

Practical Ministry to a Missing Generation (20s & 30s) Handouts

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Handout 1: Recommended Reading

Understanding a Generation:

- Kinnaman and Barna, UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity
 - This book offers helpful statistics about the beliefs of young adults. It also analyzes the negative perceptions they have toward Christianity in general and some areas that have been stumbling blocks to their faith.
- Kinnaman, You Lost Me
 - In Kinnaman's second book on this generation, he recognizes that not everyone has left for the same reasons. He breaks the missing group down into sub groups in an effort to understand the varying reasons why they have left.
- Clark, Hurt & Hurt 2.0
 - Chap Clark spent time getting to know a group of high school students to try to understand their world. One of the biggest things that stood out was that they had been hurt. They had been hurt by those who should have been there to protect them. Hurt by parents and divorce, hurt by the church, hurt by teachers, hurt by friends. In order to reach them this hurting must be recognized and attempts made to help heal some of the wounds. It is important for older generations to understand this when they reach out because the younger generation is cut from a different cloth.
- Smith, Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Young Adults
 - This book has a ton of helpful descriptive statistics on the beliefs and practices of young people when it comes to religion and spirituality.
- Miller, Blue Like Jazz
 - A book to read to get inside the head of a 20-30 something to try to understand their perspective.

Prevention:

- Holmen, Church + Home
 - A strategy to re-engage families in the spiritual development of their children
- Singleton, impartingfaith.com
 - Joel is our youth minister. He has developed a more specific action plan for churches and families to partner together to develop faith in children. There is a booklet on the site that we use as a congregation as guidance for parents on how to do spiritual activities with their children. His website is extremely helpful and practical.
- Joiner, Think Orange
 - Another family ministry approach out of Northpoint.

- Haynes, Visionary Parenting
- Rienow, Legacy Path
- Joiner, Parenting Beyond Your Capacity

Reclaiming Those who have left:

- Rainer, Essential Church: Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts
 - Why they leave and how to close the “back door”
- Rienow, When They Turn Away: Drawing Your Adult Child Back to Christ
 - This book is written to parents who have children who have left. It is not written about the situation. It is written to you if this is your situation. Powerful and helpful.
- Kimball, The Emerging Church
 - Kimball does an excellent job of reframing what church is really all about. He discusses culture (post-modernism) and what impact it has on Christianity today. Last, he talks about various aspects of ministry and how they can address the emerging generation of young people. This is a very helpful book. The whole emerging church thing was controversial and the terminology is old now (because so many people meant so many different things by the term “emerging” that it got thrown out) but this book still has some insightful points that are worth considering.

Unchurched Young Adults:

- Stetzer, Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Read Them

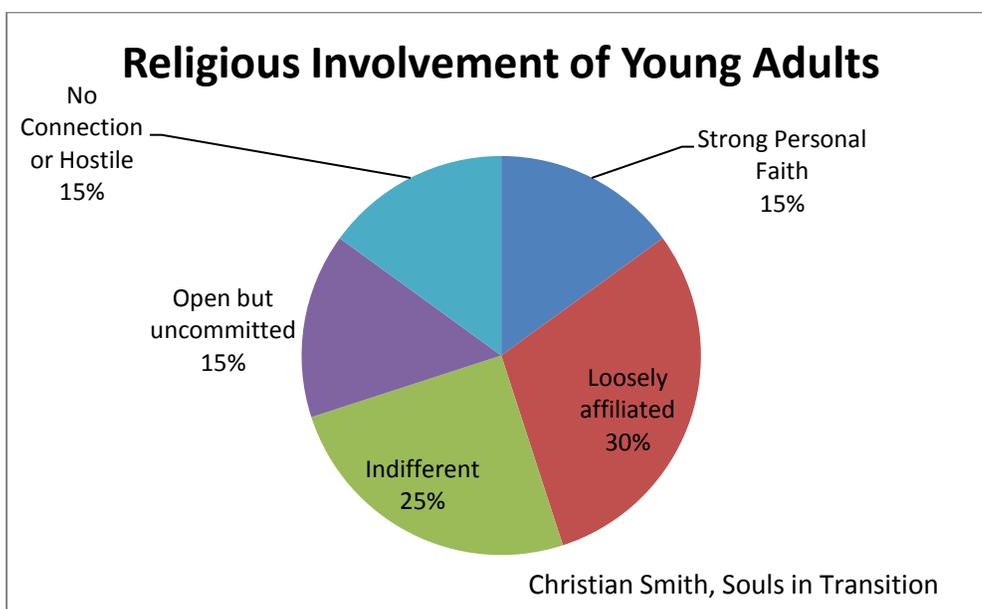
Handout 2: Identifying the Problem of a Growing Culture Gap

1 - Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults” by Christian Smith

These statistics show the decrease in religious involvement as a whole in America. Christianity is not as prevalent as it was even a decade ago.

Young adults religious involvement:

- Strong personal faith, practiced regularly – 15%
- Inconsistent or loosely affiliated with a religious tradition - 30%
- Indifferent toward religion – 25%
- Open to spiritual matters but uncommitted – 15%
- No connection or hostile toward religion – 15%



2 - “Teenagers Want Successful Careers and Global Travel, Expect to Delay Marriage & Parenting” Barna Group May 2010

Barna released a new study on where teenagers see themselves in five years. They were specifically asked what they would like to accomplish by 25. The more involved teens are in their teen years, the more likely they are to think they will be involved in later years. Even then, only 60% of our involved teen attenders believe they will still be by 25.

- 29% believed that at age 25 they would be actively involved in a community of faith
- 20% of Catholic teens definitely expect to be involved in a community of faith

- 25% of mainline Christian teens definitely expect to be involved in a community of faith
- 60% of regular church attenders believed they would still be actively involved in a community of faith by 25
- 22% of teens infrequent in their church attendance believed they would be actively involved
- 14% of non-attenders believed they would be involved
- 39% said they would definitely have a close/personal relationship with God. That goes up to 72% if you add in those who believe they will probably or definitely have a close relationship with God
- 48% desired to regularly serve the poor but only 7% said they would definitely be active in regularly serving the poor at age 25.

Link - <http://www.barna.org/teens-next-gen-articles/366-teenagers-want-successful-careers-and-global-travel-expect-to-delay-marriage-a-parenting->

Handout 3: Challenging Deadly Assumptions

Assumption #1 – The Problem is with Them

Assumption #2 – What We are Already Doing Screams Relevance

Assumption #3 – Spiritual Development's Focal Point is the Church Building

Assumption #4 – They Want Something Less Biblical/Compromise

Assumption #5 – When Things Get Tough, Hold Down the Fort

Assumption #6 – Their Leaving is Due to Lack of Biblical Knowledge

Assumption #7 – The Goal is to Get them Back to Church

Results of these assumptions:

1. View of Church is too small
2. They don't believe the institutional church is connected to everyday life
3. They don't see the church engaged in relevant and impacting mission
4. They see the church as an institution that exists to perpetuate itself
5. They don't see the church as something they feel comfortable inviting others to

Handout 4: Needed Paradigm Shifts

1. Changing from they should come to us to we should go to them
2. Changing our assumption that what we are already doing is the complete mission of God to asking what if there was more to the mission of God than what we are currently engaged and invested in as a congregation.
3. Changing from institutional to relational
4. Changing from group-centered to God-centered
 - a. What happens if their group of friends falls apart or moves on?
5. **Big one** - Examine the mission of the early church and ask how does your congregation reflect it:
 - a. More time was spent out than in.
 - b. The mission was more than Bible study and worship – do we reflect that?
 - c. The mission was not just done by professionals.
 - d. Just looking in from the outside, one might think the sole mission of the church was worship and preaching.
 - e. If we find gaps between the biblical call and our practice, what are we willing to do to correct it?

The Result of Changing to a More Biblical Paradigm:

1. When our young people can see that the community of faith is serious about the mission of God they won't want to be anywhere else.
2. When they can actively make an eternal difference in the world, they will stick around and/or show up to make an impact
3. When they find caring, concerned, loving people who genuinely value them, they will identify with that
4. If we will teach them how the Bible is relevant to their faith and everyday life and decisions, they will stick around

Handout 5: The Four Step Process of Engaging Another Culture*

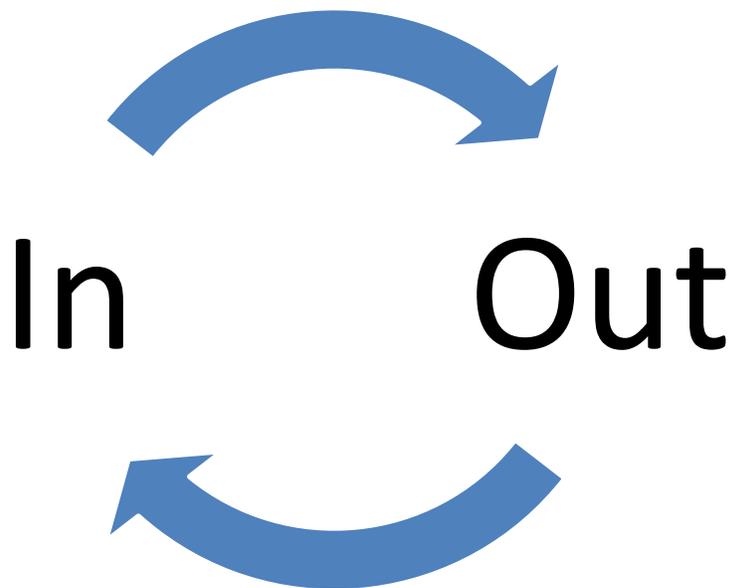
1. **Pray** daily that our hearts will be inclined toward this generation, God will enable us to see the good.
2. **Read** some of their material, books, listen to speakers that are representing a good portion of the voice of their generation.
3. **Go** to two popular gatherings of this generation and just observe. (possibly take notes of observations)
4. **Sit down** with two young people of this generation and simply ask questions and listen.

*unsure who came up with this

Handout 6: The “In & Out” Tension

We need environments where their specific needs, questions, etc can be addressed but the tendency is for these groups to form into nice and tight country clubs that are hard to break into, hard to break out of and defeat the purpose. We have to acknowledge that tendency on the front end and make provision to prevent it from happening at the very beginning.

In: Build an effective environment where the faith of this generation can be meaningfully fostered and grown



Out: Launch them out to rub shoulders with people who are different than they are both inside and outside the church

Result is more people get incorporated back into the environment/ministry within the congregation and so the cycle repeats.

Lookin In:

- **Place of deep connection/relationship:**
- **Authenticity & Safety**
- **Relevance:**
- **Actual Application:**
 - Class on quiet – give them 20 minutes of quiet
 - Class on prayer – give them 30 minutes of prayer
 - Class on creation – let them go outside and look around

- Class on the elderly – have them take communion to a shutin
- Class on the poor – take lunch to the homeless, serve in soup kitchen
- Class on giving – take up money for a family in need

Looking out - their life and identity is more than just that group.

- **Encouraging meaningful connection outside the group. Sending them out, sending others in.**
- Service to others inside and outside the church
- Q & A with elders and older members
- Senior Brunch
- Marriage mentoring and other forms of mentoring
- Helping shut-ins (even during class/worship) – go and take worship to them.
- Encouraging them periodically to attend another Bible class and get outside the 20s & 30s class for a time.
- Devo's in members homes.
- LIFE groups – a great time to connect with various ages.

In/Out - It becomes a cycle – the come in, get filled up and go out to fill others up...around and around

Handout 7: Think “Up & Down” – Preparing for Future Transitions

We lose them at the transitions.

- Actually, we lose them before they get to the transition but the transition points are when it shows up and they jump ship.
- We have to make the steps smaller.

Think Up & Down:

- Sending them down – send some 20s down to the college and youth
 - Things to try:
 - Teach class
 - Mentor
 - go on trips
 - This also equips the 20 something for ministry as well.
- Sending them up – encourage time with older members of the church (Bible class, shut-ins, fellowship activities, etc)
 - Things to try:
 - Q & A Interviews – elders and older members/couples
 - Marriage mentoring
 - Encourage them to attend other Bible classes and small groups
 - Take worship to shutins
- **This is laying a foundation for creating smaller transition steps**
- What makes transitions difficult are the lack of meaningful relationships in the new environment due to isolated/insulated ministries.
- Fix it now so it won't be an issue later.

Handout 8: Suggestions for Church Leaders

This is going to require some work by our leaders:

1. Patience – you have to be patient with people when you don't understand them or where they are coming from.
2. Spend time with them
3. Listen to them - Give them that voice in decision making
4. Don't think they have to be 50 to be in leadership or be in charge of something outside the assembly.
5. Be willing to be questioned. They have questions.
6. Be authentic.
7. Know what the negotiables and non-negotiables really are so you can stand firm where you need to and have flexibility where you need to.
8. Be aware that not all of your assumptions about things may be completely accurate. Another reason to listen to them.
9. Invest money in this - Be prepared to spend money on this one...this is the future of the church. There will be no evangelism budget or worship budget in 25 years at this rate. We have to invest now.
 - Few churches will be able to afford a full time staff person for this.
 - See the handout on how to do this without full time staff. One key tip, even if it is just \$100/week hire someone who is personable and engaging in or near the 20s & 30s age range to work on this ministry. Leadership tends to pay attention to things that get the budget.
10. Make sure elders are shepherding the whole flock and not just those closest in age to themselves.

Handout 9: Suggestions for Parents

1. Pray for them
2. Be loving and accepting of them as people, even if they have gone
3. Turn them to Jesus first, the church attendance thing will follow
4. Be authentic...they can't stand hypocrisy (even if they are engaged in it themselves!)
5. Don't feel guilty. There is tremendous guilt over those whose children have left their faith behind. You can't change the past but you can affect the future.
6. Make sure your kids feel loved, valued and protected.
7. Be willing to address past brokenness in your family if the need is there. They know about it but don't know if you are willing to address it or take responsibility for the parts that are yours.
8. Create a safe environment for them. If you treat them or their questions about faith harshly or belittle them you will run them off.
9. Know that God knows. It is amazing how there are times young adults are reached in ways we could have never planned but God knew all along.
10. Be patient and willing to listen.

Handout 10: Ministering Without Full-Time Staff

Most churches won't have the luxury of hiring additional staff to take this on. Here are some ideas to consider on how to do this more organically.

1. Begin making the meaningful connections with who you have left in this group. There is no reason to wait to get to know these guys if they are present.
 - a. Encourage their feedback
 - b. Show them you care
 - c. Try to understand them
2. Get the best, most engaging teacher you have in the congregation and have them start a young adult class. Make sure the topic is relevant and engaging.
3. Evaluate who is coming (to class or worship) and start asking them about their talents, abilities and how they see those things being used for God.
4. Identify potential people:
 - a. If you have a youth group, identify who has graduated out over the last 10 years and see who is still present and who is not.
 - b. Find out from the members who they know who might be willing to come if there was something in place for them.
5. Have an activity where these people are invited off the church property to do something. This could be a BBQ, service project, etc.
6. Find who of this age is interested in helping and give them responsibilities for managing the group.
7. Give them roles and responsibilities with limited time frames and "job descriptions"
8. Begin advertising what you have. You don't want this to be a secret. When these things are announced on Sunday there may be older members who hear it and know others who might want to be a part of this.
9. Less is more – start by doing fewer things but do them well
10. Start a budget line for this group.
11. Next step, pay one of them to help manage and oversee the group. Even if this is \$100/week with a detailed job description that would be great. This will get someone thinking about and engaged in the well being of this group.
12. These guys need reminded about what is going on. You will need someone who is willing to regularly email them, call them, send info to them about what is going on and inviting them to be a part.

There are many other things that could go on this list, this is just a start to get the wheels turning of how this might look in your congregational context.