

How to Reach the Nexter Generation

By Ken Gosnell

This age is a defining moment in the history of the church. The question remains whether churches can change and transform rapidly enough to reach this new group of adults called "Nexters" (individuals born between 1981 and 2000). Many people want Nexters to be an instrumental part of their church families. However, most attempts at reaching this age group have been feeble, at best.

The good news is that we can reach Nexters. Many in the Nexter generation are thirsting to fulfill their spiritual calling. To get twenty-something's to become an active part of their church family, leaders must respond by exhibiting certain core characteristics.

1. Nexters are looking for a church family who will model authentic Christianity.

Nexters are tired of organized religion, but they are not tired of authentic Christianity. Many are living messed-up lives and are looking for messy churches who dispense grace freely. They know their imperfections and seek to know that they are not alone. They want to belong to an authentic church with authentic people, who like them, are also imperfect.

The rigid, traditional church where everything is scripted is more suited for the professional middle class, not the Nexter generation. This age group does not want sloppy services, but they want unscripted, real services. They want to be a part of a church that does not expect perfection, but demands authenticity.

2. Nexters are looking for a church family who will foster friendships and community.

Individuals in this age group are living separated and fragmented lives. They are living away from their families and are longing for models and mentors to help them with life issues and difficulties. One way to evangelize and develop this group of people is through relationships and coaching. The church can help this group connect to others, but more than that, the church can help this group connect to God.

3. Nexters are looking for a church family who will extend compassion.

Nexters long for a place where they are loved 'in spite of', rather than 'because of' who they are. This compassion value runs deep within the Nexter. This current decade might be summarized with the word "kindness." The people reaching adulthood in this decade have experienced deep hurt and brokenness and long for a place in which they feel love and compassion.

4. Nexters are looking for a church family who will appreciate their contribution.

The church of the past has overlooked this age group when selecting leaders. However, church leaders can no longer do so if they hope to attract this group to their church. They must move quickly to put these twenty-something's into some type of leadership role in order to create a sense of belonging and ownership.

To reach this group will take effort and must bring changes to the current church. With great challenges, there are great rewards. I once received a letter from a Nexter that had been a part of a church that I had led. He wrote, "Thank you for your ministry. It has made the difference in my life. I was so ripe, so broken, and so ready. You plugged me in and that has made all the difference." If we can get Nexters involved, they will help take our church to the Next level and that will make all the difference.

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