



Leadership Link

Equipping Leaders to Lead



Dear Friend

Life at the beginning of the 21st century is rarely physically demanding, but our mental and emotional health takes a battering on a daily basis. The immediacy of advertising, media, pressing needs and day to day survival means that young people struggle to imagine the future and, therefore, plan towards it. They are preoccupied trying to sort through the debris of fears, aspirations, warnings and comparisons thrown up by mainstream culture.

Due to the rapid advancements in technology and communication and increased secularisation of society the culture gap between seasoned leaders and emerging leaders is greater than at any other time in history. Therefore, much greater attention needs to be given to succession and leadership development. What is clear from the church demographics across the UK is that new pathways must be found to develop leadership among 18-25s. What we sow now, we will reap in 2030.

Every decade of life has a unique set of challenges, questions to face and new tensions to adjust to. However, due to rapid cultural change we cannot assume the questions that today's twenty some things ask are the same ones today's senior leaders asked in their twenties. Our ability to both lead and mentor younger leaders will be greatly enhanced as we understand more about the world they inhabit and the questions they ask. These are some of the pertinent questions that twenty some thing Christians are asking.

What is my unique contribution?

What do I want to do with my life?

Am I lovable?

Why is life so hard, boring, unfulfilling?

Why do the same Christian answers not seem to satisfy me?

How has my parenting affected me?

What parts of me need healing, adjusting, fixing?

What does it mean for me to be a man/woman?

Who are my real friends?

Gordon MacDonald has explored these questions in 'A Resilient Life' and I have taken some of these questions directly.

There are certainly more questions than answers, but also a growing conviction and resolve across the church to raise up the next generation of leaders and help their peers stay connected to church and active in mission. Whilst there isn't a magic formula, understanding is growing, new pathways are being explored and good practice is being shared. So in developing current and future leaders, what values and theology need to be grasped during the hugely formative years of 18-25?

In my experience during these years people have a new freedom, often from leaving home to think and act more freely. They are also largely still flexible and open for their worldview and values to be changed before deciding on which principles and beliefs they will anchor their life. After 25, change and discipleship is still possible, but worldviews and values are fast being cemented and it requires more energy and discomfort to change.

With this in mind what values can we work to cultivate in the lives of younger leaders? Which ones, when cemented will serve them well for the rest of their lives? How can we help them see who they are becoming in God and take responsibility for their own spiritual formation? What do discipleship pathways look like for those in their twenties and how is leadership developed?

Fortunately, Kingdom principles are not affected by time or technology, so foundational truths for healthy and Godly leadership remain the same. What has changed is the cultural context in which emerging leaders find themselves and the mediums for communication to which they respond. The challenge at stake remains to engage, envision and mentor for the growth and effectiveness of the local church through reaching and keeping 18-35s

Yours Rich Wilson

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