The Hidden Mission Field: Reaching Out to Young Adults and Single Adults 28

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers - Summer 2009

Unmarried America

> Ministry Opportunities for Today's Church



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#### Next time in **enrichment**

#### Church Multiplication: Growing the Church Exponentially

The long-term health of any denomination or movement can be evaluated by two simple standards: the number of new churches born each year that survive and prosper; and the vigor and reproductive rate of its established or "adult" churches.

In the American Church today, some denominations are thriving, while many others are on the road to extinction. Declining denominations are marked by striking similarities — their members are getting older, their congregations are declining in size, and they start few new churches. Thriving denominations, on the other hand, have a much younger demographic and they start many more new churches each year. Eventually declining denominations will become extinct unless they dramatically change their values and behaviors.

In this issue of *Enrichment*, we explore the topic of church multiplication from multiple perspectives. Hear compelling essays from: Mark Batterson, Neil Cole, Earl Creps, Dave Ferguson, David Kinnaman, Dave Mills, Dave Olson, Nelson Searcy, Ed Stetzer, and others.

## enrichment

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#### **YOU ARE A WINNER!**

## Top 10 ROADBLOCKS to Your Success

uccess means different things to different people. Success takes time, planning, and a strong desire. Success is taking action. Success is setting goals and accomplishing them. Success means reaching your goals even when the going gets tough.

There will be challenges along the way. Here are 10 potential roadblocks to look out for:



#### 1. No clear vision

The clearer your vision of your definition for success, the faster you will achieve it.

#### 2. Fear of failure

Do not let worry, fear, and uncertainty hold you back from reaching your full potential. Eliminate the bummer words — *no, never, can't, won't, maybe,* and *if.* 

#### 3. Lack of determination

Turn challenges into a problems that need to be overcome. Do not let a challenge become a stopping point on your path to success.

#### I. No action plan

Write a detailed, step-by-step plan of how you will achieve your success. Include a timetable for completion, and place the written strategy where you can read it, every day.

#### 5. Change

You will have to make adjustments in your life to focus on reaching the success you want. For example: What current priorities on your time will have to be changed? Are you surrounded by people who can help you succeed?

#### 6. Negative thinking Everyone has some self-doubt. However, these two questions will help you. Ask your-

these two questions will help you. Ask yourself every day: 1. Did I give my best effort to today's activities? 2. Did I move closer to reaching my goals?

#### 7. Lack of enthusiasm

Be the day's cheerleader. All days are good;

some are better than others. You will find enthusiasm is contagious; give some to others.

#### 8. Procrastination

You can have the best plan in the world, but if you do not take action on it you simply have a dream. Are you self-motivated, or do you need external motivation from someone else? Determine which method of motivation works for you. Take action.

#### 9. Making excuses

Take personal responsibility for your success by eliminating excuses. Avoid blaming others for your lack of effort.

#### 10. Learn from your mistakes

Everyone makes them. Successful people learn extremely valuable life lessons from their mistakes.

These roadblocks can become stepping-stones to your success. How? By identifying which ones are holding you back from reaching your goals, and diligently working to eliminate them.

This is Your Life! Your Goals! Your Success!

#### Ideas for Implementation:

- Highlight one potential roadblock and work for 1 week to turn in into a positive.
- Continue the process through the entire list, each week highlighting a new potential roadblock.
- · Repeat as needed.

SOURCE: http://Teachingmoments.com

### FROM BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS | Implications of Immediacy

For several days in January 2009, the media buzzed with reports about the US Airways flight that landed in the Hudson River shortly after take-off. Hailed as the "Miracle on the Hudson," New York government officials gave the pilots and crew awards, and the crew appeared on several national TV programs. The story was amazing — a breath of fresh air in a

on several national LV programs. The story was amazing — a breath of fresh air in a season of bad news.

However, most do not know that well before the media picked up the story, several eyewitnesses posted commentaries and photos on numerous blog sites. They scooped the news outlets with up close and personal testimonials minus the spin accompanying the latest headline.

This phenomenon speaks volumes about the way age groups from tweeners to young adults understand and value information. They want it raw and unedited, alive in the moment, through their own lens, and unfiltered by anyone whom they view as having a biased agenda. Digital commu-

nication, which has been a part of this generation's lived experiences, makes information immediately accessible and free. Thus edited communication comes across, at its worst, as an attempt to brainwash. At best, it seems irrelevant, disconnected from the present reality in which they live. In either case, it makes no impact. This has implications for church leaders.

Implication #1: Listen well — they want to be heard.

Implication #2: Be authentic — they want to hear your natural voice. Implication #3: Act wisely — they want to see how what you know matters.

**RANDY WALLS, D.Min.**, director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

#### CROSS ROADS

## CAUSES Aren't Enough

With a broad and powerful impact, the icons of pop culture promote various social causes. Because the social problems of the world are numerous, the champions of these worthwhile causes often influence followers of Christ to join their campaigns to confront the current social malaise. Even *The New York Times* has acknowledged that "conservative Christian churches do

superb work on poverty, AIDS, sex trafficking ... and many evangelicals are powerful internationalists and humanitarians."

Christianity Today<sup>1</sup> recently commented that none of the good works that evangelicals are doing with great effectiveness deal with the most profound social problems facing humankind — alienation from God.

Christian history is replete with groups that have

specialized in mercy and justice. However, one thing evangelicals have done exceedingly well is share the gospel that teaches God loves and forgives. The social problems of the world have root causes. The most fundamental root cause is the breakdown of our relationship with our Creator. The gospel makes clear that the way out of social tragedy starts with people being restored to God.

Christianity in the U.S. has historically had difficulty maintaining healthy balances between evangelism and compassionate care toward social problems. Newfound enthusiasm for reaching out to numerous needs must continue, but we must not inadvertently *do violence to the poor* by not sharing the gospel that

abundantly pardons and saves to the uttermost.

BYRON KLAUS, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri NOTE

1. "The Greatest Social Need" in Christianity Today, January, 2009

## UTHTRAX

## Growing Through Grief



When did you experience your first funeral? For

most Americans, that unnerving occasion may not occur until well into adolescence; for some, much later. We shield ourselves from the reality of death, and it can shock the system when it suddenly intrudes.

Tom Morris knows young people and the adolescent experience, having worked with them for more than three decades. And he has seen how devastating the sudden death of a friend or classmate through suicide, automobile accident, drug overdose, shooting, or illness can be. He began leading grief groups with teens, teaching classes on the death and dying, and holding seminars for churches and community groups. And now he has written a book.

Tom's main premise can be gleaned from this statement in his introduction:"[Dealing with grief] is not so called 'closure' (trying to seal up grief so it stops hurting). Nor is it 'coping' (simply enduring grief in the hopes that it will wear out before we do). This is growth (allowing something terrible to have both its negative as well as positive effects in our lives). Growth is the option I hope you will choose."

Although this self-published book could use another proofread, do not let the small editing issues keep you from digesting and using this valuable resource — for teens, yes, but also for anyone struggling with grief.

Learn more about Tom Morris' seminars and his book at www.growthroughgrief.com. The book is also available through www.ytcpress.com.

**DAVE VEERMAN**, The Livingstone Corporation, Carol Stream, Illinois

# SOMETHING

he Next Great Thing describes texting as this generation's rock and roll. In the 50s, parents were unsure about a slickhaired guy named Elvis whose moves sent shivers up and down the spine of parents and youth, but for very different reasons. Texting does the same thing. Students love it. Adults might not get it or even hate it. Some even call texting the mom-avoider. A teen might not answer a call, but will text his parent instead.

The reality is that for most teens, a phone call is considered passé, just like e-mail. They are not trying to avoid communication. They are just doing it a different way. They might happily send and receive 10 texts to converse with friends or their parents, even if one phone call might seem easier to us.

There are paradigm shifts in culture, and texting is a flashing light pronouncing a new mode of communication. It is presenting new challenges such as texting during service, or larger issues such as sexting (receiving or sending sexual texts or images). But if this is shaping the way our teens talk, how do we tap into this technology? In a recent discipleship class I shared a message titled "Something To Say." In our small group, teens shared how God had impacted their lives. I asked them to create a 144-character or less text and send it to three youth staff members, including me. For some teens, this was a first step in sharing their faith. Two of the teens sent their message to several friends; another texted her unsaved dad.

I do not have all the answers about texting, but as I read the student's messages later I realized that teens have a lot to say about God, even if they do it different from me.

T. SUZANNE ELLER is an author and a youth sponsor at First Assembly of God, Muskogee, Oklahoma. Contact her at http://realteenfaith.com. STATISTIC SOURCES: The Next Great Thing: http://www.nextgreatthing.com/wordpress/2008/ 07/17/texting-is-the-new-rock-and-roll/



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## Networking the Twitter-ific Way

"What are you doing?" Can you answer that question in just 140 characters or less? This is the challenge and fun of writing a "tweet" for Twitter, one of the hottest new social networking services. In just a few moments users can create a free profile page, then send and receive tweets via e-mail, cell phone, Facebook, or via the Twitter Web site.

# twitter

Twitter has multiple business uses, including marketing, public relations, and responding to customer concerns. Personal uses include building community and getting answers to questions ("I'm at 4th and Main. Where is the nearest Starbucks?"), and flirting. Twitter has even been useful in several recent serious incidents. For example, James Buck, an American grad student, was arrested in Egypt last year during a protest. Buck used his cell phone to tweet the message "Arrested." His friends quickly contacted his school, embassy, and the press. Result? He was released the next day. Twitter was used to pass along crucial information during the Mumbai terrorist attacks and the California wildfires.

Media outlets monitor Twitter as a source of public sentiment on current issues. Israel was the first government to hold a worldwide press conference via Twitter to take questions about the war with Hamas. Church ministry leaders are using Twitter for prayer requests, accountability, devotionals, and encouragement. "Like cell phones, e-mail, and Blackberries, Twitter is a tool that can either add value to your working life or become the perfect interruption machine, depending on how well you use it," writes blogger Sharon Sarmiento. THE HIM BEHIND THE HYMN He'd Rather Serve Jesus

n February 1, 2009, George Beverly Shea celebrated his 100th birthday at his home in the North Carolina mountains. Amazingly, he still can belt out gospel songs in his signature baritone voice.

Born into the home of a Wesleyan Methodist pastor's family, George gave his heart to the Lord as a 6 year old and rededicated his life to Christ at 18. Still George struggled with God's direction for his life. Because he was a gifted singer, he wanted to use his musical abilities somewhere.

When George was 23 years old, he was living at home. Forced to drop out of Bible college because of lack of money, he went to work as a clerk in the Mutual of New York Life Insurance Company. The job paid his bills but did not satisfy his desire to use his God-given gifts. As he auditioned in his spare time for singing jobs around New York City, his efforts were met with affirming reviews and potential radio contracts singing secular music. George was conflicted inside.

Sensing her son's inner turmoil, George's mom felt led to challenge him. Late one Saturday night she left a poem on the piano in the living room. She hoped the words by Rhea Miller would encourage her son to not be swayed by the prospect of secular popularity.

George went to the piano early the next morning to rehearse a solo he would sing at his father's church. As his eyes caught the piece of paper his mother had left, he pondered the words.

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold, I'd rather be His than have riches untold; I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands, I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause, I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause; I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame, I'd rather be true to His holy name.

A tune began to form in his heart. Writing down the notes he discovered more than a melody. He found in this new song a truth that would guide him the rest of his life. Instead of seeking a successful career singing popular music, he chose rather to serve Jesus.

GREG ASIMAKOUPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington

## SUSY FLORY, Castro Valley, California

#### CATCH THE AGE WAVE

## Staying Sensitive to the Older Members in Your Church



G while we may honor older members of our congregations, doing so also reminds us of the challenges of growing older.

Former pastor-turned-author Cecil Murphey explored the attitudes, fears, and challenges of growing older in his book *Aging is an Attitude: Positive Ways to Look at Getting Older* (Living Ink, 2005).

While a pastor, his church's membership doubled, but most new members were under 30."I was afraid we were going to neglect our older members, "Murphey wrote. To ensure older members were not overlooked, he met with the older members every month.

Once a year in a worship service he honored long-time members and read the names of those who had been members 50 years or more." I wanted the younger and newer members to realize that those who had been there since those early days had set the pace."

He included older members in future plans — and gained valuable insight. During a building meeting Murphey feared an eightysomething man would oppose new construction. Instead he related one mistake they had repeated over the years: never making classrooms large enough." This time, let's make sure we make them large enough, "he said.

Murphey suggests people write a timeline starting with salvation then pondering their spiritual "age markers," such as baptism and service." When I come to the end of my *spiritual* journey," he wrote, "my age won't matter very much. What I did with my life is what will count."

DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado.

shorts

#### UP-WORDS

#### Consistency

recently attended a conference where I stayed in an old hotel-like building. Not long after my arrival, I decided to take a shower. I adjusted the water to the perfect temperature, jumped in, only to quickly scramble out again because the water turned scalding hot. I carefully readjusted the water temperature, waited a few seconds, then gingerly stepped again into the flow. I had just begun to relax when the water instantly turned ice-cold. Once more, I made a hasty exit. After a couple of additional attempts, with similar results, I abandoned the effort. This experience reminded me of just how important consistent Christlikeness is to the Christian's influence on his or her world.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (13:8). His essential, unchangeable, nature, which He shares with the Father, is love. Jesus unwaveringly showed love in all its forms: compassion, mercy, grace, and sacrifice.

As Christians, we represent Jesus in our world, and our witness must be consistently Christlike to be effective. If our demeanor alternates between pleasant and unpleasant, or vacillates between loving and selfish, or if our words do not match our actions, everyone — Christian and unconverted alike — will learn to avoid us, as I learned to avoid that cranky shower.

Jesus is glorified when we, who are called by His name, consistently display His character. Unfortunately, none of us are capable, unaided, of adequately representing Christ's consistency. Amazingly, though, the Holy Spirit, who is ever-present in us, enables us to transcend mere human ability.

It is only by consistent inner surrender to the Spirit that we can consistently project Christlikeness — a fountain whose flow of sweet water is never interrupted by bitter — into our world.

JACK AIKEN, Eagle River, Alaska

#### FAITH COMMUNITIES

## Protestants Still a Majority — Barely

Protestants are still the majority in the United States — barely. According to the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey



conducted by the Pew Forum, 51 percent of American adults report they are members of a Protestant denomination. Of the 31 percent

of adult Americans who were raised Catholic, only 24 percent

#### THE GOSPEL BEYOND

describe themselves as Catholic today.

A report on the survey, "The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey Reveals a Fluid and Diverse Pattern of Faith," states "constant movement characterized the American religious marketplace." Every major religious group showed gains and losses. "Those that are growing ... are simply gaining new members at a faster rate than they are losing members," the report stated.

While percentages of other religions appear small, they still represent a significant number of Americans who may embrace the gospel as they hear and understand it. Here are more statistics from the report:

- Mormons compose 1.7 percent of the American adult population.
- Jehovah's Witnesses comprise 0.7 percent.

global economics, politics, sci-

ence, and culture. But that, too,

is shifting with a new kind of

change. This change is not so

much a decline of U.S. power

but the "rise of the rest." The

new business powers in the

world do not come from the

India and China loom large

among the new economic

super-powers.

U.S., but from other continents.

This changing topography

Christianity. The accusation that

is also true in the growth of

• The survey found that

"three-in-four Buddhists say they are converts to Buddhism."

- Most likely to be married are Hindus (78 percent) and Mormons (71 percent), with 90 percent of Hindus and 83 percent of Mormons married to someone of the same religion.
- Those with the largest families (3+ children at home) are Mormons (20+ percent) and Muslims (15 percent).
- Jehovah's Witnesses have the lowest retention rate with only 37 percent who were raised in that tradition still identifying themselves as Jehovah's Witnesses today.

**DIANNE E. BUTTS**, Pueblo, Colorado.

#### SOURCE

"U.S. Religious Landscape Survey Reveals a Fluid and Diverse Pattern of Faith," February 25, 2008, http://pewresearch.org/ pubs/743/united-states-religion.

Christianity is just a Western or U.S.-influenced faith simply does not meet with the facts. The vibrant centers of Christian influence are now places like Lagos, Seoul, and Sao Paulo. The peoples who call themselves Christians are now more numerous south of the equator than north of it. Vibrant Christianity that is growing is doing so in contexts of great opposition or economic difficulty. The "rise of the rest" spiritually clearly indicates that Christ's redemptive focus is not about who gets passed by, but is centered in His relentless pursuit of all peoples, so that none perish.

**BYRON KLAUS**, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

#### SOURCES

Lamin Sanneh, Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003). Fareed Sakaria, The Post-American World (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008).

**CHANGE:** Getting Enough Latitude To See What's Really Happening

hange is a word people banter around today. People have varied opinions about how pervasive change is or should be. On a global scale there have been three major shifts over the last 500 years that redistributed power and reshaped international life. The first shift was the rise of the Western world, a process that began in the 15th century. This produced modernity, with science and technology, commerce and capitalist, and the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

The second shift, which began in the late 19th century, brought the rise of the United States. For most of the last century the United States has dominated



#### **MINISTRY ON THE HOMEFRONT**

## **First Impressions** of God

#### When the pastor asked,"What is God like?" one

youngster quipped, "He buys His clothes at Big and Tall." Another lad said his children's church taught him "about God, Moses, and Batman."

Children are spiritual beings — they seek to know God and often ask naive questions or give confused answers in their search. Their questions, misunderstandings, and doubts are not stumbling blocks, but invitations to spiritual growth.

As a pastor or church leader, you have valuable occasions to minis-

ter to your own family. Home is the primary classroom, and you are the first and most important teacher. Scholar and theologian, William Barclay counseled, "There are no teachers so effective for good or evil as parents." Each day, try to do one of these:

- Teach about our Heavenly Father as commanded in Deuteronomy 6.
- Weave spiritual lessons into conversations, letters, chores, and actions with your kids.
- Openly thank God for nature.
- Read the Bible or pray where your kids can see you.
- Say grace before meals.
- Place reminders of faith, such as pictures of Jesus or the Bible, around your home.
- Place Scriptures on your refrigerator, car visor, or bathroom mirror.
- Fellowship with church families to remind your kids that you value a faith community.
- You do not need to be spiritually perfect before you can be a spiritual equipper to your children. A mother wisely recognized that she did not always have to quench the thirst of her son's spiritual needs, but she must create the thirst.
- **Daily impress spiritual truths** on your children. Remember, their first impressions of our Father come from you.

BRENDA NIXON, Mt. Vernon, Ohio

#### just returned from the National Religious Broadcasting convention

In Nashville. This was my third convention, but I noticed a trend or two. The most obvious was a gap, actutained through their iPhones and computers as their TVs (with 100+ channels) and radios. And the gap widens as the demographic moves younger — thus the *chasm*. first-of-its-kind Web destination providing expert answers you can trust for your family and career, all free."These experts include Gary Smalley, Kevin Lehman, Gary and Barbara Rosberg,

ally more of a chasm. On the one extreme I

saw aging veterans, graying celebrity couples with radio hair, still able to gather a loyal following at the convention, while ministering (back home) to a shrinking niche.

I am not criticizing or making fun of these folks, most of whom have given their lives to spreading God's Word. I just suspect that their influence has waned as they have aged. But the rea-

son for their reduced impact has much more to do with technology than any diminishing in their skills or marginalization of their causes. The world has changed and is *changing* dramatically in the technological/ digital revolution. Today, people are just as likely to be informed and enterAt the other extreme, I found a few innovative communicators, mostly young men and women, aggressively attempting to reach their generation through new media. Here are two:

Youthbytes, San Bernardino, California, focuses on reaching high school students through short video clips and Web-based curricula. The clips are fastpaced, pointed, and engaging. Youth workers can purchase a DVD (20 are available) on a specific topic. Included with each YouthByte episode is a video summary, icebreakers, a primary lesson, facts, figures, and illustrations used in the episode, key Scriptures, a complimentary story, and discussion questions.

The second is **iQuestions**. According to their brochure, "iQuestions is the and many others. From their Web site (www.iquestions.com), you can choose from a variety of categories. When I chose"teens," I found a list of questions answered by John Trent, Elisa Morgan, Joe White, Roland Warren, and others. Each answer is presented in a video clip. And for churches, they offer jLog, an interactive Web video platform that can be customized by a church to address their specific content needs. Check it out at www.jLog.com.

Broadcasting today must embrace the new media (Web, iPhone, Tweeter, Facebook, texting, iTunes), and these companies/ministries are doing just that.

**DAVE VEERMAN**, The Livingstone Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan





church in Hibbing, Minnesota illustrated the pastor's Easter Sunday message in an unusual way — by helping pay the debts of some people in attendance.

Following First Assembly of God Pastor David Oler's sermon on grace, the church demonstrated this concept in a tangible way through a random drawing.

The church chose two winners one in each service — to have their rent or mortgage payments covered for the remainder of 2009, at up to \$800 per month. In addition, the church also gave away two \$500 gas cards and two \$500 grocery cards.

In a region hard-hit by economic recession, Oler says the gesture has attracted a lot of attention.

"We've had a wonderful response from people in the community who are unchurched," Oler says." A lot of people have called and sent e-mails voicing their support."

In recent months, about 700 miners in the iron ore industry have been laid off in the Hibbing area, Oler says. Some families have lost homes due to foreclosure and eviction.

Interestingly, when the congregation came up with the giveaway idea last year, the community was still prospering.

"The Lord started talking to me months ago about doing something this Easter that would be seen as an act of unmerited favor — an act of grace for the community," Oler says.

Oler asked the church board for suggestions, and someone proposed a giveaway.

When the pastor and board presented the idea of paying someone's mortgage to the congregation of about 320, the congregation responded with enthusiastic applause.

"In one service, it was almost a standing ovation," Oler says." People

were like, 'Wow, look what we can do!'" The church funded the giveaways

by money that had been set aside for missions and community outreach.

"The Lord has blessed this congregation, and we were eager to bless someone else, "says church member Steve Jacobson."We're not looking to fill pews.We just want to help people in need. My hope and belief was always that people who came seeking would find more than just a hope for financial relief — that they would also encounter the Holy Spirit here."

The church offered the giveaways with no strings attached. There were no income requirements. The winners did not have to be regular church attendees, or even local residents. As an illustration of grace, Oler wanted the gifts to be available to all.

The only requirements were that the winners be in attendance that morning, be 18 years of age and, for the rent or mortgage giveaways, have a mortgage or lease contract.

The church has provided groceries and financial assistance to needy individuals in the past, but it has never given to the community on such a large scale.

"We wanted to show our community during this time that we're willing to share their burdens and walk through this with them," Oler says."Obviously, we can't pay everyone's mortgage for them. But we are spreading the word that the church cares. We want people to know we are available to talk and pray with individuals, and to assist with their needs as the Lord enables."

The giveaway has attracted national attention, with the Associated Press carrying a wire story and interviewing Oler on its radio program.

"We're trying to avoid making this seem like it's a gimmick," Oler says. "The most important thing to me in all of this is for people to experience the bigger picture of grace. Having your mortgage paid is great, but we can't even get near what Jesus has done for us. That's the message this church will continue to take to the community in the months and years ahead — the message of Christ's grace and compassion."



**CHRISTINA QUICK**, freelance writer, Springfield, Missouri.

# God's Time Principle



Genesis 1 is amazing. God accomplished so much, so fast. These were the most productive days in history. And that's where we

We need to see

the light first

before plunaina

ahead in darkness

and chaos.

can draw out some of God's time principles. God focused on one

type of task each day. He had an orderly plan. He made what was needed first and built on that.

He sorted the heavenly from the earth and divided time into segments of days, hours, and seasons. While we cannot do everything in a day or even a year, God will continue to give us new days. God first made light. We need light to see and we need to be enlightened. We need to seek the light first

> before plunging ahead in darkness and chaos. That is why we need prayer and Scripture first.

God then devoted His time to fruitfulness. He created plants that produce fruit, creatures that

multiply, and man to whom He gave a purpose to continue to be productive. He also created a helper for man, as He knew we needed to work with others. And still, He took time to rest

KAREN H WHITING, author and speaker

and enjoy His workmanship.

As pastors, strive for the light first. Find God's wisdom. Focus efforts on areas where you can sow to produce fruit and allocate different tasks to different days, such as a day to prepare your sermon or ministry activity, a day for prayer, a day for counseling others, and a day for administration, meetings, and planning. Sort out the needs and benefits of tasks, both eternal and mundane ones. Look to build a team of helpers instead of being a lone super-pastor. And take time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labor. @

# **C**online

## Web-only articles



## www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org

#### Basics and Beyond: Starting a Single Adult Ministry BY LINDA G. HARDIN

Many churches overlook the single adult population. But single adults comprise over 40 percent of the adult population 18 years of age and older. They also account for more than 50 percent of the unchurched population.

Building an effective single adult ministry needs to have this philosophy: single adults are important to God and vital to His kingdom. In this article, Linda Hardin, general coordinator, Single Adult and Young Adult Ministries for The International Church of the Nazarene, guides pastors in developing a viable single adult ministry.





#### STEMMING THE TIDAL WAVE OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY: Helping Young Adults

Stay Sexually Pure in a Promiscuous Society BY JOHN J. SMID

The saintly Cure' of Ars wrote in praise of the chaste young man: "Of all God's creatures, none is more lovable and attractive than a young man devoted to his faith, especially when by the help of the divine grace he has preserved his innocence and purity of heart."

In today's sexually charged society, remaining pure is a challenge for any young person. This author learned the tragedy of living an impure life and provides practical advice on how young people can remain sexually pure.



#### We Have an Altar (Hebrews 13:10) BY GRANT MCCLUNG One of the important features of can

**One of the important features of camp meetings was the altar.** At the altar people sought God. Many were baptized in the Holy Spirit. But how important is the altar today? According to McClung, president/ CEO of Missions Resource Group and member of the International Executive Council of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), "If we are to have a future as a movement, the altar will need to continue to be central to our worship, experience, and daily living." He continues, "We must never ... fail to impart to the next generation, that 'we have an altar' — that special place and experience with God where we experience *Confession* (and forgiveness) of our sins, transformational *Change*, a special *Consecration*/closeness to God, the *Communion* of the saints, and our purpose for living in His *Commission* into the world.

#### The Narrow Path to The Wide Room BY JASON ARANT

There is a volume of material on leadership and vision available today. Many believe if they can learn the leadership principles contained in these books and excite people about their vision they will be effective leaders. But according to Arant, "In the church those who lead and those who follow are tempted to forget that moving toward the wide-open vista of a God-directed vision often requires a journey through a narrow time and place as its prerequisite." But Arant continues, "Narrow times may do little for our pride but they do much for our formation."



#### Why Is There a Hell? BY STEVE D. EUTSLER

Many people today do not believe in hell. They question why a loving God would send someone to hell. And, people in the pews do not often hear a sermon on hell. In this timely message, Steve Eutsler explains the biblical basis for and purpose of hell.



**Give us your take** on articles in this issue. Visit the **EJ FORUM** at http://forums.ag.org/enrichment journal

# e News&Trends

ompiled by JOHN W. KENNEDY

## **New Home Often Prompts New Type of Church**

Pastors looking for a stable congregation in America's increasingly mobile society may be in for a disappointment. According to a study by the Phoenix-based Ellison Research, more than four out of five — 81 percent — of evangelical churchgoers switch congregations as adults.

Most moves are prompted by churchgoers moving their residence to a different location. But the study found that geographical housing shifts also have theological implications.

Around half of laypeople find a new church that differs noticeably in doctrine from their old one. Among Protestants, 44 percent who switch churches also end up changing denominations or faith groups. The study shows that 28 percent move to a more theologically conservative church as 19 percent end up in a more theologically liberal congregation.

In general, when people change where they go to church they usually find a congregation that has a different worship style and is a different size, according to the research.

Among Protestants who switch churches, 31 percent move to a more contemporary worship style, whereas 42 percent find a more traditional service.

Only 11 percent of churchgoers find a new place of worship that is about the same size. In contrast, 43 percent settle in a larger congregation, including 18 percent who say the new site is double the size of the old one. A whopping 45 percent go to a smaller congregation, including 21 percent in a body that is less than half the size of the old one.

"There has been just as much movement toward smaller congregations as toward larger ones," says Ron Sellers, president of Ellison Research." Observers may worry about people leaving small congregations and going to the megachurches, but they need to realize there are about as many people moving down in size as moving up."

## Do Worshippers Feel Safe at Your Church?

As American society becomes increasingly irreligious, are local congregations at increased risk for misdirected hostility? Todd Hudnall, senior pastor of Radiant Church, an Assemblies of God congregation in Colorado Springs, isn't taking any chances. In early 2008, the church with more than 1,000 Sunday morning attendees, initiated elaborate security precautions.

The move followed the December 2007 shootings at the nondenominational New Life Church in Colorado Springs. At the end of a Sunday morning service, 24-year-old Matthew Murray shot and killed teenage sisters Rachel and Stephanie Works in their van in the parking lot, then entered the church armed with more than 1,400 rounds of AR-15 ammunition. Volunteer security guard Jeanne Assam faced down Murray in a hallway, and Murray died in an exchange of gunfire. "Some people wonder why God would allow killing in a church," Assam says."The point is that Satan is alive and well in this world." David Works, the father of the murdered girls, says Murray would

have killed dozens

if Assam hadn't stopped him. Works himself was shot twice in the assault and spent 9 days hospitalized.

Hudnall, who previously served as senior pastor at Assemblies of God churches in California, Texas, and Kansas, believes Colorado Springs may attract more attention because of its unique makeup. The city is the site of several high-profile ministries, including Focus on the Family, as well as the U.S. Air Force Academy.

At Radiant, the security team is comprised primarily of retired police officers, military security officers, and emergency medical technicians. All have been trained in security and those who are armed already were licensed to carry a weapon. Although they are plainclothes guards, all carry a badge if the need arises to identify themselves to others. The guards rotate on different shifts, but have trained together.

"Having security team members stationed and visible serves as a deterrent for people considering mischief," Hudnall told *Enrichment*. The church has 16 strategically located motionsensitive, infrared cameras on campus that are viewable anywhere to leadership via a virtual private network.

"I feel every church should make security issues part of their planning," says Hudnall.

# Capturing the Ministry Potential of Seasoned Adults Urged

**Focused on evangelizing children and youth** with the gospel. With studies showing that the majority of Christians make a profession of faith before leaving home, many moderately sized churches have invested heavily in the outreach efforts by hiring children's and youth pastors.

But some observers now exhort senior pastors not to ignore the fastest-growing segment of the population: adults in the second half of life.

"Churches that overemphasize youth and children's ministries have a blind spot," says

Wes Wick, who with his wife, Judy, founded Young Enough to Serve (YES), a Scotts Valley, Calif.-based Assemblies of God-endorsed ministry reaching adults in midlife and beyond."Our message is: don't turn your back on older adults to reach the young. Add them to your ministry team."

With one in four Americans projected to be over 60 in another decade, churches that have nothing for them besides potlucks and field trips might find these adults dropping out.

Unlike those people now in their 70s and 80s — who tend to be loyal to congregations and denominations — baby boomers are likely to go somewhere else or stay home if they do not feel connected.



Churches that overemphasize youth and children's ministries have a blind spot.

"Many adults in the traditional retirement years feel neglected and marginalized," Wick contends."Some pastors say, 'Our older people just want to be entertained.'"

One of the chief goals of YES (www.yestoserve.org) is to challenge pastors to adopt a more deliberate serving model for Christians at midlife and later, guarding against clichéd, unbiblical attitudes toward retirement and ageism.

Unless they are actively engaged in meaningful ministry, empty nesters will flee for another church — or no church at all — before reaching retirement, Wick predicts.

The Wicks are working with a national interdenominational organization — Christian Association Serving Adult Ministries (CASA) which helps pastors equip adults for ministry in life's second half.

"A lot of church focus is on youth and children as it should be, but the older adult is often sidelined once they reach a certain age — particularly if the pastor is under 50," says Ward Tanneberg, the Seattle-based executive director of CASA.

The huge numbers of people in churches in their 70s and 80s is a new and unprecedented opportunity for the church, Tanneberg believes.

"No one thought so many would live so long," says Tanneberg, a retired senior pastor." From the church's perspective, we really haven't grasped that yet. The church has to come to grips with this age wave that will continue for years to come."

## A DECADE Makes a Difference at Church

Pastors today are slightly older and more longwinded compared to a decade ago, according to the recently released National Congregations Study. The survey of more than 1,500 U.S. houses of worship, including 230 Pentecostal churches, shows that ministry has changed in incremental yet significant ways since 1998.

The most striking area of change deals with technology. Now, 44 percent of congregations have a Web site (contrasted with 17 percent a decade ago) and 59 percent (matched up against 21 percent before) use e-mail to communicate with members. While 27 percent use visual projection equipment, up from 12 percent, 68 percent still maintain a written order of service, down four points.

Congregations are becoming more expressive and even Pentecostal in worship. More than one in four (27 percent, up three points) had someone speak in tongues during the past year, while 57 percent feature raising hands in praise (a growth from 44 percent). More than one-third of churches (34 percent) use drums, compared to only one in five 10 years ago. In all, 26 percent feature a main service with spontaneous jumping, shouting, or dancing, an increase from 19 percent.

Meanwhile, pastors are delivering sermons that last 5 minutes longer: an average of half an hour. The standard length of the main service is unchanged at an hour and 15 minutes, although 30 percent still go for 90 minutes or longer. Overall, 71 percent of churches continue to conduct two or more services a week, down 2 percent. The music portion of the typical service has remained steady at 20 minutes. However, choirs sing at 44 percent of churches, a drop of 15 percent.

Those in the pulpit represent more ethnic diversity than in the late 1990s. Today, 68 percent of senior pastors are white, a decline of 8 percent. African-Americans head 26 percent of churches, up seven points. Hispanics and Asians each remain at a paltry 2 percent.

The survey shows that 47 percent of congregations would allow a woman to be the primary religious leader. Nevertheless, the ranks of women have dropped to eight percent from 11 percent during the past decade.

The median age of the senior clergyperson is 53, a rise from 48. The portion of lead pastors over 60 has risen 5 percent to 26 percent, while those 40 and under has dropped 5 percent to just 17 percent.

More than one in three ministers — 35 percent — work without the help of any full-time staff. Another 36 percent have one full-time staff person while 30 percent have two or more. Women continue to comprise 60 percent of attendees, as before. @

#### Other findings include:

**56%** of congregations have a youth minister

**62%** of senior clergy have graduated from seminary or a theological school

**37%** of senior clergy hold another job

**14%** of senior clergy serve an additional congregation

**53%** allow someone who drinks alcohol in moderation to be a leader.

Unmarried mist America

## Introduction Developing a Viable Singles Ministry By Gary R. Allen

#### Blending Singles into the Church

**he church is to be an inclusive environment** where all are welcome and feel they are a part of the community of faith. The church needs to provide services, ministries, and activities that do not distinguish among the various life situations



**GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min**., is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and director of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

of single, single again, single parent, and married. For example, there is value in a Sunday morning service where everyone can sing and pray together, hear a sermon that spans every life situation, and leave feeling inspired and challenged.

#### Meeting the Unique Needs of Singles

Even though inclusiveness is necessary, singles have unique needs the church must address. Churches need to develop support groups, training sessions, and interaction activities that facilitate growth and development of singles.

Many Young Adults Leave the Church

The number of young adults leaving

in this section:

- Unmarried America: How Single Adults Are Changing the Face of the U.S. and What It Means for the Church / Sidebar: Five Types of Single Adults
- The Hidden Mission Field: Reaching Out to Young Adults and Single Adults / Sidebar: Any Church Can
- **34** What Twentysomethings Wish You Knew / Sidebar: Quick Pointers for Building Relationships with Twentysomethings
- Bridging the Generations: Young Adult and Single Adult Ministry Prepares the Church of Today for Tomorrow
- 44 How to Win the Senior Pastor's Support for Your Singles Ministry
- Strengthening the Church Today and Building the Church for Tomorrow
- 4 Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Starting a Young Adult Ministry / Sidebars: The Facebook Generation • Ministry Models • 15 Things You Should Know Before Launching a Young Adult Ministry

- Single Adults: Gifted and Giving / Sidebars: Creating a Culture of Inclusiveness • Beyond the Walls: How One Church Is Ministering to Singles • The Urban Dweller: What We Can Learn From Seattle
- Remaining Pure in a Sexually Charged World
  - Divorce and Remarriage: Ministering to Those Who Have Experienced This Trauma
- Salvation for the Single-Parent Family / Sidebar: The Ten Commandments for Formerly Marrieds
- Life in the Blender: Ministering to the Needs of Blended Families / Sidebars: Zero Neglect • Resources for Ministering to Blended Families
- Herein Ministering to the Missing Generation
- Get Over the Numbers: Reaching Young and Single Adults in the Smaller Church / Sidebar: Multidenominational Approach
- Single Does Not Mean Alone

the church is staggering. This was a serious issue 40 years ago. The number of young adults leaving the church has increased despite the church's emphasis on youth ministries and the rise of full-time youth pastors. Somehow, the church must keep these young adults connected with a church as they transition into higher education and adulthood.

#### A Safe Place for Singles

The church must be a safe place for everyone, especially singles. There are some who prey on singles. Singles often feel vulnerable and are uncertain where to find a safe environment. The church must provide quality leaders of proven integrity. Screening, training, and proper monitoring of leaders are essential. Any improper attitude or behavior should be dealt with immediately and firmly.

#### Setting Community Standards

Jessie Miranda, an Assemblies of God executive presbyter, says, "The church must be what it wants the community to become." In a world filled with so many voices attempting to define sexual and lifestyle boundaries, the church can be a clear and definitive voice in proclaiming biblical standards. The peace of Jesus Christ and disciplined personal living will influence the community and set the moral standards. The purpose of this issue of *Enrichment* journal is to provide our churches and pastors with a clear focus of the needs of young and single adults as well as practical ideas and resources for beginning and sustaining effective ministries to them. Our desire is that ministers and churches will see the increasing number of young and single adults in their communities as an opportunity to reach these unique groups and assimilate them into their fellowship. @

Jany R. Alle



# INALE ADART OF THE USE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE CHURCH

ow is the church doing when it comes to reaching the 14th largest Nation in the world? How many missionaries are

How many missionaries are focused on that group? How many people are aware that this population is exploding,



while its representation in churches is falling dramatically?

These questions take on real significance when we realize we are speaking about single adults in America. According to census data, there were 101 million unmarried adults in the U.S. in 2007. If single adults were a country, they would be the 14th largest nation. (Germany, the largest country in Europe, is number 17.)

#### Growing Population

Who are single adults? For one thing, they are heads of households. A Census



Bureau report released September 23, 2008, shows that in 2007, for

By Rich Hurst

the third consecutive year the majority of the nation's households were headed by unmarried Americans. Unmarried adults now head up a majority of households in 22 states and more than 300 cities — a figure that has increased each year for several years. According to the Census Bureau American Community Survey, over half of the country's total households are headed by single adults.

That survey also revealed that blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites or Asians to be single. More than six in 10 blacks are unmarried, and almost one in 10 black adults lives alone with children. Gays and lesbians are also a significant segment of the single population (approximately 9 percent), though not necessarily by choice since only two states allow same-sex marriage.

The Census Bureau surveyed about 3 million households from every county in the nation. They include 12.2 million widows and 3 million widowers, as well as 25 million men and women who are divorced. In addition, there are 32.8 million men and 27.1 million women who have never married.

More racially diverse than the overall population, singles are also younger — 57 percent are less than 45 years old, and four in 10 are younger than 35, according to "Singles in the U.S.: the New Nuclear Family," a report from market research publisher Packaged Facts, a division of Market-Research.com.

Unmarried adults — those never married, divorced, widowed, or separated — share generational similarities: younger singles are comfortable with technology, for example, while older singles focus on luxury. About a quarter of singles are Boomers, who seem open to experienceoriented travel. The most significant unmarried sub-group — single parents — enjoys sharing their children's entertainment, according to the report. And single moms, despite earning 66 percent less than their male counterparts, concentrate more on providing for their kids materially and emotionally.

The configuration of these unmarried households is diverse. More than 30 million Americans live alone, far outnumbering the 24.2 million households that contain married couples with children less than 18 years of age. The 10.8 million single-parent homes include 2.5 million single dads with custody of their children and 8.3 million single mothers. About 12 million adults are living with an unmarried partner, while some 47 million unmarried Americans are living with relatives.

#### Shrinking Population

While this enormous growth has occurred among this segment of the U.S. population, another dramatic shift has been taking place at UNMARRIED AMERICA: HOW SINGLE ADULTS ARE CHANGING THE FACE OF THE U.S

the same time. Attendance in most U.S. churches has declined or plateaued across all segments of the population, and especially among singles.

Let us look at two denominations.

According to the 2006 Annual Church Profile (ACP), there are 44,223 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention. The Southern Baptist Convention measures church growth by the number of baptisms. In 2006, 10,449 churches baptized no one; 3,312 churches baptized only one person; and 13,760 churches baptized 1 to 5 people. A total of 27,521 churches in the SBC baptized five or less people for an entire year, which is 62 percent of all SBC churches. Furthermore, at least three of four churches are plateaued or declining.

losing members. Only five churches of the nearly 11,000 in the denomination have grown every year for the past 10 years. Three in every four churches have either reached an attendance plateau or have experienced declining attendance.

#### Addressing Both Problems at Once

We have a great opportunity in American church history to address two issues at the same time. We can reach out in love to single adults and avail ourselves of their gifts and energy to strengthen the church.

Viewing single adults as a specific target of church ministry is not a new idea; single adult ministry was a focus in many churches during the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, years later, there are

In time, churches lost interest

By the '80s it seemed every church had a singles ministry. Furthermore, the church had countless resources for single adults and their leaders: singles conferences, books about ministry to singles, Bible studies for singles groups, teaching videos for singles pastors, newsletters, sports leagues, cruises and trips to the Holy Land, and much more.

At the time, those in singles ministry understood that churches did not want to embrace singles any more than they wanted to embrace the homeless. But singles simply became too powerful in terms of affluence, education, and sheer numbers to ignore. Singles had forced their way into the church, and the church had to figure out what to do with these parishioners who did not fit neatly into

So, how do we incorporate single adults into the life of the church? Simple. First, you attract them, and then you retain them.

#### Attracting Single Adults to **Nur Churches**

In the 1950s and '60s, many churches and parachurch organizations saw one in two individuals become believers when they first heard the gospel. Today, estimates vary between one in 10, to one in 20. Only 5 to 10 percent of our culture is open and ready to make a commitment to Christ. Furthermore, it takes 6 to 9 months longer for someone to come to faith than before once he begins to interact with a believer. Today there is less understanding of the Christian view of life and truth.

Eric Hoey, PC (USA) director of evangelism and church growth, says the answer to turning the tide lies in simply sharing the good news. "If every Presbyterian were able to have the skill and the confidence to share his faith with only one person in the next 10 years, we could stop the decline of our denomination and start a new wave of bearing fruit in the name of Christ," he writes.

Sharing Christ's love is especially important for reaching single adults. This group is keenly aware of their need for love, relationship, support, stability, comfort, and understanding. Christ offers this to those who seek Him. And yet, single adults as a group are not responsive to the gospel. Where is the disconnect?

Or consider the Presbyterian Church USA. In 2 years, the denomination shrank by approximately 94,000 people. In 2006, this church saw a net loss of 56 congregations and a membership decrease of nearly 46,000 people.

"We Presbyterians have a lot to be humble about," said Dan Chun, speaker at last year's General Assembly closing worship. For 42 consecutive years, the church has been

increasing numbers of singles and decreasing numbers of churchgoers. The question today is: How can we use the lessons learned — or missed — by those who focused on single adult ministry in earlier decades?

but few great disciples.

Singles were the new kids on the block in the '70s when I took my first position as singles pastor. Our church was one of the first to have a singles ministry in our city.

any established ministries.

What did we do? We took single adults who were looking for answers and put them into fellowship groups where they studied topics like relationships, loneliness, and recovery. We encouraged them to be consumers, not partners. Mike Regele, who wrote Death of the Church, said, "You can only talk about singles issues so much before you kill the singles ministry."



The answer may lie in the difference between harvesting and sowing. In the 1960s, the Peace Corps discovered that people were eating the corn the Peace Corps had distributed to hungry people for planting. The recipients did not, or could not see the advantage of sowing to increase the harvest. We need to transition from a harvest mentality to seeing the value in sowing. Christianity is marginalized and trivialized among today's single adults,

## Five Types of Single Adults

#### The Never Married

The single adult who is not yet married is usually a young adult in his or her twenties or early thirties but may be adults in their forties or even older. Older unmarried adults are becoming more common. Forty-eight million adults in the U.S. have never married. The median age of marriage has

increased significantly since 1970 to 27.1 for men and 25.4 for women.<sup>1</sup> Some are choosing to remain single longer to establish a career, finish a degree, purchase major life items, or pursue other goals. Some have not found their life's partner and are still waiting for this to happen.



#### The Divorced

Twenty million adults in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> are divorced. The average length of the first marriage is 8 years; the average length of the second marriage is 6 years.<sup>3</sup> In 1970, the divorce rate was 35 people out of 1,000. In 1999, according to Christian researcher George Barna, the rate was 250 people out of 1,000.<sup>4</sup>

This represents a 680 percent increase. The bottom line: one fourth of all adults in the U.S. report having been through at least one divorce.



#### The Widowed

The widowed person understands the phrase, "You may be only one heartbeat away from singleness." No one plans to become single through the death of a spouse. Sometimes it is somewhat expected due to a long illness; sometimes it comes through a sudden, shocking accident.

There are 13.5 million widowed adults in the U.S., more than the entire population of each of the nations of Belgium, Ireland, and Norway. Of all women age 65 or older, 45 percent are widowed, and 70 percent of all widowed adults live alone.<sup>5</sup>



#### The Single Parent

Females head over 12 million single-parent families in the U.S. and over 3 million single-parent families are headed by males.<sup>6</sup> Some single parents have sole custody of their child(ren), some have joint custody, some have visitation rights only, and some have no contact with their children because of their own choice or the

choice of the other parent.

Twenty-four million children (nearly 4 out of 10) live in a home without a father. Sixty percent of all children born in the 1990s will spend a significant amount of their childhood in a father-absent household.<sup>7</sup> Single parents are not the small minority they used to be.

#### The Separated

Although separated people are legally married, they are living the life of a single adult, especially if they have been separated for a long time. One person is now doing the domestic tasks, financial responsibilities, child-care duties, home repairs, car repairs, and other responsibilities that were shared by the other spouse.

Usually (but not always) when separated people visit single adult ministry, they have lost most or all hope of reconciling with their spouse and will benefit from acceptance, support, and learning from others in a single adult ministry.

Excerpted from *Reaching Single Adults* by Dennis Franck. Used by permission of Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, copyright © 2009. All rights to this material are reserved.

#### NOTES

- 1. U.S. Census Bureau, January 2001.
- 2. Ibid.
- 3. "Family," *Time*, September <u>25, 2000.</u>
- 4. George Barna, Unmarried America: How Singles Are Changing and What It Means for the Church (Glendale, Calif.: Barna Research Group, 1993), 22.
- 5. George Barna, *Single Focus: Understanding Single Adults* (Ventura, Calif.: Gospel Light, 2003), 7,8.
- Susan Goter, "Nearly One Half of All U.S. Households Consist of Single Adults," Single Adult Ministry Journal 124, (1997):7.
- 7. Wade F. Horn, president, National Fatherhood Initiative, Gaithersburg, Maryland.

a trend that will not be reversed unless we cultivate conversations and relationships that make the gospel meaningful to them.

We may need to rethink what constitutes evangelism, especially among single adults. We need less emphasis on point-in-time evangelism (where the decision is paramount) and more emphasis on process evangelism (which makes room for conversations on a range of topics). Process evangelism gives legitimacy to the efforts of those interacting on the level of worldview, establishing common ground, and discussing cultural issues.

James Engels, retired faculty member from Eastern College, St. Davids, Pennsylvania, has developed a continuum to illustrate this process view of evangelism. At the far left is an individual who has rather large and negative hurdles to cross before considering the claims of Christ. The closer the numbers come to the cross (in the middle of the continuum), the more these represent individuals who are increasingly open to the gospel. The middle of the continuum represents the point of decision — when a person trusts Christ for the first time in his life.

The higher numbers on the right reflect deepening trust and maturity in Christ.



For example, a person on the far left would be considered a "-10." This could be a friend who is against anything religious or someone who is unfamiliar with the gospel. Moving toward the center would be those like the scribe in Mark 12:34: someone who is "not far from the kingdom of God." The goal of reaching single adults is to help singles move from unfamiliarity with God to love for Him (Deuteronomy 6:5). Anything along the scale with anyone is evangelism. One number on the scale is not necessarily more important than any other. At every point you are evidencing and explaining the Kingdom which is what evangelism is about.

We need to rethink how we reach singles and how we move them along the continuum. First, evaluate what you are currently doing to reach single adults. Second, ask questions about what environment would welcome singles to come and discuss Christ with your church. Third,

create a plan to teach the Word and give singles a chance to move from hearers to doers (James 1:19-27).

Years ago, I worked with the singles pastor from Peachtree Presbyterian Church near Atlanta. Their primary method for reaching singles was by doing Habitat for Humanity projects each weekend. The

singles classes every Sunday. Why? Peachtree learned to create a place where anyone along Engel's continuum felt at ease.

In the '70s, '80s, and '90s we failed to listen to single adults and talk about what was on their minds. Paul quoted the Athenian poets not his prophets — on

Do not assume your current singles ministry is what they are looking for. You will not reach single adults by doing church as usual.

Peachtree singles would invite their friends from work to join them on Saturdays at a building site. The friends would get excited about what they had accomplished on Saturday and would ask to return to the site on Sunday. When they heard the response, "Oh, we don't work on Sundays; we go to church," their friends would say something like, "Well, if that's what you're doing tomorrow, I am going with you." Thousands crowded into their

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theologian George MacLeod, "I simply say, the cross must be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I am claiming that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap, at a crossroads so cosmopolitan they had to write his title in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. At the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble, because that is where He died and that is what He died about and that is where churchmen ought to be and what churchmen should be about."

Mars Hill (Acts 17). To quote

#### Retaining Single Adults in Our Churches

During the heyday of singles ministry, we had no shortage



of single adults in our churches. We filled our church calendars with events that attracted singles. Many of those we attracted did not stick around long enough to become fully devoted followers of Christ. In time, churches lost interest in singles ministries that provided lots of great activities, but few great disciples.

decided to commit the majority of its budget to reaching young singles. At the time, the church had few members who were single adults. Yet, located on the outskirts of Washington, D.C., the church's leaders felt compelled to reach single adults working for the federal government and the new technology sector.

was little focus on social activities, topical study groups, and the other staples of old-school singles ministry. Instead, from the start, the church built Frontline on servant ministry among its members, undergirded by biblical teaching. No one spends more than a week or two as a visitor without understanding that the

> center of one's participation in Frontline involves a two-pronged approach of small-group study of Scripture (not just topics about singleness) and engagement in servant ministry. In Phoenix,

Arizona, Pam

participated in a Back-to-School Day — sponsored by the Phoenix Rescue Mission - handing out backpacks and school clothes to hundreds of children. On that hot August day, Pam noticed the pavement was burning the bare feet of a girl waiting for her backpack, so Pam picked her up and held her until they found her a pair of shoes. As Pam held the child, she felt the girl's heart beat next to her heart and suddenly felt a bond of passion, both for the girl and for the ministry at the Rescue Mission. The experience of Frontline ministry engaged Pam in a way that a social

activity or a singles class could never have done.

#### Conclusion

So, how are we doing reaching the 14th largest population in the world? Not so well, but we can make real inroads. For one thing, we must recognize the category "singles" represents young and old, never married, widowed, and divorced. They are grandparents, parents, and childless. They are students, professionals, unemployed, and underemployed. They are interested in who Jesus is, but many are skeptical of His messengers.

The way to reach singles is to decide what group you want to reach, do your homework, listen, and do not assume your current singles ministry is what they are looking for. You will not reach single adults by doing church as usual. Begin thinking outside the box. We cannot expect singles to come knocking on our church door. We fulfill the Great Commission when we go outside of our churches, daily walking with singles until they tune into God's Word and see the relevance of Christ's claims for their own lives. We will reach them when we challenge our church and our missionaries sitting in the pews to do whatever it takes to listen and share the hope of Christ with them.

How can we avoid this mistake today? Eric Swanson of Leadership Network suggests we must cultivate an outward focus. He writes, "All over our nation there is a quiet movement of the Spirit of God that is causing believers to reexamine how they 'do church.' Churches around our nation are throwing out old measures of success. It is no longer merely about size, sensitivity, spiritual gifts, church health, nor the number of small groups. It is about making a significant and sustainable difference in the lives of people around us - in our communities and in our cities."

In 1994, McLean Bible Church just inside the Beltway in suburban Virginia hired me as a consultant to help them reach singles and young single adults. This church of a few hundred members

Today, 14 years later, more than a quarter of the church's 12,000 weekly adult attendees are members who participate in Frontline, the church's congregation of young (and mostly single) adults. Many more single adults participate through the church's main congregations. When people ask me what made the difference in this church, there are only two things I can point to that changed this church that now has a citywide impact on Washington, D.C. One was its decision to specifically target young singles, and the other was to reach out to families with disabled children. The first infused an army of servants, and the second blessed the church by giving it a mission beyond itself.

As McLean Bible Church was building its ministry to singles and young adults, there







° CONNECT			
CLASS	ROOM		
INFANTS	105 🗲		
PRESCHOOL	205 7		
ELEMENTARY	1 1 5 🔶		
YOUTH	120 🗲		
COUPLES	2 2 0 🎵		
SENIORS	100 ←		
Singles & Adults	230 ?		
	230 ? Caucelled		
0	0		

# **THE HIDDEN MISSION FIELD:** REACHING OUT TO YOUNG ADULTS AND SINGLE ADULTS

ut of the divorces, widowhood, singles bars, clubs, apartments, and condominiums comes a torrent of need, and it is flowing right past the door of our churches. ... There is boundless talent and creativity in this flood of single adults.

The church can help and it can also be helped. It can give and it can receive. Opportunity is there. What will we do?"<sup>1</sup>

According to Earl Creps, former director of the doctoral leadership program at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, "To fail to reach out to the single adult is to 'wall out' over 40 percent of the adult population today."

David Reddout, pastor, First Assembly of God, Leesville, Louisiana, says, "Every group in the church has unique needs and gifts ... children, youth, men, women, married, etc.

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forgotten the single adults and have led them to believe we do not expect them to be involved in ministry. The apostle Paul said for ministry it is better to be single (1 Corinthians 7:25–35). The purpose of ministry to singles is to help them see they are the church and to help them come to a place of ministry."

I define young adults as adults between the ages of 18–35 whether single or married. Single adults who might attend a single adult ministry are adults between the ages of 30 and 60 who are unmarried by chance, change, or choice — whether

Jared VanBruaene

# THE HIDDEN MISSION FIELD: REACHING OUT TO YOUNG ADULTS AND SINGLE ADULTS

theirs or someone else's. Young and single adults fall into one or more of the following categories:

- 1) never married
- 2) formerly married
- 3) widowed

SENIORS

4) single parent

5) separated (The separated person is legally married but living a single lifestyle.) family is to target only half of adults in society.

Questions pastors and churches need to answer are:

- Did Jesus target only families and married couples?
- Did He minister to the woman at the well who had five husbands and was now living with a man (John 4)?
- Did He accept, forgive, and

from the church (especially 18–30 year olds).

- The church's emphasis on marriage and family without an equal emphasis on singleness as an acceptable lifestyle.
- The decrease and postponement of marriage in society.
- Married couple households only increased 7 percent between 1990–2000.<sup>2</sup>

This segment of the population is too large to ignore, and the abilities and talents of young and single adults are too valuable to waste.

Young adults and single adults are here to stay. The church must be aware of and involved with the needs and issues of young and single adults if it is going to be effective in reaching, nurturing, discipling, and training them.

#### A Healthy Church

Typically, churches emphasize marriage and family. All families — nuclear, step, blended, expanded, and single-parent — need strengthening. A marriage and family emphasis, however — without affirming and emphasizing singleness at any age as an acceptable lifestyle — tends to alienate and isolate the unmarried person.

A church that mainly emphasizes families and marriage is not healthy. To forget the unmarried adult and his/her minister to the woman caught in adultery (John 8)?

- Could Jesus' singleness be the reason for His awareness of, and ministry to, unmarried adults?
- Could the inclusion of biblical writers who were single adults be a subtle, yet powerful reminder that God values the single and singleagain person? (Paul was single; Jeremiah was never married; Ezekiel was widowed; Hosea was divorced.)

Every church can do something to show an attitude of understanding and acceptance of young and single adults. (See sidebar, "Any Church Can.")

#### Demographics Demonstrate the Need for the Church To Minister to Yound Adults and Single Adults

• The loss of young adults

- The average age of first marriage: men — 27.1; women — 26.0.<sup>3</sup>
- Unmarried households now outnumber married households — 55.8 versus 55.2 million.<sup>4</sup>
- The percentage of U.S. adults (age 18 plus) who are unmarried — 45 percent — 97 million adults.<sup>5</sup>

#### Single-person households

- 1900 5 percent of all households were singleperson households <sup>6</sup>
- 1960 13 percent of all households were singleperson households <sup>7</sup>
- 2000 26 percent of all households were singleperson households <sup>8</sup>

#### Single-parent families

• 1970 — One-ninth of all

family types were singleparent families.<sup>9</sup>

- 2000 Almost one-third of all family types were single-parent families.<sup>10</sup>
- 28 percent of children under age 18 live with a single parent.<sup>11</sup>
- 60 percent of all children born in the 1990s will spend a significant amount of their childhood in a father-absent household.<sup>12</sup>
- 43 percent of teens do not live with both natural parents.<sup>13</sup>

#### Cohabitation

Cohabitation is a halfway house for people who do not want the degree of personal, legal, and social commitment that marriage represents, at least for now. Cohabitation has skyrocketed, up 1,150 percent from 1960 to 2000, increasing from 439,000 to 5.5 million couples. It increased 71 percent during 1990–2000.<sup>14</sup>

- Nearly half of people between 25 and 40 have cohabited.<sup>15</sup>
- Half of currently married stepfamilies with children began with cohabitation.<sup>16</sup>
- The biggest increase in cohabiting couples is not among twenty-somethings, but people over the age of 35. Almost half of adults under 40 have lived with an unmarried partner.
- For single adults, ages 35–39, 49 percent are currently living with someone.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Divorce and remarriage**

- 43 percent of first marriages divorce.<sup>18</sup>
- 60 percent of remarriages



with children divorce.19

- 65 percent of remarriages with children from a prior marriage divorce.<sup>20</sup>
- 65 percent of simple stepfamilies (one partner with a child) divorce.<sup>21</sup>
- 70 percent of complex stepfamilies (both partners have children) divorce.<sup>22</sup>

#### Widowed

- There are more widowed people in the U.S. than the entire population of each of the nations of Belgium, Ireland, and Norway.<sup>23</sup>
- 45 percent of all women 65 or older are widowed.<sup>24</sup>
- 70 percent of all widowed adults live alone.<sup>25</sup>
- In the next 30 years the U.S. will experience a doubling of the population age 65 or older.<sup>26</sup>

#### Life Issues Should Motivate the Church To Minister to Youno Adults and Sinale Adults

Single and married adults have the same basic spiritual needs. Because single adults sometimes feel uncomfortable in churches with familyoriented programs and emphases, though, they do not always stay long enough for these needs to be met.

Because single adults do not have a spouse to provide encouragement and spiritual support, some single adults become undisciplined in their spiritual life. A specialized ministry provides a place to identify with others and nurture their needs such as selfesteem, commitment to God, faith, and personal discipline.

Cathy Roth from Hayward, California, says, "Just getting the opportunity to observe and getting to know other single Christians has challenged and humbled me spiritually. It has helped me value others (quite different from myself) for the gifts God has given them and increased my tolerance and patience."

Helen Marispini from Livermore, California, says, "Being a part of the single adult ministry has given me a place where I can find friendship, encouragement, and support. My friends hold me accountable to my commitment to the Lord."

#### Personal needs and issues

When churches do not address the unique needs of unmarried adults, single adults do not receive a biblical and single adult perspective on relevant topics. If the church is not providing teaching and discussion opportunities on the issues facing single and singleagain adults, where are they receiving this information? The answer: The media, Internet, television, theaters, newspapers, non-Christian friends, videos, and other sources, many of which are unhealthy.

How many of the following issues is your church addressing?

- Rearing children alone
- Shared parenting
- Dealing with changes as a single adult
- Relating to a former spouse
- Sexuality and singleness
- Money management
- Developing friendships with males/females
- Learning to forgive an ex-spouse
- Accepting singleness
- Dating/dating again
- Divorce recovery

## Any Church Can

A church of any size can address some of the needs of young and single adults. At the very least, a church without a ministry to them can:

#### Acknowledge single adults through teaching, preaching, and events

Include references to single adults in messages, teaching, and announcements. Examples could include:

"Whether you are married or single, there is a place for you in our church."

"Jesus lived an effective life of ministry as a single adult." "Our women's retreat is for all women, married or single."

#### Give examples of effective single adults in Scripture

Examples of effective single adults include: Jesus, Paul, John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Mary, Martha, Anna, the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene, Deborah, Hagar, Dinah, Miriam, and Naomi.

## Provide respite, encouragement, support, material and financial help

Single parents and their children, some widows, and other single adults desperately need our assistance.

## Be aware of other churches in the community that have a ministry targeting young and single adults

Encourage single adults in your church to attend one of these groups for their emotional, mental, relational, recreational, and social needs. Many single adults welcome their pastor's recommendation to a ministry and will still support their home church through attendance, service, and resources.

Churches that decide they are too small or choose not to develop a young or single adult ministry, should, at the very least, work at understanding the issues single adults face, and portray open, accepting, and informed attitudes and actions toward them. Helping a single parent with occasional home or car repairs, free childcare, or financial help to attend a church event shows Christ's love in practical ways.

— **DENNIS FRANCK,** Springfield, Missouri

# THE HIDDEN MISSION FIELD: REACHING OUT TO YOUNG ADULTS AND SINGLE ADULTS

- Living with mom/dad
- Understanding emotions
- Grief recovery

SENIORS

- Trust
- Loneliness
- Building a healthy identity
- Career choice
- Premarital education
- Re-marital education
- Blending families
- Stepparenting
- Relating to married adults
- Adjusting to widowhood

#### Healthy friendships

Single adults of any age want quality friendships with others of the same and opposite sex. A young adult and single adult ministry provides an atmosphere of acceptance and openness where people can discover others with the same experiences, hopes, and hurts. The ministry also creates an atmosphere that nurtures relationships in a Christian context. Many young and single adults coming from the bar scene are tired of the selfish attitudes and are open to the grace and love of God through others.

Lisa Stevko from Castro Valley, California, says, "I don't feel like I'm just waiting to be married anymore. The Single Adult Ministry has provided me with a circle of friends and activities. I have others I can talk and relate to that are being stretched and grown by God in the same ways I am."

Greg Davis, Castro Valley, California, says, "Because of common experiences there is a greater understanding of the struggles, as well as help and encouragement. People without common experiences may be able to sympathize, feel for you, but cannot empathize, feel with you (2 Corinthians 1:4). Because of this commonality, there is a dynamic that fosters spiritual, emotional, and relational growth."

#### Ministry Potential Validates the Need for the Church To Minister to Young and Single Adults

Unmarried adults have time, talent, and creativity to share with the church. They do not need to obtain approval from a spouse to use their time and talents. When the pastor preaches a message on tithing and giving, married adults must confer with their spouse for consensus on giving 10 percent to the Lord's work. The single adult does not.

If married adults want to give three or more hours a week to a lay ministry, the wise thing to do is obtain agreement from one's spouse. Again, for the single adult God has only one heart to convince.

#### Jesus' Life Authenticates the Need for the Church To Minister to Young and Single Adults

#### Jesus, a single adult

Jesus was a single adult in Jewish society that pushed children into marriage at ages 14, 15, and 16 to carry on the family name and procreate. Jesus did not fit the social, cultural, or family mold as a single adult. He was rare in His day. He is the example of what a life, wholly dedicated to the Father, can accomplish.

Sensitivity/response: Six church types I define six types of churches

by their level of sensitivity and responsiveness toward single adults and young adults. A church's sensitivity/ response level is influenced by the following:

- The church's attitude and ministry history
- Priorities of the pastor
- Priorities of the board
- Personal experience of pastor(s) with young and single adults (church, community, work, immediate or extended family, etc.)
- Understanding and attitude of other church leaders
- Budget concerns
- Available potential leadership
- Personal experience of board
- Personal experience of staff
- Personal experience of congregation
- Biases and verbal reactions and recommendations of pastors, board, and congregation
- Young adult/single adult ministries in other churches within the community
- Size of the church

#### TYPE ONE — Little sensitivity and no targeted ministry to young or single adults

This church and its leadership may not see the need for a targeted ministry to young and/ or single adults. This church generally does not understand single adults and does not practice intentional sensitivity toward them. This church may not be aware of its biases toward married adults. This may be evident in that, for single adults to attend an event, it is generally more than half the cost for married adults. This church also lacks the use of inclusive language and help for single parents.

#### TYPE TWO — Some sensitivity to young and single adults, but no targeted ministry to them

This church and its leadership may have only a little understanding of the needs and issues of single adults. They may verbally accept and recognize unmarried adults from the pulpit and in some adult classes. However, there is no targeted ministry to single adults of any age.

#### TYPE THREE — More sensitivity to young and single adults, and a targeted ministry with a volunteer leader

This church and its leadership have more understanding of the needs of young and single adults than do type two churches. The pastor may have appointed a volunteer leader to develop single adult ministries. This church may want to pay its leader, but for now can only support this person through prayer and material resources. A type three church displays an understanding of the needs of young and single adults through inclusive language in preaching and teaching. This church establishes equitable costs for events, provides childcare and help for single parents, and includes single adults in all leadership levels.

**TYPE FOUR** — Much sensitivity to young and single adults, a targeted ministry and a parttime, paid leader to develop it This church and its leadership have a greater understanding than the level three church.

#### UPCOMING

Saturday, May 16 7:00 p.m. All Church Banquet • Delicious food • Special music • Cost \$12.50 Singles are welcome! Sunday, June 7 10:30 a.m. M Service • son, • sonary to Brazit

Every church can do something to show an attitude of understanding and acceptance of young and single adults.

It shows financial priority by budgeting for a part-time leader to develop and oversee young and single adult ministry. Church leadership includes single adults in many facets of the church and demonstrates they understand them through their sensitivity in preaching, teaching, and in other ways listed in the type three church.

TYPE FIVE — High sensitivity to young and single adults, a targeted ministry, and a fulltime, paid staff member to oversee the various ministries This church and its leadership have a reasonably good understanding of young adults and single adults and are open to learning as much as they can about them. They genuinely want to see young and single adults ministered to and become part of every ministry area and leadership level of the church. This church's understanding and openness are displayed through sensitive preaching, teaching, and unbiased programs of the church as in the type four church.

**TYPE SIM** — Very high sensitivity to young and single adults, a targeted ministry (developed as a multifaceted ministry), and a full-time, paid leader exclusively for these ministries This church and its leadership desire young and single adults to become part of every leadership level of the church. This church will display a greater understanding and sensitivity to their needs than most other church types.

#### **The Minimum a Church Could Do** Whether your church is a

type one or type six church, you can do something to reach young adults and single adults in your church and community. It might be only an occasional event for single adults in the church and community. For example, one Bible study a week, one social activity a month, one seminar every three months, one community outreach every six months, and/or one retreat a year is a start. In this way, your church will be meeting some of the diverse needs of young and single adults.

Young adults and single adults are here to stay. If the church is to be effective in reaching, nurturing, discipling, and training adults, the young and single adults warrant our best efforts, time, prayer, and resources. This segment of the population is too large to ignore, and the abilities and talents of young and single adults are too valuable to waste.

A church of any size can and should minister to young and single adults. Through prayerful consideration and strategic ministry, young and single adults can become a force in your church and can emulate the greatest single adult who ever lived, Jesus. @

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By Margaret Feinberg

but if it has been a few years since you legitimately called yourself a twentysomething - because those "twentysomething forever" bumper stickers eventually fade in the sun — then you may need to think again.

Beloit College's annual "mind-set list" for the incoming class of freshmen highlights some of the differences of today's twentysomethings. They observe these students "have grown up in an era where computers and rapid communication are the norm, and colleges no longer trumpet the fact residence halls are 'wired' and equipped with the latest hardware. These students will hardly recognize the availability of telephones in their rooms since they have seldom utilized landlines during their adolescence. They will continue to live on their cell phones and communicate via texting. Roommates, few of whom have ever shared a bedroom, have already checked out each other on Facebook where they have shared their most personal thoughts with the whole world. Gas stations have never fixed flats, but most serve cappuccino. IBM has never made typewriters. Caller ID has always been available on phones."

If you are wondering how to relate to this new breed of young adults — and build bridges into their hearts and lives — here are a few insiders' tips:

#### Twentusomethinas Lona for Authentic Relationshins

Sure, we come off as the independent, do-it-yourself, constantly-on-the-move type, but do not be fooled by our appearances. Underneath the too-busy-don't-have-time veneer, we are starving for authentic relationships.

While researching for *Twentysomething: Surviving* & Thriving in the Real World (W Publishing), I asked dozens of young adults what is the top struggle of being a twentysomething. The most common answer caught me off guard. Survey says: Loneliness. And married women answered loneliness more often than singles.

once every two weeks for four months. At first, we were strangers, but over the course of our lunches, we became friends. Four years and several moves later, we still exchange Christmas cards and letters.

Toward the end of the mentoring program, Jeanie confessed, "At first, I was intimidated to join the program and act as a mentor. I knew I did not have all the answers to the questions you would be asking. But now I realize that you were not coming to me for answers, you were coming for a listening ear

We twenty somethings are not really asking for advice as much as hoping for a listening ear.

Twentysomethings today are looking to connect with other people including you. Like no other generation before, we long for mentors who will offer a listening ear and a kind smile on a regular basis.

Over the years, I have had a number of Christian mentors, women who were willing to open up their busy schedules to hang out with me. Some were official, like Jeanie, a fiftysomething woman who I was teamed up with as part of a woman-to-woman mentor



junction with a Pensacola, Florida-based church. We met and a friendship. That took so much of the pressure off."

If you are in your thirties, forties, fifties, or older and can afford the time to meet with us once a month on a regular basis — whether it's for lunch, cup of coffee, long walk, or short jog — we would love to spend time with you. You may have to take the initiative and develop the guidelines and boundaries for the relationship (so we do not call you at 3 a.m. to tell you about the latest n' greatest Infomercial ad on television), but your efforts will more than be rewarded.

As you build relationships with twentysomethings,

remember that we are not really asking for advice as much as we are hoping for a listening ear. We are also looking for people who will be honest about their own mistakes and misgivings. The most powerful stories you will ever share with a twentysomething include the words "I was wrong" or "That was a mistake."

Sara, a twentysomething involved in a Texas-based college ministry, advises, "Be real. Let (us) see your struggles. We want to see that you have the same issues that we have, or that you did



when you were our age at least. You really understand and appreciate people more when you know where they are coming from. Share what you're learning."

#### Twentusomethinas Want You To Celebrate (or at least respect) Their Sinaleness

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, since our parents' generation, the median age of marriage for men has risen from 22 to 27 and the median age of women has risen from 20 to 26. That sounds like a pretty harmless statistic unless, of course, you are in this demographic.

Let me break it down for you.



Today's twentysomethings are marrying four to five years later, on average, than our parents. So when we call our moms to ask for advice relating to our careers, personal finances, and student loans (which are topping \$20,000 on average, per college graduate), we feel worlds apart. My mom married at 19; I married at 29. I spent a decade facing a long list of challenges and situations including Internet dating, speed dating, and meat-market singles groups, that she never had to face.

Twentysomethings like me are often okay with the challenges, but our parents' generation does not seem to be as comfortable. We do not want to be asked deadend questions such as "Have you gone on any dates lately?" or "Why aren't you married?" Unless Ashton Kutcher becomes single again (sorry Demi Moore) and moves next door, we probably do not have a better answer for you than the last time you asked. And if we do, we will tell vou.

So do not feel like you have to play hall monitor on our single status or even worse, matchmaker, when you are not asked. If you have someone that we really should meet, calmly let us know; and if we are interested, we will let you know. Meanwhile, focus on encouraging us in our careers, ministry involvement, and spiritual growth. And, of course, you can always let us know when we look like we have lost weight. That almost always makes us feel warm and fuzzy inside.

#### Final Word of Advice

The good news is that today's twentysomethings are not looking for you to be perfect or have all the right answers. And if you try, do not be surprised if your new twentysomething friends shy away from you. They are not looking for you to be a hero, they are just hoping you will be a friend and love them right where they are. And





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## Quick Pointers for Building Relationships with Twentysomethings

**Get Plugged In**. Twentysomethings are on the Internet. Most have an e-mail address, and many have a Web page. Do not just pick up the phone. E-mail twentysomething friends from time to time. Visit their Web pages, and if they had a well-established career, try to Google the person. Go to www.google.com and type in the person's name with quotes around it. You may find a whole lot of buried talent.

**Be Sensitive to Finances.** Singles often have more discretionary income than married couples with kids, but do not assume every twentysomething single is a high roller. Strapped with student loans, credit card debt, and an entry-level or low paying job, you may want to pick up the tab for lunch more than every other time or plan on some picnics.

**Be There. Be Where?** You have limited time and resources, but here are three important dates to remember in every twentysomethings' life: Birthdays, Valentine's Day and Moving Day. If you have trouble remembering birthdays, sign up for a free reminder at www.birthdayalarm.com. Pick up the phone, send a card, or buy a gift — whether it's big or small — whatever you do means more than you could know. For single twentysomethings, invest in cards, candy, and flowers as an unexpected Valentine's surprise. And whenever a twentysomething is moving — especially if he/she is moving away — offer to help clean, pack, or carry boxes. Your actions will be a lifelong reminder that you really did care.
BRIDGING THE GENERATIONS: POUNG ADULT AND SINGLE ADULT MINISTRY PREPARES THE CHURCH OF TODAY By Scott Harry

America



Frickson

Fuiten

DeLaRosa



ight years ago when Scott Erickson accepted the pastorate of Peoples Church in Salem, Oregon, he inherited a well-established church with loyal members. But he also inherited a leadership structure with 20th century written all over it. And that structure was creating barriers to where Erickson believed the church needed to grow.

"We had a dinosaur ministerial leadership model with the senior pastor feeding down to the other positions," he says.

Joe Fuiten had given careful attention to the community demographics around his Bothell, Washington, congregation. He knew that

> as housing costs rose, Cedar Park Church would

Comment on this article find more Visit the EJ Forum at http://forums.ag.org/ enrichmentjournal of its younger members forced into distant suburbia.

"The younger people tend to move farther out," he says. "They cannot afford the housing in close. They are moving 20 miles away."

Eddie De La Rosa and Templo Cristiano of Uvalde, Texas, realized they had an influx of single parents, many young enough to be grouped with their children in the church's all-encompassing youth service.

"We were having services for junior high, high school, and college and career all in one place," he says.

Pastor Jerry Brooks of Oak Creek Assembly of God in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, believed he was serving the array of targeted groups in his church well. But he wanted to ensure Oak Creek maintained a unified focus while meeting everyone's needs.

To ask for a common denominator among these four pastors, churches, and regions might seem a trick question. There could certainly be multiple answers. But a critical link between them is the need to reach and disciple a key segment of U.S. society - single young adults.

# Ministru Team

Each pastor had a vision for perpetuating his church's mission to a new generation, and each understood resources had to be directed toward that need.

"I decided the church was gray and in decay," Erickson remembers. His solution? When an executive pastor left, he divided that position into three others — a part-time business manager and, most critically, two pastors to focus on college students and post-college career-minded young adults.

Fuiten made a similar choice. Besides setting up eight branch campuses to make Cedar Park more widely accessible, he intentionally hired younger pastors to provide accessible role models on his staff for his young adults.

"When you are a bigger church," he explains, "you tend to get more mature ministers. They rise through the ranks. I intentionally hired new staff members right out of college. I'm 58 and I need to balance myself and reach the younger crowd."

De La Rosa and his wife stepped into the gap personally. Serving a bilingual congregation of about 200, they regrouped their Sunday evening service. Norma De La Rosa teaches a Bible study in Spanish to families who choose that venue, while Eddie preaches in English to a growing core of young adults.

Brooks hired a young adult pastor some 20 years ago. In recent years the church has taken on a single adults pastor. But regardless of the niches Brooks and his board identify, they remain committed to a holistic approach to ministry.

"We have always attempted to be an inclusive church," he says. "We do not want to segregate any group. We integrate people regardless of ethnicity, age, or stage in life."

While the churches adapted their ministry teams

in different ways to better serve young adults, they made a shared discovery. Young adults quickly respond and become valued team members. Where some pastors might be concerned that investing



"We are making an investment. ... We may not see in this life the results financially. That is okay." - Erickson

in young adult ministry becomes a drain on church resources, in these cases the opposite has proven true.

"We have medical personnel, sports attorneys, airline pilots," Brooks says. "When you invite these people to relationship with Christ and invite them to share life with you, these are the movers and shakers of the community."

When De La Rosa became intentional about serving the needs of his young adults, they quickly offered their services to expand the church's outreach. The church's VBS program last summer reached some 200 children.

"We really began focusing on young adult ministry in 2005, and by this year the majority of our 50 VBS workers were young adult volunteers," De La Rosa says. "They helped put it together and lead it. That would not have happened 3 years ago."

"Some of the largest contributors to Cedar Park are single adults," Fuiten says. "I find even college students carry their own weight. Most are working. The church becomes a great part of their life."

"Many of these single adults are looking for a place where they are not viewed as strangers but as part of the fiber of the church," Erickson says. "We have put them in leadership. We want the congregation to know we value these people. Every believer has a place of service."

Regardless of the expense a specialized ministry might incur, the mandate remains to connect with this generation.

"Instead of making this a dollar-and-cents thing, we have decided we are making an investment," Erickson says. "We are investing in these people. We may not see in this life the results financially. That is okay."

# **Countering Objections**

Sometimes simple inertia can keep a congregation from

branching out into new ministry. Misconceptions about young adults can contribute to reluctance to involve them in leadership positions. A traditional preference for married volunteers over singles adds to this marginalization. Whatever the roadblock, these pastors agree it is a mistake that must be rectified.

"Going to war with half your army does not seem like a formula for victory," Fuiten observes. "We learned that in Iraq. Single adults are available for the 'surge'. "

"Jesus was single; Paul was single," Erickson says. "They seemed to do pretty well. Once we establish that persons are persons of character, we entrust ministry to them in their areas of giftedness. If a pastor thinks he has to wait for the perfect family to come along before anything can be done, that is just wrong thinking."

"When I look from the platform," Brooks says, "I see young adults involved in the choir, playing instruments, on the worship team, and running cameras and sound and lights. They are involved in every aspect of ministry." To place artificial restrictions of age or marital status on someone, he believes, sidelines "a wonderful, energetic workforce for God."

"They are a gold mine," De La Rosa says. "You need to dig in and find those resources. Our young people have stepped up and become Sunday School teachers and children's church workers. Yes, older people can 'hold the fort,' but you have to ask yourself where you are going to be in another 5 or 10 years. When our older people are moving on, our youth and young adults are stepping up. They are strategic to our future leadership."

Brooks cites the promise of

"In Salem we have a very high percentage of single adult-led homes, divorcees, people living with grandparents," Erickson says. "This is not Ozzie and Harriet's backyard at all." his own years in singles ministry as an associate pastor at Life Center in Tacoma, Washington.

"When you get into older singles, most of them have been divorced, and you have

"Single adult ministry is not necessarily synonymous with young adult ministry despite the common overlap." -Fuiten

Joel 2:28: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

"If your church is old only, you are living in a dream," he says. "Dreams are a compilation of what has happened. If you are not careful, your older congregation will only look back. But the young have vision. They are forwardlooking. They have vitality. And many have the time and energy and excitement to contribute to the things of God."

### Changing Family

The decision to delay marriage continues to swell the single young adult demographic. And the realities of U.S. secular culture find many young singles becoming parents outside of marriage. Add to that a steady stream of broken marriages and reconfigured families, and a ministry to single adults can impact every stage of life. "We have to deal with the issues of divorce and finances and jobs," says De La Rosa. "We have to teach what is expected of someone as a young father or mother. They can be in their 20s and have growing children. Some ladies in our group are young and have daughters in high school. Finding Mom in youth service with her daughter was one reason we determined to branch out."

"On the east side of Seattle where I live probably more than half the adults are single, and divorce is a reality in that mix," Fuiten says. "So not only do we offer a Sunday evening service for singles, but we give them additional options like divorce recovery classes. And you have to remember in some cases you are actually ministering to middle-aged and senior members, so single adult ministry is not necessarily synonymous with young adult ministry despite the common overlap."

Fuiten's resume includes

with that a counseling load that goes up dramatically," he says. "I was busy day and night meeting the needs of 400 singles. I've carried that passion to Cedar Park."

Families led by a single adult are more vulnerable. When crisis strikes, the church has a unique opportunity to intervene with Christ's love.

De La Rosa remembers one young man who had only come to Templo Cristiano with his children briefly when he was felled by a brain aneurysm.

"The mom had already left, so the four kids were living with their grandmother," De La Rosa remembers. "About a week before he died, he'd gone to one of our young adult services. It was the middle of winter, so our young adults bought the kids coats, a Christmas tree, and gifts. Those kids now come to our church regularly because our young adults took them to heart."

The need to minister to

families in flux calls for an adjustment in how churches identify families in their midst. Erickson smiles when he talks about Ozzie and Harriet, but he is seriously focused on creating a sense of family throughout Peoples Church.

"I joke about Ozzie and Harriet," he says, "but here's a fact that would probably shock some people — the average family who fills out our information card lists the man with one last name, the woman with a different last name, and each child with a different last name. That happens more than half the time here.

"We cannot talk about family from the pulpit just in terms that are historically family. When I talk about family, I cannot just use the single word *family*. I talk about *rebuilders, single moms, empty nesters.* I refer to those categories so every person feels like "This church is for me.' "

"Family is no longer what I grew up with — Dad, Mom, sisters, and brothers," De La Rosa says. "It's no longer going home to my dad and mom knowing they will be together at the end of the day. At our church, we find a lot of people in their second or third marriage. A lot who no longer are in a marriage. A lot of young adults and kids do not have a dad to go home to. But so many of these individuals have been saved under our ministry, and that's why the church right now is a very clear image of the world. We live in this world, not of



# <u>BRIDGING THE GENERATIONS: YOUNG ADULT AND SINGLE ADULT MINISTRY PREPARES THE CHURCH OF TODAY FOR TOMORROW</u>

it, but we look like it."

Fuiten and Brooks observe the same family dynamics at work in their congregations, but caution that the need to be inclusive should never be misinterpreted as redefining the core meaning of family.

"Redefinition of family is not needed," Brooks says. "There is a biblical definition of family, and it serves the church and the nation well. The nation is struggling to redefine the term. But the concept of family should touch everyone in the church. I think of *family* and I think of someone who knows your name and values you and gives you a safe environment. We need to be sure we have a family atmosphere at church that encompasses all. I choose not to redefine family; I choose to practice family."

"The liberal political crowd is redefining family," Fuiten warns. "They try to wrap the family mantle around any



two people who love each other, which becomes the cover for homosexual relationships. Family needs to stay defined as a husband and wife as the model. Obviously, there are a lot of singleparent families, which are legitimate and ought not to be looked down upon in any way. But we need to preserve the model. We need to point people toward a biblical ideal while ministering to them in life circumstances that are far from ideal."

**Single Parents, Multiple Needs** Cedar Park lives up to that



"To place artificial restrictions of age or marital status on someone sidelines a wonderful, energetic workforce for God."

-Brooks

commitment to assist in lessthan-ideal circumstances. And Fuiten points out that such assistance does not need to have "single parent" in a program title.

"A strong traditional kids program helps single parents," he points out. "When you have a strong program with workers who are both male and female, you can bring role models into kids' lives by means of those programs that they wouldn't get in their home. I'm of the opinion that 24/7 is when a church ought to operate. And there are some families needing more help and they should find that in the church."

Among its array of services, Oak Creek offers SPICE — Single Parents In Christ Enabled.

"We set aside nights when single parents can leave their children at church with targeted care and ministry," Brooks says. "They go out to activities and fellowship, and they can relax knowing their kids are in a strong children's ministries environment."

At Peoples Church, some of the highest percentages of salvation responses have been among those coming out of fractured families and abusive relationships. "We have been reaching out to a shelter for battered women," Erickson says, "providing transportation to church. We had 15 women join us one Sunday and eight of them came to Christ."

Peoples Church organizes a spa weekend each year for single moms, and some 50 professionals from the community volunteer their services.

"It's a Friday and Saturday event, and the moms can leave their children with our childcare volunteers," Erickson says. "By the time Saturday afternoon wraps with a family picture, the smiles are amazing. Many of these ladies have never been treated that way before."

# Balanced Blessing

The church that fails to serve its young adult and single adult constituencies is missing a key to growth, the pastors agree. But they insist the move toward targeted ministries cannot undermine any other ministry component.

"You cannot dive in and forget the whole spectrum of the church," De La Rosa says. "You cannot forget others who need your attention. Knowing how to balance is the key." "One challenge from the beginning is to ensure they do not become a church within a church," Brooks says. "Singles and young adults must not become disconnected from the rest of the body. We make opportunities for them to connect with their peers, but we keep them interacting with the rest of the body."

A key to maintaining balance, Erickson insists, is maintaining a biblical focus. "Our focus is not social, but relationship with Christ. What we have found is most young adults want their lives to have purpose and count for something. Our young adults and single adults do things to help people. We have a team that cares for widows. A team of men who help single moms with auto maintenance and repair. We are trying to do a lot of things like that in our community. But our real focus is pointing people to relationship with the Lord."

Balance in ministry also rests on balance in personal perception. Today's young adults and singles are transitioning into church from environments very different from those of their predecessors. Older church members may need to adjust their preconceptions.

Someone visiting a young adult service at Templo Cristiano, De La Rosa says, will observe plenty of surface evidence of changing culture. But the inner change of the heart remains the same, he insists.

"We live in 2009," he says. "If we're doing what we're supposed to be doing,



we're going to attract more and more people we're not used to having around us in church. We have young adults with tattoos. If you saw that 20 years ago, you'd get a big reaction. But their hands are lifted up in praise."

### **Open Doors**

When Erickson wants to illustrate the spiritual harvest he envisions for Peoples Church, he points to a family that might best be described as a work in progress — a man and woman, not yet married, but drawn to the message of the gospel.

The man had been coming to church a little while when he approached Erickson. He shared how his heart had been stirred and asked if he could bring his family. "Of course," Erickson replied, "but why do you ask?"

"I gave my heart to God," the man said, "but I'm living with the mother of my two children. I do not know what to do to change that. Can they come and be in this atmosphere?"

The man brought the mother and children to both services the next Sunday. That evening he again came to Erickson with more questions. The two of them walked together to the children's wing to pick up his 5-year-old son.

"That boy's eyes were huge," Erickson remembers. " 'Dad,' he told that father, 'God loves me!' The dad began to cry right there. I said to myself, *Lord, help me never forget the picture I have just seen.* 

"That boy and family were welcomed even though they were not in the right mold," he says. "They still attend. They still need to move in the direction of marriage. The woman doesn't come as often. But I see the dad and son at the altar praying."

Had Peoples Church been perceived as a place of rigid expectations and a traditional ministry environment, Erickson believes, that family might never have been exposed to the gospel.

"The analogy of going into all the world means geography, certainly, but it also means reaching every stratum of humanity," Fuiten says. "It's ethnicity. In Seattle 40 percent of the community is foreign-born. So going into all the world is reaching the ethnic pockets that fill our cities. The same is true of singles. You wouldn't feel you were doing God's work completely if you left out certain countries. In the same way you haven't completed God's work if you leave out the single and young adults."

Young adults are a bridge, Brooks says. They are a vital link between generations waiting to be used to pass the baton of truth farther along.

"We must pass that truth along with great care," he says. "No one can afford to drop that baton, and no church can afford to hinder any group from participating in ministry. Age and station of life vary, but not commitment to ministry. There is no stage of life where pastoral leadership is not needed."

"Single adults and young adults are not going away," De La Rosa says. "Just like the baby boomers or any other generation, this group is going to become stronger whether we accept them in our churches or not. They are not going to disappear. Instead of us looking at them from the inside out, why not open our doors and begin to say, 'Why don't you become a part of our family?' " @



**SCOTT HARRUP** is senior associate editor of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel.* 



# HOW TO WIN THE SENIOR PASTOR'S SUPPORT FOR YOUR SINGLES MINISTRY

hat is the difference between singles ministries that make it and those that do not? Is it a superdynamic leader or a great team of volunteer leaders? Is it financial support through the church budget? Is it facilities?

While all these are valuable, a far more important factor is: The success of a single adult ministry can often be measured in direct relationship to the support the senior pastor gives to the single adult ministry.

Oh, yeah. The senior pastor — the guy who has to juggle a hundred priorities. Or the



pastor who wants you to do something big, but is not willing to back that with

By Rick Stedman

a sufficient budget. Or the married pastor who would like you to attract thousands of singles but is not really attracted to the singles ministry himself.

Yes, the senior pastor is an important key to unlocking success in single adult ministry. I would even say: Unless the senior pastor supports single adult ministry, it will be difficult for the ministry to flourish.

But how can single adult leaders win the support of their senior pastor? Here are three suggestions:

# Talk Their Language

In the book *The Seven Habits* of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey suggests that we must "seek first to understand, and then to be understood." This is good advice for single adult leaders.

Something drives every senior pastor. Deep inside lies the dream that drew him into the ministry, the vision that guides his decisions, the program that thrills him. Something motivates all senior pastors, and those in single adult ministries need to catch their senior pastor's vision and then relate the potential of singles ministry in terms he values.

Unfortunately many in singles ministry spend time and energy trying to convert the senior pastor to their vision and purpose, rather than listening to and catching the senior pastor's vision and motivation. Single adult leaders expect their senior pastors to jump on their bandwagon. Some do, but far more do not

— and singles ministries suffer.

A better approach is to discover what your senior pastor's bandwagon is and jump on it. Determine what your singles ministry can do to best help his vision become a reality.

I do not mean to suggest that God has not called and directed single adult leaders with specific purposes. Neither am I suggesting that single adult leaders are to be chameleons in terms of their goals, simply blending into whatever environment is around them. I am not advocating that singles leaders should become rubber-stamp personae with no vision of their own. They, too, need their distinct calling and vision that God in His grace richly provides.

Instead, I remind single adult leaders that God has called their pastor — not them — to be senior pastor. Ultimately, it is the senior pastor's vision — not the single adult leader's vision — that will permeate the church programs. If the single adult ministry goals are not in sync with the senior pastor's, promotion, planning, and execution will run into multiple roadblocks. On the other hand, if single adult ministry closely fits the senior pastor's vision, every step of the process will be smoother.

Some senior pastors feel the primary purpose of their church is worship; others feel that the church centers around expository preaching. Some senior pastors in the older denominational traditions feel their primary calling is nurturing and shepherding, while many in the newer churches are driven by a desire to reach the unchurched. All feel the importance of each area, but one theme will especially float their boat. One purpose or vision will particularly resonate within them.

In the early years of my ministry I worked with three pastors in developing a single adult ministry. One pastor was skeptical of single adult ministry. The second was open but not interested. The third was interested and excited, but only after the single adult ministry began to share his vision of ministry.

Under the third senior pastor, Tim Coop, the singles ministry had been functioning for about 10 years before I arrived. Tim was supportive of that ministry but not



As a result, I changed the focus of the single adult ministry to outreach. Tim responded with excitement, support, and involvement. In fact, other singles pastors told me they envied his support of my ministry. Here is what I learned and still believe today.

### Work Hard Toward Integration

Senior pastors will become most excited about singles ministry if it becomes truly integrated with the rest of the church and in step with their vision.

# **Minimize Duplication**

By integration, I do not mean sharing facilities. Many singles ministries meet on church grounds but function as a minichurch. At one church, almost none of the singles attended the regular worship services of the church, and no one on the steering committee was a church member. They met in the church's fellowship hall but were part of the church in name only. The senior pastor felt their lack of integration. The singles felt he was not supportive of the singles ministry, but it was their separateness he did not support.

Some groups do not need the larger church. They have their own officers, small groups, worship, music, social





events, etc. Because of this, they do not have the need to go to another worship service. This is one reason I resisted singing worship choruses in our Sunday morning singles classes. We had table discussions instead. This made it easier to encourage them to attend the morning worship services.

The class for younger singles, however, lobbied hard for singing in their class. They developed a worship team.



Although it was a nice addition to their class, I noticed some hung around in the parking lot afterward and talked rather than attending the main worship service. When I ask why, several responded, "I really don't feel like sitting through another church service. After all, what we do in class is worship in God's eyes, isn't it?" While that was true, they missed out on the greater benefits of the larger church assembled together, and the larger church missed out on what the young singles had to contribute. In a strange way, when a singles ministry becomes complete in itself, it may be harming the integration process with the larger church body.

# **Encourage involvement**

We worked on integration by encouraging singles to join the choir, teach children's classes, serve as ushers, participate with other church members in feeding the homeless, etc. It is easy to train people to serve only their needs. Senior pastors sense this separateness. To them the singles ministry can seem selfserving. Senior pastors also notice when the singles are serving the larger body. Tim the planning is the most enjoyable and fruitful part of the process.

I made it a habit to brainstorm with Tim concerning the programs, ideas, and progress of the singles ministry. Long before these ideas were presented to a group and even before they were presented to the leadership team, I talked with Tim. I found his insights helpful, and the programs benefited from his experience. But best

Senior pastors will become most excited about singles ministry if it becomes truly integrated with the rest of the church.

remarked to me several times how happy he was to have so many singles involved in different aspects of church life. He noticed this far more than I did. To me, the singles are just regular people serving. To Tim, they represented a whole new resource that was benefiting the larger church. As a result, his support of the singles ministry deepened.

### Invite the senior pastor to participate in the planning process

Integration also includes involving the senior pastor in the planning process. It is easy to work in a specialized area of ministry, plan things on your own, and report to the senior pastor. But often of all was the excitement in him as the programs emerged — he felt a part of the team.

### **Anticipate Their Concerns**

The vast majority of senior pastors are married, have children, and know best the concerns of more traditional family life. The singles' world is often foreign to them. Senior pastors feel uncomfortable. Thus they may tend to be leery of singles and singles programs — maybe even pessimistic. Think through the concerns and reservations your senior pastor may have, then meet him at his point of understanding. Provide relaxed opportunities where he can meet with and learn from your single adults.

# Conclusion

Because the senior pastor is not 100 percent enthusiastic for singles programs, single adult leaders often feel alone and isolated. But the support of the senior pastor can be won through prayer, through planting seeds, and through thoughtful responses. Such support means the world to singles and their growth process.

One single woman said to me, "It is so nice to hear Pastor Tim talk about our events and to feel his enthusiasm for what we are doing. It makes me feel I am an important person and not an outcast like I have felt before."

The real benefit in winning the senior pastor's support for your singles ministry is not just the support you will feel. In the final analysis, it is the support the singles themselves will feel and the heightened sense of esteem they will experience. They will truly feel part of God's family — the church and not just a part of a group of singles or outcasts on the fringe. @



**RICK STEDMAN** is senior pastor, Adventure Christian Church, Roseville, California. Having been a senior pastor for the last 15 years, Stedman knows that these principles still apply to singles and other ministries as well.



# STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH TODAY BUILDING THE CHURCH FOR THE CHURCH FOR

# ingle adult and young adult ministries are two of the most important ministries a church can develop to strengthen this demographic in the church and also reach the single and young adults in its COMMUNITY. Because of the focus on building healthy

III ILJ LUIIIIIIUIIIUJI Because of the focus on building health, families, many churches overlook this segment of their congregations. Dennis Franck, national director, Single Adult Ministries, visited with several members of his national Single Adult/Young Adult ministry team. Reza Zadeh is student/young adult pastor at Timberline Church, Fort Collins, Colorado, where Dary Northrup is senior pastor. Darcy Decker coleads Saturday Night Alive/single adult ministry, Bible Fellowship Church, Rapid City, South Dakota. Lindsay Fosner serves as young adult/connections pastor at Cedar Park Church, Bothell, Washington, Joe Fuiten, pastor. Sam Miller is associate/ single adult pastor at Peoples Church, Salem, Oregon, where Scott Erickson is senior pastor. These young adult/single adult leaders share their passion for ministry to this segment of society. Interview with young adult and single adult ministry leaders







Why is young adult ministry important for those in their first or second year after high school? Fosner: Churches must create something strategic in this transitional season of life. This is the first time many young people will be away from the umbrella of parental authority. Many will begin exploring ungodly principles. They will also begin understanding how to engage life and make decisions for their future.

Our young people need counsel from people they can trust who are not their parents. They need mentors; they need people they can look up to; and they need guardrails that will support them dur-



ing this phase in their lives. **Miller:** As they enter college, people who they





view as authorities challenge their beliefs. We need to make sure we are there for them. **Decker:** In Rapid City, a church sponsored a transition seminar for students to help them have a successful college life or successful life after high school. This seminar gave them tools to prepare them for life after high school. some of our young adults to our annual business meeting was a shock to them.

Why is young adult ministry important for an adult in his or her mid-twenties and thirties? Zadeh: A lot of nonbelievers get together after work at the bar for happy hour where they sit and talk. Their relational circles center around things we do not partake in as believers. But for young professionals in their late twenties and thirties, where are they going to find social interaction if they do not want to go to bars? We must provide these environments. **Decker:** A young adult in our young adult group said, "When I was in college, I was involved with the college and career activities. Now that I am out, I am looking for areas where I can get involved with other young adults. I am looking for Christian fellowship." Fosner: Many adults past college age want to settle down and get married. Where can they meet godly people if the church does not provide the relational atmosphere where they can build relationships and

identity in Christ. Society is targeting young adults with movies, TV, and advertisements that focus on what you look like and what you have or do not have. This may be why finances are a huge issue for young adults. Many young adults are drowning in debt. We need to teach them how to balance a budget.

The church is the only place where young adults can hear that their true identity is found in Christ, not in the pursuit of worldly pleasures. Fosner: Another spiritual issue comes down to finding God's will, learning how to hear the voice of God. For young adults, this may be the first time they are encountering these decisions for themselves. A young adult ministry can target how to understand the voice of God and walk through those stages and the ways God will speak.

Other issues include alcohol, dancing — some things that have been taboo in church culture. Look at the cultural practices — movies, music, some personal decisions people make. Here is an opportunity to draw the line



"Many unchurched single adults believe the church is for Ozzie and Harriet." — Miller

Zadeh: High school graduates are forming their social network that will take them through their adult years. Also, some of our young adults have no idea how the church operates. Inviting hopefully find a spouse? We need to create opportunities for them to connect.

What issues do young adults face? Zadeh: We need to help young adults understand their for an A road and a B road. Then ask young adults which is the higher road — the one that is going to push them closer to the Lord.

Our young adults need to learn spiritual discipline. They

need to relearn things that their parents did for them when they were younger. How do you pray? How do you study the Word of God? How much time should you give to these disciplines? What are you allowing to fill your life?

Churches that have young adult ministry can help young adults discuss these issues on a deeper level than churches that do not have a ministry to young adults. It is one thing to talk about sex when you are sitting next to your parents; it is another thing when you are sitting next to your peers. You can often delve deeper into a topic when you are in a room with people who are facing the same get involved in things that are bigger than themselves. They do not have money to write a check to a missionary, but they do have time and resources to go to the soup kitchen or Habitat for Humanity. This gives them a sense of community.

**Fosner:** Young adults are not as inclined to come out for something if they have not been part of the planning. So giving them leadership opportunities generates a sense of ownership.

A young adult group within our area recently climbed Mount Rainier, the tallest peak in Washington. They raised \$10,000 through Facebook to fight human trafficking. into God's Word. That is our goal with a young adult group. She also reminded me she is not looking for legalism or flip answers. She wants in-depth answers. Fosner: What works best for us is staying within the culture of the church environment. We have multiple churches, multiple sites, and multiple services. For us to stav in tune with the DNA of our church, we formatted our young adult ministry under the same model. We have a service that meets later on Sunday night because that is when young adults are awake. Our service lasts 1 hour and 15 minutes. We dare not go over that time

single adults believe the church is for Ozzie and Harriet. Having single and single-again adults serve in the lobby of the church as part of the welcoming group, as ushers, or in other areas will go a long way in making them feel accepted and valued.

Also, when the pastor uses inclusive language from the pulpit, he is communicating value, acceptance, and sensitivity to the needs of single and single-again adults. **Decker:** Some singles are afraid to enter a church by themselves. Thus, they choose not to go to church. The other aspect is total acceptance. If a person is not included, that person will not come back.

Churches can embrace singles who come in by welcoming them, standing beside them, encouraging them, giving them an overview of the church, and allowing them to get involved.

What are the issues single adults and single-again people face? Miller: We did a survey and 77 percent of my single adults indicated the number one thing they struggle with is anger. So we did a series on anger management. Other important issues are grief recovery, divorce recovery, single parenting, and budgeting. Budgeting is as much an issue with single adults as it is with young adults. In practical areas, some single parents need help with childcare or household repairs. We have a team of that provides these practical services.

We were discussing building healthy relationships



issues. Young adults will talk about dating and ask questions until midnight. That would never happen in a multigenerational situation. **Miller:** Another area is the issue of character and character development. As young people are moving into lifetime careers, they will find there are opportunities to be dishonest. It is important for us to lay down principles that will help them maintain godly character.

### Why are community service projects and volunteerism important with young adults? **Tadeb:** Young adults want to

Zadeh: Young adults want to

# What are some ministries you are doing for reaching and strengthening young adults?

"It is important that young adults see the church as bigger than just them and their niche place." —Fosner

> Zadeh: We started with a Bible study with fellowship and food. At first we had about 30 people. We do events on-site and off-site. Ministry to young adults can be as simple as a Sunday School class. All you need is a place for young adults to connect relationally and spiritually. Decker: While we have events that attract young adults, Bible studies are important. Miriam, a young adult, said she is looking for life application of Scripture and a place where she can dig

because young adults need the predictability of knowing when a service is going to end. But they always stay an hour later and talk. We just created space for relationships to form. We work to keep enough off-site events to build that core group and those relationships. The relational core is really what creates the magnetism and keeps people coming back.

What can churches do to make single and single-again adults feel welcome, accepted, and valued? Miller: Some people attach a stigma to singles within the church. Many unchurched



when one young man said, "I am not looking for a girlfriend. I just want to have dinner with somebody who shaves her legs."

**Decker:** Single and single-again adults face other issues like communication skills, restoration, coping skills, courage, stepping forward versus stepping back, and encouragement for involvement. We also need to constantly emphasize the biblical view of life. **Fosner:** I would add the loneliness factor. How do you find comfort from the Lord and from other people, and how do you break those cycles of isolation in your life?

# How can a church help single parents?

**Decker:** We come alongside single parents and recognize the heavy load they carry. **Miller:** We have men in the single adult community who — after we have conducted a background check — serve as surrogate dads for boys on campouts. We have moms who do the same thing when our Missionettes have activities. It is important to have properly screened people fulfill these roles.

How can a church reach and integrate young adults and single adults into the life of the church? Zadeh: In our culture young adults and single adults are friend, or relative.

A young and single adult ministry should not detract from the main church attendance. Having a young and single adult service at the same time as the main church service can be a hindrance to full-church integration. start attending a single adult ministry when we accept and care for them. They want to see if this is true for the church as a whole, not just single adult gatherings.

The first thing is to provide ministries specifically for single adults. As new single adults

come to the church, we make



"Young adults want to get involved in things that are bigger than themselves." —Zadeh

starving for relationships and acceptance. A young adult or single adult ministry can provide unique (safe) environments for people who are unchurched.

The gospel is for all people in all life stages. A church can stay family focused and still minister to single adults. When we do a series for singles, we include married people in the teachings because everyone in church knows someone who is single, whether it is a neighbor, We are all given 24 hours in a day. Sometimes young and single adults are so busy with social activities, they do not have time for more church commitments. What we can do, however, is train our young and single adults to be solid witnesses in their social environments so they can communicate the gospel. Our church has many singles that give their time, homes, and resources for spreading the gospel.

Miller: Singles will normally

them aware of these ministries. It becomes incumbent on the leadership of the single adult ministry to channel young adults into ministry outside the single adult spectrum. As young adults integrate into a local church setting, churches are preparing future deacons, pastors, and other leaders. Single adults come in, find acceptance, discover their gifts, and we then release them to ministry in the church and outside the church. This is a process. **Fosner:** It is important that young adults see the church as bigger than just them and their niche place. **Decker:** If people recognize that today I might be married, but tomorrow I might be single because of an incident, it gives a perspective on accepting and appreciating evervone.

As a pastor, sit down with single adults and ask questions, listen to their hopes and wishes, hear the challenges they face, hear their hopes



A new believer is baptized during Beach Reach, South Padre Island, Texas. The annual outreach is sponsored by the young adult ministry at Timberline Church.

# STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH TODAY AND BUILDING THE CHURCH FOR TOMORROL

and dreams. If you act upon their suggestions, this means you really heard them.

### In what ways are young and single adult ministries redemptive and preventive?

Miller: Single adults come to church with hurts and misgivings. If we do not force people, they will gradually, on their own, move toward committing their lives to Christ and find redemption. By redemption, I am not speaking only spiritually, but holistically.

As we help single adults become involved in community with other followers of Christ, they will help each other in a preventive sort of way. If I have four or five people I am learning to be in relationship with and I start to choose the wrong path, I would trust that one of these four or five will say, "Hey, man, what are you doing? What are you thinking?" Accountability



"If a person is not included, that person will not come back." —Decker

happens in community. Decker: I see redemption as restoring relationships with Christ and with others. This provides a church an opportunity to support individuals spiritually and help them become grounded in Scripture. It is also an opportunity to help restore their significance in Christ. It can be redemptive by bringing healing and breaking the cycle of loneliness. Fosner: The whole nature of the Word of God is preventive. If we are teaching the Word of God and applying it in a way that is connecting with the life issues people face today, it is going to be preventive. We are educating people on how to walk on



the road of life and protect them from the enemy who desires to lead them on the road to death.

Many single and young adults want to marry or marry again. What can single and young adult ministries do to help prevent them from bad relationships in the future? Miller: We must teach them the biblical perspective about marriage and remarriage. Decker: I was involved in a Bible study with single adults, and one person in the group had been divorced three times. Some had been divorced two times. All of them desired to get married again and be in a loving relationship. The other thing they said, "I have made mistakes in the past. I do not want to make these same mistakes. I want to change." So a single and young adult ministry is about helping people make positive changes.

# Some pastors fear a young or single adult ministry will be a financial drain on their church. What is your perspective on this?

Zadeh: Neither young or single adult ministries are moneymakers when it comes to tithing. It comes down to what kind of investment a church is willing to make. Hopefully, reaching young and single adults is a high priority for the church. The church's return on investment will come, not necessarily in the area of finance, but by building leaders who will start new ministries that will reach new people. Miller: I ask, "Which departments are self-funding and profitable to the church?" We have had church education departments for years, and I do not know of any that are paying their way. Decker: As a young or single adult ministry brings people to the Lord, it helps people grow spiritually and helps build new leaders. It is worth the expense. We run our Rapid City's Saturday Night Alive group mostly by volunteers. I also recognize that we are probably working with some single adults who have limited household income.

# Some pastors are reluctant to begin a young or single adult ministry. They have different fears. What would you like to say to them?

Zadeh: Get over your fears. Young and single adults are already in the population and are seeking to get plugged in. Do we have any other choice than to reach out to them? **Decker:** I recognize that a senior pastor's plate is often overflowing. I want to encourage them to look at people in their church who might be interested in leading a young or single adult ministry and then begin empowering those people to take on leadership roles. 🖉



Appoint 4 Leader

# Invitation to a Journey: A ROAD MAP FOR STARTING A YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY By Jason Bowman

Get Starteo

Unmarried America

Ask



# very church has young adults who desire more influential fellowship with other Christian young adults. Before a pastor simply implements a program to reach young adults, how-ever, he must assess why he wants to develop this program.

detect authenticity; if they sense you want them to attend to prove your new program a success, they will be gone. But if they see your genu-Comment on this article ine love, passion, and friendship, they will work to

t the EJ F

Young adults

see your dream come to life. By following the simple steps below you will be on your way to beginning a fruitful ministry for young adults.

# **Ask Questions**

Ask young adults what they look for and what it will take to reach others like them. If they assess your motives are only to grow your church and

ministry, you will have difficulty connecting with them. If they see a heart that loves them, they will overlook miscalculations and will work with you to see your dream accomplished.

Asking questions and listening build ownership. Young adults have access to more information than any other generation. They have thoughts and opinions on almost every topic. By asking them what they are looking for in a church and in a ministry, you will unlock a wealth of knowledge, engage their interest, and build a friend. By listening to their passion and implementing their ideas, you will create a ministry together. If it is their ministry, they will advance it, advertise it, and own it.

Create a leadership team of young adults. Some pastors have given certain young adults the opportunity for creative input and critical assessment of their sermons. Having this feedback can help you relate your messages to

# INVITATION TO A JOURNEY: A ROAD MAP FOR STARTING A YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Technology continues to revolutionize the way our world works and relates. Even at 31, I feel inadequate to articulate the technology used by young adults. We have an opportunity to learn from those younger than ourselves. As a young adult pastor I had two college students as mentors who took it upon themselves to bring me up to speed with current communication

trends and tools. One late spring afternoon 3 years ago, David walked into my office at church and sat down at my computer and demanded I start a MySpace online profile and a blog. In fact, he did it for me. Today, David VanHal

serves as young adult pastor at New Song Church in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. I sat down with David to discuss the importance of today's technology and young adult ministry.

Why is being part of an online community important for young adult leaders? VanHal: A majority of young adults under 24 see the Internet as another way to communicate. For those over 24 it is a tool to use; for those under 24 it is part of their life. Older people often see being online as disconnected, while young adults see it as being more connected. The purpose statement of Facebook, the online utility, is "connecting you with those around you." Contrary to what some think, it is not about meeting new people as much as it is about staying close to those you already know.

Some young adults criticize the older generation for creating Facebook accounts. Why? VanHal: Some young adults do not like older adults joining Facebook because it was originally created only for those on college campuses. They liked the exclusivity.

Personally I like the fact older adults use Facebook. My dad set up a Facebook account about a year ago. I set my mom up with one and she still does not use it. Often I will say yes to becoming someone's online friend. But if they are older, I know they will probably never communicate with me.

The only reason you hear about young adults not liking older adults on Facebook is because they are the only ones who talk about it. It is an issue of adaptability. Many understand that it is a public utility now and is used by others. The real issue is whether or not we have a willingness to change with technology.

> You introduced me to MySpace and Xanga, but then those seemed to fade in popularity to Facebook. Is there a newer online technology that young adult leaders should be aware of? VanHal: It's hard to see Facebook going away

anytime soon. What is important is to keep our minds open to the technology young adults are currently using and learn from them. We can learn how to communicate better by listening and learning from people who are using technology effectively. Technology is always evolving. This gives us an endless amount of possibilities to use it.

# As a young adult pastor, how do you use technology?

VanHal: I am focusing on texting and the new technology that will allow the young adults to text to a Web site during my message. Later I can see their input and respond appropriately. We also only use an online sign-up roster for small groups. We may have to change that, but we will see. I blog. Every pastor needs to have a blog, an online writing forum. It keeps me sharp at communicating what I am thinking and gives people who otherwise might not have the opportunity to get to know me. I was surprised when I began my ministry that only 50 to 60 percent of young adults had text messaging and were willing to engage technologically. The best use of technology is using it so even those who are not as savvy are benefited.

My advice for pastors is to find a young adult to mentor you in the ways of the Internet.

You can read more of David's online adventures at www.davidvanhal.com.

— JASON BOWMAN, St. Louis, Missouri

the needs of young adults already attending your church.

Teach with questions. Get young adults to think by asking the right questions. When you ask questions, you create an approachable atmosphere. Often discussion does not work because the leader already has the answer to the question he asked. Prepare only questions. Have young adults first discuss your questions among themselves in groups to get them talking and then report their answers.

# Appoint a leader

Allow someone the privilege of serving as the leader of this ministry. This will communicate to young adults that they are important. This individual may even be a young adult.

Young adults long to be empowered. They may consider themselves leaders but are often without opportunity to lead. By having a chance to implement the ministry they have created they will find fulfillment and connection. Even if there are only a few young adults in your church, it is never too early to appoint a pastor to implement a young adult ministry. Maybe there are no young adults in your church because there is no young adult ministry.

Too many young adults continue to attend the youth group for years after high school. While this is a valid opportunity for some, it ignores the fact young adults face different social, developmental, and relational needs.

Challenge leaders to empower more leaders. The

facebook Generation

purpose of the leader is to prepare God's people for works of service. The role of the minister is to get others ministering. And it is the hunger of this generation to make a difference.

# Get Started

If all young adults hear is talk, then the excitement will wane. However, if you take their ideas and implement them, they will begin to see your desire to meet their needs. Here are some practical ways to get a young adult ministry launched in your church.

• Lunch with a potential leader. Taking someone in your church to lunch to assess his or her heart for young adult ministry is a great way to build a relationship and provide an intimate opportunity for a young adult to express passion for this generation.

• Brainstorm. Food and vision for ministry work well together. Once a leader is in place, plan an after-service luncheon to get other young adults who might be interested in a young adult ministry.

• Plan social events. Give opportunity to connect with one another in an informal atmosphere.

• Spend time with leaders. Encourage the young adult pastor to spend time with leaders. This will provide an opportunity to hear more of their input and for them to catch more of your passion and vision.

# Resource the Ministry

A successful young adult ministry can pay for itself. Young adults give when they are challenged with passion and purpose. Some young adult ministries place a giving station in the back of their gatherings instead of passing a plate. This frees the leader to teach on giving without collecting an offering. Many young adults early in marriage find themselves in the "Dual Income No Kids" category, giving them a larger expendable income. Even those in school often have some income with most of it set aside for recreation.

Young adult ministry will propel the church into the next half century. One children's pastor said, "Young adult ministry is job security." Why? Because some young adults have kids, and young adults with kids are willing to serve and connect in areas of the church where they have a vested interest.

### **Maintain the Mission**

Any young adult ministry should seek to be real, relevant, relational, and revolutionary. While the terms *real, relevant, relational,* and *revolutionary* seem subjective, they are important in the mind of a young adult.

The term *real* is an issue of authenticity. Young adults have a built-in authentic gauge to perceive motivation. Make sure the motive for



# **Ministry Models**

**Pastors throughout our country currently use a variety of styles in young adult ministry.** The key is to select one that works in your situation. Often a young adult ministry will be defined by the ages 18-35. Any articulation of age needs to be kept to a minimum. The following models might be right for you and your young adults:

# Sunday School Structure

• College class: Designed to reach the 18- to

25-year-old demographic, this class works with food and coffee. Finding a passionate leader to facilitate discussion on issues will also keep the class fresh.

• **Parenting class:** Young adults find themselves parenting for the first time. By placing an older, more mature couple with parenting ability as the leaders of this class, you will see many late 20s and early 30s join.

• Intergenerational class. Young 20s have a hunger for intergenerational connection. The key to this class is a leader who can connect with the needs of all people.

# Worship Night

Young adults often look for a deeper spiritual connection with God. Extended worship and prayer can be just what many young adults are looking for in their busy lives.

• Keep these times fresh and new. Offer a different schedule and interactive elements to enhance the experience.

• Offer food and a social time prior to the service to enable participants to feel they are

experiencing God's presence together.

# Small Groups

The desire for authentic community with accountability can be created in a systematic small-group structure.

• Train leaders in small groups and give them immediate opportunity to lead.

• Elements found in small groups include socialization, food, teaching, and leadership opportunities.

# Church Within the Church Structure

This structure requires willingness and flexibility from leadership.

• Select a facility on campus not used during the time of the traditional worship gathering as a place for a young adult gathering.

**Promote intergenerational integration** through workdays, all-church events, having young adults serve on the board, and other service occasions when all groups are involved.

— JASON BOWMAN, St. Louis, Missouri

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# 15 Things You Should Know Before Launching a Young Adult Ministry

If you are thinking about launching a ministry to twenty and thirtysomethings, you are not alone. There are hundreds of others around the country who share the same passion and calling to encourage and equip this generation. I interviewed several pastors, leaders, and church planters to find out what they wish they would have known before launching into ministry to young adults. Here is what I discovered:

You can become so relevant you become irrelevant. In your desire to be different, cool, or hip, it is possible to lose the core message of Christ.

Do not be afraid to discuss the difficul-

ties, complexities, and even the mysteries of the gospel. Your message does not need

to be boiled down to a set of steps or an easy-tofollow program. This generation is attracted to wonder, struggle, and even issues that offer no resolution. This generation can handle the truth and desires to explore spiritual paradoxes.

Be your real, flawed self 100 percent of

the time. Let them know your struggles, weaknesses, and failures. Do not be afraid to step off of the podium and become fully human. Your mistakes and transparency with which you experience trials become a connecting point for this generation.

**Pray, pray, pray.** Prayer needs to be the cornerstone of your work. Carve out time between the countless, immediate demands

to pray. Surround yourself with people who can pray for you on a regular basis.

**Be willing to learn from anyone.** Look for spiritual insights and lessons from a broad range of topics, life experiences, situations, and people. Then, be willing to share what you have learned with others.

Find people who can support and encourage you and be your friend. Ministry

can be lonely. You need people who are not directly involved in the ministry who can support you — whether it's your spouse, a more experienced church planter, or a veteran Christian.

Do not try to compete with the world.

It may be tempting to try to compete with the latest brands, fashions, film and television shows, but remember: what you have is better. Matt Carter, lead pastor of The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, says, "The twentysomethings of Austin, Texas, are the coolest, savviest, smartest young people I know ... and I realized something very quickly. I cannot compete with the pop culture in the cool

impact. Young adults in your area are waiting for a chal-

lenge from their church and

and empower them. Pastors

can make a difference by

inspiring the young adults

of their churches to radical

revolutionary thinking and

The potential for young

has never been greater. The

national Young Adult Minis-

tries of the Assemblies of God

encourages ministry to young

adults and has developed

ing need. You can find

youngadults.ag.org.

resources online at www.

resources to meet this grow-

adult ministry in your church

community involvement.

young adult leaders to inspire

# INVITATION TO A JOURNEY: A ROAD MAP FOR STARTING A YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

ministry to young adults is motivated out of love. If your young adult leader or you as pastor have a challenge understanding the trends of the current culture, be honest about your inability. Share your heart for people and they will listen to your heart for God.

*Relevant* is quite possibly the most subjective. What is relevant to one person may or may not be to another. Regardless, it is a journey that pastors must traverse if they are to reach this generation of young adults.

If you are starting a young adult ministry, create an atmosphere that resonates with the times. You can make your church more relevant simply by changing colors and decorations.

This generation is hungry for *relational* ministry.

Many factors contribute to this including divorce rate, detached families, and even technology. Establish these relational opportunities.

• Social times. Some young adults find themselves without a built-in social group for the first time in their lives. The church can meet this need by creating social events: dinners, bonfires, themed parties, and small groups.

• Food. Young adults appreciate having lunch with a pastor. Take them to lunch or coffee to connect with them on a relational level.

• Family time. Maybe the testimony that you are *not* there but you are at home with your spouse and children speaks louder than if you were there.

• Create online profiles for you and your ministry. This

technology connects you with people you already know.

A *revolutionary* ministry is one that attracts and impacts young adults. The message of Jesus is the greatest revolutionary message of all time. Does any revolution ever begin without having something worth dying for in the minds of young adults? We have a message of revolution; when it is proclaimed in a real, relevant, and relational way, the young adults of this generation will proclaim it with all their energy.

The young adults of our time desire to make an



JASON BOWMAN, former national Young Adult Ministries coordinator and lead pastor, New Life Community Church, St. Louis, Missouri. Visit www.thenewlifecommunity.com or contact Jason at Jason@thenewlifecommunity.com. department. I cannot compete with MTV or downtown Austin. But I can offer something the world can't. I can offer them Jesus. And twentysomethings are incredibly hungry to follow somebody as real, raw, genuine, and passionate as Jesus."

**Do not pretend you have all the answers, because you don't.** If you pretend to have an answer for every situation, you will quickly lose favor and reputability with this generation.

**Be creative.** The obstacles and challenges you face — whether it's a lack of funds or location — are opportunities for innovation. If you cannot do one thing, try another. If that does not work, try something else. Use your unique gifts and methods for sharing the gospel. Do not be afraid to try new things.

**Be experiential.** Create environments not just where people can learn about God but where they can experience God, participate in worship, and interact in a community.

Provide resources for those who want to learn more. Look for ways to equip young adults to search the Scripture and church history for themselves. Recommend commentaries and books on ancient culture. Introduce Web sites and links where people can learn more for themselves.

Create an environment where organic community can grow and

**thrive.** Encourage people to connect, to honor their commitments, to keep confidences and respect others.

Experiment with ways to express ancient truths that connect in fresh ways with this generation. "I think

we need to recapture the metaphor of sin as idolatry," says Darrin Patrick, pastor at The Journey in Maplewood, Missouri."It is important to use the biblical metaphors: missing the mark, unrighteousness, trespass, lawlessness, etc., but twentysomethings seem to identify with the idea that sin is choosing good over the best. I often say that the real struggle we have is not that we desire bad things, but rather, that we 'overdesire' good things like sex, our jobs, our boyfriends, etc. It is the good things in our lives that become the best things that we end up worshiping instead of God."

Dig deep into the Bible. Those who have grown up in the church have a hunger for a fresh perspective on the biblical story. The insight may come from the origins of a Greek or Hebrew word, the historical context of the time period, or a deeper cultural understanding of a gospel story. Such details invite people to dig deeper into the Bible for themselves.

Never forget that you are pioneering. There are not any ready-made maps or plans for reaching this generation. Everyone on the frontlines is just doing it. They are watching God move and work in one-of-a-kind ways in their congregations. Though you can learn from others, the twenty and thirtysomethings in your area are going to respond to something completely different from those in another part of country.

-MARGARET FEINBERG, Morrison, Colorado



# Single Adults: GIFTED AND GIUING By Tim McLauchlin

### Sinale Adults Are Not a Needu Group

ome say single adults are the neediest group in the church. Four years after being hired as a single adult pastor, I disagree. Single Adult Ministry is a blessing to a church and pastoral staff. Some people in every ministry group make you work harder at your calling, but there is a great deal a church can do with a healthy Single Adult Ministry.

In the Bible, single men and women did mighty things for the Lord. Elijah, Daniel, Naomi, Hagar — a single mother and Christ were single adults who impacted history.

Single adults have much to contribute. Our single adult ministry is called One Accord. I encourage our single adults to get involved in outreach, choir, childcare, volunteering in our church office, and other areas to use the gifts and talents God has given them. We have teachers, Life Group leaders, and department heads that are single adults. When they engage in ministry, they often see the needs of others in the church or in the community and begin new ministries.

### Sinale Adult Initiated Ministries A lady in our single adult



loves to cook. She is divorced and lives by herself, so cooking is not as much

fun. I invited her to join me at a Bible study at a re-entry house for felons. This house maintains 8-12 residents who are required to work full time while attending classes. This

Because of her willingness we have seen several, who society labels failures, come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. They appreciate those who care enough to see what they could be and not what they were. The apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:13 to "forget those things which are behind and reaching forward to those which are ahead." Cadence was able to do just that.

For two years Dave, a gentleman in our group, has taken the reins of one of our outreach and evangelism

As our single adults engage in ministry, they often see the needs of others in the church or in the community and begin new ministries.

often leaves them little opportunity for a home-cooked meal. Cadence was more than delighted to prepare dinner for them. She built a team to go with her to cook, lead Bible studies, sing, and love and encourage these felons.

teams we call Takin' it to the Streets. Dave was a disc jockev for a secular radio station. He started a ministry in which he does Christian films and concerts to reach non-Christian crowds with the love of Jesus. Because of his

# Creating a Culture

Pastors can model what it means to accept single adults within the church. They can show the value of single adults by using sermon applications that relate to single adult issues. They can teach in ways that are relevant to single adults. They can also emphasize the single adults in the Bible by using their stories in their sermons.

When making announcements from the pulpit, be sensitive and not exclude single adult participation. Churches need to re-evaluate their married couple events. Leaders can word promotional material in a way that is welcoming/friendly to singles. Christian education leaders can establish Sunday school classes where singles are welcome. Include topics for this class that are inclusive to singles: relationships, communication, and understanding men and women.

Pastors can teach on one's identity in Christ and coping skills to the whole church body. Just because one is married today does not mean tomorrow his or her spouse will still be there. Teach how to depend on the Lord versus finding one's value in another person. Teach how to find fulfillment in life, how to live a full rich life in Christ versus depending upon one's circumstances.

Pastors can sit down with single adults and discuss how the church can minister to them. Listening and responding to their hopes and wishes make a difference to single adults. Know their culture, and learn their style and needs.

> — DARCIE DECKER, Rapid City, South Dakota



connections we are able to take up-and-coming Christian bands to the streets and surrounding counties to minister.

Cadence and Dave are two examples of single adults who have initiated ministries that are growing our church. Others single adults take food to elderly shut-ins, teach classes for single women/ men, minister in the jail, and use their skills as carpenters and mechanics to assist those in need.

One man in our Single Adult Ministry is a professor at the local college. He had a vision to start a men's small group that would meet at a coffee shop in the morning once a week to pray and discuss topics important to single men. They have grown so much in one year they had to leave the coffee shop and gather at a house we have on our church campus. Dr. P sees men who will not go to Bible study groups come faithfully and even invite others.

We also have a real-estate agent who has been a leader in Single Adult Ministry. She started a Bible study for single moms. They meet weekly to pray and encourage keeps qualified single adults from serving in important leadership positions. (See Divorce and Remarriage: Ministering to Those Who Have Experienced This Trauma, page 70, for a expanded treatment of this passage.) families through spiritual development, personal accountability, and cost-efficient residential housing, this ministry makes a difference in the lives of single parents and their children.

Three single adults took

We need to allow more qualified single adults to serve in church leadership roles.

each other. These ladies help with meals, childcare, home repair, and care for each other if one is sick.

# Single Adults as leaders

Some ministers find it difficult to place single adults in leadership roles. Some pastors believe deacons or leaders must be married. They base this on Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 3. Their interpretation of this passage



"Well, Rev. Gundersen, I see you have a B.A. from Word of Life Bible College, an M.Div. in Christian Ed. from Trinity Seminary, and 12 years experience as a singles and young adults pastor. *This* is impressive: it says here you have mowed lawns and done custodial work! Gentlemen, I think we have our man!"

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, men and women are staying single longer or not marrying at all. As a result, we need to rethink the way we place people in leadership positions, and allow more qualified single adults to serve in these leadership roles.

# The Importance of Single Adult Ministry

Single adult ministry is a vital part of the church. Four out of every 10 Americans are single.1 They are married, divorced, separated, or widowed, and they need a place to connect. We offer a Single Parent Housing program in which we house up to three single-parent families who are struggling either financially, spiritually, or both. We allow them to live in one of our homes for 1 year to 18 months and only pay \$100 a month in rent. While in the house, they attend classes such as Divorce Care, Financial Peace University, and Parenting that not only benefit them now but also when they complete the program. By encouraging struggling, single-parent

classes offered through our Christian Education Department and have received credentials with the Assemblies of God. One desires to go into full-time ministry and the other is feeling led to the mission field.

Invite a few single adults in your church to form a committee. Encourage them to brainstorm about some things they would like to see take place in the church. Offer them suggestions such as Bible studies geared specifically for single adults' needs, classes that will teach a single adult how to do tasks he or she may have never done. Offer classes as: cooking, basic car care, home repairs, or budgeting ideas for the one-income family. These classes will draw single adults from your community and give them a place to connect and build relationships with other single adults who are experiencing many of the same difficulties. Offer a single adult conference at your church on a Saturday afternoon and invite a speaker to address single-adult issues.

If you do not have a ministry that focuses on single adults,

In a café setting, women from the interaction team talk with each woman as her vehicle is serviced.

# **Beyond the Walls:** How One Church Is Ministering to Singles

A young mother drove her vehicle into Central Assembly of God's parking lot one Saturday morning after she saw our street-side sign, "Free Oil Change for Single Moms." She stuck

her head out the window and sheepishly asked, "Do you really change oil for single moms — free?"

"Absolutely," I replied. "Would you like your oil changed?"

Her answer stuck with me:"I don't even know if my car has oil."

Her answer goes to the heart of why I wanted to start a ministry to help single moms, widows, and wives of deployed military men with simple maintenance on their vehicles.

Single mothers often find themselves in a situation they did not choose. They depend on a vehicle to get them to one, sometimes two jobs, while juggling kids around town — in a vehicle they often know very little about.

Through tragedies that took the lives of my two sisters, both in their twenties, my wife and I began empathizing with ladies who are struggling to make ends meet. Thus, the ministry of changing oil for single moms. This ministry puts love into intentional

action. We show women and their families that we value them enough to

help them in this tangible way. We also show our community that we are serious about helping those beyond the walls of our church. Hence, our ministry name — Beyond the Walls.

We contact single moms via flyers, signs, and personal invitations. We change oil once a month in our church parking lot. Our oil change team has a team approach to evangelism. The team represents six sub units — Registration, Refreshments, Interaction, Children, Oil Change, and Follow-Up.

On the morning of the oil change, women bring their cars to our registration area. A team member greets each woman and helps her fill out a form about her vehicle, which she signs giving us permission to provide this service. While someone from our team drives her vehicle to our oil change area, a woman from our team escorts her into our building where we provide food and drinks. In a café setting, women from our interaction team talk with each woman while we are working on her vehicle. Often, they pray about specific needs a single mom may have. This is a beginning of a friendship where women get acquainted in a casual setting.

Only women interact with the single moms in the fellowship area. But we also want them to see positive, healthy relationships between the men and women on our team. As well, we want them to know we care about more than just their car; we care for their family and any needs they have.

Moms often bring their kids or grandkids, so we have something for them as well. As many as 12 children have come waiting with their moms.

Our oil change team inspects lights, turn signals, tire pressure, fluids, and changes the oil and filter. We send a runner to a nearby auto parts store to get the specific oil filter. We match the grade of oil with the original manufacturer's recommendation.

Once the work is complete, we give each woman a copy of the inspection sheet and someone explains the work we did. Before she leaves, we give her information about a number of connection opportunities from our church that may relate to her life. Within a few days the church sends a post card congratulating her on a "Changed Vehicle" at Central Assembly. Ultimately, we pray God changes her heart as well.

This ministry impacts many women and their families. The church started A Life Skills for Moms class on Sundays and many of the ladies who come for oil changes now come to the class.

- BRUCE SNAVELY, Springfield, Missouri

ask the Lord to send you someone with a passion for this ministry. Start a discipleship program for single adults and single-parent families, and watch God do amazing things through your willingness to take a chance and love. James 1:27: "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you" (NLT).<sup>2</sup>

# No Church Is Too Small

Do not let the size of your church detour you from starting a Single Adult Ministry. *(See Get Over the Numbers*)





The rain pings against the window, but he only hears the harmonies of an Indie Rock band he discovered on MySpace. Another night he is with his MacBook and a cup of fair trade coffee at a third-rate coffee shop at the street level of his high-rise apartment building. He works, eats, shops, and sleeps within a six-block radius. He is the urban dweller. General descriptors for this demographic include: single, liberal, young, and creative. These urban young adults densely populate our nation's cities and are a vast unreached people group.

If you see a growing city, you will find the young-and-coming demographic, roughly ages 25 to 35. The city attracts them due to urbanization: the process by which single-family residences

are

street level of hisCurrently, Seattle is the fastest urbanizing city in<br/>the Works, eats, shops,<br/>adius. He is the urban<br/>this demographic<br/>nd creative. These<br/>pulate our nation's<br/>people group.Currently, Seattle is the fastest urbanizing city in<br/>the U.S., according to the Brookings Institution. In<br/>some zip codes, the young-and-coming age group<br/>represents as much as 89 percent of the population.<br/>But with this increase comes changes in culture<br/>and values.pulate our nation's<br/>people group.Only 40 percent of young adults will marry<br/>before age 35 <sup>1</sup> They are more interested in chasing.

before age 35.<sup>1</sup> They are more interested in chasing careers and dogs than spouses.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, conservative, family-oriented churches are irrelevant in urban areas.

driven away from downtown and replaced

young adults pack into high rises.

with multiple dwellings. As this occurs, young

families move to kid-friendly suburbia while single,

In the past few years, Assemblies of God churches in Seattle have felt this tension. Historically stalwart churches have experienced numerous pastoral transitions and a collective 24 percent decrease in attendance.

But they are not alone. Since 2004, Portland, ranked third in urbanization, has seen a 25 percent decrease in combined church attendance.<sup>3</sup>

The question lingers: How do we bridge the divide between our suburban-built churches and the urbanites that are now our neighbors? This matter is complex philosophically and practically. Survival will require deep change in mind, heart, and strategy.

Verlon Fosner, pastor of Westminster Community Church, Seattle, Washington, watched as Seattle rapidly moved north. Within 3 years Westminster was struggling to stay afloat. It was evident its conservative, family-oriented approach was not relevant to its single, democrat neighbors. The church had two options: relocate to suburbia (as one Assemblies of God church has done), or change. They chose to change.

Brave as it was, transforming from a programmatic model to reflective services and a midweek Serve Night was painful for pastor and congregants alike. But they are now connecting with the young and comings.

"Singles with little or no church background are now finding it comfortable to begin their spiritual journey with us," says Pastor Fosner.

A few denominations in Seattle are successfully reaching urban young adults through recent church plants. The common threads of these models seem to be highly spiritual or intellectual services and small groups.

Our long-standing churches, however, resemble a fishing boat in the Pacific. The ratio of Assemblies of God churches to population in Seattle is 1 to 72,088, and Portland is not far behind.<sup>4</sup>

Urbanizing cities are grooming the next generation of leaders. But many of our cities are nearly void of our Movement. Districts need to plant new churches and assist old churches as they transform so they can effectively reach these young and comings. It is the hour to partner as missiologists and Pentecostals and seek the Lord for His strategy to reach urban young adults.

LINDSAY FOSNER, connections/young professionals pastor, Cedar Park Church (Assemblies of God), Bothell, Washington, and member of the national Young Adult/ Single Adult team for the Assemblies of God.

### NOTES

- "Born Again Less Likely To Co-Habit, Just as Likely To Divorce." The Barna Group, August 6, 2001: http://www. barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaU pdateID=95.
- 2. In Seattle, there are more dogs than children.
- 3. Research and statistics gathered by Verlon Fosner.
- 4. Research gathered by Verlon Fosner.

— Reaching Young and Single Adults in the Smaller Church, page 92.) When our church first started One Accord it was averaging 500 in attendance. Since that time we have grown to well over 1,300 in Sunday morning attendance. You may not be able to provide housing for single parents, but your can start a Sunday School class or an evening Bible study for single adults. Several

resources are available to help a church of any size get started. Check out www.singles.ag.org for information on "How To Start a Single Adult Ministry." Find a regional conference near you that can provide ideas and tools to grow a Single Adult Ministry in your church. @

### NOTES

 Martin R. De Haan II, Singleness: The Misunderstood World of Single Adults (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, 2002), 8
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TIM McLAUCHLIN, single adult pastor, Trinity Assembly of God, Algood, Tennessee







# egarded as a gifted communicator, recording artist, and pastor, Sy Rogers has served for over two decades in ministry as a pastoral care specialist regarding sexuality and related concerns.

Christianity Today selected Rogers as one of 50 up-and-coming evangelical leaders under 40.



Richard L. Schoonover, Enrichment journal associate editor, sat down with Rogers to talk about how young and single adults in the church who struggle with sexual sins can find hope and healing, and how pastors can help them.

### Why do Christians struggle with sexual sins?

**Rogers:** Several areas set Christians up for struggle. First, biologically our genetic code lays the foundation of our sexuality. We are sexual by design. Our genetic code plays out through our desires as our hormones ignite these desires. This begins in adolescence and is natural.

Many Christians believe sexual feelings are unholy and they are bad because they

have these feelings. But God intends for us to control these tensions. As people feed their sexual appetite, this increases pressure on them. Thus they continue to struggle.

Additionally, we struggle biologically because our brains gravitate toward pleasure. The brain locks in on sexual pleasure and encourages a person to get more. Even after a person becomes a Christian and repents of sexual misadventure, he will never forget the fact his sexual experiences felt good. The blood of Jesus washes away guilt, but not memories. Our memories are neurologically imprinted. We must help people reckon with that in their struggles.

Second, we struggle with our developmental or psychological makeup. Many who have been deprived of love in their families are hungry for love. Many say, "It's not the sex I want; I just want someone to make me feel valued." When things happen to us, we react. Your family may have been negligent, but it is another thing to satisfy that neglect with wrong behavior.

Culture has also misdirected us. Culture teaches us how to dress and act and defines standards of behavior. Additionally, we are influenced by our perceptions. Our temperament and personality interplay with our culture and environment.

Third, our human nature is corrupt, weak, and disconnected from God and therefore contributes to our struggle. When a person is born again, he is still human. The blood of Jesus cleanses from guilt, yet people still wrestle with insecurities and immaturities. Some people may even have generational issues, where they learned imprints and patterns from bad role models in the home.

The devil also knows how to set people up to meet their needs the wrong way. We call this temptation. A person does not need to be deprived of love or abused to experiment and open Pandora's box. Many never imagined what would happen when they took a first look at pornography or started making out on a date. They did not understand how that could lead them to where they are today.

# Why are some pastors reluctant to teach young and single adults how to deal with sexual sins?

**Rogers:** My greatest advocates are pastors and students. But my greatest obstacles are also pastors who do not want to talk about sexual issues. If



they are not ready to deal with sexual issues, I understand. But for the sake of those they shepherd, where could they send them for help? What resource could they bring in to help their young and single adults? After the excess of the '60s and '70s, however, we began to discuss people getting back on track with God from homosexuality, sexual addiction, and promiscuity. This has been reflected in products, books, resources, 100 people, 25 women and 18 men have or have had that problem. One in every eight have been involved in Internet pornography, and that includes leadership.

Within the family of faith alone, it is imperative that



Sexual sin is like the elephant in the room that nobody addresses. Scripture does address it, however. There are 38 standards of sexual conduct throughout the Old and New Testaments. God does redeem sexual sins. The New Testament church in Corinth had former sexual sinners from several categories, including homosexuality, who had been adopted into the family of faith.

Church culture has taught that polite people do not talk about sex because it is private. So the church did not teach biblical sexuality. When the church did begin to discuss sexual issues, it was not from a redemptive aspect. As a result, our discussion became negative — "do not do that, the world is wrong, the Bible speaks against that." Our teaching was not engaging and we did not say, "God can help you."

"When a person is born again, he is still human. The blood of Jesus cleanses from guilt, yet people still wrestle with insecurities and immaturities."

> testimonies, and ministries. The younger generation my largest audience in Bible colleges — demands answers. They want to be part of a redemptive solution in culture and in church. So I ask pastors, "Why would you not want to have support groups for young and single adults who struggle with their thought life?" "Why don't we talk about issues like masturbation?" "Why do we not have a ministry for women who suffered abortion?" "Why do we not stock church libraries with resources on these issues?"

# Why is it imperative that the church speaks out on sexual issues?

**Rogers:** Statistics show that one in four high school girls has a sexually transmitted disease. One in four girls and one in six boys — maybe higher — have been sexually violated before the age of 16. That means in a church of we help those individuals struggling with sexual sin to get back on track. The church can help by doing a better job of educating, discipling, and talking about sexual themes.

Since Christian teens and young adults are experimenting with sex in about the same percentage as those outside the church, how do we help them apply biblical knowledge to issues of morality? Rogers: Be more authentic. When was the last time you heard your youth leader share how God helped him with his struggle with masturbation?

I am not going to tell my audiences not to have dirty thoughts. I am going to tell them how God helped me deal with mine. We are to encourage others with the encouragement we have received. We are to be examples to the flock. Leaders are supposed to be examples, advocates, cheerleaders, admonishers, reminders, and to set the tone by the way they conduct themselves. This is also true in parenting. My daughter came home from school and asked, "So what about masturbation, Dad?"

She cared about my opinion. She heard the world's opinion, her friends' opinions, what her sex education class said, but she cared to ask my opinion. Christian parents should be the very first line of communication when it comes to sexual issues like masturbation.

The world will train us about sex. Pop culture is educating us about sex. We listen to it on television. The average American teen watches 11,000 hours of TV, not counting film and music. Having a couple of 30-minute meetings a week is not going to cut it compared to the tidal wave of sex talk coming from culture. We need to share our journeys.

# Explain how forgiveness and accountability play into working through sexual sins.

**Rogers:** One reason I outgrew my sexual sin was the fact it did not meet my need anymore because I found a better way. That is the power of healthy relationships in God's family.

God worked through others to bless and love me in a way that is healthy with boundaries. It took time to build personal relationships from which I could derive healthy love. So relationships were a powerful vehicle through which God met my deepest needs.

I had emotional damage because I had been abused and

rejected. Being born again put me into a place where God had access to me by His Spirit and through His people. This took place through the support of my cell group, church family, and professional counselors. This was like God with skin on to help effect a transformative work in me.

I also had to learn some important tools. Why did I struggle? I needed education. This insight helped me understand my humanity. I am not a bad human; just human. Humans are vulnerable. Knowing this helped me stop feeling condemned and ashamed. I realized that God is not only my advocate; He is my friend and counselor. I saw God as someone I could run to rather than run from.

I began to admit my dirt. I knew God had the power to make me clean. I used to think I must somehow clean up on my own, and then I can approach God. That is a mistake. He taught me how to deal with the sin issues in my life, and to not fall so easily. What could be better than running to God rather than from Him? This helped me relax — not with sin, but with my humanity — and not give up on God, who began the good work in me, or myself.

# Talk about process as opposed to deliverance.

**Rogers:** I believe in the unlimited supernatural power of God to do anything He wants with what I surrender to Him. But that does not mean because nothing is impossible with God that everything is probable on our terms. I

have known people who have had purity and security amputated out of their lives. Jesus will help them grow. He will help them heal. He begins the process at salvation, but the event is not a substitute for the growth process. God uses miraculous events. We should ask for them. He is capable, and He is good. If we cry out to God for intervention, He will give it to us in His way and time. God often uses events to unleash the process, but they are not a substitute for the process.

When people say, "God delivered you from that," God delivers you from the power of sin being your master, and He delivers you from the guilt of sin. He delivers you from eternal separation from God due to sin, but He doesn't deliver you from going through the process of spiritual growth.

Church culture has conveyed something closer to Eastern mysticism. If you are enlightened enough with the right insights, if you mean it enough, if you are earnest enough and pray hard enough and grit your teeth long enough, then one day you will rise above all these struggles and your darker lower nature, never to be vulnerable and bothered by them again. That is closer to the attempts to achieve nirvana. Effort and enlightenment create nirvana, but that is not Christian doctrine. Pastors must be careful in what they convey to their congregations. If it were going to be an uphill battle, I would rather be told so than to be told it is going to be a walk in the park.

# Please share a few closing remarks to our readers.

**Rogers:** Pastors and church leaders need to paint a picture of God that causes people to hope in Him. More important than public policy or moral standards, we must value the people we serve. We must inspire in them that they have a God in whom they can hope. If they struggle with something from their past, if things currently trip them up and demoralize them, they need to know they have a God in whom there is hope. He has solutions to their problems; He has answers for their family circumstances, their loved ones, and their personal struggles.

Because pastors live under the scrutiny of public life, they must walk in the light the best they know how. They must live authentically and practice what they preach. As the younger generation looks to them, they can say, "Follow my example. I'm a little farther down the road. This has really helped me, and I am convinced it will help you too."

I take off two months a year to fill up my spiritual and emotional tank. There are things I choose not to do because I want to invest my time with God and my family and to make sure I get the maintenance I need.

Finally, I see a Christian counselor a few times a year just to talk things through, to get maintenance for me to talk to someone who sees me objectively. Not because I think I am in danger of a meltdown, but to prevent myself from going down the wrong path again. My life is stressful, and I do these things to avoid a relapse. @

For more information on Sy Rogers and how to schedule him to speak at your church, visit his Web site: www.syrogers.com.





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# *hurches have always stressed the importance of strong marriages* and need to continue to do so.

But when pastors and churches minister to young and single adults today, they often encounter those who are single because of divorce. If a pastor is not careful, he can inadvertently make those who have been divorced feel like secondclass citizens. Also, some pastors *are in a quandary concerning* what kind of ministry positions those who have been divorced can have in the church. Gary R. Allen, executive editor for Enrichment journal, sat down with General Superintendent George O. Wood to discuss

how the church can minister to those who have been divorced. Wood also shares insight into how those who have been divorced can hold ministry positions in the church.

In light of so many people divorcing and remarrying, what can pastors do to encourage strong marriages in the church? Wood: He starts with children and young people. Talk to them honestly about things that pertain to the home, marriage, and sexuality from a Christian perspective. Society bombards our young people with sexual messages from the age of 10 or 11 on, and the church has been too silent. These young people do not get solid guidance.

This is changing, however. Many of our churches are giving help and focus to young people and families on this subject.

Pastors need to preach on what it means to be a Christian husband, a Christian wife, a Christian parent, a Christian child, and how people can have a solid Christian family. The church also needs to develop a program for couples that are considering becoming engaged or who are engaged.







When I was a pastor we began an engaged couples seminar. A couple did not need to be engaged to attend, but we required any couple getting married in the church to attend this seminar. At times a couple would realize they were marrying their fantasies rather than the real person. Their personalities, outlooks, and interests were so different they realized they had been in the heat of romance and had overlooked reality.

When there is distress within a marriage, the church needs to have compassion, especially toward those who are the victims of another person's abuse or infidelity. When a person is the victim of another person's misbehavior, we need to be careful that we do not brand this person like a leper.

# When a couple comes to a pastor and one or both of them have been divorced and want to remarry, what can pastors do to help that couple?

**Wood:** Our bylaws permit a minister to perform a marriage if a marriage has ended because of adultery by an unfaithful spouse. Our bylaws also say a minister can decline to marry this couple.

The bylaws do not mention specifically about ministers remarrying somebody who was divorced prior to conversion, and as a Christian is seeking remarriage. Given the action of the General Council



in permitting a person to hold credentials if he has been divorced prior to conversion, by inference a minister would have that latitude.

But there are cases where a marriage has ended not because of infidelity, but because of other reasons. As a pastor, I used biblical principles and my conscience as a guide. For example, if there had been severe abuse, I might perform that remarriage. But if I felt the marriage did not meet biblical conditions, I would refer that marriage to some other minister. That was my personal way of proceeding. were simply an accommodation to existing culture. I never looked at it that way. I felt that some of our positions prior to 2000, even prior to 2007, were based on a narrow understanding of the phrase, "husband of one wife," found in Timothy and Titus.

In hermeneutics we teach not to build doctrine on obscure texts or texts that are capable of a multitude of interpretations. "Husband of one wife" is one of those texts. In fact, we have already worked around that text in a

"Before we address people whose marriages have been on the cliff, we need to talk about how a pastor can encourage good marriages."

Today we have men and women wanting credentials who have had marriage entanglements prior to their conversion. How are we dealing with that?

**Wood:** I have had a deep-seated feeling since I became a pastor in 1971 that our Assemblies of God position needs to more accurately reflect where I felt the Scriptures stood on the issue. In the past our position represented more our tradition than it did Scripture.

Incrementally over the years, we have gradually brought our position to a careful and closer alignment with Scripture. I say this because some believe our changes on credentialing number of ways because we credential women who are not the husband of one wife. We credential single persons who are not the husband of one wife. We credential remarried widowers. So we have in effect worked around that text.

In my first year in seminary one of my professors was in a dialog with a group of other first-year students. He believed that "husband of one wife" meant one wife for a lifetime. If your wife died, the Scriptures forbade you to remarry. If you remarried, you should lose your ordination. I was 22 years old, and I thought that was extreme. By the end of the second year, his wife had died. By the third year he had remarried. His position on that Scripture changed 180 degrees.

We need to interpret "husband of one wife" the same way we interpret Acts 2:17: "In the last days, ... I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy." We claim Peter's use of loel as our basis for credentialing women. If we believe the phrase "husband of one wife" means one wife during a lifetime, we say this phrase does not apply to somebody who remarries after a spouse dies. So we use this interpretation and allow ministers whose spouse has died to remarry and keep their credentials.

What about those who are single? The apostle Paul was single. Obviously, then, the phrase "husband of one wife" was not meant to exclude single persons. So this is how we interpret this text as our basis for credentialing singles.

My position is this: Why then do we not interpret "husband of one wife" according to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come"? Why do we not interpret it by Jesus' statements in Matthew 5:31,32 concerning the persons who have been the victims of somebody else's infidelity and the fact they are no longer bound? Why do we not interpret "husband of one wife" using this as a basis for credentialing those who were divorced prior to conversion?
The General Council has developed a process for persons who have been the victims of a spouse's infidelity or who were divorced prior to their conversion. This is a separate process from credentialing. If a person wants credentials, he or she must go through the application process, but there is a separate application process for those who have been divorced. They must present documents and testimonies from persons who knew the circumstances. The presbytery interviews these people. We are seeing people who were already being used in ministry in our pulpits and in our churches, but we would not give them credentials.

Often, we said to a person who graduated from one of our schools, "We trained you, but we cannot credential you." I had a problem with that ethically. We let that person invest his time and money preparing for ministry and treat him as though he is qualified for the ministry, but when it comes time to cinch the deal, we say, "Sorry. Go to another church." We have made progress in opening the door and being scriptural at the same time.

#### Respond to those who might believe we have diminished the office of pastor, elder, and deacon by allowing divorced and remarried people to become ministers.

**Wood:** First, I respect that position. There is room for a variety of understanding of Scripture, and I realize some of my friends believe the opposite on this in terms of how they

look at Scripture. We need to respect one another's viewpoints.

My experience has been that persons who have been through this trauma are more committed to marriage and upholding the standard of marriage than many persons who have never known that pain. In the 17 years I pastored, three members of our board of elders had gone through divorce because of the infidelity of a spouse and had remarried. This did not happen while they were elders, but before they became elders. They were godly men. Their present marriages were an incredible example of the Christian life. These were men of faith and good reputation. According to our previous policy, they could teach a Sunday School class, be an usher, work with Royal Rangers, but they could not be a deacon.

When we allowed them to be deacons, we removed the stigma and allowed them to develop in ministry. We would have been missing an ingredient of spiritual contribution had we not opened the door to include their gifts. They were not at fault in the breakup of their marriage. They did not have that choice; their wives forced this upon them. So why should we revictimize the victim. which is what we had been doing?

#### How can a pastor who might have a prior marriage be influential in standing against divorce?

**Wood:** A pastor who has experienced divorce can stand



against divorce because he knows the trauma connected with divorce. But I need to make this distinction. Recently there have been some highprofile individuals in the charismatic movement who divorced without biblical cause. They have simply divorced and acted like nothing is wrong. They continued their ministry, and those in their congregation are clapping. When this occurs, it gives license for every marriage in trouble to crack up.

In the Assemblies of God, we provide some narrow grounds for ministry for those who have had a prior marriage. These narrow grounds are clearly specified as infidelity or an ecclesiastical annulment before, at the time of, or immediately after the marriage. We have had that policy for about 70 years. We have recently added the unbeliever aspect. If a pastor and his spouse divorce because they do not get along, our policy would allow a minister to keep his credentials as long as he does not remarry. But if he remarries and has no biblical reason for the divorce, then he must yield his credentials.

#### What can we say to encourage pastors in smaller communities and congregations who struggle to have qualified individuals who meet their bylaws, constitution, or tradition in this divorce and remarriage issue?

Wood: As a pastor, you use wisdom. If you have a major block of people who are unalterably opposed to reconsideration of this matter, then you must wait. I never tried to force anything when I knew it would bring major disunity. If the pastor senses it is going to be a volatile issue — I imposed this rule no matter what the issue — there would be a calm presentation of the pros and cons. I did not allow personal attacks against the people who held a different position. I did not allow clapping or booing or any physical manifestation signaling agreement or disagreement. After the





discussion I conducted a secret ballot. We agreed this would not become a fellowship issue. We need to give laypeople more credit. If we give them a reasonable chance to do things in an orderly, Christlike manner, they will behave rather well.

#### What is our process on annulment?

Wood: For ministerial credentials, we do not take into account legal annulments. Even if a person had a marriage that has been legally annulled, we still require a credential applicant to go through an ecclesiastical annulment process. The ecclesiastical annulment is something that has been with the Assemblies of God since the 1930s. It is based on fraud or deceit prior to, at the time of, or immediately subsequent to a marriage. Fraud or deceit can involve matters like homosexuality that the spouse hid, affairs

that the spouse did not disclose, or severe psychiatric issues the spouse did not disclose. Those are some things that go into an ecclesiastical annulment. There is no provision for dealing with annulments for laypeople; these only relate to credentials.

A pastor needs to use judgment when a person says he has had a legal annulment. If the marriage was not consummated, it does not even biblically qualify as a marriage.

A pastor would need to look at the basis of this legal annulment. To get a legal annulment means non-consummation or immediate abandonment after the marriage. This would probably qualify a person for remarriage.

What are some practical ways a church can be more inclusive and supportive of divorced people in its congregation? Wood: A church must look carefully at its message. For example, if a church bills itself as a family church, it is telegraphing a message to single parents that is probably negative. Pastors need to be sensitive when they preach on marriage. Since single people or divorced people will be in the audience, the pastor must be inclusive in his preaching. He can say, "These are principles that apply to a husband and wife, but there are broad principles here that apply to us all."

On Mother's Day — which is one of the toughest days of the year for some — I took into account that there were single mothers in my congregation who had bad experiences. Christmas is another season. As a pastor you need to continually look at what you say from the pulpit and in publications. You must be careful not to use terms that would not be inclusive of those who have gone through marital distress and divorce.

#### In what ways has the church inadvertently or intentionally made divorced individuals feel second class, damaged, or like irresponsible persons? Wood: Times have changed. When I was growing up, there

were no divorced people in the church. If you were divorced, no matter the cause, you were stigmatized. That has changed today. But attitudes also vary from size of church and region of country or culture. If a small church is going to grow, it must create a climate of welcoming people, from wherever they are coming.

#### Any final comments?

**Wood:** An analogy that helps me is the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant contained the Law, but it also contained the mercy seat. The Ten Commandments and the mercy seat represent God's righteousness and God's love. When they are together, His righteousness and His compassion meld into His justice.

In the ark of the covenant, God chose to physically represent those two aspects of His nature that are equally strong. He put mercy over the Law. I keep that in mind when I am dealing with people. Rather than trying to get a pound of flesh or simply be a Judaizer or legalist, I take compassion and mercy into account. If I am forced to choose, if it is possible biblically and conscience wise to elevate mercy above the Law, I will elevate mercy, because that is what God did. @

To view the Assemblies of God position paper concerning divorce and remarriage, go to: http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/ Position\_Papers/index.cfm.



**GEORGE O. WOOD, D.TH.P.**, general superintendent of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri





# SAWATION FOR THE SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY

By Lois Breit

What can your church do for single-parent families looking for answers and help? More than you can possibly imagine.



magine losing your main source of income overnight and wondering how you will buy groceries, pay rent, and keep utilities on while facing an unknown future.

Now add:

- Meeting *all* family needs before and after work. These may include angry teens, depressed children, or an infant.
- Searching for a cheaper place to live, packing up for a move to a lessdesirable location.
- Dealing with your own grief, loss, loneliness, and fears.

Welcome to the daily life for many single parents, something with which I am familiar.

When my husband left, I was unprepared. My identity as a wife and mother changed. I had the responsibility of raising five children, while dealing with the loss of family, friends, home, community, and a husband I loved.

By the time I stumbled into what became our home church, I was broken and so were my children, then ages 2, 5, 7, 9,



and 11. My boys were angry at their dad, me, and life. They fought all the time. My girls were confused and crushed. Disciplining my oldest son was impossible because he was so depressed he did not care what privilege I revoked. My fun-loving second son became mouthy and cynical. My shy, 7-year-old daughter began bed-wetting. My youngest previously cuddly son now refused any hugs or affection, while my 2-year-old kept looking for her daddy to come home every night. us daily, even years, as my children became teens.

- Teaching about the Holy Spirit. He was presented as Comforter, Healer, and Restorer.
- Awareness of our physical and emotional needs.
- Intentional inclusion. They changed couple events to adult activities. Progressive dinners did not have to be an even number.



Bible study or care groups are essential to understanding and having a personal knowledge of the single parent's real needs.

Recent statistics tell us that more than 50 percent of marriages, even within the church, end in divorce. I offer the following suggestions and challenges to pastors and congregations to meet this ever-increasing need.

My family was changed because we found a church that was willing to take on the challenges we brought. Here are ways the pastoral staff and church body cared:

• Prayer. A team prayed for

- Awareness of my children's pain. My children at times tried everyone's patience; but, because the church did not give up on them, my children gradually accepted their love.
- Love. Love is the greatest healer. Love gives hope, overcomes depression, and paves the way for a future. By withholding judgment, God's people showing His love saved my family.



• Ministry training. They allowed me to give back in ways that built my confidence and let me bless others. This can be simple: handing out bulletins, greeting, or assisting with a class.

#### Practical Ways To Minister to Single Parents

Pastor, how would your church have welcomed us? How would you have counseled us? What hope would you have offered?

#### Offer acceptance

My divorce left me feeling like a failure, while love and acceptance gave me the courage to go on. As a single parent feels safe, he or she will begin to face personal issues.

#### Meet immediate physical needs

Asking non-invasive questions is often what it takes to discover the needs of someone struggling alone. The need may not be food, shelter, or a ride, but protection from an abusive spouse. Do you know where the nearest women's shelters are located? A person's mind and spirit will be open to the Word once you alleviate her biggest source of fear or worry.

#### Emulate forgiveness

Forgiveness is *the* key component to healing and wholeness. If the single parent avoids this step, he or she will waste everyone's time. Here are a few indicators of single parents' willingness to forgive:

- Have they accepted God's forgiveness for themselves?
- Do they blame others or God, while rarely taking

### The Ten Commandments for Formerly Marrieds

- Thou shalt not live in the past.
- Thou shalt be responsible for thy present and not blame thy past.
- Thou shalt not feel sorry for thyself indefinitely.
- Thou shalt assume thy end of the blame for thy marriage dissolving.
- Thou shalt not try to reconcile thy past and reconstruct thy future by a quick, new marriage.
- Thou shalt not make thy children the victims of thy past marriage.
- Thou shalt not spend all thy time trying to convince thy children how terrible and evil their departed parent is.
- Thou shalt learn all thou can about being a one-parent family and get on with it.
- Thou shalt ask others for help when thou needest it.
- Thou shalt ask God for the wisdom to bury yesterday, create today, and plan for tomorrow.

Single Adult Ministries Web site: http://singles.ag.org/index.php?option=com\_content&task=view&id=2302 &ltemid=2273

responsibility? Will they pray with you to forgive the person who has offended them? Does their attitude toward the person or situation change?

A woman divorced her unfaithful and addicted husband. She and her children became involved in ministries; but, because she was unable to forgive, her patterns changed little. She cut off friends who would not agree or commiserate with her and her church that tried to protect her when she wanted to enter another bad relationship. Her new marriage was a disaster. Her children became rebellious teens and ended up in difficult marriages. Forgiveness is a choice.

#### Develop training programs

After I taught a parenting class, a single mom said, "I am now ready to go back home. I have hope, techniques, and a plan to bring order to my home."

• MOPS or Teen MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers). Consider an evening Teen MOPS to teach teen mothers.

One teen MOPS meets at a coffee shop each week. Last Christmas, nine high school and neighborhood teen mothers accepted Jesus after hearing the gospel through the Christmas story.

 Strong children and youth programs. If you are genuine and truthful, children and youth will listen. Bring hope to parents and children through education classes.

#### Financial planning

Finance classes will benefit everyone in your congregation, but are necessary for single parents. With over 50 percent of single-parent homes below the poverty level, here are some ways the church can help:

- Assess current needs and how the church can help; always start with the immediate need.
- Set up financial-planning classes which include:
  - Designing an actual budget with the single parent.
  - Answering tax questions. Include instructions on filing an EZ or online tax form, EITC information, and provide names of trusted volunteers or professional tax preparers.
- Teach tithing and giving, and the blessings that ensue.
- Set boundaries. Help them solve their problems, rather than take a role as problem solver.
- Offer partial scholarships for their children.
- Help them evaluate how their choices cause their financial crises.
- Sound financial decisions build character, vision, and a future. Your church can launch a family into financial stability.

#### Provide counseling

Offer a choice of trained counselors in your community. Lack of transportation, finances, or depression can immobilize a single parent, but your church can help get the ball rolling. Suicidal thoughts can capture the mind of an overwhelmed single parent. Help leadership recognize the signs of depression and suicide. They may be the only one close enough to see the danger signals in an emotionally distraught parent or child.

#### Small aroup involvement

Bible study or care groups are essential to understanding and having a personal Compliment. Find single parents' strengths and encourage them. Avoid unrealistic expectations.

A mini spa, fresh haircut, manicure, or a make-up party can help heal a crushed spirit.

#### Social life

Encourage your congregation to invite a single parent to personal gatherings, not just church functions. Divorce,

#### Spiritual growth

Set mini goals for the single parent; provide a printed list of God's promises; encourage their presence in Sunday School, Bible studies, etc. "Have people invest in and mentor your single parents. Senior citizens can be mentors answering spiritual questions, challenging their faith, and keeping their actions accountable.



knowledge of the single parent's real needs. These groups can be a training ground for trust, friendships, and lifelong behavior patterns.

I caution against exclusively single-parents groups. They *can* feed anger and resentment, while being around the healthy breeds healing. Careful training of leadership will keep single-parent groups positive.

#### Rebuild self-esteem

Court appearances, accusations, and threats leave single parents lacking confidence. What can the church do? death, and moves cause many to lose their friends, family, and homes. They feel on the outside, but have a desire to be included.

Bringing a single-parent family into your social realm involves wisdom and boundaries. Single parents can become clingy in their need, dependent in their weakness, and pesky in their loneliness. When the pastor, leadership, and congregation set guidelines and boundaries for this ministry, problems should be limited and healthy friendships should grow.

#### Sensitivity to the children

Patience and grace will be needed as you minister to the children. In the first several years their lives are raw. Parents often bicker and put their children in the middle. Some children cry because they do not see their absent parent; others cry because they have to. Some children are angry they cannot live with the other parent; some are angry they have to talk to them. Some wait for a phone call or visit that will *never* come.

What to do with the children?



- Pray for the children: For continued prayer covering select leadership teams, mentor families, and people who truly care about children.
- Choose proven men in the church to invite boys to a ballgame, to go out for a hamburger, or just talk. (Conduct background checks on *all* who will be working with children and teens.)
- A grandparent couple can invest time in the life of a young girl.
- Love them into wanting to behave in church, rather than expecting them to. They are grieving the loss of a parent, family, and maybe the lifestyle they once had.
- Limit expectations for them in answering questions or earning badges in classes. Let the shy ones absorb, engage the outgoing,

and provide a refuge.

- Concentration, discipline, and a will to succeed in their studies can be weak while grieving. A tutor could be a ticket to success. Look to your youth group.
- Recognize those who carry shame, guilt, or blame for things that were not their fault.
- Poor grades and hand-medown clothes can make a child feel odd, stupid, or unacceptable. Find ways to build them up. Focus on their strengths. Train volunteers to:
- Know they are not to solve all problems, just have a listening ear and a caring heart.
- Meet with the pastor and/ or parent to assess the child's needs, abilities, and initial goals before committing to this ministry.
- Recognize when they are in over their heads,

i.e.: realize the child's emotional issues are too extensive for them, they are becoming too personally attached, or they do not have the time to give to this ministry.

- Not overreact. Remember, children are not always accurate in their assessment of situations.
- Keep in communication with the parents.
- Never interfere with the parental role. They should not become a threat to the parent's relationship with the child. Volunteers are not responsible to give the child a better life, only to help him or her cope.
- Protect their privacy.
- Have regular progress evaluations with parents and/or pastors.

#### The Church Made a Difference for My Family

The church did not know us, but they embraced us. They had no grounds to trust me, but they gave me an old car to use. They did not know if we had food, they just brought groceries. The church was Jesus, letting us know we were still loved and cared for at a time we felt unloved and abandoned.

My children's behavior was often irritating, disruptive, and humiliating. A man once told me, "Take your disruptive children out of the service." But the pastor told me to keep bringing them, even though my 9-year-old son was talking back to him *during* the services.

The pastor said, "I can take it if you can take it; he needs to be here." I listened to the pastor who not only took what my son gave him, but became a lifelong friend to him.

Because of this church and its pastors, our lives changed. My brash and mouthy young son grew into a man who loves God. He and his family are now missionaries to Mexico City. The toddler waiting for her daddy to come home every night is preparing to leave as a missionary to Eurasia. The shy, timid girl became a witness in her school and workplace. She is in nursing school, and she and her husband are youth pastors. The isolated little boy became a passionate evangelist and outgoing youth pastor. The angry, frustrated son has learned the power of forgiveness and has given his life to the Lord. As for me, I am an ordained minister, having served as an associate pastor, district youth director's assistant, and currently as a U.S. missions and district retreat/ conference speaker. God can do the impossible when the church lives out the gospel.

What can your church do for the single-parent families looking for answers and help? More than you can possibly imagine. @



LOIS BREIT, Costa Mesa, California, is a U.S. missionary to ethnic and urban church plants and revitalization churches of the Southern California District, and a conference and workshop speaker.



"It's such a nice summer day outside, I was tempted to shorten my sermon. But I've learned not to yield to temptation!"



# **IFE IN THE BLENDER** MINISTERING TO THE NEEDS OF BLENDED FAMILIES

By Donald R. Partridge

eady or not, here they come stepfamilies and single-parent families. These families represent the most significant cultural change in your church today. They are now your business. They are a critical concern in your ministry. These systems have impacted just about everyone you know,

possibly even your family. The issues these families experience are enormous. In this article I speak to some of the more serious issues and offer solutions. You will learn things you may not have known, and I will present biblical applications. But with this article comes a challenge. Are you ready for some reorientation?

You know the statistics: Half of all adults today are single, single-again, or single parents. The other half are married, and half of those married are in stepfamilies. Divorce statistics suggest that about 43 percent of first marriages and over 60 percent of stepfamilies fail. Given the fact stepfamilies have such a high turnover, second, third, and even fourth marriages are ever more frequent. Regardless of the reasons, single parents and stepfamilies are gaining statistical ground.

Why will working with stepfamilies and single parents become a predominant ministry in your church? When you reach into your community, you get what is there — and a growing part is single parents and stepfamilies.

The Head of the Church said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isaiah 61:1,2, KJV). Few more closely fit the bill of being brokenhearted and continually bruised as single parents and members of stepfamilies.

So, let us meet a couple visiting your church. This story is true, except for names and locations.

After going through an agonizing divorce, Barbara, who lived in Wichita, Kansas, planned to take her two daughters and move as far away as possible. She contracted to work in Seattle, Washington, using relocation money to finance her move. Just before she was ready to leave, the children's father took Barbara to court and barred her from taking their children out of state. So Barbara went west alone. As soon as her yearlong contract was fulfilled, she moved back to Wichita.

Her relationship with her daughters is currently strained due to her absence and because the father has been speaking against Barbara to the children. The daughters live with



Barbara is determined to have them come back and live with her,

their father, but

something the father is opposing. Litigation is looming.

Now add this. While in Seattle, Barbara met and married Jacob, who has moved back to Wichita with her. Barbara and Jacob are already having difficulties over Barbara's kids. He wants her to be more of a disciplinarian, something Barbara refuses to do. She is trying to reestablish closeness with her daughters and is afraid of alienating them completely.

Can things get worse? Jacob has had two previous marriages and has three children: the first wife lives in New York with two children; the second in Seattle with one son. Jacob has not spoken with his children for months. Both ex-wives have turned his children against him. When he calls his kids in New York, they hang up on him. And now he has moved away from his son in Seattle. to them you understand, are concerned, and in your church they can find direction and advice. This couple can become a center of health and stability for themselves, for their children, and for other single parents and stepfamilies.

This is the Isaiah ministry Jesus was referring to. Would you like to be a lighthouse for couples like Barbara and Jacob and watch your church grow? If so, here we go.

#### The Danger of Sudden Relief

It is important to understand the principal reason many single parents rush into dating and marrying. Barbara and Jacob were divorced single parents living in Seattle. Look at the dating practices that led to their decision to marry. This will help you understand what happened early in their relationship.

The Bible describes divorce in gruesome detail. Since in

custody and visitation issues, financial problems, being forced to live apart from children, having a life partner as a hostile ex-spouse, having former friends and relatives turn against you. These make up the ingredients that produce extremely vulnerable individuals.

In their environment of heartbreak and emotional damage, imagine what took place when Barbara and Jacob met. Suddenly they experienced adult kindness and companionship. Emotions that had been crushed down for so long were suddenly awakened. These emotions caught Barbara and Jacob off guard.

Such a sudden radical change in environment can be overwhelming. Neither Barbara nor Jacob realized their intense feelings for one another were largely the result of this sudden change.

The complexities of multiple relationships in blended families can be overwhelming. They can, and do, dismantle the best of families.

Barbara and Jacob are sitting in your church Sunday morning. They look good and are great to talk to. Yet, a glimpse of their inner lives reveals enormous complexities and heartaches. They need your help. But how can you help them?

First, you can assist this couple by what you say Sunday morning. You can get across the union of a couple they become one flesh, separation is the wholesale tearing of that one flesh into two parts, leaving gaping holes and body parts lying around. Divorce is the commission of violent and horrendous acts of treachery and physical damage by one or both partners against the other.

Now add court issues, child

Their emotional intoxication was just about impossible to manage.

Non-parents are *drawn* into relationships; single parents are *rammed* into relationships.

Non-parents take their time when dating and grow into relationships. Single parents fall in love over a meal. They can go from "Hi, how are

# LIFE IN THE BLENDER: MINISTERING TO THE NEEDS OF BLENDED FAMILIES

# Zero Neglect

Some of the greatest difficulties in blending families arise when some bonds are given too much attention, too much time, or too much energy, resulting in the *neglect* of other bonds and step-connections.

Concentrating on one bond *at the expense* of others is favoritism. If there isn't a good reason for the extra attention (something like a major illness), awarding one bond or step-connection more attention than another is lethal to blending families. Favoritism awakens jealousies and resentments that can dismantle the best of families.

Benefiting all stepfamily members through zero neglect means that no bond or step-connection is overlooked or disregarded. Zero neglect means that all of the blending family members experience a sense of well-being and feel reasonably satisfied.

Neglect occurs when individuals in the blending family perceive that they are receiving less favor, less time, and/or less material goods than other family members. Their sense of fairness is violated. They feel dishonored. They experience a sense of loss, which builds anger or resentment and sadness and awakens nuclear bonds to war.

One couple told us that the reason their blending family was so successful was that they were careful always to put their marriage first over the rest of their blending family.

Hardly 10 minutes later, another couple told us that the success in their family was due to their always giving the kids first priority.

Here is the principle: Regardless of the priority of relationships, if family members never feel slighted, uncared for, or mistreated, things will be good for the stepfamily.

#### - DONALD R. PARTRIDGE, Ph.D., Pleasanton, California.

The above has been edited and abridged from *Loving Your Stepfamily: The Art of Making Your Blending Family Work.* Copyright © 2007 by Dr. Donald R. Partridge. Used with permission.

you?" to "This is the person I want to spend the rest of my life with" within hours.

After their first date Barbara and Jacob believed they knew everything they needed to know about each other. They dismissed any problems they observed and deemed them to be of little concern in planning their life together. Proverbs 27:7 says: "A sated man loathes honey, but to a famished man every bitter thing is sweet" (NASB).1 They discounted the fact Jacob had been married twice before and was estranged from his kids, and Barbara was living away from her children. Everything in the relationship was sweet.

How can you as pastor help?

For single parents who can remarry, prior to their dating explain to them the powerful feelings brought on by such a contrast. Talk about the emotional intoxication that comes from such a sudden change in their environment. Explain to them that emotions can become nearly unmanageable. Tell them they will want their new relationship to move forward at lightning speed; that God will bodily appear in dreams, visions, and endless confirmations; that they will ignore judgment, forget who they are, glorify their partner, forget how to date, leave morality behind, and (during this time) forget their kids.

Teach them that marriage is only sustainable to those who are patient, willing to move slowly, and make wise preparation.

Knowing what to expect will

help dating single parents to not be caught off guard, to manage their high emotions, and to alter their dating habits.

#### **Family Connections**

Just as quickly as stepfamilies join, they also deteriorate. Here is why. Genesis 2:24 says: "So shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall no longer be two but one flesh."

Married couples are meant to be separate and independent, masters over their own households. Imagine the potential for problems when individuals marry without leaving the authority of their parents. Overlapping authorities and overlapping relationships can cause conflict. But contrast a first marriage with a stepfamily.

In first marriages, couples intentionally separate from outside relationships and authorities; in stepfamilies outside relationships and authorities intentionally overlap. First-marriage spouses are independent and bond exclusively to each other. From the day of marriage, stepfamilies are not independent from their children and therefore do not bond exclusively to their current partners.

Separation from all outside relationships brings peace. Overlapping relationships automatically create difficulty and hardship.

In a first marriage the husband and wife are "one flesh," with their children sharing the same biological connection. Parents and children are one family unit.

In contrast, stepfamily

members are both biologically and non-biologically related adults and children. And the other parents of the children and the other parents' partners all have a voice in exercising control over the stepfamily. The complexities of these multiple relationships can be overwhelming. They can, and do, dismantle the best of families.



You see this evident throughout Scripture and throughout history as multiple wives and children not of the same father or mother feud between themselves and create endless turmoil — Sarah and Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac, Leah and Rachel, Jacob's sons and their half-brother Joseph, the troubled offspring of King David, Gideon's 70 sons, Jephthah and his half-brothers, Hannah and her trouble with Peninnah - to name a few. If relationships between half-brothers and sisters do not work that well, how can we expect nonbiological relationships to work in stepfamilies?

Barbara and Jacob are in this kind of trouble. Jacob criticizes Barbara's parenting style. The daughters have shown they do not want Jacob intruding into their lives. And Barbara and her daughters' father are in conflict over where the daughters are going to live. Also, because Jacob has been absent for so long from his children, his ex-wives are turning their children's hearts against him.

Is harmony possible in single-parent families and stepfamilies? Can Jacob and Barbara's daughters develop a They have a total of nine separate key relationships in their family: [1] Barbara's children with their father, [2] Barbara with her children, [3] Barbara and Jacob themselves, [4] Jacob with his children, [5] two of Jacob's children with their mother in New York, and [6] Jacob's third child with his mom in Seattle. The non-biological

Non-parents take their time when dating and grow into relationships. Single parents fall in love over a meal.

kind and caring relationship? Can you as pastor help? Absolutely. Here's how.

The Bible tells us that children must honor their father and mother, that we are to love our enemies and do good to them who persecute us, offer our cheek for a second blow, and go the extra mile with someone who is controlling our time and energy. Therefore, we can and should do the following:

First, have parents clearly identify every relationship in the single-parent family or stepfamily. Unlike first marriages where every member shares the same biological connection, in single-parent families and stepfamilies every biological and nonbiological connection needs to be clearly recognized.

Look at Barbara and Jacob.

connections include [7] Barbara and her relationship with Jacob's three kids, and [8] Jacob's connection with Barbara's children. The last set of connections [9] is between the children who have yet to meet one another.

Every one of these separate relationships is poised at any moment to threaten the stability of Barbara and Jacob. Barbara and Jacob must identify and satisfy each individual relationship for their marriage to remain peaceful.

Second, once Barbara and Jacob identify family relationships, these relationships become individual targets for Barbara and Jacob to accept — not oppose. Barbara and Jacob must not resist or fight against any of these relationships. And they must set the example by honoring and supporting every connection and relationship in and around the stepfamily.

By accepting bonds and step-connections, this means the parents and stepparents allow the other parents and stepparents the full rights and privileges due them. Acceptance means they allow the other adults to live their own lives in the way they see fit. Acceptance does not mean approval. This does not mean one set of parents needs to approve the lifestyle of the other set of parents or their method of child raising. But they and their children must respect and honor the position of biological parent and stepparent and your children, whether earned or not. Every parent and every stepparent is to be considered important and vital to the emotional well-being of your children.

Whether or not you like the people in your children's other family, every bond and every step-connection are key elements in promoting your children's well being, as well as your own stepfamily happiness.

Peter writes: "Be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8,9, NKJV).<sup>2</sup> The Bible is telling Barbara and Jacob to be kind, considerate, and helpful — and to instruct their children to behave in the same way.

By the way, this author's own stepfamily has 23 separate relationships compared

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with Barbara and Jacob's nine. When we say that identifying and accepting every single relationship is important, we are not kidding.

#### Mind-sets

Family members in a first marriage share the same mind-set — they all are members of the same family.

Those in single-parent households and in stepfamilies do not share the same mindset. Even parents and their own children think differently. The single mother does not recognize her former husband as a part of her life, but her son gives him full recognition as his father. The remarried father recognizes his new wife as part of the family, but his daughter thinks, *That woman is not my mother*.

These mind-sets define behavior (Proverbs 23:7). How children think and how parents think is how they are going to behave. Yet, as parents, it is not in our nature to have our children think and behave differently from us. We want our children to share our values and beliefs. When they do finally found Him. Do not miss the wording: When they discovered Jesus, Mary said to Him, " 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your health of everyone, especially of children.

What's the solution? Identify and respect mindsets. List how everyone in the

Every bond and every step-connection are key elements in promoting your children's well-being, as well as your own steptamily happiness.

not, we object. Even Paul the apostle told one of his churches, "I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:15,16).

This is the problem between Jesus and His mother and father in Luke 2. Without Mary or Joseph's knowledge, the young Jesus stayed behind and spent several days in the temple until His parents father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' " (verses 48,49, NKJV).

See the mind-sets? And, see the differences in behaviors? Mary said, "Your father and I. ..."

Jesus said, "I was about My Father's business." Between Jesus and His mother there were differences in the usage of the term *father*. Mary was referring to Joseph; Jesus, to His Father in heaven.

If Jesus' family was disrupted by different mind-sets and behaviors, it is easy to imagine the problems that can arise in single-parent households and stepfamilies.

These differences in mindsets are seriously affecting Barbara and Jacob's stepfamily. Look at the high number of mind-sets in opposition to one another: parents opposing parents, former spouses opposing each other, children in conflict with parents. Such tension-filled situations are catastrophic to the emotional stepfamily needs to respond to other family members. Then the adults must honor and work with these mindsets. This is more difficult than anyone would think.

For example, Barbara and Jacob will recognize that Barbara's children need to love both father and mother, but must also respect and be kind to Jacob. Then they are to do everything possible to support this mind-set. Barbara will certainly attempt to strengthen her own relationship with her daughters but must also support the daughters' relationship with their father. Jacob will do all he can to help Barbara and her daughters regain their former closeness. He will also try to enhance his stepdaughters' relationship with their father. And with Barbara's guidance and Jacob's servant behavior, the daughters may then be willing to accept Jacob as part of the family.

Barbara must see herself as a servant of Jacob and his children and their mind-sets. She must do what she can to



help heal the division and animosity between Jacob and his children. She must support his desire to travel to New York and Seattle to see his children. She can also help begin the long process of bringing restoration to the relationship between Jacob and his ex-wives, possibly trying to get to know them.

#### Parenting/De-Parenting

Even two excellent parents can ruin a good stepfamily. The lack of agreement between spouses on how to parent will likely bring down a good stepfamily.

Parents are notorious for letting discipline slide; stepparents, for being too demanding. Right or wrong, the child's parent must ultimately control how he/she will raise his/her child. If one parent's parenting level is low and the parent refuses to budge, the stepparent has no recourse but to de-parent to that level. De-parenting means to back off and allow the child's parent full control over his/her own children.

De-parenting is a huge issue among stepparents. Time and time again we have seen stepparents ruin great marriages because they did not know how to be flexible and could not learn to de-parent.

Jesus set the example of this type of flexibility. Jesus is Messiah and King; yet, when He came to earth, He did not exercise the rights of Messiah or King. In fact, He did the opposite. Paul says Jesus made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. He would not even so much as figuratively break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax (Matthew 12:20; Philippians 2:7).

Can stepparents follow this example? Can a stepparent surrender lawful parenting rights and take on the form of a bondservant, submitting to the parenting level of the spouse? Can a stepparent win over the stepchildren through self-sacrifice and service rather than through requirement and force?

Barbara and Jacob find themselves in this quandary. Barbara has established the level of parenting. Can Jacob de-parent to Barbara's level? What is the solution for Jacob?

The model Jacob will need to follow is the *grandparent model* — where the parent does all the required work and the grandparent gets to enjoy the children. Jacob can become like a grandparent figure, free from the weight of parenting. This will allow Barbara to do her parenting without interference. If any difficulties arise with the kids, everything falls back on Barbara. Jacob, on the other hand, can learn to enjoy his stepdaughters. He can learn to care for them and accept them as they are, with the good and bad. He can be one of Barbara's best sources of encouragement.

Following Jesus' example

# **RESOURCES** for Ministering to Blended Families

The following Web sites provide ministry and resources for blended families:

InStep Ministries http://www.instepministries.com

Successful Stepfamilies http://www.successfulstepfamilies.com

Designing Dynamic Stepfamilies http://designingdynamicstepfamilies.com

and the idea of taking on the grandparent model, Jacob must accentuate the positive, bringing into the new family healing and grace.

#### Conclusion

Sin is wreaking havoc among families in our communities, with the result that single parent and stepfamilies are now a significant part of your congregations. You must reeducate yourself to deal constructively and helpfully with these growing family systems.

Knowledgeable care and wise support are critically needed. These families are brokenhearted; they are continually being bruised. They are prime candidates for those on whom Christ wants to bestow mercy and not sacrifice. This field of ministry is ripe and ready for harvest. The laborers are few.

Let us go into the highways and byways that His church might be filled. @

#### NOTES

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# MINISTERING TO THE GENERATION By Carol Howard Merritt

Our congregation became an intergenerational meeting ground, a place for supportive tribes to form.

# n my bedroom I have a Gabbeh rug, woven in deep browns and dreens, This is not the

typical elegant Persian rug. This one has thick, choppy wool, rough edges, and crooked lines. It is made with vegetable dyes, and each row changes colors, leaving a wonderful earthy richness. In a region known for its fine and intricate carpets, these rugs are bottom of the line because they are constructed and carried by nomadic tribes who pack them on animals until they set down a temporary home. They then unfold them on the ground, where their family can gather on that 4-by 6-foot area.

be comforting to have a bit of familiar space to unpack on after reaching a strange land. So, as I got ready to move for the seventh time in 16 years, I bought the carpet and packed it into the trunk of my car. I needed a familiar space I could take with me, something that was sturdy, warm, and not likely to wear out anytime soon.

I do not travel with a caravan of extended family and friends, but like many in my generation of thirtysomethings, I move often with my spouse and daughter. These moves take me increasingly away from my family of origin.

When I unpacked my boxes in Arlington, Virginia, I rolled out the rug in my bedroom. My daughter and I sat on the thick pile as we listened to books on tape and admired the brown and green diamond shapes. The soft where I can meet friends and gather a makeshift family. Evidently, even though I feel dreadfully alone sometimes, I am not alone. Ethan Watters wrote an article about meeting his young unmarried friends every Tuesday night at a particular restaurant and labeled them an *urban tribe*. From the outpouring of mail the little piece received, he realized this sociological trend was widespread, so he wrote a book on this development.

The term *urban tribe* strikes a chord with me too, although I am married and have a child. Away from my family of origin, I long for community. As a pastor, I see that the best work of our church springs up when these groups begin to form: small, cohesive parties who can depend on each other for interesting friendships, pet sitting, and meaningful holidays.

As a pastor, I see that the best work of our church springs up when these groups begin to form: small, cohesive parties who can depend on each other for interesting friendships, pet sitting, and meaningful holidays.

While preparing to put our house on the market before our move from Rhode Island to Washington, D.C., I realized I needed a carpet to cover the



lames Pauls • eyecrave photography

shiny wood flooring my husband and I had recently installed. I also imagined it would itchiness tickled my hands, connecting me to my history in Rhode Island, as well as its own years of tradition tightly wound up into its threads.

#### **Urban Tribes**

The carpet reminds me that each place I find myself, I try to quickly set up a little area

#### Forming Tribal Churches

When I began as a 27-year-old pastor of a small rural church, ministering to young adults seemed like an impossible task, especially when I looked at newspapers, philosophy, and church growth trends. Newspapers and magazines often dressed young adults up as greedy slackers, ever sponging off their parents, and never assuming responsible roles in society.

I often did not recognize the people our popular culture described. No matter what cause united moms, how much volunteering dads engaged in, or what trends 20-year-olds began, they were inevitably compared disparagingly to Baby Boomers, the civil rights movements of the sixties, and were eternally dwarfed in that Boomer-looming shadow. How could the church understand young adults if it continually looked at them through the tinted spectacles of older adults?

Then I read church growth material, which thoughtfully categorized younger generations. I loved studying books like Soul Tsunami, but when I tried to put some ideas into practice in my elderly congregation (like the instructions to "get glocal"), I realized the great gulf between where we were as a church and where we needed to be to implement the suggested ideas. I began swimming and swirling, feeling hopeless, like I had to reinvent 2,000 years of solid traditions and practice to reach out to my generation.

Visiting contemporary worship services particularly designed for young adults made me feel irritated and empty. I was a part of a large, growing segment of spiritual young adults who wanted nothing to do with contemporary worship. As soon as I saw that white screen slither down from the ceiling, I knew that I was going to have

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### MINISTERING TO THE MISSING GENERATION

a difficult time stomaching the next 25 minutes. Someone was trying too hard to be hip. Like my high school English teacher's attempts to be fashionable and cool, it just seemed *wrong*.

I was being unfair. Actually, I think I was just jealous. Obviously, there was a place in our society for slick worship, but I was like most pastors. I could never be hip, even when I tried. I could buy a pair of designer jeans to wear on a Sunday morning and use the word *awesome* a lot, but I was still perfectly square.

My rural church was far from cool, too. It was small, ancient, and full of people over 60 and the perfect place to effectively care for young adults. Like those nomadic tribes, our church needed a rug — a comforting space for young adults, a place where years of tradition formed something beautiful. And they came, and they began to join. Over time, we began to weave a rich tapestry of diverse, intergenerational people.

We did not discover the formula for a booming Gen X megachurch in just 3 years; instead, we reversed the trend of lost membership, kept the original members, and had a consistent 10 percent growth made up of individuals of various ages.

Our congregation became an intergenerational meeting

ground, a place for supportive tribes to form, and I began to realize that our church has great assets for reaching out to young adults. When I moved to Rhode Island, I noticed the same thing happened in that bayside New England town of Barrington. Then I joined the staff of an urban church in Washington, D.C., where the flow of young members seemed to rise every week. those once-sacred hours.

When a young person walks into a church, it is a significant moment, because no one expects her to go and nothing pressures her to attend. Instead, she enters the church looking for something. She searches for connection in her displacement: connection with God through spiritual practices, connection with her neighbors through an intergenerational community, and connection source of connection. I have seen tribes gather in a variety of settings: in a college town, the rural countryside, a New England community, and an urban setting. Watching relations and groups develop in a church, creating and maintaining space for them, is a vital part of what I do as a pastor.

Envisioning what the church will look like in the next 20 years, I imagine a body that gathers together to wor-

We began to weave a rich tapestry of diverse, intergenerational people. We reversed the trend of lost membership, kept the original members, and had a consistent 10 percent growth made up of individuals of various ages.

#### Weaving Connections

Though young adults came, we realized how easy it was for them not to. It is no longer important for someone in their twenties or thirties to go to church. Denominational affiliation has very little power in our politics or workplaces. The societal expectation to attend worship is gone, the blue laws faded a long time ago, and now children have plenty of sporting and scouting opportunities during with the world through social justice outreach.

The church has been making these vital connections for thousands of years, and we can easily respond to the young, weary travelers in our midst, letting them know that they can find a spiritual home within our worshiping communities and that we will provide a supportive space for them so they can form their tribe.

Our churches can weave a

ship God, strives for social justice, and cultivates tribes. Even the smallest churches *especially* the smallest churches — have the resources to respond to young adults in meaningful ways when they understand their contexts and make a place for them. These relationships take shape when our intergenerational groups of displaced families and single people begin to weave a rich tapestry of familiar space. @



**CAROL HOWARD MERRITT** is a pastor in Washington, D.C. You can read her blog at www.tribalchurch.org. "Ministering to the Missing Generation" by Carol Howard Merritt is reprinted from *Alban Weekly* (No. 164, September 10, 2007), with permission from the Alban Institute. Adapted from *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation* by Carol Howard Merritt. Copyright © 2007 by The Alban Institute, Inc., Herndon, Va. All rights reserved. *Alban Weekly* is a free electronic newsletter sent once a week with timely and concise information on emerging trends and Alban's latest resources and upcoming events. Sign up at www.alban.org.



# GET OVER THE NUMBERS: REACHING YOUNG AND SINGLE ADULTS IN THE SMALLER CHURCH By Brandon Searles

ingle adult and young adult ministry continues to be a hot topic. Books that identify the characteristics of the previous three generations continue to educate pastors, teachers, church workers, and even parents. A common theme in these books, however, is: *Pastors, the church is in trouble if it does not reach and disciple young adults.* A question these books often leave unanswered is, "How?"

We see or hear of successful single and/or young adult ministries in larger churches. While serving as district young adult representative I facilitated workshops to help churches launch their single adult/young adult ministries. When I opened the floor for questions, one of the most common questions leaders asked was: "How can we target single adult/young adult ministry when we are a smaller church? Can we keep the attention and interests of single adults/young adults with little or no budget?"

The answer is yes. I share both from my experience and research. My goal in this article is to provide a plan to implement a new or improve an existing single adult/ young adult program in the smaller church.

What are the needs of single adults and young adults? The answer is one word — *relationships*. Look at some activities single and young adults engage in on an average day (excluding social events):

• E-mail. Always good to hear from old friends as well as new ones.

• Facebook. People to relate to in one form or another.

• Phone calls and text messages. Several conversations that stretch over the entire day.

• Chat room. No shortage of interesting people.

Singles likely come to your church by way of relationships: friend, boyfriend/girlfriend, family, or coworker. This is our starting point.

#### Key 1: Relationship Makes Slick People Sticky

If you want to attract single and

young adults, provide an environment where they can relate. I did not say provide a *place*, but rather an *environment*. Single and young adults are not looking for a circle of chairs or a building. They are looking for a place to fit in, a place to experience belonging. Provide genuine love and acceptance. You will be surprised how even the hardest or cynical skeptic will return.

#### Key 2: Give Them Something To Talk About

Your meeting content will play a crucial part in attracting and retaining single and young adults. I have looked over curriculum and even created some. I have experimented with a complete package, and I have also used a series of studies built around a theme. Which worked best? Each had its pros and cons, but curriculum by itself does not make meetings a hit. What works is having the right chemistry. The right chemistry brings single and young adults into relationship, gives them a sense of belonging, and a confidence they are part of something significant. Curriculum is only a platform, a compass, and something to keep order and give purpose. So, do not put too much confidence in curriculum; it is only one piece of the master plan.

Imagine you are the director of a Hollywood production. You have in your hand a



profound story contained within a clever script. Scripts do not read themselves, so you call talent agents. They can hire the most acclaimed actors and actresses and gather them in a room and give them your script, and yet there can be no chemistry. People will leave your movie saying, "Very interesting story but the characters just were not believable."

You can create an environment for reaching young and single adults using three ingredients. They are true of a group of two or 2,000 and they require no budget.



On the other hand, you can have a simple script that tells a predictable story, but the chemistry between characters is captivating. The story did not change, but the interaction between the characters came to life. People will leave this movie reciting lines from their favorite scenes and labeling this movie, "Unforgettable."

Your curriculum is the script. Regardless of how ingenious the content or flashy the handouts, the packaging should come with a label that reads "Warning: Chemistry not included." Your job as pastor is to bathe the meeting in prayer as well as prepare an environment conducive to life-changing relationships.

Following are three ingredients to create an environment for reaching the young and single adults in your church. They are true of a group of two or 2,000 and they require no budget.

Be real. Single adults and young adults are sensitive to superficiality and facades. They have grown up with infomercials selling products they do not trust and watching politicians portrayed as phony and self-serving. They look for a leader who is not perfect, but is comfortable with that fact. They look for adults who have temptations, and feel as though they disappointed God at times. They then can grasp grace and hope when they hear, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, KJV).

### GET OVER THE NUMBERS: REACHING YOUNG AND SINGLE ADULTS IN THE SMALLER CHURCH



Take your current single adult/ young adult ministry to another level by networking with other churches to create combined events.

Attendees at a community-wide singles event sponsored by Saturday Night Alive, Rapid City, South Dakota.

Next, they want to know your passions and fears, joys and sorrows. After all, you want them to trust you with theirs. Here is a question you should ask yourself before each meeting: *Will I* be spending time with those I call friends or just a target audience of my calling?

Jesus called His disciples "friends." He laughed when they laughed and cried when they cried. They saw Him when He was hungry as well as when He was exhausted. They saw not only the Messiah, but also a human being who knew what it was to laugh, sweat, bleed, and cry. **Be relevant.** Many young adults can describe a church service from start to finish, yet stumble their way through the plan of salvation. They can tell Bible stories but find it difficult to apply them to their lives.

One month we created an anonymous written survey entitled *Burning Questions*. I distributed pieces of paper with fill-in-the-blank statements such as "I have always been told that\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_." "I do not understand why God \_\_\_\_\_\_." At the bottom of the paper were also blank lines for them to write their own questions. I gave each person opportunity to ask questions without fear of embarrassment along with an assurance we would address any question asked in sincerity. The questions were not easy, but they indicated where these young adults were. The content must speak to their dreams and desires along with their doubts and fears. Otherwise, they make themselves an exception to the truths and will usually be anxious for the topic's conclusion.

**Be respectful.** We live in a time-conscious day. We must keep a balance in which there is enough time to have a meaningful meeting while being mindful of time. Value their time. Respect their commitments and responsibilities, and they will allow you to speak into their lives.

Be mindful of their budgets. Your group may range from college students on their own for the first time to single parents who have child-care costs associated with each event. If you want their trust, respect their budget.

#### What, When, and Where? Step one. Inventory.

Survey your Sunday and Wednesday services for single and young adults. Look for young adults who have remained in your teen ministry. Use the number of single and young adults in your church to approximate the percentage that will initially attend your first meeting. Generally, 70-80 percent of your young adults will come to this meeting. Take this number and add 50 percent for friends they bring with them. For example, if you have 10 single adults/young adults, at least seven or eight will probably attend. It is also likely (and hopefully encouraged) that three or four will bring a friend. This gives an approximate starting number of 12. Use this number to begin thinking about the type of meeting to start with. Employ a sign-up sheet or interest card to spark interest.

#### Step two. What type of meeting?

I found that a small-group format is best. Here are some benefits. First, this format offers a relaxed, casual atmosphere that will probably not intimidate more sensitive attendees. Second, it provides a format in which feedback and interaction are almost inevitable. There is no greater way to get the heartbeat of your group than to hear them share. Third, from these small groups you can birth other events such as outings,





Participants at the 2008 retreat held in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

# Multidenominational Approach

I have been involved with a multidenominational singles ministry in Rapid City, South Dakota, for 24 years. Smaller churches can team together with other churches to develop and create a thriving young adult or single adult ministry. Our singles group started as a Bible study from one church. It blossomed into a gathering of many young adults. The group has grown into a self-supporting single adult ministry.

This group started with the support of my pastor who recognized the importance of fellowship, life issues, and the uniqueness of singles. He supported me with ideas, insight, and guidance. Pastors should encourage the single and young adult leaders in their churches to start a singles ministry. It will provide the fellowship and encouragement young and single adults so desperately need.

We call our singles ministry Saturday Night Alive. We devote two Saturday nights each month to Bible study/life issues. One Saturday night we host a coffee house. We also have an informal activity each month. We developed a leadership team comprised of individuals representing various churches. We involve other pastors in the community in teaching and sharing their passion with the singles. Churches have supported our ministry and assisted in promoting our activities and our annual fall retreat in the beautiful Black Hills.

This multidenominational approach can work for smaller churches to unite to support and minister to young adults and single adults.

— DARCIE DECKER, Rapid City, South Dakota

retreats, and special services.

These events do not need to take place on the church campus; in fact, there are benefits to being off-campus. You can use a home, park, or coffee shop for some of these events. Having events off campus will open the door for attendees to offer ideas of a place to meet or even open their home.

Our single adult/young

adult ministry small group meets twice a month. We began with seven attendees, including my wife and myself. By the second month our numbers were in the teens. We grew to where a house could no longer facilitate our group, so we launched our first single adult/young adult weekly service. The small group then multiplied into smaller groups to keep the number within each group around 10 or less. At one point we had over 10 groups that met separately but came together for the weekly service.

#### Step three. Select a time to meet.

The next barrier is *when*. Regardless of the size of a church, the calendar fills up quickly. First, select a time that can be repeatable. I recommend the time interval between meetings not be more than a month. I understand the desire to start slow and safe in the beginning; but if there is too much time between meetings, you will have difficulty building momentum.

#### Step four. Assign ownership.

There is pride in ownership. At the first meeting begin identifying tasks you can delegate. Whether the task is preparing for the next meeting, looking into costs or details of an outing, contacting members before the next meeting, or keeping track of attendance, you will begin to see leadership arise.

#### Networking — The Often Forgotten Step

Take your current single adult/young adult ministry to another level by networking with other churches to create combined events. This provides your group with other single young adults with whom to create relationships. This can broaden the types of events available to your young adults. If your group hosts a shared event, your group members will transform into a team.

If there is no single adult/ young adult network in existence, perhaps you are the catalyst needed to start one. To create a network, call neighboring churches. Even if they do not have a single adult/young adult ministry they may be at a place where God is beginning to lay this on their hearts.

#### Conclusion

Remember Isaiah 43:18,19: "Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new" (THE MES-SAGE).<sup>1</sup> Within this generation lives the future of the church, the workforce, and the American family. As Abraham Lincoln warned "The philosophy of the school room in one generation will become the philosophy of government in the next." What an incredible privilege we share to minister to single and young adults, yet what a tremendous responsibility.

#### NOTE

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# SINGLE DOES NOT MEAN ALONE

At every life stage, singles are connecting for personal support and ministry fulfillment.



Louis Greek



Jackie Dittman



Ingrid Aquilar





# hen the 1992 Chevy Suburban veered off the overpass on Interstate 25 near Johnstown, Colorado, it plunged 50 feet before hitting a concrete embankment.

The impact crushed the vehicle, and the resulting fire burned the seven passengers' bodies beyond recognition.

Three adults and three children of the Rempel family of Alberta, Canada, and a family friend had been traveling home through the night after visiting relatives in Mexico. Authorities believe whoever had taken the last turn behind the wheel had fallen asleep. It was 4:30 a.m., Thanksgiving 2008.

For Louis Greek, 30, an investigator for the Larimer County medical examiner, death is part of the job almost daily — whether from homicide, suicide, or accident. But this accident scene, about 40 miles north of Denver, was hard to process emotionally.

"It was a tough scene for me and everyone else on the team," Greek says. "Especially on Thanksgiving. A difficult scene to see, and very emotional for the family members we contacted in Mexico and Canada. Especially when it involves children."

The youngest victim was only 21 months old.



When Greek's pager goes off, he knows he will be responding to a situation involving tragedy at some level. Larimer County encompasses urban Fort Collins as well as the wild expanse of Rocky Mountain National Park. Cause of death can vary from gang-related homicides to skiing accidents.

"I will go to the scene and take photographs," Greek says. "I will interview family members, doctors, friends, teachers, and counselors if necessary."

He is also responsible at times to transport the decedent to the hospital and assist the forensic pathologist in the autopsy to try and determine the cause of death.

"People ask me how I can do my job," he admits. "But I think it's an opportunity to serve people. They are experiencing some of the worst times of their life. I believe God has given me the strength to serve them."

Greek believes much of that God-given strength comes through his involvement with nine70, the young adult ministry at Timberline Church in Fort Collins. Named for the local area code, nine70 attracts participants from across the community, including students from local colleges and universities. The Tuesday night small group Bible study, Thursday night service, and weekend activities give a spiritually positive framework to each week.

"I feel I cannot make it through my week without being plugged in some way there," Greek says.

Jackie Dittman, 47, encounters the same kind of support at Saturday Night Alive, a citywide singles ministry she coleads in Rapid City, South Dakota, where she has attended Bethel Assembly of God the past 25 years. Bethel and about a dozen other churches are represented at Saturday Night Alive, and Dittman also heads up a singles Sunday School class.

As a health unit coordinator at Rapid City's Regional Behavioral Health Center, Dittman assists patients in need of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional care. She believes her faith is her greatest asset in helping patients and their families, even if she never quotes a single Scripture.

"I pray every day that I will be a mirror that reflects Jesus to the world," Dittman says. "There's a lot of darkness out there. I feel like my unit is a ministry field."

To be effective in that ministry field, Dittman relies on emotional and spiritual support from the friends she has made through her class and in the larger group. And she is always ready to return that support.

"Bonnie in our class is a schoolteacher," she says, offering one example. "Her school closed just as she was dealing with her sister's brain tumor and her brother's cancer. We have gone through some struggles together."

# SINGLE DOES NOT MEAN ALONE ,

It was a very personal struggle that connected Ingrid Aguilar, 34, of Kernersville, North Carolina, with Calvary Church in nearby Greensboro and the singles community there. For Aguilar, living as a single person was a painful reality following her divorce. After the final court hearing in September 2005, she had moved to North Carolina from Connecticut with two young sons and her third child on the way.

"I did not think my husband and I could ever get back together," she says. "But part of me could not see myself with anyone but the father of my children."

Aguilar had attended Seaport Community Church in Groton, Connecticut, with husband Alberto.

"The Lord really used that church to help me in my spiritual choices," she says.

Now she was praying to find the right church for her broken family in their new community. Calvary was the third church they tried. When Aguilar attended a Divorce Care group, she experienced a spiritual breakthrough.

"I prayed, 'Lord, I am open to whatever You want from me. I want You to heal my heart."

#### Ministry Opportunities

Aguilar's journey to recovery points to the restorative power singles ministry offers, both to group members and the community.

In Colorado, Greek and his nine70 friends use weekends for much more than social interaction. On many Friday nights they visit Fort Collins'



bars to offer patrons a safe drive home. Greek's personal struggle with alcohol before coming to Christ makes that ministry especially relevant.

"I made a lot of poor choices when I was younger," he says, "especially with drugs and alcohol and violent behavior. I was only 15 when I left home."

A friend from nine70 with a similar past has teamed with Greek on nighttime outreaches.

"People respond," Greek says. "We recently gave two guys a ride after they had been drinking downtown. They asked what made us different. We explained how God has changed our lives and saved us. They started coming to nine70."

In North Carolina, Aguilar continued to attend a support group in the wake of her divorce. As her pregnancy progressed, she wondered how she would care for three children alone. She remembers one encouraging encounter in particular.

"I was at a Bible study on February 4, 2006," she says. "A lady approached me and began to pray for me. God gave her a specific word for me — that He had heard my cries, that He saw me as a woman of God, and that He had a wonderful plan for the son I was carrying. She did not know I was having a boy."

In the following months, God began to restore the Aguilar family. Alberto had moved to North Carolina just a couple months after Ingrid to be near the children.

"The Lord started changing him," Aguilar says. "He gave himself to the Lord. We were remarried in September 2007."

Dittman has seen a number of friends make lifelong connections through Rapid City's singles ministry network. As married friends transition out of the singles group, she finds endless opportunity to continue ministering to those joining. Her Sunday School class offers an eclectic mix of supportive topics.

"We did one series on memorizing Scripture," she says. "We did a series on the Book of Ephesians, then focused on the armor of God. We recently got back into *The Purpose Driven Life.*"

There is no hard and fast schedule. Most topics are completed in a quarter, Dittman says, but the Book of James covered a year.

Dittman also sees great value in a national network of singles ministry groups. She joined the 2008 Caribbean cruise in November sponsored by Dennis Franck and the national Single Adult Ministries office. About 400 singles from the Assemblies of God and the Church of God participated.

"There was lots of music and worship and powerful teaching on sharing our faith with others," she says. "It was wonderful. The experience of sailing over the ocean in that huge ship just reminded me how God is in control of everything. Creation is enormous. I am very thankful for Dennis Franck and others who work to bring singles together. He really has a heart for us."

#### The Most Important Decision

When Dittman was 16, her

boyfriend lost his mother to cancer.

"She was only 38, and that shook me up," Dittman recalls. "Both my sisters were Christians, and I was visiting one sister the weekend of that funeral. My sister led me to the Lord."

Greek accepted Christ while in his teens and credits his grandmother's influence and prayers for that decision. At her invitation in 1996, he went to a Christian Renewal Conference in Estes Park, Colorado.

"I really did not fit in," he says. "I came from a very difficult family background. But after one youth pastor talked about his life in drugs and prison and how it changed his life when he met the Lord, I began to think about what was missing in my life. No substance or person had filled that void."

The intervening years have been challenging. Greek is a long-time member of the National Guard, with two tours in Iraq and one in the Balkans to his credit.

"I have made some wrong choices," he admits, "but I feel blessed God has come into my life. He has used the things I have experienced, even the poor choices, and I am happy to share those experiences with others. People like my grandmother and the leadership at nine70 have shown me a whole new way to live life and view things."

Aguilar renewed her childhood commitment to Christ when she was 22 and expecting her oldest son. Her involvement with the singles group at Calvary Church



▲ Louis Greek has served with the National Guard in Iraq and the Balkans.





Alberto, Ingrid, Justin, Joell, and Jayden.



▲ "I appreciate hanging around with other singles in ministry," says Jackie Dittman (at right). She is a coleader of Saturday Night Alive.

"He has used the things I have experienced, even the poor choices, and I am happy to share those experiences with others." - Greek

helped that relationship to grow and proved to be the means for a restored relationship with her husband.

"Sometimes during those dark times in your life you feel as if God is not there," she says. "But God is there. He is there all the time. He is helping you get through the things you need to get through by putting people in your life to help you and uplift you. That was the only thing that allowed me to deal with all the craziness and chaos I was going through at the time."

Alberto and Ingrid are now raising sons Justin, Joell, and Jayden with the goal of seeing each of them make a life-changing commitment to Christ.

#### More Than Just Families

For Dittman, staying active

with Saturday Night Alive and her Sunday School class helps her integrate more effectively with Rapid City's Christian community. She is concerned that not all singles find the level of involvement she enjoys.

"I appreciate hanging around with other singles in ministry," she says. "Then I do not feel like a fifth wheel. Unfortunately, that happens in a lot in churches where they have families sit together at potlucks. Most churches are very family-oriented, which is not bad, but when 44 percent of the U.S. is single, that leaves a large chunk out."

Greek concurs.

"I think everyone in every walk of life has a need," he says. "Singles and young adults are really deciding who they want to be, and it is critical that college-age and young professionals make the decision to follow Christ."

Even if a church is too small to maintain a specific ministry to singles, Dittman says, there are other simple ways to make them feel included.

"Little things like acknowledging them from the pulpit to let them know they are included go a long way," she says. "We know a pastor's plate is full. We do not expect the pastor to take on the whole ministry. But just a word of encouragement, just coming alongside a team that wants to reach out to singles — that can make all the difference. Pastors need to use singles' talents and gifts. They have a lot to offer. Plug them in."

With the encouragement of church leadership, singles can come together to create the kind of support network they need.

"My divorce was such a difficult time," Aguilar says. "The people the Lord put in my path lifted me up and prayed for me. I saw God's hand in the whole thing."

"My brother is currently in prison," Greek says. "But for a while I was able to get him to come to our group. The friends from his past do not write him or visit him. But the group from nine70 does. They take the time to care about him. Jesus really shines through some of these people in our ministry."

For Dittman, singles helping singles is a natural outgrowth when any healthy local church has a vision for reaching its entire community for Christ.

"The whole concept of 'single' is huge," she says. "There are so many different dynamics. Singles represent all different age groups and life stages. When it comes to singles ministry, no one person can do it all. The key is to encourage people within the church to develop their own gifts and take where they have come from in life to help others facing those same challenges." @



**SCOTT HARRUP** is senior associate editor of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel.* 

## Theological Enrichment / GARY GROGAN

# Communicating Spirit Baptism in Fresh New Ways

A they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, even as the Spirit was giving them to declare" (Acts 2:4, *A.S. Worrell Translation*). In his footnote on this verse, Worrell states: "This gracious experience — whether considered as an immersion in the Holy Spirit, or a filling with, or the gift of the Holy Spirit, is the *privilege* of every true believer (verse 39), and his *duty* (Ephesians 5:18)." How do we teach this privilege and duty in our post-Christian culture?

The Lord wants to baptize every believer in the power of the Spirit. For that to happen, He wants to teach pastors — as He has faithfully done in every age of every culture — how to communicate this experience in fresh new ways that will reach people instead of driving them away. Here are some practical ways to minister the Holy Spirit baptism in today's culture.

#### Decide Holy Spirit Baptism Is a Blessing, Not a Curse

Missional leaders work to communicate with the cultures in which God has placed them. The last thing they want to do is drive people away. Because of this, some leaders develop an apprehension toward preaching or teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> No one needs to feel condemned; this is a legitimate concern, especially for those who are reaching people from diverse backgrounds.

Pastors must decide that Holy Spirit baptism is biblical and is a viable experience for their church today. With some creativity and intentionality, pastors can lead their people into this life-changing experience without scaring them away or freaking them out.

Many younger ministers are walking away from Pentecostal circles because they have become convinced tongues<sup>2</sup> is no longer theologically correct. In many cases, they struggle with past methodologies, not so much with theology.

Everyone I have known who has walked away

from proclaiming the Baptism speaks in tongues in his/her private prayer times. Now, instead of leading others into this joyous experience, they are robbing others of this great gift. That is grievous and unnecessary.

Holy Spirit baptism is a valid, biblical experience that Jesus administers himself (Luke 24:49). I am asking — no matter the hang-ups — that with integrity pastors simply say, "Okay, it's Bible." This is where we must start. Pentecost is not a cultural experience that turns us off; it is a Jesus experience, a Bible experience, and an experience for today.

#### Be Creative With Teaching Holy Spirit Baptism the Same As You Are With Other Topics

I love the creativity and innovation of this generation. So be creative in teaching this great truth. Use your God-given creativity and make it fun and powerful.

Mark Batterson, pastor at National Community Church in Washington, D.C., says part of being Godlike is being creative. I agree. Be Godlike in proclaiming the truth of Holy Spirit baptism.

I used a Pentecost Sunday sermon series written by Ron Bontrager, pastor of Lakeview Christian Center in Indianapolis, Indiana, entitled "Power-Aide."

My young creative ministry team put more than 100 bottles of Power-Aide on our stage. Each week we gave away

drinks. This was a simple but fun way to deal with Holy Spirit baptism. After the third message, we came around the front and worshiped. Many experienced their own prayer language for the first time. It was fun, contemporary, and easy. For weeks afterward, people e-mailed us and testified they had received their language while reading their Bibles at home. One received the Baptism while driving to work.

#### **Be Intentional**

Schedule a stand-alone or short series around Pentecost Sunday. Instead of ignoring Spirit baptism, scheduling this series will force you to make it work in the culture of your church and community. Consider scheduling a Holy Spirit retreat at the end of your Alpha course, or start a class or seminar on Spirit baptism. Resist the temptation to do nothing. A Lutheran church in St. Paul, Minnesota, teaches on the Holy Spirit baptism through classes, seminars, retreats, and other creative ways — more than most Pentecostal and charismatic churches do.

Part of missional leadership is doing the things we know are right but would rather not do. For me, it is preaching on money. I do not like to preach on money; but when I do, our people and church are blessed because of my obedience. Pastoring would be easy if all we had to preach on was grace, but pastoring is not always easy.

Resist the subtle temptation to wait until you have the baptism in the Holy

#### Avoid the Ditches of Legalism and Liberalism

We want what is best for our people and do not want our neglect to hinder their walk with God. Leaving out teaching on the Holy Spirit baptism leads people to being critical, judgmental, and into the *ditch of liberalism*. By liberalism, I mean *out of balance*.

It is better to drive down the road than to run off the road and into a ditch. People can be injured, our vehicles can be damaged, and at the least, we can delay the journey for ourselves or someone else. We need to be reminded that our calling is to faithfully *preach the Word* (2 Timothy 4:2). We want to do this in culturally relevant ways. This wonderful experience of the Holy Spirit baptism will greatly enrich lives. We need to avoid the *ditch of indifference*.

We also need to avoid the *ditch of legalism*. Legalists are never happy regardless of what is said or done. They are certainly *out of balance*. Legalists often equate Pentecost with certain styles of preaching, singing, and other methodologies. They tend to reject anything they do not understand.

A Pentecostal legalist wandered into our church while I was teaching on the Holy Spirit baptism. I did so in

> a conversational way and then had a simple time of worship and prayer around the altar for about 10 min-

utes. Approximately 20 people began to speak in a prayer language for the first time that morning, including Erika Harold, Miss America 2003. This Pentecostal legalist came to me after the service and said, "There is no way those people were really baptized in the Holy Ghost." I asked why she felt that way and she replied, "Because it wasn't loud enough and there was no real emotion in it." She was stuck in the ditch of legalism.

To stay out of both these ditches we

### It is not necessary to have a camp meeting-style appeal to see people baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Spirit figured out. It is simply our job as leaders to teach our people and lead the way. We must provide opportunities for growth, and we do that by being intentional. Make plans and then work those plans like we do with other things.



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need to remember that none of us can save anyone, so why do we think we can fill anyone with the Holy Spirit? In both cases we simply teach the Word of God and create an atmosphere, then God does His part. Preach salvation, and people will get saved. Preach Holy Spirit baptism, and believers will be Holy Spirit-baptized. We get what we preach.

To stay out of the ditches pastors also need to free themselves from the pressure of thinking they always need to have an altar service. Train people

to be on prayer teams and have them available to pray with people who want to make a public c o m m i t m e n t to Jesus and for those who want

to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to have a Billy Grahamtype appeal to see people saved, and it is not necessary to have a camp meeting-style appeal to see people baptized in the Holy Spirit. Today's audiences will not process old methodology. It may even cause them to freeze up or perhaps walk out.

People do not always respond immediately to a message of salvation. It is the same way with Holy Spirit baptism. People will not always have an immediate response, but eventually some will respond.

#### Pray Your People Will Be Holy Spirit Baptized

Praying people through to the Baptism requires no special gifts or abilities. We simply teach God's Word in creative ways, learn to connect with culture and not alienate people, and then pray for the Lord to save and baptize His people. I encourage young pastors/leaders to pray: "Jesus, I need You to baptize these people in the Holy Spirit. You said You would, and I am asking You to do it." Pour out your concerns to Him about people getting weird, demonstrative, and spooky. Ask Him to take care of those things.

I pastor in a city with a large university where people from every walk of life come to our services. We try to do things with order and excellence. I want people to connect with God through salvation and Holy Spirit baptism, but I do not want Pentecostal cultural things to chase them away. I have told the Lord I am not ashamed, but He has to help me make all this work in our setting.

> In the past, some Pentecostal churches have left out the Baptism as they have grown or have regulated it to Sunday or Wednesday nights. With the huge cultural shifts we have

seen and with the dissolution of Sunday night services, it is imperative we learn how to teach Holy Spirit baptism in relevant ways on Sunday mornings, in our youth or young adult meetings, and other primary meetings.

#### Admit Your Fear and Do Some Defragmenting

Paul said to young Timothy, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7, NIV). Just like a computer needs to be defragmented once in a while, we need to do the same. We need to get rid of junk-like fear that slows us down and keeps us from doing what we know we should. We cannot afford to give in to our fears and apprehensions. Desire overcomes fear and intimidation. If we will simply have the desire and ask the Lord to really help us, He will. If we will be faithful, He will be faithful and will baptize believers in the Holy Spirit.

You do not need to lose your mind and put on a gospel freak show to teach the truth on Holy Spirit baptism. But you do need to be willing "to preach the message, to insist upon proclaiming it (whether the time is right or not), to convince, reproach, and encourage, as you teach with all patience" (2 Timothy 2:4, GNT) like you promised to do when you were licensed and/or ordained to full-gospel ministry.

As men and women of integrity, pastors must do what they promised the Lord they would do. Pastors need to be like Jet Li, the warrior in the movie *Fearless*. His family name was shamed. He regained honor for his



# **SIX STEPS** To Receive the Holy Spirit Baptism

1.Thirst — Mark 11:24; Matthew 5:6

2. Ask — Matthew 7:7

**3. Look to Jesus** — Acts 1:8

4. Receive — Galatians 3:14

5. Praise — Psalm 22:3

6. Speak in unknown language (tongues) — Psalm 81:10

- GARY GROGAN, Urbana, Illinois.

It is not necessary to have a camp meeting-style appeal to see people baptized in the Holy Spirit.

family by defeating the best warriors in the land. We need some young, fearless ministers to show us how to do this in post-Christian culture.

Pastors do not need to preach on the Holy Spirit every week, but they need to be willing to preach this important Pentecostal doctrine. Perhaps a standalone or short series around Pentecost Sunday is sufficient. If there is no sin in preaching on the Incarnation and Resurrection only around Christmas and Easter, why do some hyper-Pentecostals (who are on spiritual Ritalin) think we have lost it if we only deal with Holy Spirit baptism once a year? Do not let legalists ruin preaching on Holy Spirit baptism for you. You can mention Holy Spirit baptism in your teaching throughout the year by saying: "Some of you need to search out the claims of Holy Spirit baptism to see if it's true just like you did the claims of Christ. This is a Bible church. I promise you I would not teach on it unless it was in the Word. See if God has a prayer language for you."

The way we say things will either free people or freeze them. As missional leaders, we are trying to connect with and reach people, not run them off.

I also talk about Holy Spirit baptism at the end of prayer meetings when people are around the altar. I show a PowerPoint outline and go through the basics of Holy Spirit baptism. (See sidebar Six Steps To Receive the Holy Spirit Baptism.) Nearly every time people receive the Baptism and start praying in a language they have never learned.

The atmosphere in a prayer meeting is different from our Sunday morning services when those exploring or window-shopping Christianity show up. I am not embarrassed being Pentecostal. It is just a matter of trying to be wise and reach as many people as possible for Christ. After all, that is the primary reason Jesus told us to receive this promise of the Father, that we might be His witnesses (Acts 1:4,8).

Many people get their ideas about Pentecost from movies like *The Apostle* or from TV evangelists, many of whom culture makes fun. Because of these obstacles, many fear teaching and praying for people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Defragment your fear and teach the Baptism in a way that does not violate your personality or the culture of your church. Styles that work at camps, retreats, and conventions do not usually work on Sunday mornings. That is okay.

#### Wrap-up

I apologize to our younger generation of ministers who sometimes feel abandoned. Forgive my generation for not being better spiritual fathers. Forgive us for making methodology and programs sacred. Please avoid the mistakes we have made and embrace the baptism in the Holy Spirit. My word to our younger ministers is: "desire earnestly to prophesy, and *forbid not to speak with tongues*" (1 Corinthians 14:39, *A.S. Worrell Translation*, emphasis mine).

I love praying in a language I have never learned. Many times I have not known what to do, but when I pray in the Spirit, the Lord gives me a word of wisdom, prophecy, or insight to bring healing and help to a person or situation. Many people that I know and love who are trying to reach the unchurched need the Holy Spirit's fullness to help them. Whether it is Joel Gross in the Minneapolis uptown area, Brad Riley at the University of Colorado in Boulder, or Terry Austria at the University of Illinois in Urbana — they realize without the help of the Holy Spirit they cannot reach people in their unique cultures.

None of us can afford to leave Holy Spirit baptism out of our preaching. We must learn to do things better and debunk Pentecostal myths.<sup>3</sup> The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a tremendous blessing to everyone who receives. As a young minister, be creative, intentional, stay out of the ditches, pray the Lord will Spirit baptize your people, and do some defragmenting of your own fears. We all struggle. Ministering Holy Spirit baptism in a post-Christian culture is a struggle for many young leaders. But know you are loved, believed in, and given leeway to figure things out. Let us not walk away from each other. Let us embrace one another as we journey together. I am passing the baton to you. 🖉

#### NOTES

- 1. I use these terms interchangeably but prefer "Holy Spirit baptism."
- I prefer to use the phrase "speak in a language never learned" because "tongues" has so much emotional and theological baggage associated with it.
- 3. For a complete discussion, request my paper "Ministering Holy Spirit Baptism in a Post-Christian Culture."



### The Greatest Challenges of Pastoral Care / MARNIE C. FERREE



# "Innocence Lost": Helping Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Though childhood sexual abuse is a debilitating experience with potentially lifelong effects, it is not a life sentence.

he young mother who sat across from Pastor Stephens nervously smoothed her slacks and looked everywhere in the room except at him. She twisted the tissue in her hands to shreds. She and her husband, who seemed equally ill at ease, appeared exhausted. The pastor wondered what crisis they might be facing. A sick child? Marital problems? Addiction? Whatever the issue, it was taking an obvious toll.

The pastor gently encouraged them to share when they were ready. Huge, silent tears slid down the wife's cheeks for a few minutes until she took a deep breath. Slowly, she shared the secret she had promised never to reveal: she had experienced childhood sexual abuse at the hands of someone she had trusted. By the time she was finished she looked frail and small, as if she had somehow physically regressed to her age at the time this person had violated her.



Pastor Stephens realized he was hearing similar stories with increasing frequency. And with good reason: statistically, at least one out of four females and one out of six males will experience some form of sexual abuse by the time she or he is 18. Someone will sexually solicit one in five minors while they are surfing the Internet. Almost 40 million people in America are survivors of childhood sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Definition of Sexual Abuse**

According to mental health professionals who treat sexual abuse victims, sexual abuse is one of the most crippling experiences a child can endure. This violation occurs when a child of any age (including adolescents) is exploited by an older or more powerful person for his own satisfaction while ignoring the victim's immaturity or inability to fully understand the situation. Despite a persistent myth, strangers harm only a small number of children. Family members abuse 30 to 40 percent of victims, and another 50 percent have been abused by someone outside the family whom they know and trust — a family friend, church member, teacher, or coach.

Sexual abuse takes many forms and does not necessarily involve penetration or physical harm. Overt forms include sexual kissing, fondling, other inappropriate touching, oral sex, or penetration with body parts or objects. Sometimes the adult performs sexual activity on the child; sometimes the adult asks the child to perform sex acts on the adult; and sometimes both parties engage in sexual activity with each other. Statistics about sexual abuse cover all these behaviors (usually without discriminating about the specific abusive activity).

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Many victims discount their experience because it was "just one time" or "I wasn't hurt or anything like that." Older victims, especially teens, tend to assume responsibility for the abuse, particularly when they know the perpetrator, which is usually the case. Unless forcible intercourse was involved, adolescents sometimes believe the sexual activity was consensual, or that they did something to invite it at the very least.

Many pastors fail to understand the limitations of their role in working with sexual trauma survivors, and with the best of intentions they end up doing more harm than good.

Nothing could be further from the truth. No matter how provocative or seductive the child or adolescent, it is always the adult's responsibility to maintain proper boundaries. The imbalance of power between an adult and a child or teenager — even an older teen 16-18 years old — is simply too great for the younger person to truly consent to sexual activity.

Sexual abuse may also be physically pleasurable, which is enormously confusing for the victim. "How can it be abuse when it felt good and my body responded?" survivors often ask, especially post-puberty abuse victims who are aware of sexual responses. God created the body to respond automatically to sexual stimuli, and the reaction does not discriminate between healthy touch and exploitive touch. Sexual response, no matter how pleasurable at the moment, does not negate the reality of abuse.



# How To Help Minors Who Are Being Abused

Helping adults who were sexually abused as children is challenging enough. A more urgent (and usually greater) crisis is dealing with children who report current sexual abuse. A pastor must take the following steps:

**1. Remain calm and do not overreact.** Children often shut down or change their story if an adult reacts negatively or with great emotion.

**2. Ensure the child's safety**. Be certain the accused perpetrator does not have access to the child. With incest situations, ask that person to physically leave the home. This is no time to fear hurting someone's feelings.

**3. Report the abuse to the proper authorities.** All states now require those who suspect child sexual abuse to report this abuse to a child protective agency. Call the local police if you are not sure who should receive the report.

**4. Recommend the child receives professional help.** Professional help may include a physical exam and counseling with professionals specifically equipped to help child victims. The parents will also need clinical help.

**5.Be courageous.** You may face a situation where there are suspicions of abuse but no proof. Trust your instincts. Err on the side of reporting if you are unsure. The welfare of a vulnerable child may depend on you.

#### Family Environment Where Sexual Abuse Occurs

Sadly, childhood sexual abuse does not happen in a vacuum. Often the experience has its roots in a family that is beset with multiple problems — problems that both cause the abuse and then contribute to its coverup. In situations of incest, when the perpetrator is a relative, the family harbors a terrible secret. Mental health professionals consider familial abuse particularly damaging because of the breach of relationship and the complicated family dynamics in which incest occurs.

Further, most non-offending parents fail to protect the child because their own problems distract them. Often one or both parents struggle with alcoholism or another addiction. Sometimes there is domestic violence. Perhaps infidelity or some other marital issue preoccupies the parents and keeps them from focusing on the child's safety.

Even when the perpetrator is outside the family, such as a youth leader, coach, or family friend, sexual abuse victims still may not find their family

a safe haven where they can report the abuse. Often dysfunctional families operate according to unspoken rules such as not talking about real issues, not dealing with feelings, or creating a closed system where children are isolated from outside influences. Parents may simply be too overwhelmed with their own issues to be emotionally available for their children, which leaves the victim to cope alone. It's hard for a child in this kind of environment to share that someone has sexually abused her.

Experts believe that the family response to abuse is more important than the abuse itself in terms of the long-term effects. Survivors who disclose their abuse and then their families do not believe them or help them are at greater risk for psychological, emotional, social, and physical problems often lasting into adulthood. Victims often feel the family's failure to support and provide healing resources is an additional, usually deeper, betrayal than the abuse itself.

#### **Effects of Sexual Abuse**

Survivors often say that sexual abuse creates "a hole in the soul." Sexual abuse is a deep violation of all that ought to be safe, and it affects every aspect of a person's being: physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual. Most survivors do not realize their problems stem from their sexual abuse. Many suffer from undiagnosed mental health issues or physical problems like gastrointestinal distress or unexplained body pain.

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse share certain characteristics in common. The most crippling is an overwhelming sense of shame. Victims do not believe something bad happened to them; they think they are bad personally and



The wise pastor will put first things first, by clearly responding to the travesty of the sexual abuse before addressing any resulting issues.

that is what caused the abuse. The debilitating shame perpetuates the secret and keeps victims silent. Over 30 percent of survivors never disclose the abuse to anyone. Of those who do disclose, approximately 75 percent disclose accidentally. Almost 80 percent initially deny abuse or are tentative in disclosing. Additionally, more than 20 percent of those who disclose eventually recant even though the abuse occurred.

Sexually abused people have problems with *trust*. Victims expect to be hurt, and they can be extremely critical, demanding, and easily disappointed in an effort to protect themselves. Because the vast majority of perpetrators are people the child trusted, experience has shown them people are not trustworthy. Survivors have difficulty believing someone, including a pastor, is safe and willing to help. A pastor must earn the victim's trust and be patient while the victim regularly tests that trust.

*Control* is another big issue with survivors. Some become perfectionists as a way to cope. Because they are powerless during the abuse, victims often feel a desperate need to control themselves, their surroundings, and other people. This characteristic often makes interpersonal relations difficult.

Sexual abuse victims usually have trouble regulating their emotions, especially anger and fear. Sometimes survivors overreact to small transgressions with unreasonable anger. At the other end of the spectrum are those victims who are so afraid of the rage within that they shut down emotionally. Underneath the anger is deep-seated fear. For example, victims are often afraid of the dark, of their nightmares, of being alone, of being touched, of people, or of authority figures in general.

Untreated trauma survivors often struggle with addiction. Seventy to 80 percent of victims cope with a shattered sense of self by medicating their pain with alcohol or drugs. In fact, untreated sexual abuse is a main predictor of relapse in chemical dependency recovery. Other addictive behaviors include socially acceptable ones like workaholism or codependency, which is focusing on others in an unhealthy way.

Sexual abuse survivors seem to have a higher rate of two specific addictions: first, to *sex* (including pornography) and relationships; and second, to *food*. Many therapists believe a possible reason for these particular problems is that they involve core survival behaviors. We are created as sexual beings, and we must eat to sustain life. Both sex and food are also self-nurturing, which blunts the burning ache within.

Almost all survivors are confused about sex. They mistake sexual activity
for love and vice versa, and so they are often promiscuous or unfaithful. They use sex or an intense relationship as a way to get love because their abuser (especially for incest victims) probably said, "I do this because I love you." Other perpetrators couch sex within an otherwise positive, *loving* environment. Most survivors, as a result, are unable to be truly intimate (emotionally) in a committed relationship.

Childhood sexual abuse victims suffer disproportionately from mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In fact, one of these difficulties, along with substance abuse, is the most common presenting problem for survivors, not specifically the sexual abuse itself. Often the abuse is only revealed after the person is stabilized in regard to the psycho-behavioral problem that brought her into treatment.

Finally, sexual abuse survivors struggle with spiritual issues. If during a child's early years the significant adults in her life harm her — especially her parents or other trusted authority figures — she transfers those negatives into her view of the Heavenly Father. If the abuser was a member of the clergy, the effect is especially catastrophic. The victim loses faith in a loving, trustworthy God, and she questions His role in her life. If God did not protect her, where can she turn?

#### **Implications for Pastors**

These truths about childhood sexual abuse and its effects have enormous implications for pastors. They will keep a pastor from telling a victim, "That was such a long time ago. Why don't you just get over it and move on?" These truths will remind a pastor that survivors are often sexually promiscuous or struggle with chemical addiction, so he can address the underlying issue and not just the obvious behavior problems. They will also prevent him from shaming the survivor for her sinful actions, and thus adding to her despair.

Equally important, the informed pastor will realize he must always refer sexual abuse victims for additional help. As outlined above, survivors are deeply wounded individuals who suffer from a wide array of physical, mental, and behavioral issues that require specialized professional help. The pastor can be an important cheerleader for the healing process. Most clergy, however, lack adequate training to assist further. Unfortunately, many pastors fail to understand the limitations of their role in working with sexual trauma survivors, and with the best of intentions they end up doing more harm than good.

#### How Pastors Can Respond Effectively to Sexual Abuse

So how does a pastor appropriately respond to victims of childhood sexual abuse? The first and most important step is to believe the survivor's story. Adults rarely fabricate this experience. Because of the shame involved, victims do not subject themselves to the potential rejection and scrutiny of being a survivor without reason.

Next, honor the person's pain and the coping methods she is using to survive. Historically, the church has often been guilty of shooting its wounded. In their zeal to respond aggressively to sin, church members have failed to offer grace and compassion to wounded people. The wise pastor will put first things first, by clearly responding to the travesty of the sexual abuse before addressing any resulting issues.

Remember that victims have experienced spiritual wounds, and they accept their ambivalence or anger toward God. Provide a supportive environment for spiritual processing of the survivor's experiences. Avoid putting a religious bandage on a gaping wound. Allow the victims to grieve and model a different way of relating to their Heavenly Father.

Be supportive of the way she is working through recovery. Do not criticize the time and money spent on therapy or self-help groups. Do not rush the victim through the healing process or encourage her to forgive before she is ready. Recognize that the victim's relationships with family are often complicated, especially if the family did not protect the victim or does not believe the abuse occurred. Many victims are estranged from family, at least for a time. Respect the boundaries they need to feel safe.

Finally, be sure to refer the survivor for outside professional help. Assemble a list of Christian counselors in your area who are specifically equipped to treat sexual abuse victims. (For a list of qualified Christian counselors in your area, call the Office of Ministerial Enrichment, 1-417-862-2781, ext. 3014). Know about helpful books, support groups, and other resources. A number of excellent Christian books and other materials are available.

#### **Hope for Healing**

Though childhood sexual abuse is a debilitating experience with potentially lifelong effects, it is not a life sentence. The Great Physician offers healing and hope to the abused. There will always be scars, but individuals can move from victims to survivors; and what a perpetrator did for harm, God can transform into good. The experience of sexual abuse can become but one part of the survivor's history, and the person can ultimately see how those threads have blended into the overall tapestry. The educated pastor can be a first responder and one of God's healing agents in the restoration process.

Photographs accompanying this article are used for illustrative purposes only. Individuals shown are models and have no connection to concepts, behaviors, or events referenced in the article.

#### NOTE

 All statistics are taken from www.darkness2light. org. This site contains a wealth of material, including references to the original sources for all statistical information.

## Ministry & Medical Ethics / Christina M.H. POWELL



## The *EMOTIONAL HEALTH* Needs of Young Adults and Singles

n today's business and academic world, supervisors and professors emphasize the role of emotional intelligence in developing emerging leaders. Perhaps the new interest in training young adults to manage their emotions and social interactions wisely comes as a balance to the increased use of technology for communication. In a world of cell phones, text messaging, and social network Web sites, a need for understanding how to communicate face-toface with other humans still exists.

Young adulthood is a time when understanding the role of emotions in making decisions and negotiating relationships is essential. As young adults separate from their family of origin, they face decisions that affect the rest of their lives: determining vocation, choosing a spouse, and selecting friends. During this season, young adults solidify their worldviews and seek spiritual answers to find their purpose in life. They formulate opinions on matters of ethics, such as the value of human life.

Pastors can provide young adults with the biblical framework for understanding the purpose of emotions, recognizing the appropriate context for expressing emotions, and discerning the danger of overreliance on emotions. Achieving and maintaining emotional health are integral parts of spiritual maturity. Discipling believers to improve their emotional health is a worthy goal for a pastor.

Here is how pastors can help address the emotional health needs of young adults and singles.

#### What Are Emotions?

Researchers define emotions as mental states that arise spontaneously rather than through conscious effort. Physiological changes often accompany emotions. People experience six basic emotions that others can detect by facial expressions: happiness, surprise, fear, sadness, disgust, and anger. We use 42 facial muscles to express these emotions. Some researchers include two other emotions in this list: acceptance and anticipation. Other emotions are described as combinations of the basic emotions. For example, remorse would be a combination of sadness and disgust. In the English language we have over 600 words to describe the various shades of emotions.

The word *emotion* is derived from the Old French meaning "to move the feelings." Thus, we can think of emotions as feelings that flow from us. Emotions help us manage our lives and provide the intuitive part of decision-making.

The limbic system of the brain controls the body's reaction to emotions. If something damages the section of the brain responsible for processing emotions, a person may lose the ability to recognize emotions and may have difficulty making plans. The classic



example of such a patient is Phineas Gage, a railroad worker injured in 1848 by an iron rod blown through his head by an explosion. While he survived the blast and was able to talk and walk after the accident, his personality changed. He went from a responsible, sociable, capable man to one who was impulsive, unreliable, and incapable of making decisions. Thus, there is a biological component to our emotions. From the perspective of a Christian worldview, we can say that God created the systems in our bodies that produce emotions. Therefore, emotions must serve a useful purpose.

#### What Does the Bible Say About Emotions?

The God of the Bible expresses emotions. In Zephaniah 3:17, the Lord takes

delight in His people and rejoices over them with singing. Psalm 78:40 shows God grieves over His people. God expresses anger in the many references to His wrath found throughout the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 9:8; 1 Samuel 28:18; 1 Chronicles 27:24). Yet, the Old Testament also describes God's compassion (Hosea 11:8,9) and love (Isaiah 63:9). In the New Testament, we see Jesus expressing emotions. Jesus felt compassion (Luke 7:13); He wept (John 11:35); He was full of joy (John 15:11); He was amazed (Luke 7:9); He was consumed with zeal (John 2:17);

He was angry (Matthew 21:12,13); and He loved (Mark 10:21; John 11:5). conduct ministry with clinical detachment. Rather the Bible tells us to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). The comfort we offer to others is simply the comfort we ourselves have received from God, who is "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). Ministry involves not only correctly handling the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15) with our minds, but also setting apart Christ as Lord in our hearts (1 Peter 3:15).

The church needs to teach young adults a balanced biblical view of emotions. While we should not ignore or suppress emotions, emotions should not rule our lives. Many times Jesus told His disciples to not be afraid (Matthew 14:27; 28:10; Mark 6:50). The apostle Paul wrote "in your anger do not sin: Do

Pastors can provide young adults with the biblical framework for understanding the purpose of emotions, recognizing the appropriate context for expressing emotions, and discerning the danger of overreliance on emotions.

> not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26). The phrase "do not be discouraged" appears several times (Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:9; 2 Chronicles 20:15). The Bible affirms that with God's help, we can control our emotions and express them in healthy ways that do not hurt others.

Finally, we must base our moral standards for living and the basis for making ethical decisions on the Word of God rather than subjective feelings. The Psalmist asked and answered a question in Psalm 119:9, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word." The truth in the Bible is objective truth that we can understand with our minds. Yet, for that truth to have power in our lives, we must also feel it in our hearts. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

#### What Are Key Components of Emotional Health for Young Adults?

Emotional health is not the absence of negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness, but rather the way a person processes these emotions. An emotionally healthy person is able to take challenges and keep them in per-

> spective. The accumulation of life's experiences makes maintaining a proper perspective easier for an older person than for a young adult. For a young adult, the end of a romantic relationship or a closed door on a career path may seem overwhelming. A pastor

who has accumulated more life experience than the young adult to whom he is ministering may be able to impart this wisdom of keeping things in proper perspective. Keeping problems in proper perspective leads to resilience, another indicator of emotional health. Resilient people recover quicker from trauma and remain competent during stress.

What other factors make a person



resilient? A strong social support network, spirituality, finding positive meaning in trauma, helping others, and an identity as a survivor rather than a victim contribute to resiliency. Young adults can find these factors that promote resiliency in ministries for them. A church can provide the social support young adults need and provide outlets for helping others. A pastor can provide counsel that helps a young adult find positive meaning in a negative experience, and choose the identity of an overcomer rather than a victim.

Another component of emotional health is emotional honesty or selfawareness. Emotional honesty means expressing one's true feelings. A person's awareness of his true feelings is related to his emotional intelligence. Young adults can struggle with emotional honesty by relating to others from one of two extremes. Some young adults can be blunt in relating their feelings to others and come across as disrespectful or abrasive. Others may be reluctant to share their true feelings out of their need for others to like them and to maintain their approval. Relationships with others suffer in both cases. Learning to share your real feelings respectfully with another person takes courage as well as practice. Pastors can model healthy communication within staffs, among leaders, and with individual parishioners. Gentle honesty in relationships builds the fellowship described in 1 John 1:5-7, a fellowship that comes from walking in the light and living by truth.

A third component of emotional health is maintaining positive relationships. The ability to consider the needs of others alongside your own is an important characteristic of emotional intelligence. Because we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), sooner or later a need to forgive will arise in nearly very relationship. Pastors can teach young adults the biblical concept of forgiveness. Some young adults in your ministry may have A pastor can provide counsel that helps a young adult find positive meaning in a negative experience.

grown up in homes divided by divorce or tainted by abuse. As these young adults prepare to find marriage partners and start homes of their own, they begin to work through their feelings about their childhood. Part of maturing in Christ is forgiving their parents and others who may have hurt them.

Forgiveness does not mean we do not set boundaries with people who have harmed us in the past and who may still be emotionally abusive. Extending forgiveness does mean setting that person free from any debt he owes for the wrongs committed. Forgiveness does mean releasing any resentment or bitterness toward that person. Forgiveness means not repaying evil for evil, living at peace with people the best you can, and relinquishing any right for revenge, leaving room for God's wrath and judgment instead (Romans 12:17–19).

In forgiving, the person that is set free is really the one who forgives. Negative emotions a person has buried can be set free by forgiveness. Letting go of bitterness can improve a person's health. Ideally, forgiveness can set the stage for restoration of a healthy relationship between two people, although forgiveness does not always lead to a restored relationship. One person is needed for forgiveness to flow, but two people are needed for reconciliation to happen.

#### What Is the Relationship Between Emotional Health and Ethics?

When I consider the role of emotions in the lives of young adults, I think about the place for emotions in the search for truth and in determining right from wrong. Emotions do not authenticate objective truth. The resurrection of Christ cannot be verified through emotions. Whether or not life begins at conception is not open to emotional interpretation. Yet, emotions do authenticate our discovery of truth. Our understanding of the plan of salvation, made known by Christ's resurrection, fills our hearts with joy.

Emotions make us care about defending truth. Emotions make us care about making ethical choices, about avoiding overstepping boundaries. Our compassion for the unborn, disabled, and elderly makes us care about the sanctity of human life. Therefore, when we teach young adults the biblical basis for medical ethics regarding end-of-life decisions, embryonic stem cell research, use of alternative medicine, reproductive



health treatments, genetic enhancement, and psychoactive medications, we must first teach that truth is objective and not the result of subjective emotional experience. In science and medicine, keeping emotions in check and removed from the process of acquiring data and formulating hypotheses is appropriate. In ministry, the basis of apologetic arguments that defend the faith is truth and reason. Yet, when we teach ethics, we must also allow young adults to feel our passion for upholding righteousness, for protecting the vulnerable, and for promoting fairness. Without emotions, learning medical ethics quickly becomes dull and burdensome. Furthermore, history painfully illustrates that emotionally unhealthy individuals, such as Adolf Hitler, turn out to be the most ethically challenged.

What makes preaching such a powerful tool for touching lives — young adults included — is that preaching appeals to both the heart and the mind. Pastors can make the truth come alive with illustrations that touch on the emotions. Sometimes that which is difficult for the mind to grasp, the heart can know. In promoting emotional health for young adults, ministers are laying the foundation for spiritual maturity.

A saying in ministry is "hurting people hurt people." When we help young adults move beyond their emotional pain and into new levels of spiritual maturity, we are preventing the cycle of emotional hurt from extending to another generation.

I have noticed a pattern where young ministers who have experienced pain from conflict and rejection by senior ministers often become the senior ministers who create conflict and pass the pain of rejection onto another generation of younger ministers. Jesus told His disciples as the time for His crucifixion was drawing near: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34,35). Emotionally healthy Christians are powerful witnesses. In a world where people take commitments lightly and break relationships too easily, Christians who learn to forgive one another as Christ has forgiven them will indeed be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matthew 5:13,14). In a world filled with adversity, young leaders who have learned to move beyond victimhood to becoming overcomers will be the leaders worth following.

Pastors can go beyond the work of business supervisors and college professors, who merely promote emotional intelligence, by encouraging spiritual maturity in the young adults they mentor. In doing so, pastors will be discipling a generation more than ready to meet the ethical challenges of their day.



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## **Q**&**A for Ministry Wives** / GABRIELE RIENAS



more of them

than what they

can produce.

We have been at our church for about 6 months. I do not know the previous pastor's wife, but I am beginning to believe she
was perfect. People constantly refer to her gifts and accomplishments, none of which are similar to mine. I have learned she was close with several of the board members' wives, who seem to be keeping their distance from me. How can I overcome feeling completely intimidated and inadequate?

You have asked about an age-old struggle for many women: comparing ourselves to one another. We tend to do so in spite of our best efforts to obey Scripture and avoid comparisons. The situation you have described is particularly challenging because it goes to the core of how you think about yourself and how you feel about your gifts.

First, I would like to bring your situation into a new light. I am pleased to hear that the members of your congregation view the previous pastor's wife in such a favorable light. This is a strong indication of your possible future with them. Since group behavior tends to remain consistent, a congregation's demeanor toward the pastor and his family tends to end up being similar as leadership comes and goes. This works in both positive and negative ways. Just like families, congregational patterns tend to repeat themselves whether it is a pattern of criticism, hostility, and avoidance, or a pattern of concern, compassion, honor, generosity, and respect. In your case, the pattern is positive, if a little overstated. You can expect the same for yourself.

The fact they refer to her frequently is more about grieving her absence than it is about rejecting you. Reminding you of their admiration for her is their way of managing the normal feelings of loss they have, and creating some distance with you before risking again. I have no doubt they will eventually risk again, especially if their previous experience was so great.

Give yourself the gift of time. You need to be wary of relationships that develop too quickly. My rule of thumb is to approach with great care anyone who seems intent on becoming close with me quickly. The fact some of the women are taking their time could well be a positive indication of healthy boundaries.

Remember also that the references to her accomplishments take on a life of their own and tend to grow larger over time. In retelling the events, people tend to edit



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hotos.com; iStockphoto

these stories. The previous pastor's wife experienced both success and failure, as any human does.

If possible, get to know her. Meet her for coffee or contact her by e-mail. This is the best way to deal with the aura of the unknown. Let her become a real person in your mind. You will see she is human and she will become less intimidating. She will certainly be able to bring a fresh perspective to her relationship with the congregation.

Focus your attention on defining yourself and your gifts. Your insecurity suggests some ambivalence about that. Many pastors' wives struggle with the idea that people expect more of them than what they can produce. Focusing on perceived weaknesses (I cannot help with worship; I do not like to entertain; I dread having to speak in front of people), these ministry wives enter a helpless cycle of guilt and defensiveness for not living

## Be yourself and you will find that certain people will intersect with your life in a positive way.

up to certain standards. Free yourself of this and celebrate the gifts God has given you.

God knows where you are and whom you serve for this season of your life. On the day of your conception, God knew that today you and your husband would be serving X congregation in Y city

with Z needs. God has been preparing you for this time throughout your life even as He continues to make preparation for your future. You are the perfect fit for this situation for this time. Stand tall in this truth with no apology.

Be yourself and you will find that certain people will intersect with your life in a positive way. Some of these may overlap with the previous pastor's wife's confidantes and some may not. In any case, the relationships you develop will be unique to you, your personality, and your needs.

I have never liked being compared to others and feeling inferior. On the other hand, I used to be a lot more flattered by the compliments of people who really did not know me well. I have learned that when people make quick assessments these assessments are often inaccurate and biased, and I should take them with a grain of salt and liberal doses of grace.

Offer yourself and the sum of who you are to be used for God's glory. It is He who takes responsibility for making that happen when you allow it. Throw your preconceived ideas away, and be courageous enough to be yourself and offer what you have with confidence. You are the woman for this role at this place in this time. @

## **Everything But Preaching / DICK HARDY**

s spiritual leaders, our roles are multifaceted when it comes to ministering to needy people in our congregations. On one hand, we are responsible to shepherd needy people through whatever issues they face. At the same time, we must hold them accountable for their actions or inactions. While caring for them we cannot coddle them.

Ask yourself: What can I do in the next 24 hours to help this overly needy person without enabling him? Beyond any grousing you might have about his annoyance, you probably want to help him diminish his neediness. Rather than ignore him, try a 24-hour, practical approach. You might be surprised at the progress some people can make.

Beyond quick solutions, here are ways you can deal with needy people in your church:<sup>1</sup>

**Provide help, not rescue.** For those who genuinely need and want help, provide them with contacts so they can get the help they need. Most pastors are skilled in providing spiritual counsel. Thus, they need to steer away from trying to be all things to all people in the needy category. The best help is probably found in outside sources.

Make sure the needy person's walk matches his talk. For needy people, their *talk* generally is at odds with their *walk*. For those who wish to impose their neediness on you, hold them accountable for their walk. This is spiritual accountability. Know where to draw the line.

**Set healthy boundaries.** I do not pretend to be a Christian counselor. However, the boundaries issue is often foreign to people with extreme needs. While ministering to the extremely needy in your congregation, you need to set boundaries for yourself. Point them to help, but do not rescue them yourself. Set boundaries concerning how far you will let these people into your life and ministry. If you have trouble setting boundaries, seek counsel.

## How To Deal With Needy People

**Do not obstruct God's way.** The needy are God's children. Jesus ministered to countless needy people, but He looked beyond their faults and saw their need. Do not get in God's way. While doing all you can to help them and protect yourself, be open to see what God can do with people with extreme needs. part of God's plan to help bring them to wholeness ... no matter what the timetable.

Ask yourself, How can I help this person move from being a drainer to being a fully devoted follower of Jesus in word and deed? How can I look beyond his annoyances and faults and allow Jesus

## While ministering to the extremely needy in your congregation, you need to set boundaries for yourself.

Finally, you need patience, a fruit of the Spirit. You cannot deal with needy people without this trait in your life. We cringe when we think about what ministering to needy people means to our nice, neat plans for ministry with *regular* people. But irregular is regular. Having needy people in your church is

to work in his life? When you can do that, you demonstrate spiritual leadership and please the heart of God. @

NOTE

 Abridged from Dr. Roger Ferguson, Owasso, Oklahoma, June 4, 2006. http://lifepointsowasso.blogspot. com/2006/06/overly-needy-people-dealing-withthose.html.



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## Clergy, Church, & Law / Richard R. HAMMAR



## Why Some Church Receipts Are Insufficient

— Gomez v. Commissioner, T.C. Memo. 2008–93

#### Background

**D contribution** deduction on their tax return. Special rules apply to any contribution of cash or property valued by the donor at \$250 or more. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in a loss of a tax deduction. It is important for church treasurers to be familiar with these requirements, since they generally are



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responsible for issuing contribution statements and receipts. A recent Tax Court case illustrates the importance of compliance with these rules.

A couple claimed a charitable contribution deduction of \$6,500 on their tax return for contributions they made to their church consisting of 10 checks totaling \$6,100 (each check was in excess of \$250) and an additional eight checks totaling \$400 (each check was for less than \$250).

The IRS audited the couple's tax return and asked them to substantiate their charitable contributions consisting of checks of \$250 or more. The couple produced a letter from their church stating that they had made contributions of \$6,500 to the church for the year in question. The IRS concluded that this letter failed to substantiate any contribution of \$250 or more for two reasons: First, it was not contemporaneous, and second, it *failed to state whether the church had provided any goods or services in exchange for the contributions, as required by the tax code.* The couple appealed to the Tax Court.

#### The Court's Ruling

The Tax Court agreed with the IRS that the couple's contributions of \$250 or more were not deductible. The court noted that section 170(f)(8) of the tax code imposes special substantiation requirements for individual contributions of \$250 or more:

(A) No deduction shall be allowed for any contribution of \$250 or more unless the taxpayer substantiates the contribution by a contemporaneous written acknowledgment of the contribution by the [charity] that meets the requirements of subparagraph (B).

(B) An acknowledgment meets the requirements of this subparagraph if it includes the following information.

(i) The amount of cash and a description (but not value) of any property other than cash contributed.

(ii) Whether the [charity] provided any goods or services in consideration, in whole or in part, for any property described in clause (i).

(iii) A description and good faith estimate of the value of any goods or services referred to in clause (ii) or, if such goods or services consist solely of intangible religious benefits, a statement to that effect. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term "intangible religious benefit" means any intangible religious benefit that is provided by an organization organized exclusively for religious purposes and which generally is not sold in a commercial transaction [*e.g.*, worship services, teaching, and sacraments].

(C) An acknowledgment shall be considered to be contemporaneous if the taxpayer obtains the acknowledgment on or before the earlier of (i) the date on which the taxpayer files a return for the taxable year in which the contribution was made, or (ii) the due date (including extensions) for filing such return.



## Churches that fail to provide donors with a proper acknowledgment are jeopardizing the deductibility of donors' contributions.

**Key point.** The income tax regulations clarify that separate contributions of less than \$250 are not subject to these additional requirements "regardless of whether the sum of the contributions made by the taxpayer to a charity during a taxable year equals \$250 or more."

The court concluded that the couple failed to meet two of these substantiation requirements with respect to their individual checks of \$250 or more:

#### Not contemporaneous

The court concluded the letter the church sent to the couple (acknowledging contributions of \$6,500) was not contemporaneous because the couple did not receive it by the latter of the date they filed their tax return or the due date of their return. Rather, the church did not issue the letter to the couple until 2 years later, on the day they had their hearing before the court.

## Failure to indicate no goods or services were provided

As noted above, the tax code also requires that, for any contribution of \$250 or more, the charity's written acknowledgment must state whether it provided any goods or services in consideration for the contribution, and, if so, a description and good faith estimate of the value of any goods or services that it provided or, if such goods or services consist solely of intangible religious benefits, a statement to that effect. The court noted that the church's letter did not satisfy this requirement:

The letter from [the church] does not meet the substantiation requirements set forth in the Internal Revenue Code and regulations. According to the Internal Revenue Code and regulations, the required acknowledgment of the charitable contribution not only must include the amount contributed, *but also must state whether the charity provided any goods or services in consideration for the contributions and describe and set forth a good faith estimate of the value of those goods or services.* (emphasis added)

#### **Application to Church Leaders**

This case graphically illustrates the consequences that can result from a church's failure to comply with the substantiation requirements for charitable contributions. Those requirements are stricter for contributions of \$250 or more, and, as this case demonstrates, require the written acknowledgment (receipt) provided by a charity to donors to be contemporaneous and include a statement indicating whether the charity provided goods or services to the donor in consideration of the contribution. If goods or services were provided, the church's

written acknowledgment must provide a description and good faith estimate of the value of those goods or services, or if only intangible religious benefits were provided, a statement to that effect. Churches that fail to provide donors with a proper acknowledgment are jeopardizing the deductibility of donors' contributions.

It should be noted that both the IRS and the Tax Court conceded that the couple made the donations in question. The problem was that they were unable to meet the stricter substantiation requirements that apply to contributions of \$250 or more. When it comes to the substantiation of charitable contributions, it is form over substance.

**Example.** Bob donated \$50 each week to his church this year. In addition, he made a \$1,000 donation to the building fund, and a \$1,000 donation to the missions fund. At the end of the year, the church treasurer provided Bob with a receipt that itemized each of his contributions, but failed to state whether or not the church provided him with any goods or services in exchange for any of his contributions. Cash contributions

of \$250 or more must be substantiated by a written acknowledgment (receipt) from the charity that states whether or not any goods or services were provided to the donor in return for the contributions. If goods or services were provided, the church's acknowledgment must provide a description and value of those goods or services, or, if only intangible religious benefits were provided, a statement to that effect. Here is an example of the required statement: "No goods or services were provided in exchange for your contributions, other than intangible religious benefits." The defective receipt issued by the church is not sufficient to substantiate Bob's contributions of \$1,000 to the building fund and missions fund.

**Example.** Same facts as the previous example. Assume that the IRS audits Bob's tax return and denies a deduction for the two \$1,000 contributions. Is it too late for the church to issue a revised receipt that includes the required language? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. The tax code requires written acknowledgments to be "contemporaneous." The IRS explains this require-



ment as follows: *"For the written* acknowledgment to be considered contemporaneous with the contribution, a donor must receive the acknowledgment by the earlier of the date on which the donor actually files his or her individual federal income tax return for the year of the contribution, or the due date (including extensions) of the return." **Example.** *Barb* 

donated an item of jewelry to her church this year, and claimed a charitable contribution deduction on her tax return of \$1,000. The church issued Barb an annual "contribution summary" that listed all of her donations of cash and property for the year. The contribution summary contained the following statement: "No goods or services were provided in exchange for your contributions, other than intangible religious benefits." It described the donated jewelry as "an item of jewelry." This receipt may not be sufficient since it did not provide an adequate description of the donated property as required by section 170(f)(8) of the tax code (quoted above). In particular, the acknowledgment contained no information regarding the quality, age, or condition of the donated property that would enable the IRS to determine its value at the time of the donation. Also, note that donors who contribute items of noncash property valued at more than \$500 (but not more than \$5,000) must complete Section A of Form 8283 and attach it to the tax return claiming the deduction. *For contributions of noncash property* valued at more than \$5,000, additional substantiation requirements apply.

Tip. Be alert to any donation of property that may be valued by the donor at more than \$500. Be sure the donor is aware of the need to complete Section A of Form 8283 for donations of property valued at more than \$500 but not more than \$5,000, and Section B of Form 8283 for donations of property (other than publicly traded stock) valued at more than \$5,000. The instructions to *Form* 8283 *contain a helpful summary* of the substantiation requirements that apply to these kinds of gifts. Different rules apply to donations of vehicles. *Failure to comply with these rules may* lead to a loss of a deduction. It is a good practice for churches to have some of these forms on hand to give to donors who make contributions of noncash property. 🙆

## Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944): "The Positive Proclamation of Pentecost"

**A imee Semple McPherson was winsome, flamboyant, theatrical, sincere, practical, generous, embracing, and opinionated** — all at the same time. Sister Aimee, as she was called (or sometimes simply "Sister"), was by far the most visible of all firstgeneration Pentecostal leaders. No one else came close.

As an American celebrity, the mainstream press covered her life and ministry alongside stories of Hollywood stars and business tycoons. Her life was in many ways a script ready-made for tabloid journalism. But beneath the glitz, McPherson was a Pentecostal preacher through and through, and she could also be an insightful Pentecostal theologian.

Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy was Canadian, born and reared in Ingersoll, Ontario. On her father's side, her religious lineage was Methodist; on her mother's side, it was the Salvation Army. Denominations never meant as much in Canada as in the United States. Because of that, Aimee grew up with a natural ecumenical bent. Minor religious differences did not matter; what counted most was what Christians shared in common.

McPherson's early adult years were tumultuous. In winter 1908, she met a young evangelist named Robert James Semple, and the two soon married. Feeling called by God to preach, the



couple first went Chicago, where William Durham ordained them both, and then headed for China. Almost immediately Robert contracted malaria and died. Aimee was alone and pregnant. She waited until her daughter was born, and then sailed to New York City where she had connections with the Salvation Army. Shortly after arriving in New York, she met and married Harold McPherson.

McPherson seems to have thought his new wife would adopt the standard role of stay-at-home mom — keep



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During the early years of her ministry, McPherson toured the country in her "gospel car," going anywhere there was a road to take her. In 1918, she visited southern California and fell in love with the place. While she never stopped traveling, Los Angeles became her permanent home and the headquarters of her Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

McPherson's home congregation met in Angelus Temple, a magnificent church building completed in 1923. The sanctuary held 5,000 people and Sister Aimee packed them in. She often preached in costume, acting out her message as she preached. But despite the glamour and theatrics, McPherson never forgot her priorities. She knew that love of God came first, and then love of neighbor. During the Depression, her church served thousands of meals to hungry families and individuals with no distinctions made on the basis of race, faith, or ethnicity.

The following excerpt is taken from her book *This Is That* (1923), and it is the conclusion of one of her most famous sermons, "Death in the Pot," based on an episode in the life of the prophet Elisha recounted in 2 Kings 4:38-41. During a time when many other Pentecostal leaders were denouncing each other and staking out their own domains, McPherson adopted a different stance. She challenged Pentecostals to lay aside their differences, come together, and concentrate on the positive proclamation of the gospel.

**any eyes and many footsteps** were turned eagerly toward this Pentecostal movement; brethren patted each other on the back and said: "No more need of hunger or separation or dearth. Here is unity everlasting with nothing to mar."

Hungrily, servants and handmaidens alike drew near with clean plates and shining spoons. "What a wonderful feast we are going to have," they said.

But stop! Who is that man slipping in so stealthily behind the others carrying something in his garment? Let us question him.



## Beneath the glitz, McPherson was a Pentecostal preacher through and through, and she could also be an insightful Pentecostal theologian.

Q. "Halt! *Who* goes there? From whence do Y-O-U come?" A. "Me? Oh, I come from no particular garden. I am the 'ONE WHO WENT OUT

#### IN THE FIELD TO GATHER HERBS.' "

Q. "And what sort of vegetables do you bring in your lap?"

A. "Why — er — that is, I — It is not vegetables I bring. Vegetables must be most carefully planted in prepared ground, tilled and cultivated (study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed). Whilst wandering yonder I found a wild vine full of nice, fat *gourds*, no trouble to till them at all. They were there already, and all I had to do was to pluck the wild gourds in passing. See? I have a good big lapful here. Fine looking specimens, are they not?"

Q. "Good specimens of 'gourds,' yes, but I am not so sure of their being good to eat, or being a desirable addition to yonder feast. I fear that they are poisonous."

A. "Oh, no, they are not poisonous, I assure you."

Q. "Well, what are the names of these different gourds?"

A. "Why — a — This one is called 'False Teaching,' this one is called 'Error,' whilst this prickly one is known as 'Doctrinal Issues.' This puffy fat one is 'Lover of Power and Recognition.' Then there is 'Self-Righteousness,' 'Formality,' 'Pre-conceived Ideas and Teaching,' 'Fear of Manifestations,' 'Flesh,' and 'Fanaticism.' There are many other gourds, and amongst their number are 'Lack of Brotherly Love,' 'False Reports,' 'Harsh Criticism,' and 'Tale Bearing.' "

Q. "Why, Man! You would never think of bringing such things into the midst of a Pentecostal gathering!

> "You are wrong, and the gourds are poisonous. They will destroy unity and curdle love and make endless confusion and trouble.

"Surely you do not realize what you are doing?"

A. "Oh, yes I do. The Lord (?) revealed this thing to me and I know

this new idea is the only right one. I know these gourds are perfectly all right and you can't teach me anything about them. Kindly allow me to pass."

Q. "Wait, wait, come back!"

There, he is gone — he worms his way into the inner circle, gets close to the pot, lifts his lapful of gourds, and in they go, the whole lot of them, into the pottage. On-lookers innocently allowed the gourds at first to pass them, and even — Shred them into the pot of pottage, *'for they knew them not.'* So they poured out for men to eat; and it came to pass as they were eating of the pottage that they cried out and said: "OH, THOU MAN OF GOD, THERE IS DEATH IN THE POT," and they could not eat thereof.

Amidst the many who came with good contributions to the pot, here and there steals up a man or woman with a lapful of gourds, which they have plucked from some wild vine as they journeyed, and they are thrown, sometimes ignorantly, sometimes knowingly, into the great pot upon the fire.

"Oh what a distressingly large lapful of poisonous gourds!" exclaims the onlooker who had been approaching with his empty dish and spoon, ready to dine, and who now draws back in fear.

"Horrors — the whole thing is spoiled!"

There is false teaching and error in that movement, and I am afraid to have anything to do with it.

There is "So and So," who did "such and such" a thing and if *that's Pentecost*, or if *that's the Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, I for one, don't want it. There's Mr. "So and So" in our assembly, and there's that one who professed to be a Holy Ghost preacher — did you hear what he did?

Did you hear of the gourd that he brought and dumped into this movement?

No, Sir! The whole pot is contaminated and poisoned. I tell you "there's DEATH in the pot," and they are in a straight between two, whether to try to overturn the whole pot or to walk away and leave it, warning others as they go.

Some say, "Come on, let's fight this movement. Let's write some tracts against it and do what we can to overturn the whole thing."

Others who walk away, warn every-

 Output I.Gray

 Image: Control of the start of

one they meet by saying: "Did you hear the news about that Pentecostal movement down there? Why, 'So and So' has just brought the most distressing lapful of gourds and dropped them into Pentecost; unity is disrupted; love is curdled, the people are made sick at their very hearts. Don't you go near that place."

Perplexity and confusion falls upon many an onlooker, some stay to criticize; others to wring their hands and weep.

What shall YOU and I do? We know that the movement is ninety-nine percent pure, but Oh, that lapful of gourds has brought so much trouble! Of course we know that "WHEN THE SONS OF GOD CAME TOGETHER THE DEVIL CAME ALSO," and that there never was a movement but where someone came in to bring reproach, and that even amongst the twelve disciples one was a Judas. We also know how one who does not measure up to the standard is singled out from the ninety-nine others and enlarged upon until the "ninety and nine just ones" are forgotten in pointing to and discussing him who went astray.

"Well, we know the thing is not right anyway, as it is, and I guess we better go away. Too bad, isn't it?"

"But wait a moment —

"Who is this so swiftly approaching with a well-filled sack clasped tightly in his arms?"

Q. "Who goes there, and what do you bring in your hands?"

A. "I am the man with the sack of meal. The meal is the Word of God. I go to cast it into the pot. This meal will simmer down to the bottom of the whole affair and settle all disturbances. It shall cry aloud:

'What saith the scriptures? Bring forth the plumb line. Let God be true and every man a liar. Prove all things. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' "

This word is quick and power and shall not fail, if cast into the pot, to purify and bring order out of confusion.

'And Elisha said, bring meal, and he cast it into the pot; and he said, pour out for the people that they may eat, and there was no harm in the pot.'

Oh, hallelujah! The Word of God is being poured into this movement and His Word is accomplishing that whereunto it has been sent. The Holy Spirit



# McPherson challenged Pentecostals to lay aside their differences, come together, and concentrate on the positive proclamation of the gospel.

today is calling as did Elisha of old: "POUR OUT FOR THE PEOPLE THAT THEY MAY EAT."

I can seem to see the surrounding circle of empty plates and see the hungry faces of the dear ones as they are partaking themselves and calling to others to come "taste and see that the Lord is good."

"POUR OUT TO THE PEOPLE THAT THEY MAY EAT." Oh, yes, that is the greatest mission of the hour. Give unto the people that they may eat.

If you have discovered something somewhere in your vicinity or in the movement at large, which looks to you like a gourd, instead of turning your back and your judgment and wholesale condemnation upon the whole thing, go bring the meal (2 Kings 4:41), get the Word of God and find out what saith the scriptures. 'If this work be of men it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God' (Acts 5:38,39).

Get out the meal — if you seek this

Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the Bible evidence, speaking in tongues, in the WORD, with the accompanying gifts and fruits of the Spirit, believe God and come boldly to receive this Bible experience even though every one round about you seems to be in error or falls below the standard.

INSTEAD OF BEING THE ONE WHO CRIES "THERE IS DEATH IN THE POT," BE AN ELISHA WITH A SACK OF MEAL; receive YE the Holy Ghost; let God make YOU to measure up to the Word. All your criticizing or scolding or telling where the trouble is even trying to fix it, can never help. The Meal of the Word will alone avail.

Pour out for the people that they may eat. Dear worker, what are you feeding your hungry people on? Are you telling them and repeating over, meeting after meeting, every story and incident that has come to your knowledge where gourds have been put into the pot? If so, you are guilty and putting gourds of doubts and discouragement in the pot yourself.

When you set the table for your guests that hunger all about you, do not frighten people away by bringing up from your cellar the poorest potatoes or the mouldy preserves, or the mildewed bread from your larder - THEY DO NOT WANT TO HEAR ABOUT MAN'S WORST: THEY WANT TO HEAR ABOUT GOD'S BEST. What are you feeding your people on? Relating the worst things you ever heard of man doing or the best things you ever heard of God doing? The former makes poor fighting food — the latter makes firm spiritual muscles and makes strong, developed, matured men and women who grow quickly under such teaching 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13).

Remember that by relating past wrongs, etc., you are as guilty as those who committed them, and are only frightening people away by crying: "There's death in the pot." Go bring the meal: preach the Word. Lift up the pure standard and God will vindicate and honor His Word.

#### McPherson's 'Original Wisdom' for Today

Sister Aimee insisted that her own preaching be positive. She did not want to nit-pick at the real or imagined errors of others or who unnecessarily divided God's flock.

1. Is your preaching positive or negative? Do you preach about "gourds" or do you preach the positive "meal of the Word"?

2. Do forgiveness and reconciliation play a prominent role in your ministry? Do forgiveness and reconciliation require the identification of wrong behavior? If so, how is this different from negativity?

3. What can you do to positively foster Pentecostal unity? What can you do to positively foster unity among all Christians? **(** 

## iUniversity: Empowering Collegians for Christ / HARVEY A. HERMAN

## Want To Leave a Legacy? Mentor University Students

ecently I attended the funeral of a close friend, Joe Zickafoose. Hundreds gathered to celebrate his life and ministry. I mourned his premature departure. We had been ministry partners and confidants for over 25 years.

Joe is most remembered for his ability to mentor students. Even one conversation with Joe could change the trajectory of a student's life. At his funeral it was impossible to miss the evidence of his people-building skills. Scores of his previous students, interns, and ministry colleagues paid tribute. They described him as a faithful discipler, humble mentor, honest friend, servant leader, patient guide, active listener, edgy musician, and hilarious hero. Many attendees soberly walked away wondering, *Am I able to live up to the investment Joe placed in my life*?

John Maxwell wrote Talent Is Never Enough. Maxwell believes talent is not what makes the difference in leadership that reverberated at Joe's funeral. Do not get me wrong. Joe was amazingly talented. As a public speaker Joe was compelling. He was a brilliant thinker, a passionate and skilled guitarist, an exceptional practical theologian, and a hilarious prankster. Except for a few references to his humor and intelligence, people told how Joe had profoundly left his mark on them by his mentorship. Joe set out to change the world one person at a time. Why did people fly in for the funeral from across America and Europe? They flew in because God used Joe to change their lives.

How did Joe do it? Why is he such a beloved mentor? And how can you have the same kind of impact on the life of a college student? When you meet a student at Starbucks, what do you talk about?

The first question to ask a student is, "Who are you and where did you come from?" People have a story, and they want to tell it. Find out what they think is special about their hometown. Who are their siblings and how do they get along? What did they like and dislike about high school? What do they admire most about their parents? Show interest in getting to know them for who they are rather than what they can do.

Then tell them your story. This subtlety alerts them to think relationship before task. Every truly transformational relationship begins with personal history giving.

The next question to ask a student is, "What are your priorities and how can I help?" The crux of any mentoring relationship is as simple as a more experienced person asking a less experienced person about goals and what course of action he intends to pursue. Maybe the student cannot articulate an action plan, but you can help him define it, and maybe do something to help resource it. No doubt this will lead you to talk about seven key areas: marital, financial, emotional, physical, professional, social, and spiritual development. Mentoring a student to

#### Joe Zickafoose

full potential will correlate directly to promoting balanced growth in these areas.

Closely related to identifying priorities is the formation of personal vision. Today's student is overwhelmed by options and opportunities. There are a million good things a student could

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do in life. The hard part is choosing what to do. This often leads a student to paralysis in his decisionmaking. A mentor may come alongside a student and help him identify his core values, help infuse godly character qualities, and in doing so foster greater clarity and purpose. Joe was exceptionally good at helping a student grasp a godly vision for his life and future career.

Then Joe would gather students into teams — missions teams, worship teams, hospitality teams, and leadership teams. He knew success in life depends on a person's ability to play well with others. Joe defined teamwork as authentic servanthood. He knew that when a student saw the needs of others as important as her own needs, then she would reach out with the love of Christ.

Only when students begin to view themselves as family units will they show deep devotion to each other. When students travel together with a common purpose, they get where they are going with greater trust and thrust. Teamwork is transformational.

Concerning leadership development, Joe recognized two priorities. First, he wanted to train every student to be a disciple maker. He believed disciple making to be the core command of the Great Commission. To Joe you were either a disciple or a disciple maker. He mentored students individually and in groups in the art of making disciples. He directly connected this with Jesus' model of equipping the apostles for ministry. This captures the imagination of students as they actively serve the highest purpose they can accomplish within the kingdom of God.

Second, Joe invented scores of additional servant-leadership roles for students. He wanted to enable a student to flourish in leadership skills. As a student graduates, he will employ these skills for a lifetime as a marketplace minister. To this end a mentor is only helpful when he sees a student operate in her leadership role. Feedback becomes rich and meaningful from a coach who watches from the front row. (When a mentor offers feedback without firsthand observation, the student may feel the feedback is disingenuous). Feedback fosters a personal metamorphosis of self. Mentoring students to become servant leaders is about expanding their capacity to create an extraordinary future. And this metamorphosis lies in the domain of performance and achievement, not in psychology.

## An effective pastoral mentor exposes emerging student leaders to other great leaders.

A pastor who offers sincere feedback to a student will begin to see rich benefits in a student's life. The student will grow in self-awareness, set better goals, become more balanced and less stressed, communicate better, improve health and fitness, and deepen family relationships. As family and friends wrote on Joe's Facebook page, they thanked Joe for helping them grow in these ways.

An effective pastoral mentor exposes emerging student leaders to other great leaders. Joe refused to permit a student to form a dependent relationship with him. He treated students as equals and deliberately fostered mutually beneficial relationships. He networked students with other students and with people who could encourage them in their spiritual and leadership development. He wanted students to meet people who possessed stories of exceptional courage, ability, and character. Nothing speaks as persuasively as a heroic example.

Most important, a Christian mentor cares for and encourages a student in her spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is not achieved; it is received. A relationship with God is not achieved through techniques, but instead by personal commitment, submission to the Spirit, devotion, and self-surrender. Joe modeled a growing relationship with Christ, and then pointed the way for a student to follow in kind. Nevertheless, he knew for a student to receive grace and truth, it would come only through humble submission to Jesus.

So how did Joe do it? He carefully and intentionally used these relationship-building skills: history giving, coaching, visioneering, teamwork, disciple making, feedback, exposure to heroic people, and spiritual direction.

Stephen Covey writes about living, loving, learning, and leaving a legacy. Joe lived well, loved generously, constantly learned, and at his funeral we all witnessed his legacy as one student after another stood to say, "Thank you, Joe, for your impact on my life. I will never be the same. I miss you and love you." I echo the same sentiments.

May you be blessed with a legacy of investing deeply into the hearts and minds of college students, and like Joe may you enjoy many great cups of coffee along the way. @



## From the Light Side / JACK AIKEN and TORRY"MOOSE" MARTIN



- SOURDOUGH, AK-Chapter Two THE DEVIL AND DOCTOR JONES

s a new pastor in Sourdough, Alaska, Mackenzie Pickens looked forward to making new friends by attending his first Ministers Only Breakfast, aka the MOB. Unfortunately, he was running late because his alarm clock failed. Then, while heading to the shower he stepped on one of his son Jason's toy cars, which sent him crashing painfully to the bedroom floor. Finally, after limping to the shower and getting the water temperature just right, he stepped in, only to have it instantly turn frigid. His wife, Annie, chose that moment to start the washing machine. Little did Mack know that his morning mishaps were not over.

After his glacier-water shower, he discovered that the clothes he had carefully piled in a chair the night before were missing. Considering that Annie was obsessed with cleanliness and order and hearing the washing machine, there was no mystery what happened to his clothes. Mack rummaged through the closet and managed to dress, despite



having to settle for mismatched socks, one black and one blue.

"At least my socks match my bruises," Mack mumbled in frustration.

He finally made it to the kitchen, and although Annie had saved him some coffee, she had only left him dust in the creamer jar. *What else could go wrong?* Mack muttered.

Within minutes he would have his answer. Racing out the door, he slipped and fell in the new-fallen snow covering the walkway. While sitting on the frozen concrete, he realized his vehicle was also covered with 8 inches of the white stuff, no doubt underlain by a thick coat of ice. It took 15 minutes of sub-zero chipping and scraping before he cleared the windshield enough to drive in what he considered a safe manner. The other windows would just have to wait. What little area he had cleared quickly fogged over because the heater and defroster chose this day, of all days, to refuse to work.

Despite the snow, ice, and fog, the warm red glow of the lights of a law enforcement vehicle penetrated the car's interior. Mack groaned as he pulled to the side of the road and opened his window. The trooper's voice was disgustingly cheerful as he asked, "Sir, may I



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**TORRY**"MOOSE" MARTIN is a former Alaskan and an award-winning Christian comedian and author who currently resides in Sparta, Tennessee. He also writes for *Adventures in Odyssey*, produced by Focus on the Family. see your license and registration?"

A few minutes later, as he examined his ticket for "Driving with obstructed vision," he realized that the last name of the law man who had given him the ticket was "Murphy." Mack couldn't help but chuckle at the irony.

After spending the next quarter-hour clearing his windows, Mack rushed to the restaurant, swinging into the parking lot a little too fast. He headed for a parking space in front of the restaurant's plate glass window, behind which a group was seated. As he applied the brakes, the car seemed to speed up, skidding out of control. Mack saw the looks of horror on the men's faces through the window, and instinctively cried out, "Lord, help!"

His prayer was answered when the front wheels jumped the concrete block at the end of the parking space, and the ensuing friction on the undercarriage abruptly stopped the lunging vehicle.

At this point, the men who had not already begun to scramble out of the way of the approaching juggernaut joined the others in a mad rush out the door to see who this NASCAR reject was.

One of the men recognized their new colleague and almost doubling over in laughter managed to gasp out, "Pastor Pickens, meet the MOB." Mack was glad his face was already red from the cold, hiding his acute embarrassment. Still laughing, they helped him get his car off the concrete block and back into the parking space.

When they were all finally settled at the table, Mack shared the full blow-byblow details of his morning gone awry. A few chuckles were heard around the table from those who could see themselves in Mack's "light afflictions."

Mack sighed before concluding with this comment, "Now I know how Job must have felt when God turned the devil loose on him. All I'm lacking are the sackcloth and ashes."

The Right Reverend Doctor Jones, from the Church of the New Revelation,

spoke up. "That's an entertaining story, Mack," he said with a smile, "but I don't know what I find more amusing — the fact you can't drive in the snow, or that you take that Job and the devil story seriously."



Thor said,"I told her flat out,'Lady, I ain't gonna let you waste my time. If you want to get outta the mess you're in, I'll pray for you, but otherwise you can get outta here right now.'"

Taken aback, Mack's coffee cup stalled halfway to his mouth. "Don't you believe in the devil?" Mack asked.

Jones let out a loud, but dismissive guffaw. "Mack, Mack, Mack. You poor boy. The devil isn't real! That 'Bogey-Man' stuff is only good to frighten children. The whole devil brouhaha is a construct of our imaginations to explain the corruption of man's essentially good nature by the influence of a flawed society. In the light of modern scholarship, that should be obvious."

"What's obvious to me is that you

have never shared a home with two children who know how to take sibling rivalry to unexplored new heights," Mack said with a grin, as he lowered his cup. "Trust me, when my two get going, they quickly put to rest any notion of the essential goodness of man."

Jones, not about to back down, pressed his point, "The devil doesn't make us do anything. We have to stop blaming our problems on some fictional character or looking for solutions in some supernatural messiah. Our salvation lies in perfecting society."

In the pause that followed, the group's theological diversity registered on their faces. A few rolled their eyes, while others nodded in agreement.

Thor Langston, a bearded and booted pastor whose small congregation met just outside of town, looked at Dr. Jones and said, "Poor Jesus. He coulda saved Hisself a lotta trouble, if He'd just known how good man really was."

Dr. Jones glared at Thor, giving him a pitying smile while shaking his head.

Thor shot back, "Jonesy, I know you prob'ly got more degrees than a thermometer, but ya got a magnet loose somewhere cuz' your spiritual compass is flat-out broke."

"And so is your vocabulary, grammar, use of metaphor, and the English language in general," Dr. Jones rejoined.

Thor paused, then shrugged, "Well, I'm sure that meant somethin', Jonsey, but I ain't sure what. But if n yo're saying I ain't got a lotta schooling, I knows that."

Thor continued, "But I do know the Bible, and I knows what I seen. The devil, or one of his demons, showed up at my place a few years ago, and I'm 'bout to testify."

"Oh, no! Not another one of your stories!" Jones sneered.

"Hold on, Jones," said Bill Green from the Church of God, "I want to hear this."

A clamor of voices from around the table expressed their agreement.

"One day I was sitting in my office, reading the Word, when my wife, Marge, who helps out at the office part-time, brought a woman back to my cubby. She said her name wus Hazel Long. When I first saw her she was kinda overwhelming. I'm over 6 feet tall, but she towered a good 3 inches over my head ... and she was big ... not fluffy-big, but muscular big. Kinda like an Amazon."

"First devils, now Amazons," Dr. Jones laughed derisively. "Tell me, Thor, when you look up at the stars, do you see constellations and Northern Lights, or do you see UFOs and unicorns?"

Thor ignored him and continued, "Well, she sat down and the first words outta her mouth were, 'I'm from the Church of Satan and I'm here to waste your time.' Now I didn't say nothin' right off, but I'm sure my eyes musta bugged out like a stepped-on toadyfrog. I know I swallered real hard. Anyway, the first thought that came to my mind was, *I'm sorry, but I got all the time-wasters I need."* 

"Ain't that the truth," said John from First Methodist. "I've got more backbiters and gossipers than I can use, too."

Milton, the Covenant pastor, called out, "I'll see your gossipers and backbiters, and raise you two critical spirits!"

Thor raised his voice over the laughter and continued. "I told her flat out, 'Lady, I ain't gonna let you waste my time. If you want to get outta the mess you're in, I'll pray for you, but otherwise you can get outta here right now."

"Wow, that was pretty tough," someone volunteered.

"Yeah, but when yer dealin' with the devil, you cain't be tough enough. Anyhow, she give me a look that pert near set my beard on fire, jumped up, 'n stomped out. She slammed the outside door so hard I thought it prob'ly come plum off'n its hinges.

"In a couple a seconds I heard screamin' from the parking lot. Me and Marge collided at the office door, but somehow we both squeezed through, stumblin' outside. And there wus Hazel, laying by her car screamin', writhin', and foamin' at the mouth. I'd only seen demons once, but I knowed what it was."

"That's not evidence of the devil or demons," Dr. Jones scoffed. "It's obvious the poor woman was having some sort of psychotic break."

"Hold on, Jonesy, wait 'til ya hear the rest of the story."

"Stop calling me Jonesy! I'm a doctor of theology. I worked hard for that title. Give me the courtesy of using it."

"Jonesy, I know you prob'ly got more degrees than a thermometer,"Thor shot back,"but ya got a magnet loose somewhere cuz' your spiritual compass is flat-out broke."

"I do apologize. Please 'scuse me, *Doctor* Jonesy. Anyhow, me and Marge finally got Hazel back into the church, with her spittin', scratchin', an' trying to bite us the whole time."

"Weren't you scared?" Milton asked, "I think I would have stayed in the church and called 911."

"Honestly, I wus a little skeered," Thor admitted, "but I was also hopping mad, and I prayed for her deliverance in the name of Jesus, commandin' the evil spirit to go. After about an hour, she gave one last big ol' heave and got real still. You wouldn't believe the change that come over that gal's face. She began to cry and laugh, all at the same time, jumping around shoutin', 'I'm free, I'm free.' A' course, me and Marge joined in, and, believe me, we had a high ol' time!"

Thor paused as the waitress distributed the checks.

As she walked away, Thor continued, "I still hear from her from time to time. Hazel's a total different person now. She spends a lotta time talking to kids about drugs and occult games, which she figures opened the door to that evil spirit.

"Dr. Jones, I know I wus face to face with the devil that day. An' there ain't no psychology can 'splain what I heard and seen." And with that, Thor concluded his story.

Nobody said much after that. The MOB seemed to be lost in their thoughts; and in a few minutes, after a closing prayer, they headed out.

Thor slowly rose to his feet. As he did so, he grabbed Mack's ticket and said, "Mack, I'm gonna buy yo're breakfast bein' as how yo're a newcomer, and all."

While Thor walked up to the cashier, Mack waited by the door. Mack again expressed his thanks as the two of them walked toward his car.

As they passed the restaurant window, Thor glanced in and suddenly grabbed Mack's arm. "Watch this," he said, nodding toward the cashier, where Dr. Jones had just arrived, after a detour to the restroom. "The good Doctor Jones is about to learn that the devil do exist. I give the cashier our tickets, and tol' her Jonsey wanted to pay for our breakfasts."

Mack almost choked, "What?"

"Yeah, I'm just doin' a little test of Jonsey's belief in the 'essential goodness of man.' You run along. I need to stay here in case the devil decides to take aholt of the good Dr. Jones. And watch yer drivin', afore ya kill yoreself and half the town with you. We're gonna need you around here."

As he drove away, despite the lack of a heater, Mack felt the warmth of a new friendship. I like that Thor guy, he thought. I've got a feeling I'm going to be seeing a lot more of him, and, hopefully, a lot less of the devil and Dr. Jones. @

## **Sermon Seeds**



## Characteristics of a Godly Mother

#### GARY R. ALLEN, Nixa, Missouri

#### INTRODUCTION

Many women who rebel against previously established roles of womanhood and motherhood may do so because they lack adequate support from their fathers and husbands. These men may have imposed unrealistic expectations on their daughters and wives. Wives and mothers who receive even the smallest amount of love and appreciation from their husbands and children usually excel beyond expectations.

The biblical characteristics of a godly mother include:

#### MESSAGE

#### 1. Purity

- a. Purity is a realistic expectation.
- b. "Just say no."
- c. Forgiveness is available through Jesus.
- d. Consequences last forever.
- 2. Prayer
  - a. 1 Samuel 1:1-20.
  - b. Your source and security are in God.
- 3. Praise
  - a. 1 Samuel 2:1,2.
  - b. Destroys selfishness.
- 4. Love
  - a. Tender heart.
  - b. Isaiah 49:15;66:13.
- 5. Perseverance
  - a. Willing to suffer.
  - b. 1 Samuel 2:18–21.
- 6. Hope
  - a. Mothers have hope when all evidence is against them.
  - b. There is no comparison of a mother's hope in and for her child.

#### CONCLUSION

Mother, you can be a godly woman with godly influence on both your husband and children. Godly mothers deserve the love and esteem of their families.

## We Must Remember Our Heritage

#### JOHN WALKER

TEXT: 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

#### INTRODUCTION

What makes America strong? Her size, resources, armed services, nuclear stockpile, success in space, two-party political system, educational system, law enforcement agencies, high standard of living, and shorter hours of work? No. America's strength comes from her heritage — open Bibles and service to God. These have been her foundational truths.

#### MESSAGE

#### 1. A word to God's people

- a. National recovery will come when God's people hear and heed His Word.
- b. Christians can rescue America.
- 2. We must humble ourselves.
  - a. We are too proud.
  - b. We are too rich and increased with goods.
  - c. We are too satisfied and comfortable.
  - d. We are too sleepy not committed to the Lord.
  - e. We are too self-centered. We do not notice our neighbor's needs.

#### 3. We must pray.

- a. How long has it been since we have really prayed and felt God's power and presence.
- b. We sing "Sweet Hour of Prayer," but our prayers often last only a few minutes.
- c. We have lessons, sermons, and books on prayer, but we need to say to the Lord: "Teach me to pray" (Luke 18:1).

#### 4. We must seek God's face.

- a. In the early morning hour
- b. In the sacred pages of His Word
- c. In fellowship with other believers

#### 5. We must turn from our wicked ways.

- a. Complacency
- b. Slothfulness
- c. Indifference
- d. Self-centeredness

#### 6. God will hear from heaven.

- a. God will hear.
- b. God will answer forgive, cleanse, restore, empower, and heal our land.
- 7. Revived Christians can hold back spiritual apathy and moral degeneracy.
  - a. God is calling us to clean and pure lives.
  - b. He wants us to have compassionate hearts and make fervent pleas for others.

#### 8. America is in peril.

- a. America needs Christian soldiers. We bear a precious name and a solemn responsibility.
- b. Are we afraid of reproach?
- c. Do we seek for what the world offers?
  - (1) Its pleasures, acclaim, pursuits, attitudes, and ideas (James 4:4).
  - (2) We can still be friendly with people.

#### CONCLUSION

If America is to retain her heritage and remain strong against her foes, God's people must hear His voice, heed His warnings, and do His work. Then America will realize her peril and turn back to God.

## The Many Hats of Any Man

WARREN MCPHERSON, Springfield, Missouri

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-27

INTRODUCTION: Today I will address the men.

#### MESSAGE

- 1. "I am made all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22).1
  - a. I am made a husband (Ephesians 5:23).
    - (1) Responsible
    - (2) Gentle, not rough, gruff, and demanding
    - (3) Loving
  - b. I am made a father (Luke 11:11–13).
    - It takes more than a physical act to become a father.
    - (1) Understanding
    - (2) Wisdom
    - (3) Patience
    - (4) Humility
  - c. I am made a provider (1 Timothy 5:8).
    - (1) My own provider
      - (a) Family
      - (b) Church
    - (2) If a man does not provide:
      - (a) He has denied the faith.
      - (b) He is worse than an infidel.
  - d. I am made a teacher (Deuteronomy 6:6,7).
    - (1) By attitude
    - (2) By example
    - (3) By talk
    - (4) By walk
  - e. I am made a referee (Ephesians 6:4).
    - (1) Fairness
    - (2) Impartiality
    - (3) Honesty
    - (4) Firmness
  - f. I am made a judge (Hebrews 12:9).
    - (1) Quick and speedy trial
    - (2) A preponderance of the evidence
    - (3) A fair and equitable decision
    - (4) A judgment befitting the case
  - g. I am made a priest (1 Peter 2:5,9).
    - (1) A mediator go between
    - (2) An intercessor
    - (3) A covering
  - h. I am made a champion (1 Corinthians 16:13). The whole world loves a winner.
- 2. "I therefore so run" (1 Corinthians 9:26).
  - a. "Not as one that beateth the air" (1 Corinthians 9:26).
  - b. "I keep under my body" (1 Corinthians 9:27).
  - c. "Lest ... I myself should be a cast away" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

#### CONCLUSION

What hats do you see on your hat rack?

NOTE: 1. Scripture references are KJV.

## The Fruit of the Spirit

JOHN ELLER, Griffin, Georgia

TEXT: GALATIANS 5:19-25

#### INTRODUCTION

Fruit before gifts. Fruit of the Spirit versus fruit of the flesh. Christian character as produced by the Holy Spirit — more than moral righteousness; not legal correctness; rather, possession and manifestation.

#### MESSAGE

#### 1. Three Fruit of Inward Character

- a. Love
- (1) For God
- (2) For fellowman
- (3) Fulfilling of the Law
- (4) Love for our enemies
- b. Joy
  - (1) Because of pardon from iniquity
- (2) Joy of eternal life
- c. Peace
  - (1) The opposite of doubts and fears
  - (2) The justified soul (Romans 5:1)
  - (3) Living at peace

#### 2. Three Fruit in Expression Toward Man

- a. Long-suffering (patience)
  - (1) Broadmindedness
  - (2) Bearing life's troubles without complaining
  - (3) Submitting to God's providence
- b. Gentleness (kindness)
  - (1) Considering one another
  - (2) Response to kindness
- c. Goodness
  - (1) Desire to do good for others
  - (2) Purified by the Holy Spirit

#### 3. Three Fruit of Expression Toward God

- a. Faith (the fruit, not the gift)
- (1) Greek means "fidelity"
- (2) Good stewards
- b. Meekness (humility)
  - (1) Not "holier than thou"
  - (2) Patient with suffering of injuries with no revenge
- c. Temperance
  - (1) Moderation known of all men
  - (2) Self-control (Proverbs 16:32)

#### CONCLUSION

(See John 15:1-8.) Crucify the flesh; walk in the Spirit.

For additional sermons, visit http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org. Look under Resources for Practical Ministry.

## **Book Reviews**

### Twentysomething: Surviving and Thriving in the Real World

MARGARET FEINBERG (Thomas Nelson, 192 pp., paperback)

The transition from dependence to independence is a difficult time in a young adult's life. Society and culture place unprecedented challenges on today's young adults. On one hand the demands of maturity are increasing (debt load, career choice, marriage); and on another, many young adults are experiencing extended adolescence (computer gaming, delayed marriage).

Feinberg offers insightful guidance and helpful ideas to maneuver this "quarter-

life" crisis. She encourages twentysomethings to thrive rather than survive during this time of constant change.

> Combing personal experience and scriptural principles, Feinberg provides hope during this tumultuous life stage. Her humor and life resonate with



young adults — challenging them to "sort through the issues of purpose, identity and what is important — and as you do, you can launch into a life that really matters."

In this book, church leaders will learn valuable information about this life stage as well as tools to inspire young adults. Feinberg believes young adults are a valuable untapped resource for the church and the kingdom of God.

This concise, well-written primer on young adulthood is a must read for anyone working with those in this transitional period. In addition to her writing, Feinberg has made herself available for interaction and questions through e-mail and her Web site. Our young adults enjoy interacting with an author online. Feinberg delivers on her commitment to inspire young adults to transform their lives and impact the kingdom of God.

> Reviewed by Randy Jumper, single adult/young adult pastor, First Assembly of God, North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Feinberg



Mixed Ministry: Working Together as Brothers and Sisters in an Oversexed Society

#### Mixed Ministry: Working Together as Brothers and Sisters in an Oversexed Society

SUE EDWARDS, KELLEY MATHEWS, HENRY J. ROGERS (Kregel Academic & Professional, 272 pp., paperback)

*Mixed Ministry* addresses church staff relationships. The authors describe a healthy model for Christian men and women who work together.

Through biblical examples, personal stories, research, and discussion the authors challenge readers to carry out the call on their life working alongside brothers and sisters ("sacred siblings") in the family of God. The authors also point out the pitfalls of men and women working together and how to avoid them.

*Mixed Ministry* claims that one of the main causes of weak, unhealthy Christian ministry is the failure to realize the value God places on men and women serving together in leadership as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Just as biological brothers and sisters learn to appreciate the contributions of one another, so the body of Christ will grow stronger and exemplify the love of God when men and women work well together.

The book is filled with practical guidance, good examples, and good discussion topics for people who are serious about long-term ministry. It is an important book for church leaders to read. Healthy relationships between men and women coworkers are very important to the success of any organization. This book definitely addresses that subject.

> Reviewed by Charles D. Arsenault, senior pastor, Evangel Temple, Springfield, Missouri.

#### Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What To Do About It

JULIA DUIN (Baker Books, 192 pp., hardcover)

In Julia Duin's words, "Evangelicals, for a variety of reasons, are heading out of church — not all of them and not everywhere, but the trend is undeniable. Sunday mornings at church have become too banal, boring, or painful. Large groups of Christians are opting out of church because they find it impossible to stay." Especially alarming is Duin's observation that it is predominantly mature believers who are leaving, a growing kind of "spiritual brain drain."

Duin is religion editor for the *Washington Times* and a confessed church dropout herself. She is a born-again evangelical with significant past involvement in the Pentecostal/charismatic world, including an Assemblies of God church. Her research is based on a combination of statistical studies, interviews with prominent evangelicals, and conversations with personal friends who have also dropped out.

Quitting Church is a troubling but important read. Duin has retained her own personal faith, so there is a pronounced thread of spiritual hunger throughout the book and a yearning for an authentic move of the Holy Spirit that seems absent today. She also pleads with pastors to better relate ministry to the real world that most people live in. This includes addressing the spiritual disillusionment that many devout believers are experiencing. Additionally, Duin looks at the organized church through the lens of singles, women, and underutilized career professionals.

Her perspectives are at times controversial, but the trend is alarming and denial would be fatal. This book is not for the pastorally faint-of-heart.

— Reviewed by James T. Bradford, Ph.D., Assemblies of God general secretary and former pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.

#### Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey

**JONATHAN MORROW** (Kregel Publications, 380 pp., paperback)

Fresh out of high school and at the end of his last summer break, your child is sent out into the world. You have had 18 years to prepare him for this event. Your biggest concern is for his safety and that maybe he will call home now and again. But what about his faith? Have you, your church, and his youth group done enough? Is he strong enough? Does he know where to find the answers? Do you?

Jonathan Morrow provides a handy and engaging resource for this dilemma. The book is as wise as it is current. Morrow designed his book not just for reading, but also as a flashpoint resource.

Welcome to College is packed with godly wisdom, practical advice, and "been there, done that" experiences. A synopsis of each chapter provides a quick review.

Written for the college student or a mentor, this book has value for anyone who has ever been perplexed about the complex issues surrounding college. It is a relevant work in helping students think Christianly, live godly, build their faith, and defend God and His Word. Morrow accomplishes all this in easily digestible bits for the student on the run.

This book is a must read for every youth pastor, parent, and student heading toward college. I wish I had read a book like this before going to college.

> — Reviewed by Mike McCrary, young life & family ministries pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri

#### The Delusion of Disbelief

**DAVID AIKMAN** (Tyndale House Publishers, 256 pp., hardcover)

**In 2006 and 2007, four leading atheists** — Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennet, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens — unleashed a literary assault on religious belief and earned the title *the New Atheists*. In *The Delusion of Disbelief,* former *Time* magazine correspondent, David



Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What To Do About It



Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey



The Delusion of Disbelief



The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism



Getting Into Character: The Art of First-Person Narrative Preaching Aikman, outlines the central features of the new atheism and provides a critical response to it.

Aikman identifies common sources of disbelief among the new atheists. Of major significance is their mutual allegiance to scientism, the philosophical commitment that science alone delivers truth, as well as their interest in the darker side of the church's past (e.g. religious factions and wars, blatant cases of serious hypocrisy). The former undercuts religious belief by arguing that God's existence cannot be proven scientifically. The latter questions whether it would matter if God did exist since some believing people across the ages have been less than morally upright.

Critically and carefully Aikman responds to these serious charges. He highlights how the new atheists often betray their own scientism by building expansive worldviews that cannot be proven scientifically. Displaying the extent of the new atheists' bias, Aikman reveals their selective reading of history. This reading not only overlooks major contributions that people of faith, like William Wilberforce, have made to society; it further ignores the horrific suffering wreaked by atheists like Stalin, Hitler, Mao, and Pol Pot. Against this backdrop, Aikman then presents a persuasive and historically grounded argument for the unique role religion plays in securing liberty.

In *The Delusion of Disbelief*, Aikman has woven together philosophical argument and historical analysis to effectively disarm the onslaught of the new atheism. This accessible work should benefit anyone interested in apologetics.

 Reviewed by Stephen Scheperle, Ph.D. candidate, University of Iowa, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

#### The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism

TIMOTHY KELLER (Dutton, 293 pp., hardback)

I have had a life-long interest in apologetics. Through the years various books have captured my interest, such as the works of C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer. *The Reason for God* ranks high on my list of important apologetic books. The author is a Manhattan pastor who has reached skeptical professional young people with remarkable success, growing a church in New York of over 5,000 participants.

Keller, a Presbyterian pastor with strong roots in the Reformed tradition, demonstrates in his writing an easy familiarity with a broad range of literature. He cites personal conversations with parishioners that provide lively support for his argumentation. His writing style is disarming. He writes in an unpretentious manner, speaking simply and directly to the reader. Punctuated with powerful illustrations and frequent startling questions, Keller compels the reader to continue his journey with the author. Keller follows a list of typical questions that people in his congregation through the years have addressed to him. (For years he lingered for an hour after his Sunday morning sermon to field questions from the congregants who wished to stay). This book is largely an outgrowth of that interaction.

College-level students, many of whom share nagging doubts of various kinds about the Christian faith, will respond very positively to this excellent book. Keller has quite clearly captured the mindset of the post-modern generation. I would advise every pastor to read this book.

Review by William W. Menzies, Ph.D., longtime Assemblies of God educator and missions consultant, Springfield, Missouri.

#### Getting Into Character: The Art of First-Person Narrative Preaching

STEPHEN CHAPIN GARNER (Brazos, 142 pp., paperback)

"Throughout this volume you will be given tools and tips for creating and delivering first-person narrative sermons with confidence and excellence. You will be able to get into character while getting your people into the Word of God. In a very real way, you will allow the Word to become flesh — your flesh — and that Word will powerfully and memorably dwell with your people," states the author.

Chapin is certainly qualified to write a volume on this subject, since he is a pastor and a professional playwright. First-person narrative sermons (laypersons may think of them as one-person plays) not only break the monotony for a preacher and his congregation; they communicate on a deeper emotional level and as a result may be more memorable than typical sermons.

*Getting Into Character* provides directions for writing and delivering

first-person narrative sermons. Garner wisely advises, however, against the overuse of first-person narrative sermons because they can become routine.

From his experience, the author discourages using manuscripts or notes in the pulpit, as well as using costumes and props. Nevertheless, I have used both with success. The success often depends on the preacher and the congregation.

I recommend every preacher try this homiletical method. *Getting Into Character* is a practical tool with which to begin this new venture in preaching.

> — Reviewed by Steve D. Eutsler, D.Min., adjunct homiletics professor, Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri.



### **Sustainable Youth Ministry**

MARK DeVRIES (InterVarsity Press, 224 pp., paperback)

**Bring in the superstar youth pastor,** experience tremendous growth, parents and teens feel great excitement and renewed vision, additional leaders recruited, youth pastor leaves, youth leave, leaders get frustrated ... start over. This is the pattern of many youth ministries today. *Sustainable Youth Ministry* addresses this issue and others like it.

A few things set this book apart from other books on youth ministry. You will not find the quick fixes, latest fads, or the newest technological advances that guarantee immediate growth. Rather, you will discover values, principles, and purposeful helps for building a long-term, healthy, sustainable youth ministry.

Senior pastors looking for a first-time or new youth pastor need to read this book. In addition, *Sustainable Youth Ministry* serves as a great tool for the senior pastor-coach to venture through with his youth pastor. Readers can take many of the principles and

apply them to most ministries in the church.

This book is written from a traditional church model perspective. Some of the approaches will not readily carry over to some Assemblies of God churches. However, pastors will find many valuable insights that any church can use to build its youth ministry with sustainable vision in mind. I highly recommend this book for any church starting or doing youth ministry.

— Reviewed by Rod Whitlock, student discipleship director, national Youth Ministries, Springfield, Missouri.



## **News&Resources**

## **Arab Outreach Ministries**

**rab Outreach Ministries emphasizes reaching the unreached.** Pastor George Rafidi conducted his first meeting of Arab Outreach Ministries in Jackson-ville, Fla., on June 7, 1996. Since then, the outreach has grown to include a three-point service around the State of Florida with a fourth service planned to begin summer 2009.

Florida is home to one of America's largest Arab populations. This fact has inspired Rafidi's vision to create a cross-shaped Arabic ministry over Peninsular Florida with an outreach in the North (Jacksonville), South (Miami, summer 2009), West (Tampa), and East (Daytona).

Another ministry that increases service to Arabs in America is the Arabic Assemblies of God Fellowship. Recognized as an official Assemblies of God Ethnic Fellowship in 2005, this ministry provides a network of resources for Arabic ministers and those ministering to Arabs.

These resources combined with fellowship increase the effectiveness of ministry taking place among the Arabs in the U.S. As president of the Arabic Fellowship and pastor of Arab Outreach Ministries, Rafidi believes God is allowing his goal of reaching the most unreached people today — the Arabs — to move from a vision to a reality.

For more information visit www.araboutreach ministries.com and www.thearabicfellowship.com.

hotos.com



On Course and The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education Partnership

To increase students' awareness of the availability, quality, and benefits of AG colleges and universities, The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education and national Youth Ministries announce a partnership for *On Course*, a print magazine (with online companion) for students grades 6 through 12.

Amber Weigand-Buckley, editor of *On Course*, sees this partnership as an extension and continuation of the magazine's current mission. She states, "The core mission of *On Course* has always been to create a generation of discipled learners who are passionate for the Word and on fire to reach the world for Christ. The logical next step in this discipleship process is an AG college education, which helps these learners continue to grow and decompartmentalize their faith through the total integration of their faith with their real life. This sets a student up to be successful in his or her relationship with Christ and to fulfill the purpose God has planned."

Research shows that 7 out of 10 Christian students who attend secular colleges lose their faith during their college years, while less than 1 in 10 who attend an AG college lose their faith. Currently, though, only 6.75 percent of AG high school graduates attend an AG college. Therefore, an increased emphasis on connecting students with AG higher education opportunities is vital to the future of the Assemblies of God.

To solidify this new partnership, plans are being developed for adding a prominent AG college section to the *On Course* Web site and print magazine, which will couple alumni features with practical articles from faculty and staff. These features will address key educational issues and better equip students as they prepare for college. Also, in addition to addressing relevant teen issues, *On Course* will intentionally connect students with the 19 endorsed AG schools and all of their benefits.

G. Robert Cook, Jr., executive vice president of The Alliance, states, "The key link between NYM and The Alliance office is the student. One of the purposes of the On Course magazine is the spiritual development of the student, and The Alliance desires to simply complement that goal by making sure the student reader knows the opportunities afforded to him or her by our Assemblies of God colleges and universities. It's a natural ... it's a no-brainer ... our two offices should work together for the student."

Jay Mooney, national youth ministries director, wholeheartedly agrees with Cook. "NYM is thrilled with the partnership for *On Course* magazine between NYM and The Alliance. Together we will better serve our youth, their families, and God's purpose in their lives. Greater days for our people and churches are just ahead. *On Course* magazine is once again improving its ministry and service to our Fellowship."

For more information about *On* Course, visit http://www.oncourse.aq.org.

### **AG Colleges and Universities Faculty Seminar**

Educators from endorsed Assemblies of God colleges and universities will attend the annual Assemblies of God Faculty Seminar in Springfield, Mo., June 24-

26, 2009.

The 3-day seminar, which will be held at Evangel University, will bring together faculty of Communications, Fine Arts, Humanities, Math, Science,

Social Sciences, and Behavioral Science departments from all endorsed schools. Guest speakers include members of the Executive Leadership Team. Several sessions will be dedicated to help educators share ideas and develop strategies for improving their school's education programs.

The seminar, now an annual event, is sponsored by the Assemblies of God Executive Leadership Team and is hosted by The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education.

## Seminarians Conference

The Executive Presbytery and The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education are sponsoring The Assemblies of God Seminarians Conference at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Spring-

field, Mo., July 5-17, 2009.

Assemblies of God students attending non-AG seminaries attend the 2-week conference. This conference is designed to give these students opportunity to take courses taught by Pentecostal faculty who may not be available to them in a non-AG seminary and to encourage them to

continue to be a part of the Assemblies of God after graduation.

Students receive complimentary tuition, books, and room and board. This opportunity not only allows students to gather with other Assemblies of God seminarians but also with the Fellowship's leadership.

## **College Administrators and** Educators To Be Honored for **Distinguished Service**

The Alliance for Assemblies of God Higher Education will present its Distinguished Administrator and Distinguished Educator awards during its biennial luncheon on August 4, 2009, at the Rosen Centre in Orlando, Fla.

The Distinguished Administrator Award (Omicron Alpha) and the Distinguished Educator Award (Delta Alpha) recognize those who have distinguished themselves in the Fellowship by consistent excellence in scholarship and service in administration and teaching. The awards recognize the outstanding contribution and lifetime commitment to postsecondary education in the Assemblies of God the recipients have made.

Recipients of the awards must meet several criteria that show they have made a significant contribution to their university and the Assemblies of God. They also need to make contributions through published works and demonstrate exemplary Christian character and ethical leadership.

## Send a Hillcrest Child or Youth to AG Summer Camp



Remember the difference camp made in your life? The Word came alive; you made friendships that last a lifetime. Perhaps you received your call into ministry or discovered a God-given gift.

Help restore the life and spirit of abused or neglected children/ youth at Hillcrest by sending them to camp. The average cost per child for camp is \$135. Your support holds the key for Hillcrest kids to attend summer camp. Partner with AG Family Services Agency in

rescuing kids/youth from harm's way, restoring broken lives and spirits, and renewing a bright hope and future.

To make a difference in the life of a child through camp, child sponsorship, prayer, and support, call Assemblies of God Family Services/Hillcrest at 501-262-1660, or visit http:// www.agfamilyservices.org.





## U.S. Missions Luncheon at General Council

Join the U.S. Missions luncheon on Friday, Aug. 7, 2009, at the 53rd General Council in Orlando, Fla. The luncheon will highlight the efforts U.S. Missions is making to reach America with the gospel. Tickets are \$35 per person and may be ordered on your General Council registration form. Districts and pastors wishing to sponsor a table and invite guests may reserve tables by marking "U.S. Missions Luncheon Table Sponsor" on the registration form.



## **Ministry to the Blind Resources**

**Five million people in the United States are banned from Christian literature** because of a vision disability. At least 75,000 are school-age children. The Center for the Blind of the Assemblies of God is making headway in lifting that ban.

The Center for the Blind's growing database of books adapted to audio, Braille, and electronic formats provide an increasing number of available titles. The Center provides Assemblies of God Sunday School quarterlies, devotionals, and periodicals free to the recipient.

People with visual limitations are teaching classes and Bible studies with these reformatted teaching materials. Others are earning ministry credentials through the CftB/Berean partnership. Feelable pictures are enhancing the joy of reading Braille for blind children. Sighted children are intrigued with colorful pictures as their blind mother reads from print/Braille books. KidsKits offer tactile interactive activities for children who are blind as their sighted parent reads from a Bible storvbook. All this and more are opening a new world to those normally banned from printed Christian literature. For more information on these resources or to discover how to obtain available Braille books, contact: Center for the Blind of the Assemblies of God, 1445 N. Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802; 417.831.1964; FAX 417.862.5120; email blind@ag.org; or visit http://www. blind.ag.org.

Nothing's

Too Hard

You can do it.

**Doing a media** 

outreach just

The Office of

tions recently

added a new

Web page to

NothingsToo

Public Rela-

got easier.

for God



HardforGodCampaign.ag.org. This page is full of instructional how-to videos and testimonials from pastors who have conducted a Nothing's Too Hard for God Media Outreach. Visitors to this page will not only find instructions on how to use the tools but can also hear some of the creative ideas other pastors are implementing in their own campaigns.

The Nothing's Too Hard for God

Media Outreach is proving to be worth the investment. Churches are reporting healings, miracles, and changed lives. Churches are also reporting the spiritual growth in their congregations and a growing recognition in their community as well as a harvest of lost people.

If you have not already conducted a Nothing's Too Hard for God Media Outreach in your community, check out **NothingsTooHardforGodCampaign.ag.org** and see if perhaps it is something you would be interested in trying.

## National Youth Ministries Announces New Speed the Light/ Student Missions Director

Assemblies of God national youth ministries announces the appointment of Chet Caudill, youth and Christian education director of the Appalachian District, as the new director of Speed the Light/ Student Missions.

As Student Missions director Caudill will provide oversight and administration to Speed the Light, the youthinitiated ministry that provides transportation and communications equipment to missionaries. This leadership role involves an

extensive speaking schedule, which includes churches, conventions, camps and leadership conferences.

Also, Caudill will oversee Ambassadors in Mission (AIM), the short-term youth missions program of the Assemblies of God.

Caudill will transition to his new post in the national youth ministries office in May. @



## MinistryDirect.com to Combine Social Networking, Resources for Asssemblies of God Ministers

Explosive sharing. That's the idea behind the new MinistryDirect.com. The General Council, in partnership with the AG Trust, is developing the Assemblies of God's first venture into the world of social networking. "The excitement is building quickly. This is an unprecedented user experience for a church body of our size," says Dr. Ron McManus, President of the Center for Church Leadership.

Pastors and leaders will have the opportunity to share their greatest ideas and innovations, upload their sermons and media, and create their own personalized ministry environment. Each week MinistryDirect.com will spotlight

a congregation and share its unique ministry perspective, giving users the opportunity to download creative content. Users will also benefit from weekly ministry tutorials from leading experts across the nation.

On June 26 at 11:30 a.m. EDT (8:30 a.m. PDT) General Superintendent George O. Wood will host a live Q&A session to kick-off the new MinistryDirect.com. Wood will receive questions live via texting, e-mail, and Twitter. Look for more information on this event in the coming weeks on AG.org.

"MinistryDirect brings leadership to a whole new level as leaders will now connect to invest in each others' lives without the limitations of geography," says Wood.

Experience ministry in a new way this summer at MinistryDirect.com.

## **Dr. Stanley** M.Horton Scholarly **Resources** Endowment

In honor of Dr. Stanley M. Horton, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary is initiating the Dr. Stanley M. Horton Scholarly **Resources Endowment** Fund in conjunction

with the Pillars of the Faith initiative. The goal for this endowment is \$25,000. Those who contribute \$125 or more will receive a copy of Dr. Horton's forthcoming biography, *Stanley M. Horton*: Shaper of Pentecostal Theology.

AGTS will use interest from this endowment to purchase biblical-theological and biblical language resources along with other scholarly resources for the Cordas C. Burnett Library at AGTS. For more information, visit: http://www.agts.edu/ partners/pillars\_of\_faith.html. @

## enrichment **Back** Issues

While supplies last. Shipping extra.

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## Young Adult Ministry — Connecting Young and Single Adults With Christ

was sitting on the floor at the back of the room during The House, our Saturday night service for young adults. That night the service ended with worship. I watched as a girl in the back row took off her shoes, stood on her chair, lifted both hands, and sang as the band played, "Jesus Paid It All." After the service she asked me, "Pastor Rod, what CD is that song on? It's cool!" A cool hymn? I love young adult ministry.

We held our first water baptismal service outside on the parking lot in a huge swimming pool. Pastor Randy Jumper, our young adult pastor, and I stood in the middle of the pool, surrounded by cheering young adults who were celebrating their friends' decision to follow Christ. Spontaneously, others began climbing in the pool, ready to publicly declare their decision. I do not know how many people we baptized that night, but the parking lot was filled with dripping wet young adults.

Every week we have a 10-minute coffee break in the service. It is old-fashioned fellowship time, just highly caffeinated. Young adults laugh, hug, meet new friends, and drink lots of Starbucks coffee.

The House is not *normal* church shoes off, spontaneous baptisms, coffee breaks, and the senior pastor sitting on the floor. That is young adult ministry. While it may not resemble a traditional



Assemblies of God church, it is a valuable and vital ministry in our 96-yearold congregation. Why?

#### Young and single adult ministry provides a place for the unchurched to connect with God

Brad is a homosexual who had never attended church. He had never even considered attending a traditional Sunday morning church service, but one of his friends invited him to The House on a Saturday night. It was not what he expected. Brad's piercings did not even merit a second look. He did not need to dress up. In fact, he was better dressed than the pastor. Brad was not sure about God and the Bible, but he liked the people and he felt something.

Three months later I was sitting behind Brad when he raised his hand and stood in response to a salvation invitation. We were both crying as he prayed and committed his life to Christ. Brad is still in process, but he is steadily growing in faith and determined to be a lifelong follower of Jesus Christ.

#### Young and single adult ministry provides a place for the *de-churched* to reconnect to God and the church

There is a crisis in the church today. We are losing an increasing number of students in the year following their high school graduation. At college, teachers challenge their faith and many begin to question their beliefs. Many walk away — from the church and from God. I do not know the technical or theological term; I simply call them *de-churched*. The House, and other young and single adult ministries, provide a safe place for them to return to faith.

Many Saturday nights I bring a young adult who is trying to find his way back. I sit with him, introduce him to my friends, and have dinner with him after service. Young and single adult ministry gives me a chance to do what I tell others to do — invite someone to come to church with you. I have been blessed to be a small part of the journey for dozens of young adults who have reconnected to church, to faith, and to Christ.

Jaime was a church kid and knew right from wrong. But everything changed at college. She met a guy, abandoned her values, and got caught up in the party scene. After 2 years she was pregnant, miserable, lonely, and ashamed. She asked me, "What will people think if I come back to church? How can I ever return?"

Jamie's first step back was on a Saturday night. I invited Jaime to church. In fact, I told her if she would come, I would baby-sit. I stood at the back of the room, bouncing her baby in my arms, and watched. People surrounded Jaime and, instead of condemning her, welcomed her home. Many of them had made similar mistakes. That night, with tears flowing down her face, Jaime recommitted her life to Christ.

As Jaime recommitted her life to Christ, I committed myself once again to young and single adult ministry. Traditional? No. Normal? Probably not. Necessary and effective? Worth it? Absolutely. @



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