

Christ-Centred Youth Ministry

Introduction

According to a research done by the Aga Khan University in Kenya in January 2016, about 80% of Kenya's population is below the age of 35 years (Generation Y/Millennial).

Key Findings

1. Identity: 40% of youth identify as Kenyans first, while 35% identify as youth first. About 12% identify by their faith first, while less than 5% of Kenyan youth identify by their ethnicity first (this excited me! Tribalism and negative ethnicity)

2. Integrity: 50% believe it doesn't matter how one makes money as long as one does not end up in jail; 47% admire those who make money through hook or crook; 30% believe corruption is profitable; 73% are afraid to stand up for what is right for fear of retribution; only 40% strongly believe that it is important to pay taxes. 35% of the youth would readily take or give a bribe.

3. Political Participation:

90% believe it is important to vote, while 70% believe they have the power to make a difference. However, 62% of the youth are vulnerable to electoral bribery, with 40% saying they would only vote for a candidate who bribed them.

4. Values: When asked what they value most, 85% valued faith first, 60% valued family first, 45% valued work first and 30% valued both wealth and freedom first.

-This stood out for me! I have heard adults accuse young people claiming they are not interested in issues of faith. This generation is hungry for the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

5. Aspirations: A majority of Kenyan youth (48%) would like to go into business. 26% percent wish to pursue careers such as engineering, law, medicine, and teaching, and only 11% would wish to go into farming.

6. Employment: Overall, unemployment among youth was 55%. Unemployment was highest among women (62%), and even higher among rural women (68%). Employment rates were lowest among those without post-secondary education (15%). By comparison, 32% of those with post-secondary education

were unemployed. 1 in 2 graduates were unemployed and only 1 in 5 youth with university degrees were in self-employment. Youth aged between 18 and 25 were twice more likely to be unemployed compared to their counterpart aged 26 to 35 years.

8. Youth and Government: What they think about government; 40% trust politicians, while 65% trust government. The most trusted institution is the family (94%) followed by religious organizations at 86%. Only 52% of the youth had knowledge of government initiatives for youth; 76% of the youth reported that they have not benefited from government-initiated youth programs. What the youth want government to address: Unemployment was by far, the top concern at 63%. Other concerns were lack of access to capital at 11% and lack of business opportunities at 9% and discrimination and non-recognition at 4.7%.

9. The future: 77% of the youth believe Kenya will be richer materially, with better access to quality education and health, and more jobs for youth; 67% believe society will reward merit and hard work. At the same time, 40% believe there will be more corruption, and 30% believe the country will be poorer in ethics and values, and experience more substance abuse.

The question I want us to grapple with today is how do we connect to this generation with an aim of leading them to Christ? How do you disciple them? How do you establish a Christ-centred youth ministry that is transformational? How do you engage and impact this generation?

Note: Our aim is not to try and change this generation, we can't change nobody! All the programs and the strategies we put in place are not aimed at changing people but to point them to Him who changes people- Jesus Christ. So the aim of youth ministry is to introduce young people to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that has the power to transform the whole person- body, soul and spirit!

Foundational Scriptures:

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I

determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”(NKJV)

Colossians 1:15-18

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Romans 1:15-18

So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

-But before we introduce them to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we need to understand the people we are called to minister to. They are referred to as the Generation Y or the Millennials (those born in the period ranging 1980 and beyond up to 2000).

-This is a generation that has grown up in the midst of growing technology, advent of social media and explosion of globalisation. This generation has a very high level of exposure.

-Pastor Oscar Amisi in his book "Generation Y" defines this generation as "so sophisticated, techno-savvy, and extremely centralized on themes of fun, adventure and unfettered passion."

Generation Y Needs

I. Transformation, not Just Information

-“The challenge is they are not looking for what’s true, they are looking for what works.” -Andy Stanley

-This generation can access information from their sophisticated search engines, so we don’t need to bog them down with that.

- What they need is truth based tools that are Biblical enough to birth the transformation that their hearts hunger for.

-They are looking for people who are honest enough to share about both their success and failure, being vulnerable with them just like Jesus did with his disciples.

II. Authenticity, not Perfectionism

-Ask you deal with this generation, just be real, be yourself. Don’t be too serious if you’re not naturally one. Don’t try to cracking jokes if you have never done that before. The youth appreciate when you are yourself.

-It’s only through authenticity that this generation are able to appreciate the power of the grace of God first hand.

III. Mentorship, not Just Leadership

-Leaders speak at a point of elevation, mentors come to the level of them and walks along with them impacting them through practical examples.

- You can lead from a distance, but Mentorship happens where there is a close relationship with the one being mentored.

Three key things you need to put in place in order to reach Generation Y:
Relationships! Relationships! Relationships!

All the other things: fun, entertainment, etc they can find it elsewhere, but the best thing you can ever give to a young person is relationship. Some come from challenging backgrounds where there is no love at all. This generation is

hungry and thirsty for real authentic relationships and you have all it takes to satisfy this need. Give them “yourself” and point them to Christ!

-Jim Rayburn, the founder of Young Life ministry said: youth ministry is not difficult; it is simply an adult building relationship with a student. I agree with Jim. What really matters in Youth ministry is relationships -with teenagers and with Jesus.

How Can We Help Generation Y to be Christ-like?

Our major goal of building relationships with this generation is to point them to Christ! Not to a personality, not an institution, not even an experience.

1. Help them Develop Spiritual Disciplines
-Disciplines of prayer & fasting, solitude, study (Bible and good Christian Materials), meditation, journaling, Scripture memorization etc.
2. Help them Cultivate Accountability Relationships
3. Help them be Visionaries.

Marks of a Healthy Christ-Centred Youth Ministry

1. Bible Centred. Our interactions with the young people should be saturated in Scripture. This is the core foundation. 2 Timothy 3:1, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 1:16
2. Servanthood. Be ready to get your hands dirty. Be ready to “wash the feet” of the youth. Lead by example. Teach the truth. Live it out. Expose the young people to the life-giving truth of Jesus Christ.
3. Authenticity. Be genuine. Be real. Not perfect, whole, together, complete, competent. Create an environment where young people are free to expose their messiness and imperfections. After all we are all a bunch of sinners saved by grace. Authentic youth workers will draw youth to Christ. 2 Corinthians 6:3-10.
4. Audacity: Bold, daring, fearless. Christ-centred Youth ministry must push young people, parents and the church outside their comfort zone.

5. Humility. We should always search for ways to decrease so that Jesus can increase. John 3:30. Philippians 2:1-11. Be dependent on Christ, teachable, accessible, flexible, be nobody (less appreciated, glamorous).
6. Sanctuary: a place of worship, rest, grace, safety, growth. Matthew 11:28-30. This environment is not found in a building- it is found in Christ!
7. Creativity: Help the youth discover their God-given creativity and use it for the glory of God!
8. Intimacy: Intimacy with Christ as a Youth Leader leading the youth to an intimacy with Christ. Abide in Christ, let His Word abide in you! John 15:5-7. Our relationship with Jesus is our youth ministry.

As a Youth Leader

Spend time in the word, not for the sake of the young people but for your own sake. You cannot give what you don't have, neither can you take young people where you have never been.

What are you doing to take care of you?

What are you reading?

How are you finding solitude?

Are you taking breaks to sit in God's presence and be reminded about your "why"?

Note: A Christ-centred youth ministry is a Gospel-centred youth ministry.

God bless You!

Other resources:

- <https://watumishiwaneno.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/a-few-thoughts-on-youth-ministry/>
- Conversation Magazine Issue 7
- *The Missing Generation*, Kay Mumford
- *Christian Youth Work*, Ashton and Moon