

REACHING STUDENTS — IN THEIR OWN WORDS

One of the things I love most about young people is if you want to know what they're thinking, all you have to do is ask them. Sometimes, you don't even have to ask.

I sat down and asked students some probing questions over the last year whenever I was speaking at student camps and conferences, discipleship events, young adult worship services, etc.

"What do adults need to know about your generation?" I typically asked in starting the conversations. It was an incredible journey in becoming a student myself so that I could hear from this generation about reaching their generation.

With that in mind, here are some ideas for reaching students gleaned from their own words:

1. Students want to be seen as people, not projects

If the focus of a church in reaching students is to be seen as cool, trendy or relevant, then it is missing the point. Have a desire to reach students because they are made in the image of God, they have souls and they matter to the Kingdom of God. No one wants to be someone's project, including students.

2. Students want to be a part of "doing" something

They want more out of church than sitting on a pew, listening to sermons, going to potluck dinners while waiting on a rapture bus to swoop down to pick them all up. They are not scared to die young; however, they are terrified to die at a ripe old age while not having

done anything significant with their lives in their own eyes. They are not typically impressed by a church's size or budget. They're more interested in being noticed relationally and in what the church is doing outside the walls of the building.

3. Students don't despise adults

People tend to think that students don't want anything to do with the older generation. However, this generation is in desperate need for the older generation to invest in them. This is largely a fatherless generation. They often seek out or are more open to discipleship or mentorship than we tend to believe. But they won't know how to ask for it, so they ask you to "hang out."

4. Students value the "why" over the "what"

They do not typically want to do something just because it's the way it's always been done or because it's what their family has always known. They are not driven by heritage. For example, students are not going to be Southern Baptists just because their parents were. If we can't answer their "why" questions or we get defensive over their questions, we'll lose them. Be ready to answer their honest questions with love, patience and kindness. Their experience with something or someone will often dictate their views more than history will.

5. Students don't want to be seen as the future of the church

Remember, if they've been redeemed with the blood of Jesus, then they're the church right now. So, let them have some ownership of the ministry and be patient

with them when they mess up — possibly a lot. A great way to keep students engaged in the ministry is by constantly communicating, illustrating and empowering participation in the vision and mission of the church.

6. Students are more globally minded

Most students are up to date on world news and affairs, especially in the area of entertainment and music. This generation may drive the older generations a little crazy because they may seem to be less patriotic to the USA. However, this is simply not the case; they just value other countries, cultures and citizens equally.

vulnerable a communicator is, the more students connect. There was a time when speakers/teachers were told not to use themselves in personal illustrations; however, this generation wants to hear those personal stories. As adults, if we act as those who have it all figured out and are not in desperate need of God's grace daily, we'll lose their attention because they won't believe that we're "being real" and that our faith is unattainable for them.

I'm personally encouraged by this generation of students. Even as an adult, I resonate deeply with

“Be ready to answer their honest questions with love, patience and kindness.”

They tend to view things from a global perspective instead of a national perspective. It's very possible that the Lord may accomplish the Great Commission through their interest in the nations. Educate, disciple and mobilize this generation toward the nations; they'll love you for it.

7. Students want authenticity and transparency

Nearly all students quickly grow weary of gimmicks and sleek presentations. The more transparent and

their views. I believe God will use them to further the Great Commission, perhaps more than any previous generation.

May they not be seen as projects, but instead as extremely valuable people who need to be reached through the Gospel, disciplined in the Gospel, and set free with the Gospel to reach other students for the glory of Jesus Christ. [»»](#)



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