

# *Growing Young*

A book by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and  
Brad Griffin

*6 Essential Strategies to help young  
people discover and love your Church*

*A presentation by Pastor Jeniffer Tillman, MD*

# Introductions and Icebreakers

- Find a partner and introduce yourselves
  - Name and Community
  - What's your favorite kind of fruit?
  - What brings you here?
  - Where do you feel needed?
  - Do you drink coffee or tea?
- Share with the class

# What Does it Mean to Grow Young?



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- **FACT:** Congregations across most denominations are shrinking and aging in the United States.
- Powell, Mulder, and Griffin studied 250 congregations over a 4-year period to better understand effective practices that may reach 15-29-year-olds

# 10 Lies We Believe About Growth

1. A Precise Size- it doesn't matter... in this case.
2. A Trendy Location or Region- We don't have to compete with NYC.
3. An Exact Age- Age need not be discriminated.
4. A Popular Denomination- God works with bent and broken.
5. Cool Quotient- We don't need to be America's Sweetheart

# 10 Lies We Believe About Growth

6. A big, modern building- It's more about the feeling.
7. A big budget- Less resources = more creativity.
8. A "contemporary" worship service- you don't have to add a rock band or coffee shop.
9. A watered-down teaching style- Let the People learn!
10. A hyper-entertaining ministry program- we will never be like Time Square.

# 6 Essential Practices

1. Unlock Keychain Leadership
2. Empathize with today's young people
3. Take Jesus' message seriously
4. Fuel a warm community
5. Prioritize young people (and families) everywhere.
6. Be the best neighbors.

# What Congregations are doing right!

- Find a partner and ask each other these three questions:
  1. What motivates you to help churches grow young?
  2. How, if at all, has your congregation aged or shrunken?
  3. How have young people added vitality to your congregation?



# Unlock Keychain Leadership



# Unlock Keychain Leadership

- “Keys” are as follows:
  - Capabilities, power, and access of leaders that can be used to empower young people

# 4 Type of Key Leadership

1. The Key-less Leader
2. The Key-hoarding Leader
3. The Key-loaning Leader
4. The Keychain Leader

# The Keychain Leader is...

- Mature, but not always young.
- Real, but not always relevant.
- Warm, not distant.
- Live out the 3 “E”:
  - Empathy
  - Empower
  - Entrust
- A “Big Picture” person, overall.

# Unlock Keychain Leadership

- Find a New partner, and ask each other these three questions.
  1. What are some keys (capabilities, power, and access) that you have already shared or given away to other, especially to young people?
  2. Which Key Leader are you?
  3. Who else needs to be a key player in this conversation back home?

# Empathize with Today's Young People



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- Empathy- the psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.
  - The imaginative ascribing to an object, as a natural object or work of art, feelings or attitudes presented in oneself.
    - [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), 2019

# 3 Questions of Youth

1. Identity
2. Belonging
3. Purpose



# Empathize with Today's Young People

- Adolescence had been extended!
  - 25 feels like the new 15, and 15 often seems like the new 25.
  - Hindrances are caused by stress and peripheral faith.
  - Young people are never satisfied because they are hungry for something meaningful.

# Tools for Empathy

1. Respond with Grace, Love, and Mission
2. Rewind to your own journey
3. Stereotype no more
4. When in doubt, ask.
5. Walk through your worship space and service through they eyes of a young person.

# Tools for Empathy

6. Learn young people's names.
7. Dig a little deeper with young person.
8. Huddle regularly with a few young people.
9. Don't leave singles feeling singled out.
10. Tangibly support marriage.

# Empathize with Today's Young People

- Find a New partner, and ask each other these three questions:
  1. What are you doing to empathize with present-day teenagers and emerging adults?
  2. In what practical ways is your congregation already empathizing with this generation of young people?
  3. What is getting in the way of empathizing with this generation?

# Take Jesus' Message Seriously



# MTD

- Moralistic therapeutic deism has been identified as a pervasive religious framework of adolescence and much of the US Church.

# How can we take Jesus' message, seriously?

1. Well, what did he actually say and do?
2. Stop focusing on the formulas and more on the redemptive narrative.
3. Participation and challenge are the two central features of churches growing young.
4. Evangelism is not a dirty word.

# Taking Jesus' Message Seriously

- Find a New partner and ask these three questions:
  1. How is your congregation taking Jesus seriously?
  2. What words and phrases does your congregation use to talk about Jesus, the gospel, and evangelism?
  3. How do young people respond to that language?



# Fuel a Warm Community



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- Warm is the new cool, act with empathy.
- Structure is necessary for growing young, but it's not enough.
- Less pizzazz and more participation
- Weaving warmth into your church's DNA .

# Fueling a Warm Community

- Find a New partner and ask these three questions:
  1. What are you doing to help fuel warmth in your congregation?
  2. How is your congregation struggling with relational connection?
  3. Who else needs to be a part of this conversation?

# Prioritize Young People (and Families) Everywhere



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- From Rhetoric to Reality
- Churches that are growing young don't assume it will happen automatically.
  - There is an emphasis on young people in their overall philosophy, worship gathering, staffing, and budget.

# Prioritize Young People (and Families) Everywhere

- You don't just take the young person, you inherit the family as well.
  - Families need support and partnership from their churches.
- Prioritizing younger people and their families requires a congregational shift in culture.

# Prioritize Young People (and Families) Everywhere

Find a New Partner and ask these three questions:

1. What are you already doing to help prioritize young people everywhere in your congregation?
2. What evidence supports your church culture prioritizing young people?
3. How does your church intentionally support and partner with parents?

# Be the Best Neighbors





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- Loving and sharing your world well.
- Churches grow young by striving to be both local and global neighbors.
- Offering teenagers and emerging adults a thoughtful path to neighbor well is not easy.
- When in doubt, refer to Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-37

# Be the Best Neighbors

- Find a New Partner and do the following
  1. One partner reads to the other Matthew 22:34-40
  2. One partner reads to the other Luke 10:25-37
  3. What positive and life-giving steps has your congregation taken to be the best neighbor to the world outside your door?

# Growing Young in Your Context



*context is everything*

# Growing Young in Your Context

- Any church can grow young, it's not magic.
- Churches do not change to grow young by chasing after unicorns, relying on size and budget, or hiring staff to resolve their problems.
- Share stories of future hope!
- Begin where you have influence, experiment on the margins, and maintain disciplined attention to your people.

# Works Cited

- *Growing Young* by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin. **Baker Books**, 2016, Grand Rapids, MI