers, semesters, and two-year-long commitments. It is a joy to see our young adults jump on board with these and experience God's work.

In all of this, I want you to know that I am grateful for you and your work. I believe in multiplying young adults in kingdom work and am optimistic about placing the church's future in their hands. It is simpler than we make it but often slower than we want it, and I want to encourage you to play the long game as you sow the seeds of Kingdom focus. We will undoubtedly see fruit, and I am praying for the Lord's blessing on your faithfulness. Let us mobilize leaders and see what God does together!

Chapter 7 Discussion Guide

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

Discuss the two keys to multiplication with 2-3 others in your Group/Class.

What are some of the ways you have served to take the Gospel beyond the walls of the church in the past?

What projects is your church involved in which your Group/Class could join?

How can your Group/Class help host a multi-generational/family mission project?

TO HELP EVERY CHURCH WIN ITS HARVEST FIELD

Mark Miller

Every Church Matters

Every church matters if we are to win Tennessee. Bill Sutton, one of the pastors I served with, taught me an old revival song from the early 20th century entitled Win Them One by One. The first verse and chorus go like this:

If to Christ our only king
Men redeemed we strive to bring,
Just one way this may be done—
We must win them one by one.

Chorus: So you bring the one next to you, And I'll bring the one next to me; In all kinds of weather, we'll all work together, And see what can be done;

Tennessee will be won when every church implements a strategy to win the ones next to them and my church wins the ones next to me. The song goes on to say, “in no time at all, we'll have them all, so win them, win them one by one.” Every church counts.

Partnership Matters

The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board's mission is to “Make Christ Known by Serving Churches.” Our passion is found in our calling to serve your church. As you make a commitment to win Tennessee, we are ready to come alongside of you and your church to partner with you in seeing people saved, baptized, disciplined, and mobilized to fulfill the Great Commission.

When people ask me, what do you do? I respond, “I serve churches in Tennessee as a consultant, coach, conference leader, and champion.” As you make a commitment to implement the seven steps outlined in this book, your TBMB (Tennessee Baptist Mission Board) staff is a valuable resource for you.

The Baptism-Discipleship Team is made of specialists that relate directly to the ministries of your church. For example, my passion is helping churches with Sunday School, adult Bible study groups, and discipleship.

The New Church Team is ready to assist mother churches in planting new churches. New churches are needed to win Tennessee.

The Church Revitalization Team exists to help churches identify and overcome obstacles and develop a path towards health. Healthy churches are a necessity to win Tennessee.

The Resourcing Team provides help for churches in the matter of stewardship and promotion of the Cooperative Program and Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions. Increased giving is necessary to win Tennessee.

Other teams and specialists exist to help your church with service, communications, missions, worship, etc. Search to find the right specialist for your need or complete a *Need Ministry Support Form* at www.tnbaptist.org.

We look forward to partnering with your church on specific strategies, emphases, and events to impact your harvest field.

