

Episode 2: Why We Should Listen to Young Adults

Transcription

1) We need the Questions Young Adults Ask

Anne: Gretchen and I were in a conversation earlier today with some of our students and one of them said something that stuck with me when I thought about this question. And it was, I want there to be space for my questions. I don't want my questions - I don't want to be seen, uh, how did she word it Gretchen, I forget exactly how, but that sense of I don't want to be put in the corner because I'm asking too many questions or sidelined. I want my questions to have space.

Gretchen: Yeah, she framed it I think around, like, is there a culture of being able to ask my questions, whatever questions they may be, if I come into this space, is there a culture of being open to hearing my questions. I mean, my question would be like why would we not want to hear what they have to say? Why would we not listen to what they tell us? And how do we better set ourselves up for that culture, right, of listening and really paying attention and then not only just listening, but what's the follow through? What are we going to act on with you, in partnership, and we're not just going to sit here and listen to you and do nothing with it. Often for me, it's like how do we make sure we take it for – like the value that is in their offering and do something with it.

Pause for reflection and discussion.

2) Young Adults start Movements

Michelle: Well, I think too about the fact that we are all caught up in a movement that was founded by a young adult. Right? That we are part of a movement that was initiated by a young adult who kinda wandered from his home town and got inspired by something and gathered other people around him and then was willing to face the political consequences for having an alternative story. And so – and I think that like so many social movements throughout history have been initiated by young adults. And so, if we as a church aren't listening to and with young adults, I think we're missing the opportunity to be part of what young adults are doing in our society and in our community.

Lyndon: I would say, yeah echoing things other people have already said, but the perspective that young adults bring is different. I think about the Civil Rights movement in the US, it was the students who really brought things to a more radical front and the older church members and adults wanted a more temperate approach at times. Yeah, I think that's typically true that it's college campuses where activism has it's heart because people have not settled into rigid roles of jobs and the drudgeries of life to the same extent that there's more imagination and more time, it's like "We're going to go do this thing." "How long will it take?" "However long it takes, maybe eight hours." And then, you know, some people will just go to the legislature for half the day. Whereas that's harder to fit in the work day.

Michelle: Again, and like I said earlier, I just go back to the number of young adults in scripture, the number of young adults in history who were really instrumental in naming what God was up to. And so, for me it's important that we are listening to young adults so that we can hear what God is saying to us through them. And I think if we don't then we – like I say we miss on their voice in our midst and that's to our detriment.

Pause for reflection and discussion.

3) Young Adults are part of the Body of Christ Today

Sarah: This is why we should listen to young adults: cause their people in the church whose voices matter. Like you, you – it's the church. For Christ's sakes and I mean that literally. Like you don't have to earn a place at the table, you don't have to wait till you're old enough to be worthy and like I say this as a person who at fifty-two years old is still being treated like a little girl sometimes at certain tables. This – we're Lutherans. This is the priesthood of all believers, people. That is why we should listen. And do we? Not nearly enough. Or anyone, frankly. Like I think that's part of why we have these goals, why we've made these policies that change to set these goals to say, "Can we shift the balance of whose voices do get a seat at the table, a microphone at convention, these things?" And we're trying. We're trying to – and you know, not that old white guys don't have important, you know they're also the present of the church. But, let's shift the balance a bit in terms of who are we as a church, well we're the people of God, of shapes and sizes and ages and genders and that's who should involved in deciding who we are right now, because the whole nonsense, you know,

the notion of “What’s the future of the church” is meaning less if we’re not actually figuring out how to be the body of Christ in the world in the present tense.

Anne: And I figure I can’t preach the gospel in a way that my friends that are twenty and in a way that – to their peers, I can’t. Like, I’m a listener, I can hold and support, but young adults can share in a way that I can’t and we need that. You’re right Sarah, we need that voice.

Lyndon: So, what if we had a Bishop who was like in their twenties?

Michelle snaps

Lyndon: Like we can barely imagine Bishops in their forties right now, what about their twenties and early thirties, like it’s crazy. People are leading world movements, as you mentioned Michelle, Jesus, and like people do big things often in their twenties and early thirties cause they have that space in their lives.

Pause for reflection and discussion.

4) We have a Faith Language we want Young Adults to Hear

Michelle: And I think too, I just want to say to this question that we have uh, we have a sort of radical understanding of how God comes into the world that I think is really important that young adults hear. That we have a way of talking about justice, about human identity about community, about redemption in a way that answers – that is really, really significant and so, that’s another reason I think that we want to be listening to and with – cause I think they are asking questions about the world that they find themselves in and our particular brand of the way that we talk about our faith can be really helpful in their, in that wondering. You know, and if their only hearing from perspectives that create more rigid lines and draw more, you know, more particular boundaries, I think their missing – that has a particular impact, and so we have a way of saying God is coming into the world in a particular way and invites us into action and invites us into community that I think that they’re hungry to hear. And so I don’t – yeah I want them to know that we have that, right.

Pause for reflection and discussion.