

Faces of Young Adult Ministry

Welcome

Begin with introductions- name, ministry setting, and how they would define “young adult”

Today we are going to look at what makes up this group we call young adult. We will begin by looking at what a young adult is and what are some of their characteristics. We will then move into watching a video by PBS about this generation and small group discussion about what we have seen. Lastly we will spend some time talking about how to navigate the transitions that young adults find themselves in and how the church can be present during that process.

Define Young Adult

- Who are they?
 - o The UMC definition varies but in the general church level, we use ages 18-30. Ask “What are the definitions that your church uses?”
 - o Generation Next is a term for the 42 million 16-25 year olds who watched the Twin Towers collapse, saw a student shoot down his peers at Virginia Tech University, grew up online and statistically speaking are better educated than any other generation in history. These and many more of these stats are from a PBS film called Generation Next.
- What are some characteristics of YAs?
 - o Have the group list what comes to mind for this group. Either write them on chart paper or have them take notes individually. The group will refer back to these later on.

Introduce the “Generation Next” video. PBS has done two documentaries as part of an initiative called Generation Next. The aim is to unravel this generation of young people who are hooked to technology, generally supportive of gay rights and racial differences, partial to postponing adulthood and swamped in debt. As part of this documentary they consider what makes Generation Next distinct from its predecessors. They look at the beliefs, strengths, weaknesses, and concerns that galvanize this generation. As they filmed, broadcast journalist Judy Woodruff traveled across the country asking 16-25 year olds an array of questions.

In September 2007, PBS aired Generation Next 2.0 where they profiled seven young adults. You can view this on their website: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/generation-next/>

Questions to consider while watching the video

What are you thinking/feeling/experiencing/struggling with/deciding during these stages? What are key points/stages during each transition?
How does one know if/when they’ve fully transitioned?

View the PBS video “Generation Next”

After the video, in small groups have them discuss the questions that were posed prior to watching. Offer up the handout on transitions along with any notes they may have taken from the video. This can also be a time when they refer back to the characteristics of young adults and see if what they wrote down matches or doesn't match what they have seen in the video.

Report Back (via chart paper or verbally)

Move into a time where we will take a step back and look at the foundational issues that are present no matter what sort of transition one finds themselves in.

Some foundational issues regardless of transition are:

- Young Adult life is Fluid
- Many young Christians want the opportunity to come to their own uncontrived conclusions – “Jim and Casper Go to Church” p.35
- Change is inevitable and flexibility is essential
- Be aware of one's emotions and feelings during transition. Sometimes young people don't feel comfortable in their own “skin” and are looking to get out of that uncomfortable awkwardness
- Sometimes social transitions (moving, school, relationships) happen simultaneously with physical growth and development stages
- Attitude can help or hinder the process of transitioning
- Reassurance that it's ok to make mistakes – how can it be viewed as a learning opportunity
- Forming and claiming one's identity is always evolving during times of transition. How we act or react during times of transition can have a big impact on who we say we are. Authenticity is what one should be focusing on.
- Be open to new possibilities. God will take us to new places. Are we willing to go?
- Where can we look for God's constant presence during transition? What things are being done to build or strengthen or maintain a faith community? How is one's spiritual life not neglected during transition?
- Others?

How can the church help with this transition?

There are many ways this can be done. I like to see what others come up with before offering things on this list.

- Remind young adults that they are loved and they are not alone.
- Form relationships that provide mentoring, space for questions, searching, life skills, challenging beliefs as well as time to simply “be”.
- Allowing room for asking and questioning God

- Remember that this is a task in development – moving from their parents' faith to their own faith.
- Being honest and open about the joys and struggles of faithful living.
- Begin to bridge gaps between key times of transition
 - high school to young adult, student to working, etc.
- Suggest life skills workshops
 - focus on various life skills and practical skills
 - simple car maintenance, parenting skills, communications/relationship skills, conflict resolution, time management, how to balance finances
 - possibly partner with civic or community organizations to offer learning times
- Practical ideas anyone can implement
 - Young adults could claim a certain location to sit during worship so that new young adults can see there are others present and they won't feel as intimidated by not knowing where to sit.
 - Change meeting times to where one time it's a virtual meetings (blog or chat room) and another time it's face-to-face
 - Others?
- Remember you can have the right formula and still get it wrong
 - Sometimes the best laid plans can still seem to be disappointments
 - Be flexible and be willing to do lots of trial and error. Be willing to learn from what worked and what didn't.
 - Know that it may be a long process to start or maintain a young adult group.

Resource Sharing

- YA Resource List
- Current Reads
- What others use in their ministry

Q & A