

Young Adults Need Peer Leaders

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Young adulthood is a season of exploration, transition, and identity formation. During this period, relationships take center stage. These peer relationships shape perspectives, beliefs, and life decisions. Peer groups often become a primary source of influence—sometimes even more powerful than family or traditional authority figures. Young adults need peers who can help them navigate this formative time. Connecting them with positive influences helps them make wise choices.

Relationships are the glue that keeps young adults connected. Social interactions—picnics, movie nights, meals, and gatherings—create the framework for deep connection and discipleship. Though these activities may seem simple, their true value lies in the bonds and spiritual growth that develop through them.

Why Peer Leadership Matters

1. Young Adults Trust Their Peers

Generation Z rejects artificial hierarchy. They don't care whether the best idea comes from a CEO or a janitor—they value effectiveness over titles. This mindset extends to the church. While young adults respect pastoral leadership, they are more likely to seek advice, accountability, and encouragement from peers who share similar life experiences. When young adults lead one another, they build authentic trust. Their leaders understand their struggles, ambitions, and doubts. As a result, peer-led small groups, discipleship teams, and ministry initiatives often prove far more effective than top-down approaches alone.

2. Peer Leadership Strengthens Community

A thriving young adult ministry is both led and driven by young adults. It cannot function as just another church program—it must become a movement led by those it serves. Empowering young adults to lead creates a culture of ownership rather than passive participation.

When young adults are entrusted with leadership, they:

- Invest in the ministry's success because they feel ownership.
- Build stronger relationships as they work toward a shared vision.
- Multiply leadership by inspiring others to step up and take the initiative.

3. Peer Leadership Retains Young Adults

One of the greatest challenges in ministry is keeping young adults engaged in church. Many drift away because they don't feel needed or valued. When they are given real leadership responsibilities, they develop a deep sense of belonging and commitment to the local church.

Peer leadership fosters:

- Greater commitment—Leaders take ownership and are less likely to disengage.
- Stronger faith—Leading compels young adults to deepen their biblical understanding and prayer life.
- Lasting relationships—Connections formed through leadership often grow into lifelong friendships.

Research shows that 45 percent of young adults who remain engaged in church do so because of personal relationships, not structured programs. Even among the unchurched, nearly half recognize the value of guidance from peers who share similar life experiences.

4. Peer Leadership Develops Future Leaders

Churches often hesitate to entrust real responsibility to young adults, fearing they lack experience or might make mistakes. Yet leadership development is not about perfection—it is about practice. At First Assembly of God North Little Rock (FirstNLR), our young adult leadership model has proven this principle.

A healthy young adult ministry serves as a leadership laboratory—a place where individuals can:

- Develop their spiritual gifts.
- Gain hands-on leadership experience.
- Make mistakes in a safe environment and learn from them.

If young adults are only given minor tasks instead of real leadership, they remain consumers rather than contributors. But when they are empowered to teach, lead discussions, plan events, and make decisions, they grow into capable leaders—both in the church and in their broader communities.

Many churches face leadership shortages because they fail to intentionally develop young leaders. By fostering peer leadership, we create a continuous pipeline of emerging leaders who are trained and ready for greater roles in the church. Their peer leadership doesn't just benefit those they serve—it prepares them for future roles in ministry and beyond.

At FirstNLR, we have seen young adult leaders grow into:

- Lead pastors shepherding their own congregations.
- Missionaries serving around the world.
- Church board members shaping the future of their congregations.
- Discipleship group leaders mentoring others.

Their peer leadership not only benefited those they served—but it also prepared them for future ministry and beyond. This multiplication of leadership ensures that the church does more than maintain momentum—it thrives for generations to come. By giving

young adults real roles and responsibilities, we help them see the church not as something they attend, but as something they build and contribute to.

Jesus built His ministry on peer leadership. The disciples were not religious elites—they were young, ordinary men who learned by doing, serving, and leading together. Similarly, young adults grow when they are challenged to lead. Biblical leadership is not about age or status—it is about calling and faithfulness. By embracing peer leadership, we align with the model Jesus himself used.

- He equipped His disciples.
- He gave them real responsibility.
- He sent them out to lead and minister.

If we want to raise up the next generation of church leaders, we must trust and empower them now—not wait until they reach an arbitrary level of experience. If we truly believe in the next generation, we must entrust them with leadership today. The church of tomorrow is being shaped by the peer leaders of today. Are you ready to empower young adults to lead?