

# Young People Will Make or Break the Church

by Pastor Dimas Salaberrios

Sometimes it alarms me that one day the worst kid in my youth group may shepherd Infinity New York Church. However, I am pretty sure that I must have frightened several pastors along my sanctification process. I am challenged like every pastor before me to imitate Matthew 28:20 which commands us to teach them “to observe all things that I have commanded you.” This drives us to a pressing question: Is my church investing significant time and resources in developing our next generation of church leaders?

I hope that the church leaders of today will stand behind their youth ministries and personally get involved. If we ignore the state of our youth we will have a major catastrophe on our hands. Our young people are our future. If ungodliness continues to go unchecked we will see a scary future.

I have a friend named John Baptiste who lived through the genocide of Rwanda, where over a million people were murdered, mostly by machetes. His family, fiancé, and ministry team of 60 were slaughtered in the streets. What was really sad about the whole ordeal is that adults ignored the warnings of the youth. Jean Baptiste said, “young people in my ministry warned us that genocide was coming but we didn’t leave or try to leave until it was too late.” The hostiles in Rwanda trained and mobilized young people to be the leaders of genocide. Jean said, “The streets were full of 8 year olds with machine guns and teens with machetes.” The youth were strategically used to launch Rwanda’s genocide.

Throughout the Bible, God used young people. David was a teenager when he defeated Goliath and freed Israel. Esther was a teenager when she saved the Jews from genocide, and Jesus was

twelve when he confounded the wise. Scripture teaches us that young people are vital to the success of a ministry. Our churches will become a lot stronger if we follow the model of scripture and empower young people to lead. The natural inclination of many established leaders is to ask the question, “But won’t young people just make mistakes?” My answer is yes. We need to create safe places for our young warriors to test their skills. I had the privilege and honor growing a young men’s group from 20 to 70. Word quickly spread that in our group it was the young people doing the ministry, not just the adults. The young men fasted and prayed and boldly sang praises in the streets and preached the Word.

To understand the power of young people in the church, all we need to do is examine church history. The Protestant Missionary Movement of North America in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was birthed by young people. Five students at Williams College, Massachusetts had a haystack prayer meeting which launched Samuel Mills on a missionary recruitment movement where young people spread the gospel across the world. Young people were traveling into foreign countries packing their personal belongings into coffins. The young people left America with no thoughts of returning alive. The Student Volunteer Movement through North America and Britain was led by young people crying out, “The evangelization of the world in this generation.” Youth ministry took off with Youth for Christ (Torrey Johnson and Billy Graham), Youth With A Mission (Loren Cunningham), Navigators (Dawson Trotman) and Campus Crusade for Christ (Bill Bright). All these guys were in their twenties and younger when they turned youth culture and eventually this nation upside down for Jesus.

I hope that our church leaders do not make the mistake of ignoring the power of mobilizing young people. Even Hitler said, “He alone who owns the youth gains the future.” Should we surrender our youth to Def Jam, MTV, false religions and the world. I think we should fight with everything we have to win young people to

Christ. It is scary but true , even Hitler's soldiers were young people.

Church leaders, let's empower our young people to lead things. Let's take some chances and inspire our young people to dream dreams for their generation. If you want to know if your church invests in young people, just look at your church's expense account. If your youth are shoved in the basement with a near zero budget, then I would dare to say that your church should examine why that is happening.

History teaches us that young people are searching for a cause worth dieing for. Don't you think Jesus is worth dying for? Today we see God moving in churches across the Tri-State. Ministry is booming in all the boroughs at youth friendly churches. Some that come to mind are Christian Cultural Center BK, Christ Tabernacle Q, The Greater Allen Cathedral Q, First Presbyterian of Jamaica Q, Abounding Grace M, Bethel Gospel Assembly M, Soul Saving Station M, Harvest Fields BX, Crossroads Tabernacle BX, LPAC BX, Infinity New York Church BX and more.

God is moving amongst our young people but too many churches are scared to entrust them with ministry opportunities. If we believe that our youth will someday lead our churches then we should loosen our grip of control and let our young people be involved in ministry today.