



On Mission 2019

*The State of the Global Gospel:
Present and Future Trends*

Mary Lederleitner - Missional Intelligence Integrating Missional Twenty-Somethings

Hi, my name is Mary Lederleitner and I wanted to take a few moments to share with you some insights I learned as I did a dissertation looking at missional 20-somethings and what they need to be able to integrate indoor faith community when they graduate from university. I think it'll be especially helpful for people in churches, but also just others who are involved in running ministries, and they would like the involvement in and engagement of young adults. My hope is that the research will really help church leaders and mission leaders. So, I made it available for you for free on my website. I'm the Executive Director of Missional Intelligence. if you go to www.missional-intelligence.net, you can go to the projects and research page and download a copy.

What's really important is to be crystal clear about the tribe or tribes of Millennials or Gen Z's that God is putting on your heart. Are they those with higher levels of education? Are they the forgotten half that didn't get a college education? Are they single? Are they ones that are married? Are they adults with addictions? Or those who've been incarcerated? Or those who might not have family support? Are they immigrants or those who never came to a church, or those who are raised in a church? Each group is a different conversation and a different approach. I focused on missional 20-somethings because I believe that so much has been invested in them already. They're a huge gift to the body of Christ and I believe there a great gift to any ministry. That's willing to integrate them. So, what I want to do is I want to highlight three theories that I found in the Social Science literature that helped to make sense of what I was seeing, and I think that they'll help you as well.

So, the first is, "The Ecology of Human Development." It's the idea that human beings are formed in a wide variety of microsystems. In these systems, their values are shaped. They develop skills. And so, the idea is that if what they develop in one microsystem is affirmed in other microsystems, their development just flourishes. And so, we see this, if a young adult was raised in a family where family members modeled deep genuine discipleship and then maybe they were involved in a local church as kids, and they saw genuine discipleship and outreach. Then they went to a campus ministry. And that foundation was built upon. And they gained new skills, and they have friends who are Christians. And in their professional journey, they're able to integrate these values and utilize many of those skills. Then, development just flourishes. But what we see in this season in life is a lot of disconnections. A lot of linkages are missing. It's not

uncommon in the research with the people that I talked with that they felt like they gained skills in their campus ministry, and when they graduated and went to a church, there was really no interest in using those skills. One gentleman called, talked about how it was like little boxes and blocks of time, nothing was connected, everything felt fragmented and when this happens, it really hinders development.

The next piece or the implications of this are, -you have to think about these linkages: What tribe(s) of Millennials and GenZ's do you feel called to reach through your ministry? And then what are the specific microsystems that have formed their journey so far? What are they talking about in those spaces? What are those conversations that are taking place that are forming their expectations? And so, as you think about that, and as you get a better understanding of that, it's really important to think about the messages and expectations that are redemptive, that you can build upon, so that their transition to your faith community isn't so jarring. Possibly your whole church culture can't absorb their expectations, and questions, and things, but it's possible to create safe places where they can continue in their development and these messages can be affirmed and these skills can be re-reinforced. The next theory is The Theory of Mattering And Marginality -it was developed by a woman, Nancy Slosberg and it's the idea that during times of transition people often feel marginalized and as though they don't matter. It's the idea that a person can make a difference and it's the idea not just that you're seeing them and helping them, but that they are able to contribute to other people's well-being as well. And I'm in this, it's the idea that that people are proud of them when they accomplish things, and they are sad when they fail or when they struggle. And basically, the theory says that people are motivated to engage when they feel like they matter and when they don't matter, they disengage. And so, I saw this in the research a lot. Young adults will go into a church and they would see groups for every type of person except for young adults. So basically, they felt like they didn't matter. There was no place for them. No one was ever expecting them to even walk in the door. But in other cases, when they walked in, and they saw, wow, there is a place for people like me. I guess we do matter to this community and then their development continues. So, questions for you and for your colleagues are things like these: Are you expecting young adults in your congregation or ministry? Do they genuinely matter to you? What do you have in place to show them that they matter to you? Are you actively prepared to integrate them? What communities, or small groups, or committees can they join quickly, where they can be themselves, where they can ask genuine questions, and begin to form genuine relationships and make a contribution? Do you use sermon examples that integrate their stories and what they are facing in their lives? And are there clear and relevant ways for them to see that others need what they bring to the table? So, this is really critical.

The last piece that I want to talk about is the idea of "Moving from One-On-One Mentoring to Mentoring Communities." It's a -mentoring communities are a theme that come out of the literature written by Sharon Daloz Parks. And in her book, "Big Questions Worthy Dreams: Mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith." She talks about that if a person is going to enter a professional organization as it's presently defined, having a one-on-one mentoring relationship works. But if we're going to be initiated into basically a context that is evolving in new ways, only a mentoring community will do. And so, what is a mentoring community? They can last for really short periods of time or they can extend for years. They can

be extremely influential. The features of a mentoring community include networks of belonging, big questions, vision for the future, they integrate genuine dialogue, they encourage deep critical thinking. So, there are places where people really listen. They really try to understand one another. They're willing to have their minds changed. So, I think they are examples of humans sharpening one another like iron sharpens iron as talked about in Proverbs. So, they are safe places to reach for an ideal and to begin to imagine what life will be like. A key discipleship question arises in these mentoring communities.

Young adulthood is an identity formation phase of life, It's the place where they're trying to figure out who am I going to be and what am I going to stand for in the world? And so, a key question is helping them to discover God's calling on their lives and then making the community about encouraging one another to fully grow and live into those diverse callings. And so, through it, you can ask, what's hindering them from discerning God's will, and you can study that together. You can talk about what they're facing that's making it hard for them to live out what they sense. God is calling them to do and you can study Scripture together, how to grow close to God, and how to be a person of faith in a broken world, and how Scripture informs their genuine questions and challenges.

So, the issue is really quite important. I found many people who were saying that there were so many pressures on them to go backwards in their faith. A lot of their friends are hanging out in bars, there hooking up there with other people. You know there's just a lot of temptation and they really want to keep growing. Part of what they need, an important part to grow into their full promise and potential in the Kingdom are welcoming places and nurturing places for their development. May we rise to the challenge so that the world can really experience the full contribution 20-somethings can make in the kingdom of God both now and in the days ahead. Thanks.