DEVELOPING LEADERS IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

Current principles and practices in selecting and equipping leaders

by Pat Springle

Article Summary
The postmodern culture certainly shapes the lives of young people, but it also has a profound impact on every person of every age in every church. To develop leaders in this culture, many next generation pastors have concluded that they have to lower the bar of entry into the process, select more carefully than ever, and connect deeply by mentoring to impart truth, skills, and character.

Further Reading
Connecting With God: Developing an Authentic and Rich Devotional Life by Pat Springle

Communicating With the Postmodern Culture: Authenticity and Truth by Pat Springle

Creating a Culture of Balance: A Mandate for Next Generation Pastors by Pat Springle

"We're seeing a Jon Stewartization of young people in our culture," observes Noel Heikkinen, pastor of **Riverview Church** in Holt, MI, (www.rivchurch.com). He explains, "Like Stewart, many young people are cynical about the future, skeptical about the integrity of those in authority, and have a fundamental lack of respect for anyone who holds an office or a position—and they feel completely free to say whatever is on their minds about all these things.[1] I feel like I've got hundreds of Jon Stewarts in our community of faith." To teach these people to become competent leaders, Noel says that the first step is to help them become good followers.

Next generation pastors—church leaders in their 30s who are growing in influence and impact—grasp the importance of developing leaders, and many are acutely observant about the pervasive impact of culture on the people in their churches. These pastors observe that it seemed to be only a few years ago that people in their 20s came to their churches with a significant biblical literacy, respect for authority, and emotional maturity. Today, however, those presuppositions are no longer valid. "It's all about the starting point," Noel explains. "Years ago, the majority of the people we were developing had a basic knowledge of the Scriptures, a high level of trust for their leaders, and more emotional maturity than most of the people we work with today."

The impact of the culture isn't felt only in the lives of young people. Everyone in the culture is affected. Those in their 20s, however, are most powerfully affected because they've never known any other cultural influence than the postmodern world. For that reason, the insights and leadership development strategies used by next generation pastors can apply to virtually all pastors as they build leaders in every age group in their churches.

The influence of culture has led these church leaders to lower the bar as they begin to develop leaders. In addition, these pastors have moved toward mentoring young leaders instead of relying on an academic model. Mentoring puts great importance on careful selection, and shifts the role of the pastor from a top-down, hierarchical style of leadership to become the primary role model to demonstrate to other leaders how mentoring can be most effective.

Windows into the Culture

In order to better understand their "prospective leadership pool," next generation pastors have identified several specific behaviors and trends within the postmodern culture. While several exceptions exist, some of the most prominent traits they've noticed include:

- Pervasive cynicism: Everything and everyone, no matter how important or how sacred, is a target to be criticized, or more likely, to be mocked.

- Distrust of authority: Adolescent rebellion against authority can be expected at any time in history, but the distrust of authority figures

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Dissenting Opinions on Authority

Some pastors see young people's lack of respect for authority transcending the postmodern era. "Teenagers have always been against authority," one pastor commented. "That's the way they're wired." This pastor doesn't see people today as any more cynical, skeptical, or distracted than any other time in history. "But today," he continues, "biblical illiteracy is certainly more of a problem than it used to be."

Dissenting pastors point to the stages of life as a plausible cause for people being disinterested in becoming leaders. One comments, "Young families are just too busy taking care of their families and their work to show up in big numbers for a leadership event." Another factor that may account for the perceived cultural shift is simply that there are many more competing offers. Today, parents can choose from far more classes, sports, music, plays, and other activities to entertain their children and train them for the future. Unfortunately, many are so busy with these activities that spiritual pursuits are crowded out.

In the African-American community, pastors report that respect for authority in the church remains very high. "In some cases, too high," comments a pastor in a large metropolitan church. He continues, "The younger generations view of pastoral authority may not be quite as high as it used to be, but it's still very strong." Similarly, Asian-American churches report a deep respect for authority among their parishioners.

These church leaders recognize the challenge of developing leaders today, but they believe the hill has always been tough to climb. It's simply not much different today than it has been for generations. The language and technology may be different, but people haven't changed.

today is much more widespread and pervasive. Many leaders report people into their 50s are instinctively skeptical of them, their roles, and their direction. Perhaps the lack of respect for authority can be traced to the breakdown of the family, the laughable images of leaders in the media, stories of moral failure by religious and political leaders, or the distant echoes of Watergate and Vietnam. Or probably, the cause of nagging distrust of authority today is the result of all of these factors combined.

In his book, *Being Leaders*, Dallas Theological Seminary professor Aubrey Malphurs notes that the generation that is most reluctant to trust authority figures are the Busters (sometimes known as Generation X), those born between 1964 and 1983. As a group, they are characterized by "extreme pessimism" and feel deeply disappointed by established leaders. Building credibility with these people is essential, but Malphurs suggests that it requires a considerable amount of time, patience, and energy. In many churches, people in this age group are considered to be the most likely candidates for leadership development, but they are often the least trusting and most resistant. Actually, Malphurs' research shows that some in the Bridge generation born after 1983 trust authority more than the Busters. This trend is "a light at the end of the tunnel."[2]

- Consumerism: Even in matters of morality, values, and spiritual truth, people feel they can take what they like and leave what doesn't feel good to them.

- Relativism and tolerance: Competing (and even diametrically opposed) values are seen as equally valid, and no one has the right to tell anyone else what is right or what to do with their lives.

- Without purpose: Today, the options people face are almost endless, but some seem to be paralyzed instead of inspired. Noel reports, "In our community, we have lots of young men in their 20s who have graduated from college but have moved back home to live in their mom's basement. They sit around all day playing video games and Twittering."

- Distractions: Individuals are plugged into multiple technological devices that demand instant responses, and they suffer from "continuous partial attention." In addition, the pace of life and the multiplicity of options can easily overwhelm people in our culture. Even in conservative, more traditional communities where people have some background in spiritual truth and still have at

least a modicum of respect for authority, distractions like children's sports, demands at work, and social events can consume a well-meaning person's time and energy.

Troy Shaw at Oasis Church says "To develop our people as leaders, we almost have to deprogram them first."

In a rural setting in North Georgia, Troy Shaw of **The Oasis Church** in Loganville, Georgia (www.theoasischurch.org) is seeing a similar lack of respect for authority among people in their 30s, 40's and 50s. "We fight against a traditional, cultural Christianity," Troy explains. "Almost everybody in our community has gone to church most of their lives, but they don't see Christ as relevant." Years ago, the problem might have been that his people were too dogmatic and legalistic, but that's no longer the issue. Today, most people in Troy's area see their faith as one of the competing claims on their time, energies, and resources. Christ and the church usually come in well behind entertainment and career advancement. Troy says, "To develop our people as leaders, we almost have to deprogram them first. One of the lines we use to communicate the life-changing vision is 'this is not your mamma's church.' We have to shatter their expectations and get them out of the narrow box they've been in. This is one of the ways we hope to awaken their hearts to the truth about Jesus so that they become leaders who reproduce his life in others."

Similarly, Scott Wilson of **The Oaks Fellowship** in Red Oak, Texas (www.oaksfellowship.org) sees distraction as the primary cultural problem for his community. "Our people aren't very cynical," he explains, "but they are incredibly busy. Their lives are filled with so many good things (and a few not so good things) that they don't see the priority of Christ in their lives." In identifying and developing leaders, Scott's assumption is very positive: most people want to follow Christ and make a difference in their community and the world, but the culture of busyness is their chief obstacle.

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Everyone Serves, Some Lead

Most next generation pastors see a clear distinction between service and leadership. Everyone is called to be involved to serve in some way, but not every person in the church is equipped and gifted for a leadership position. In the past, some Christian authorities insisted that "everyone is a leader," but this perspective caused them to water down the essence of leadership so everyone could meet the requirements. In our culture, however, many pastors are seeing genuine interest on the part of people who want to make a difference in their communities. They may not want to become leaders, but they definitely want to serve. One pastor explains, "When we conducted a survey of our church, we realized that our people don't pray, don't give, and don't read the Bible much at all—but they are off the charts in serving, especially in helping people in the community."
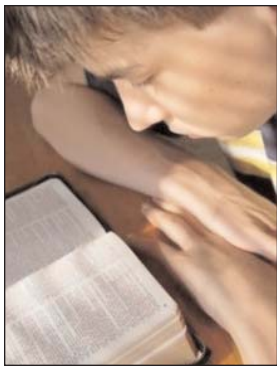
Some next generation pastors observe that personal activism has, in many cases, reversed the pattern of involvement. Fewer people *believe* and then *behave*, but many more become actively involved in helping and serving. Then, through their hands-on involvement and relationships with other believers who serve alongside them, they meet Christ. To further enflame people's passion to make a difference in others' lives, Riverview's Noel Heikkinen invites people in his church to start "indie ministries." "They can start any kind of service project or ministry they want to," he reports. "Sooner or later, we want them to tell us what they're doing, but we don't want any bureaucracy to get in their way." As Noel and

his staff watch people serve, they notice those who demonstrate leadership skills. In this way, the people selected as leaders have already proven their character, competence, and skills in their serving.

Initially, Lower the Bar

Virtually every next generation pastor interviewed for this paper said that the people who might be candidates for leadership in their churches begin the process with fewer skills and a lower level of spiritual maturity than candidates only a decade ago. For this reason, pastors have to lower the bar for people to enter the leadership development pipeline, and pastoral staff and lay leaders have to invest more time and energy to qualify people for leadership positions. In addition to a pervasive distrust of authority, skepticism, and distractions of all kinds, the most common description of people in their churches is "biblically illiterate." "We can laugh about them thinking Malachi is an Italian chef," one pastor lamented, "but the sad fact is that most people haven't developed a biblical framework to shape their thinking and their choices." Some pastors wonder if the proliferation of information, news, and blogs online makes people think they're well informed, but these sources seldom add depth to their biblical insight and knowledge.

Next generation pastors realize that people haven't developed a biblical framework to shape their thinking and their choices.

Daniel Montgomery, pastor of **Sojourn Community Church** in Louisville, KY (www.sojournchurch.com), observes that every age group is affected by the postmodern culture, "but the emerging generation, those in the teens and twenties, has never known anything but this culture. They don't seem to grasp the role of discipline and they don't want to put themselves under any kind of authority." Many church and business leaders have observed that the work ethic today is not as strong as it was a few years ago. Daniel explains, "Becoming a leader takes hard work and determination. Some authorities say it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert at something, but most people today aren't willing to invest that kind of time in developing their skills. The same principle is true in leadership. Most think the "American Idol" experience of a few weeks of fun and stress should be enough to emerge as a winner. They don't understand that becoming an expert in any field takes a lot of training and experience."

Similarly, Daniel observes that the proliferation of technology has many benefits in enabling the rapid dissemination of information, but many people today lack intellectual resilience and the ability to interact meaningfully about issues. He observes, "It's a lot easier for them to blog about a topic than to sit in a room and engage in the give-and-take of dialogue about theology." The volume of input, however, doesn't equate to depth of insights. Daniel observes that many young leaders spend hours listening to their favorite teachers and pastors, but they seldom engage in the hard work of examining original sources. Even for some who are getting ready to step onto the stage and lead a church, the intellectual bar remains low.

Even in the Bible Belt, pastors can't make the same assumptions as they did a decade ago. Shawn Lovejoy, pastor of **Mountain Lake Church** in Cumming, GA (www.mountainlakechurch.org), notes, "For young people who want to become leaders in our youth ministry, the rules have changed. A few years ago, even people who didn't attend church knew that it was inappropriate for youth leaders to drink, smoke, cuss, live with the opposite sex outside of marriage, wear their pants too low or bare their navels in church, but a lot of young people today are all over the map morally." These young people are coming to Christ and want to make an impact, but they aren't even aware that some of their behaviors aren't appropriate. "The problem," Shawn relates, "is that they think they're ready to be leaders. Like Jesus, we want to qualify the unqualified, but it's messy."

Pastors today can't assume that their people trust authority, or more personally, trust them. Technology has given people an incredible amount of information, and some of the bad news

LES HUGHES

is about fallen spiritual leaders. Les Hughes, pastor of **Westwood Baptist Church** near Birmingham, AL (www.wwbc.org), explains that when he was 16 years old, he may have known of one Christian leader who had a moral failure. Today, Les's son is 16, and he knows of many fallen Christian leaders. But it's not just high school students whose trust in authority has been eroded by reports of moral failures by spiritual leaders. "People throughout our church have heard so many negative stories about pastors that I have to work hard to earn their trust," Les reports. "And whether they've heard reports of pastors' moral failures or not, people today are profoundly skeptical about the integrity of their leaders. It's my job to earn their trust."

Dave Nelson, pastor of **K2 The Church** in Salt Lake City, UT (www.k2thechurch.com), explains that the pervasive lack of trust among his people has changed his expectations. "When I was young," he remembers, "I listened carefully to my leaders, and I soaked up what they had to say to me. I trusted them implicitly, but that's not the way things are today. In our church, I've realized that everything we do is challenged and questioned—and our people have no problem voicing their objections. At first, I was surprised, but not anymore. Skepticism is a staple of the culture."

When people are asked to enter a leadership role, or at least to be mentored so that they can become leaders, many are resistant because relativism in the culture erodes confidence in their authority. Greg Lee, pastor of **Suncrest Christian Church** in Saint John, IN (www.suncrest.org), has talked to people who said they don't want to become leaders because they'd have to take a stand on what's right and what's wrong. He comments, "Relativism has convinced them that one person's truth is just as valid as another's, so how can anyone claim, 'I know the truth, and you need to follow it.'" Greg observes that relativism is most prevalent among younger people, and only in the oldest generation does the majority still have inherent respect for authority and feel comfortable defining right and wrong.

Today, the bar for starting the process of becoming a leader may be lower, but pastors aren't willing to take warm bodies. They want to see a heart for God and at least a modicum of faithfulness as people serve in the church or the community.

A Move Toward Mentoring

Most next generation pastors grew up spiritually in churches that used an academic model of leadership development. The proven assumption was: "If we have a class, they'll come." That assumption, however, is no longer the case. J. D. Greear, pastor of **The Summit Church** in Durham, NC (www.summitchurch.cc), remarked, "The last time we had a leadership development class, the content was fantastic, but only a handful of people showed up. It wouldn't have mattered if we'd had Billy Graham teaching it because our people just won't come to these kinds of classes any more."

To develop leaders, from the entry level to church planters, next generation pastors are moving toward a mentoring model. The academic model focused primarily on imparting content, but it often didn't sharpen skills or inspire people to take action. Les remarks, "We hoped people would come to enough classes that sooner or later their lives would change. Years ago, this model was at least moderately successful, but it simply doesn't work in our culture today."

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The content of leadership is just as important today as in past years (and especially for those who are biblically illiterate), but the means to impart knowledge may need to change. The context for developing leaders is relationships. Many next generation pastors use a targeted, one-on-one mentoring model, and they have curriculum and service projects to equip rising leaders. Others have an approach that is a bit less defined. They put people into the fray of ministry with little or no training and scant supervision. "People learn best," Daniel observes, "in a crisis. When they desperately need to have some information or a skill, they become very receptive to teaching and training."

J. D. is developing a "leadership pipeline" in his church. "It's all based on mentoring relationships," he relates, "but we want to impart a set of content and skills to people all along the way." They don't have many leadership events designed to communicate content. "The classroom is in their car or when they jog or wherever they can listen to a message on their MP3 player." J. D.'s pipeline has four stages:

1. *People enter when they become small group leaders,*
2. *Some move on to become small group coaches,*
3. *A few may become ministry leaders or campus pastors for multi-site churches, and*
4. *A very select group become church planters.*

J. D. explains, "We've made it as easy as possible for people to enter the pipeline as small group leaders. For instance, they don't have to teach the

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A Comprehensive Strategy

At The Oaks Fellowship, Scott Wilson created a strategy to capture hearts and harness enthusiasm as they develop young leaders. The strategy evolved over several years, and today, it includes many effective elements. The heart of Scott's leadership development plan relies on relationships-creating connections where truth, grace, and heart can be imparted to others.

Today, each department of the church has a leadership development strategy tailored to the specific ministry. The strategies include individual mentoring and classroom content. Some teams meet after the first service on Sunday mornings; some meet during the week. "Whatever fits their schedule is fine with me," Scott explains.

To identify and equip as many young leaders as possible, Scott instituted The Oaks School of Leadership. High school graduates who enter this program spend 25 hours a week as interns under the leadership of qualified pastors at the church. These students receive college credit from a nearby Bible university, and after those two years, they transfer to the college full time, often receiving scholarships from the church for exemplary leadership capabilities.

To build strong relationships in the community, The Oaks Fellowship sponsors a "volunteer college" to train men and women in nearby communities in skills related to volunteer work to care for disadvantaged people. The courses taught range from computer programming to refereeing youth sports. This effort provides strong connections with individuals and agencies in the community.

Every new member at The Oaks makes a commitment to participate in a small group and to find a place of meaningful service. In those roles, some will surface as promising leaders. To facilitate universal service and the selection of leaders, Scott has hired a staff member to match people with opportunities.

A few years ago, Scott recognized the impact of mission trips. "They're discipleship on steroids," he reports. "the challenge of these environments can propel people to higher levels of commitment, service, and leadership." Today, the church sponsors 15 trips each year.

Scott believes that internships are perhaps the most effective form of mentoring. The church invites people to be mentors at all levels and for extended periods of time, even on the board where Scott builds into people who have shown great promise in becoming top leaders for the church.

lesson. They just need to lead a discussion using questions we give them. As people move up the pipeline, though, we significantly raise the bar at each level."

Careful Selection

"Years ago," one pastor commented, "we issued a broad invitation to anyone who wanted to be a leader to come to our leadership development classes. There were two problems: many prospective leaders stayed away because we didn't personally invite them, and some of those who came had no business learning how to lead!" Even though they initially lower the bar for people to become leaders, Next Generation pastors see the need to be very selective. They aren't inviting people to simply come to a class; they're asking them to enter a mentoring relationship. The stakes and the investment are too high to take whoever might respond to a blanket invitation.

"We've moved to a rabbinic model," reflects Tom Hughes, pastor of **Christian Assembly Foursquare Church** in Eagle Rock, CA (www.caeaglerock.com). "Not long ago, we realized that people today don't respond very well to propositional truth, but they long for authentic relationships. When we ask people to be involved in following us, we have to be very selective because we're investing a lot of time and energy in them." One of the barriers Tom and his staff have to overcome in the lives of many of those they mentor is a double standard about grace. Many of them, he explains, are sharply critical of leaders in the church, but they don't want anyone pointing out sin in their lives. They want to be completely accepted in all their sins and brokenness, but they aren't very accepting (or even tolerant) of others who struggle. If they only attend church, their double standard is never addressed, but in a mentoring relationship, even the deepest issues of the heart and character surface.

In a highly relational model of leadership development, those being mentored become much more than statistics at the end of a week. The become part of the mentor's life. Wes Furlong, pastor of **Cape Christian Fellowship** in

Cape Coral, FL (www.capechristian.com), has selected five men he is training to become pastors. For each one, he customized a curriculum, and he spends plenty of time with them to impart skills, wisdom, and knowledge they'll need in roles as pastors.

Some next generation pastors use an "organic" approach to mentoring, but others have finely tuned systems for their most promising top-level leaders. Tom and Wes both invite promising young leaders to become "volunteer staff," or interns, who commit to be mentored, spend 10 hours a week in ministry for a year, and in some cases, raise funds to cover their expenses. Tom also has a second tier of mentoring called "Year Out" which involves a commitment of 20 hours each week. This program is tailored for those who are considering occupational ministry. People in the program are assigned to a spiritual director and a staff team. They meet with a licensed counselor to work through any family-of-origin issues, and they spend time with one of the senior staff to learn more about leadership in the church. In addition, they have a targeted reading list to gain insights from the best and brightest thinkers in ministry. The selection of people for these programs begins in strong relationships, usually with a staff member, and the program itself is based on the principle that spiritual passion and skills are caught, not taught.

The system Tom and Wes have implemented may sound highly structured, but they insist it is inherently relational. The people aren't slaves to the program; instead, the program is the skeleton for the mentoring relationship to take shape. "This gives us opportunities to know people very well as they grow in their leadership abilities and answer God's call in ministry," Tom relates. The non-paid positions test their commitment as they gain knowledge and skills, and staff members have the opportunity to discern the calling and capabilities of each person being mentored. The program for each person is customized, tailored to the person's interests, calling, and needs. Typically, Tom has 20 "volunteer staff" and two people who are taking a "Year Out."

Even though he has developed a very attractive mentoring model, Tom doesn't assume people

will volunteer to become leaders. "I had an eye-opening conversation with a Korean in our church," Tom remembers. Tom had explained that he expected leaders to surface naturally: "Leaders always step up." But the Korean explained that Tom had completely misunderstood the Asian culture: "In our culture, people wait to be asked by the community to assume a leadership role. I've been wondering why you never asked me to lead." Tom had been asking himself why gifted people like this man weren't volunteering to take leadership positions, and now he knew. As he talked to other subcultures in his church, he asked them how they understand leadership selection and development. Tom soon realized that his previous assumptions were very often wrong, and he began being more intentional about selecting people to be leaders—even white people who often didn't "step up" until they were specifically asked. In the past year, Tom asked leaders in his church to identify others they'd recommend for training.

"It's interesting," he explains. "Of the 17 men we invited to participate, 16 of them didn't see themselves as leaders. But the people around them saw more than their potential. They observed their actual abilities to influence others. If we'd just given a blanket invitation, only one of the 17 would have come."

At the point of entry into the leadership pipeline, many next generation pastors use a filter as a first step to identify prospective leaders. They ask their staff and key lay leaders to make a list of people who have demonstrated potential or actual abilities, and they then send the list to one another to red flag any who shouldn't be on the list. They then make a point to have a staff member or lay leader meet with people on the list to hear their stories, discover their passions, and begin to clarify their calling. After these conversations, they determine who to select as prospective leaders. The process takes a lot of time, but it is a far more effective selection process than a general invitation.

At **Sun Valley Community Church** in Gilbert, AZ (www.sunvalleycc.com), pastor Scott Ridout's leadership development process begins by watching how people serve. "Leadership at Sun Valley," he says, "isn't appointed; it's acknowledged." No one is thrust into a leadership position at the church without first serving in the most humble capacities. Scott explains, "It doesn't matter if people come to us after being elders or teachers at other churches. Everybody starts at the bottom as a servant. Any authority someone has is moral authority because of his or her character and service, not merely by position. We have CEOs of corporations who clean facilities. As they serve, real leaders prove themselves, and people follow them." If people balk at serving in humble roles, they disqualify themselves from leadership. The way they serve is the most important factor in selecting and acknowledging leadership in people at Scott's church.

A more personal, intentional approach to selection requires the top leaders to become experts in evaluating character and talent. Matt Evans, pastor of **Rock Bridge Community Church** in Dalton, GA (www.rockbridge.cc), comments, "Our staff and elders have to be like scouts for a Major League baseball team. They need to have their eyes open to watch for people who show unusual talent in leadership." Like many other pastors, Matt previously issued a broad invitation for people to become leaders and hoped the right people would show up, but utilizing his top leaders as scouts has proven to be far more productive. People are screened from the beginning, which reduces many awkward problems of trying to equip and place unqualified people.

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The Role of the Pastor

Changing the model of leadership development in a postmodern culture requires insight and courage from senior pastors. Shifting the strategy and tailoring curriculum are essential, but even more, they have to be role models in mentoring young leaders. Some of the changes in the pastor's role include:

- **Set the Pace.**
Leadership development can't be delegated to someone on the staff. Certainly, every staff member needs to be involved in developing leaders, but the senior pastor has to set the example. Troy Shaw comments, "It all starts with me. If my staff members don't see me mentoring with authenticity, they're not going to see it as a priority for themselves." Pastors, though, can't simply add additional hours of mentoring and training to their schedules. Mentoring, by its nature, demands intimate—and often draining—time with a few people to impart life to them, so pastors have to reassess their priorities and change their schedules accordingly.

- **Change Strategies.**
Greg Lee observes, "We previously used a model that was primarily academic: train and deploy. But now we have a very different strategy: we deploy and debrief. When people are thrust into service, they learn 'on-the-job' and are much more receptive to instruction because they know they need it."

For some pastors, the change is significant. J. D. Greear comments, "In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins says that self-absorbed leaders live by the model of 'a genius with a thousand helpers.' But pastors (and any other kind of leader) who operate that way don't build into people's lives and replicate themselves." The shift to mentoring is a radical investment in building into a few people, often with little fanfare or recognition, but with significant results for the kingdom.

To facilitate a change in thinking and expectations, Tyrone Barnette, pastor of Peace Baptist Church in Decatur, GA (www.peacebaptistchurch.org), has changed the labels of leaders in the church. "We don't

call them elders and deacons anymore," he reports. "We wanted our leaders to see their roles in a different light, so we call our top men's leadership team 'Joshua's Men' and our women 'Deborah's Daughters.' This may seem like a small (or even unnecessary) change, but it's made a big difference to our top leaders. Instead of just fulfilling standard roles, they see themselves in the legacies of Joshua and Deborah."

- **Tailor Curriculum.**
Virtually all next generation pastors have shifted from a content-centered approach to leadership development to a mentoring model, though they still value content as a component of building leaders. Instead of using a "stock content," many of them tailor the curriculum to fit the people they are mentoring. For example, Brian Howard, pastor of **Copperhill Community Church** in Valencia, CA (www.copperhillchurch.org) explains, "We assess the people who enter our leadership development program according to 12 specific areas. In the 18 months we train and mentor them, we touch on all those areas, but the mentors focus attention on the areas in a person's life that need the most attention. All areas are important—character, competence, and content. So far, we've had 80 men participate, and it's been very successful."

Technology, these pastors are learning, can cut both ways. Though many young people gain a staggering volume of information from the Internet, they may not learn to think critically. Personal involvement and discussions can help overcome that problem, but online content is a convenient way to get information to people who are being mentored. They don't have to show up at a specific time and place to hear a teacher, and most of them prefer this flexible method of getting information.

- **Start Early.**
Scott Ridout recommends that churches involve students in cutting-edge service opportunities. Students today have shown that they want to make a tangible difference in the lives of disadvantaged and hurting people. Scott explains the benefits: "Students who

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become actively involved in serving are much more likely to stay involved in church when they go to college or enter the work world. But it's more than that. Under challenged teenagers become consumer-oriented twenty somethings who care only about themselves instead of others."

- **Place People Well.**
  When the mentoring program concludes, new leaders need to find a place of service that fits them and the church. In many cases, people enter the leadership development process with the intent of becoming a coach in the small group ministry or filling another specific role, but sometimes, the process enflames new desires and awakens new callings. In the last several group meetings in Tom Hughes' leadership development process, he asked people to come prepared to speak into the life of a particular group member. For example, many participants told the person what qualities they see in him and how they see God using him in the future. "Speaking affirmation into people's lives confirms their calling and encourages them deeply," Tom explains. In some cases, the observations of others in the group come as a surprise to people and launch them into a ministry they may not have imagined.

  Other next generation pastors report that the network formed among rising leaders often propels several to launch new ministries together after their training is completed.

- **Be Gracious, Not Reactive.**
  Skeptical people can be annoying, but next generation pastors are learning to invite questions instead of resenting people for asking them. People are already suspicious of authority, and if pastors bristle at questions, their suspicions grow even stronger. Shawn Lovejoy relates, "I try to invite people to ask questions and offer dissenting opinions. When I listen patiently—and even say 'I don't know' from time to time—my relationships with young leaders grow. Being defensive

cuts off discussion, breaks trust, and causes people to want to run." Shawn doesn't have to agree with everything people say or affirm things that aren't true. "They aren't offended if I speak up and tell them what I think is true. They just want to know that I'm listening to them. If they're convinced I'm listening, I can say hard things to them."

BEING DEFENSIVE CUTS OFF DISCUSSION, BREAKS TRUST, AND CAUSES PEOPLE TO WANT TO RUN.

Young leaders seem to have a sixth sense to smell phoniness. Devin Hudson, pastor of **Grace Point Church** in Las Vegas, NV (www.gracepointvegas.com) points to Larry Osborne's warning about "the holy man myth" and explains, "Today, people aren't going to follow anybody who isn't authentic. My people want to know I'm real, that I'm one of them. They're much more likely to trust God with their problems if they see me responding to my struggles by trusting God through them. Trying to be somebody I'm not doesn't impress them, and it puts too much pressure on me. It doesn't work for anybody."

Celebrate the Right Things

Next generation pastors realize that developing leaders in this culture isn't about standing back, teaching them principles, and telling them what to do. At the heart of their models is the invitation: "Come and be with me. Join me in serving God and touching people's lives." A highly relational model of leadership development is labor intensive, so priorities have to shift to make room for schedule changes. One pastor commented, "It's not just about 'taking the hill' anymore. It's about taking the hill with a team. We have to invest in relationships if people in our churches are going to become leaders."

In any culture, we can tell what people truly value by what they celebrate. Les Hughes comments, "We make a big deal out of celebrating what God is doing in our church, but we've changed it a little in the past few years.

When we have celebrations, we now ask people to tell how God is using people to touch their lives. It's all about the relationships, and we hear wonderful stories about God's work through people to change lives. In this way, we celebrate—and reinforce—the success of mentoring."

PAT SPRINGLE

Patrick Springle is the president of Baxter Press in Friendswood, TX. He served on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ for 18 years, 11 as the Texas state director. He was Senior Vice President of Rapha for three years before starting his publishing business.

Leadership Network welcomes your response. The primary writer is **Pat Springle**. Editorial advisors were **Linda Stanley**, Director of Next Generation Leadership Communities for Leadership Network and **Warren Bird**, Director of Research and Intellectual Capital Support for Leadership Network. Contact them via **Cindi.Haworth@leadnet.org**

LINDA STANLEY

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Leadership Network's mission is to identify, connect and help high-capacity Christian leaders multiply their impact.

* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the NIV translation.

ENDNOTES

[1] To find out more about Jon Stewart and "The Daily Show," go to www.thedailyshow.com

[2] Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2003), pp. 54-55.

RESOURCES FROM LEADERSHIP NETWORK

NEXT GENERATION CONCEPT PAPERS

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This concept paper exposes many of the stresses and struggles that next generation pastors-senior pastors in their 20s and 30s who are growing in influence and impact-are dealing with, and opens conversations to creating a balance between the demands of a busy schedule, a growing congregation and maintaining spiritual vitality.

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All leaders experience pain, but healthy leaders find appropriate ways to increase their pain threshold. Doing so helps them grow as a leader to new levels, enabling them to take their churches and ministries to new levels as well. Failure to deal with their pain leads to a "leadership leprosy" in which they, like someone with leprosy, do harm to themselves or those around them because of their inability to deal with pain. Author and pastoral consultant Sam Chand (http://www.samchand.com) offers many practical ideas in this fast-moving podcast.

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