Beth Seversen

Not Done Yet

Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults

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Journeying

THE LONG, WINDING ROAD TO IDENTITY FORMATION

To become adults, we take a long, winding road from adolescence to adulthood. The road metaphor aptly describes the journey toward forming an identity. And we can't read much on young-adult identity without running into Jeffrey Arnett's description of early adulthood. A professor of psychology at Clark University, Arnett coined the term *emerging adulthood* to refer to a unique and distinct developmental life phase between adolescence and mature adulthood, roughly from age eighteen to twenty-nine. During emerging adulthood, young adults increase in their independence from family and other support systems, experience seismic change, and explore the world, themselves, and endless possibilities. Arnett uses the metaphor of a long and winding road to depict this prolonged transitional period, which runs from exiting teen years to entering adulthood. Emerging adulthood is sometimes divided between younger (eighteen to twenty-three) and older (age twenty-four to twenty-nine) emerging adults.

Although not everyone agrees that emerging adulthood is a distinct developmental phase or that emerging adulthood happens at a certain age, most agree that there is a time period in which people transition from adolescence to adulthood. Obviously, it's during this season of life that people make life-impacting decisions regarding education,

vocation, life partnership, geographic location, housing, and community. First, let's nail down some terminology before we explore a few of the characteristics of this life phase just before adulthood.

Sorting Out Our Terms

While *emerging adulthood* refers to the developmental stage that extends between adolescence and adulthood (usually ages eighteen to twenty-nine), the millennial generation refers to people born between 1981 and 1996, according to Pew Research. Postmillennials, also called Generation Z, were first born in the year 1995, according to Seemiller and Grace, or 1997, according to Pew Research. Scholar James Emory White marks the birth years of Generation Z as between 1995 and 2005. Designating generational years for cohorts isn't an exact science; it is simply a way to describe people who were impacted by similar social, economic, political, and technological events or changes in history like the Great Depression, World War II, the Kennedy assassinations, the Cold War, and 9/11. Since there is no one authoritative body that determines generational birth dates for our purposes, let's imagine the start year for Generation Z was 1995, and that they experienced 9/11 in kindergarten and arrived on the college scene as freshmen in 2013.

Combined, the two youngest generational cohorts make up about half of the US population, with Generation Z (25.9 percent) at one percentage point ahead of millennials (24.5 percent). For a time, the 78 million millennials made up the largest generation in American history and were the most racially diverse segment of American society. Generation Z has surpassed millennials in both size and ethnic diversity.

I will use the terms *emerging adults*, *young adults,* and *young people* synonymously. Frequently I will refer to Generation Z and millennials or to both of them as "emerging generations." But my primary focus will be on *emerging adults* as a descriptor for people in their twenties and early thirties.

I won't describe the differences in the two generations. Much already has been written on millennials—much of it negative. But you won't find any millennial bashing here, only a deep appreciation for a generation

seeking to find their place in the world. Generation Z may be less familiar and is the focus of much current study. For a quick primer on Generation Z, I recommend *Generation Z: A Century in the Making* by Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, and I defer to James Emory White's summary of the defining markers of this newest generation: recession marked, Wi-Fi enabled, multiracial, sexually fluid, and post-Christian. He writes,

> So who are Generation Z? They are growing up in a post-9/11 world. They are experiencing radical changes in technology and understandings of family, sexuality, gender. They live in multigenerational households, and the fastest-growing demographic within their age group is multiracial.

Rather I will focus on looking at these two groups collectively within the category of "emerging adulthood" as it relates to the heart of this study: churches reaching and keeping young adults. Neither of the newest emerging generations attend church much. Only two-fifths (41 percent) of Generation Z attend weekly religious services, while only 27 percent of millennials attend weekly services once or more. This book is about Christian churches that care about those dismal statistics and are pointing these emerging generations toward Christ.

In the face of the general decline in religious attendance among emerging adults in North America, logical questions emerge: How are churches reaching the small minority of dones and nones among emerging adults who are increasing in religious Christian faith and church attendance? How are churches reaching the least-reached, least-churched generations, especially the younger eighteen- to twenty-three-year-old group? Let's start by taking a quick stock of what we know about young adults through a developmental lens.

The Characteristics of Emerging Adulthood

Much of the literature proposing the concept of emerging adulthood refers to it as a transitory stage with five common features also first identified by Arnett:

1. identity exploration answering the question "who am I" and trying out various life options especially in love and work
2. instability in love, work, and places of residence
3. self-focus and figuring out how to manage life independently
4. feeling in-between, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult
5. possibilities and optimism, when hopes flourish and people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives

The trail through emerging adulthood is confusing and complicated. For research I traveled to Burning Man, a self-expression arts festival held annually over Labor Day in Black Rock City, Nevada, and attended by some sixty thousand adherents. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a female millennial attending Burning Man.

> I entered college as a statistics major, and I graduated with an accounting degree. I went to work for a Big Four. I hated it! I was miserable. So I got a new job. My boyfriend and I had dated four years, and we broke up for three and a half years. We just started dating again. I left accounting and went to recruiting, and now I recruit for a startup in San Francisco. . . .
>
> Spirituality is a belief in something bigger, I think. That's how I would define god too. I wouldn't say god is Jesus. I would say god is just like a higher being. . . . I feel like I can always pray. I pray, like, every night. . . . I always believed in god, which I wouldn't really classify as like a Christian God or anything. And I try to meditate a lot and understand my inner self, like Zen meditation. . . .
>
> I like to party, fine. Doing drugs seven days a week? No. . . .
>
> What am I looking forward to or longing for? I value my friends really highly, so good relationships. I'd like to settle down. Right now I live in San Francisco, and there is a decent amount of partying. I look forward to settling down a little bit more, having a house, a couple of kids, just enjoying myself, a good career. Sounds kind of boring, but is sounds really nice.

This twenty-seven-year-old woman explores her identity in terms of what company she will work for, who her life partner will be, and where she will live. Besides her identity exploration, we observe instability, self-focus, transition or in-betweenness, and an optimistic outlook toward a more stable future. Her story clearly fits the five distinctive marks of emerging adulthood and is illustrative of many young adults' journeys.

Besides the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults, Christian Smith, professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame, and his research team also looked at the underbelly of young adulthood through interviews with eighteen to twenty-three year olds. They wanted to discover how broader cultural influences shape young people's behaviors and relationships. In *Lost in Transition* they describe the dark side of emerging adulthood, also using five descriptors. Smith found some emerging adults are disposed toward many of the same morally misguided behaviors, addictions, and social problems their parents struggle with, including moral confusion, recreational sex, unlimited technology, routine intoxication, serious addiction to alcohol and drugs, and massive consumerism. The difference is young adults engage these destructive behaviors with a greater intensity than their parents due to wider exposure to and availability of contraceptives, information, drugs, alcohol, and purchasing ease while at the same time living in a much more morally relaxed society.

For instance, today's technology gives young people far greater access to pornography and sexual stimuli than was available to their parents. And for many emerging adults, cultural shifts depreciate their sense of certainty and give them a universalist outlook. For many emerging adults, life in a postmodern context is more self-constructed, subjective, and morally relative than that of their moms and dads. For example, a bright eighteen-year-old student in my introductory course on the Bible this semester raised his hand and asked, "Isn't sin a social construct?"

Delaying Adulthood As We Know It

Back in the day, yet not that long ago, adulthood was defined by the social markers of leaving home, completing an education, gaining

financial independence, marrying, and starting a family—and for those of privilege, home ownership. But let's be real: those conventional markers are now delayed for Americans for all sorts of reasons that have to do with the economy: job instability, access, and the need or pressure for higher education or specialized training, extended financial dependency on parents and family, and recreational sex due to easily acquired birth control. Young adults are for these reasons extending their transition to adulthood and suspending for an undetermined amount of time a career, marriage and family, and homeownership or even rental.

Social forces, particularly the global economy, undermine stable and lifelong careers. Cultural trends like increasing use of artificial intelligence, companies not replacing retirees, and needing more education or training to compete for employment in the job market contribute to a delay in fully entering adulthood. Many young adults are supported financially by their parents through their twenties to mid-thirties. Smith reports parents spend an average of $38,340 on each of their young adult children between their kids' ages of eighteen and thirty-four. For all these reasons emerging adults statistically are not marrying or starting families as much or as early, compared to past generations.

Fifty-nine percent of millennials are not married. Eighty-three percent do not have children. These two factors contribute to delays in identity commitments and, I suspect, in delays in commitments to a religious identity. In the past, young adults stopped participating in church for a few years then returned once they had a stable career, married, and started their families. Think about it. Between 1950 and the latest census, the median age of women marrying for the first time rose from 20.3 to 27, and the median age of marriage for men rose from 22.8 to 29. The debate continues about whether or not young adults will return to church once they marry and start a family.

Today's young adults take a nine- to eleven-year break from church after high school. Many who study the religious lives of young adults see the delay in marriage and family formation as the key reason they are not practicing their faith. Rodney Stark, an influential figure in sociology of

religion, says not to worry about this too much. Young adults are simply sleeping in and learning to manage their lives on their own, like they always have. When they eventually settle down, marry, and have kids, they'll be back to church. Yet the verdict is out on whether or not churched dropouts will return to church after five, ten, or fifteen years away.

Delaying Commitments to Identity

Developmental psychologists believe human identity develops throughout our life span and is never complete. But young adults are on the apex of a significant identity stage, making some of their most important decisions affecting the rest of their lives.

When we talk about identity, we refer to questions like, Who am I? What am I going to do with my life? What groups will I commit to? In the United States, personal identity includes one's goals, values, beliefs, group memberships, and roles. The guru of identity work and life-stage development, Erik Erikson (1902–1994), is still respected for his theory of eight stages of identity development from a life span perspective, especially his work among adolescents and his concept that culture influences development. Identity is a sociological concept focused on the search for self and how self relates to the wider social context.

Identity is considered fluid, mutable, and adaptable over time as societies change and develop. It is also believed to vary according to social contexts—that is, people may juggle multiple identities and switch them according to whether they are with their family, with friends, or at work. We may manage multiple identities corresponding to the various roles in life we have—I am a professor, a minister, a wife, a mother, and a friend. The groups people associate with contribute to their sense of identity. Children of immigrants, for example, often modify their ethnic identity, having different identities depending on the social context they're in at a given time and place.

Erikson believed that the work of identity is the most important work of adolescence and saw identity as the sense of who one is as a person and as a contributor to society. He believed that although people develop

their sense of identity throughout life, there is a significant identity stage that takes place during adolescence (ages twelve to eighteen). Jeffrey Arnett later proposed that the period of emerging adulthood is when identity development is a major task and has similarities to the same maturation tasks Erikson outlined among high school-aged youth. Still, over time, the two major questions in developing identity have remained much the same: Who am I? and What is my place in the world?

Today, these questions are most acute during young adulthood and worked out within what Erikson called a "psychosocial moratorium" or a reprieve from responsibilities like work and family, when young adults get to play and experiment with future roles and land on their moral and ideological commitments. During this season of life, young adults explore and form their personal and social identities—their self-concept: who they are, what they think about themselves, who they will become, what group or groups they will belong to, what they want to do with their lives, what vocation they will pursue, their beliefs and what perspectives they will adopt, what romantic partner they will journey with through life, and basically how they view the world. Marcia built on Erickson's work and proposed an identity model with four stages or quadrants: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement to describe and measure identity exploration and commitment. For our purposes in considering how churches are connecting to and supporting young adults, I am focusing on just moratorium. Setran and Kiesling describe moratorium as "individuals in moratorium actively explore ideas and lifestyles without having committed to them."

Because there are fewer expectations for young adults to be responsible and keep commitments among people of privilege in the United States during emerging adulthood, young people are able to experiment with their roles. Often this period of "social moratorium" or "moratorium" takes place in institutions like the university campus—at least for the privileged—or internships, apprentices, trade schools, working at summer camp, and so forth. These types of structures can assist or block the process of identity cohesion. Informal identity processes and not just

structures also are likely to lead to positive and cohesive identity formation. These include supportive parents, supportive adults, and supportive communities, which are all necessary during young-adult years for healthy and cohesive identity formation. Approaches that are less supportive, such as when young adults are isolated, discourage identity exploration and commitment and can lead to what psychologists call "identity procrastination."

The Balancing Act

Young adults need a healthy balance of both personal agency and community to pull off a healthy, cohesive identity. They need to act with deliberate agency, making independent choices in order to develop and grow intellectually, occupationally, and psychosocially. Making their own decisions and becoming responsible for themselves helps them prepare for adult roles. When they don't have those opportunities to express and act with personal agency, young adults tend to procrastinate and to become passive and chaotic in their identity exploration, which may interrupt or delay the formation of their identity. This disruption causes them to be driven by circumstances and impulse, making them unprepared for adult roles.

While it's important for young adults to act with agency, they also need a supportive community that encourages them to explore an identity that is not isolated from supportive parents, adults, and community. In the United States there's an increasing absence of supportive community and adults during this stage. Increasingly, choices of a college, career, location, housing, and spouse are made independently, apart from supportive community. Identity work is seen more and more as one's personal and subjective choice. Cultural observers argue that social identity has eroded in the United States and is replaced by personal choice and guided by self-selected affinity groups. When identity work excludes a supportive family, adults, and mentors, identity formation can lead to anxiety and apathy. Without a supportive community, identity exploration may be aimless, and young adults find themselves stuck.

Think about it. When those life choices that young adults used to make in the context of a supportive family and community are now made with very little guidance from older adults, they are left responsible for their own critical decisions, and the consequences of their independent choices have long-term effects. For example, they may take on enormous college debt to get a degree that has no practical use in a career and as a result end up working as a barista and living at home overwhelmed, isolated from meaningful community, and depressed.

During this significant period of identity exploration, it is also not uncommon for emerging adults to lack much support from society and from churches at this crucial time in their lives, and they often drop out of organized religion as a result. Robert Wuthnow, professor of sociology at Princeton University, points out that most churches offer few programs or assistance to young people once they graduate from high school. It's not until they get married and or have children that churches jump back into providing means of support and encouragement through premarital counseling and childcare and parenting classes and other forms of social support. Young adults are pretty much left on their own to figure life out.

Supportive communities at this acute identity stage are important because they help organize identity pathways across ethnic groups. Identity commitments are nurtured when emerging adults are involved and integrated into normal structured communities like university life, trade schools, apprenticeships, and church. Community and religious involvement are important contexts that foster positive identity formation. What is great about community involvement is that it often provides multiple opportunities for exercising agency. Community participation especially seems to link to identity formation when the activities and groups young adults belong to are infused with positive values and ideologies.

Involvement in religious communities and activities provides a positive context for identity formation. Through religious involvement, emerging adults are supported in finding meaning and purpose, making sense of difficulties, receiving opportunities to experiment with beliefs and to assess their value, and taking opportunity to engage with a moral

community that supports their values and gives them a moral framework. Basically, social research confirms that religious communities help young adults integrate a cohesive identity. Being religious is actually associated with positive identity outcomes, like learning the social skills and behaviors needed for work and friendship. Religious contexts encourage emerging adults to get their focus off themselves and on to others and the world, to find meaning and purpose in a faith community, and to understand their place in "the universe and eternal scheme" of things.

The Role of Mentors in Finding Identity

Mentors play a positive role in a young adult's identity development. In the church and Christian communities, mentors help young adults internalize beliefs and behavior. They offer accountability and support for young adults to find the courage and strength to say no to temptations, unhealthy choices, and destructive behaviors. In their book on discipling emerging adults, Richard Dunn and Jana Sundene write, "In every country and culture, the key factor that determines whether young adults are thriving or simply surviving is always the same: the availability and accessibility of teachers, coaches, pastors, friends and mentors who are committed to investing in their spiritual vitality."

Sharon Daloz Parks, a pioneer in young-adult development theory, argues that a mentoring community is the ideal resource for guiding identity development among emerging adults. Mentoring communities help young adults reach their potential and are places where emerging adults can imagine their futures and see how they can contribute to making the world better. Without mentors and mentoring communities in the twentysomething years beyond college, emerging adults may flounder in their identity development.

Faith communities provide a social structure that buffers religious identity, keeping people from caving in to the pressures of competing identities that are countercultural to kingdom values and norms. In Christian groups, campus ministries, and residential Christian colleges, young adults are less likely to give up their religious identity. Parks argues that

mentoring communities are very significant in emerging adults' formation of meaning, purpose, and faith. Within supportive Christian communities like churches and campus ministries, emerging adults find the resources and support to make and to continue religious identity commitments.

Delaying Religious Commitments

Religious identity construction may not be acute until a person's late twenties or early thirties, when commitments to career, marriage, and family are finally made. Such delayed commitments to marriage and family may make returning to church difficult for emerging adults. Of course, the verdict is still out on whether young adults who grew up in church then dropped out after high school will return to church. Their memories of church from ages twelve to sixteen or eighteen are certainly not as sharp and vibrant as their unchurched memories from ages eighteen to twenty-seven or twenty-nine. Among earlier generations, religious commitments were postponed for a few years after the completion of high school; today they are delayed by two to three times that amount.

All these delays—landing a job with financial security, purchasing a home, marrying, having kids, identity formation, and commitments—lengthen the time that emerging adults are disconnected and detached from church. The longer emerging adults are absent from church, the more foreign church culture and life may appear to them. What's to say that when they finally do marry and have children, they will come back—especially when their new habits, friendships, and social groups are formed outside church? What's to say that they will go back to attending church?

Christian Smith, who has worked with the largest and longest study of emerging adults, concluded that, due to social change and upheavals, emerging adulthood is extended far longer than for previous generations of young adults. It is possible that with these societal changes extending young adulthood, conversion may also be prolonged. So evangelism may need to look different than it has. The chapters to come will reveal some of these generational differences as we explore the spiritual journeys of young adults and how churches are reaching and keeping them.

During their identity construction, many emerging adults will disassociate from their parents' religious associations and views, likely because they need to differentiate from their parents. For young adults, religious disaffiliation seems to cause less family tension than other disassociations. Since most young adults care about their parents, their parents' opinions, and their relationship with their parents, not attending religious services may be one of the least stressful forms of detachment. One result of religious disassociation from parental choices is that young adults in the United States, in seeking to form their own religious commitments today, cobble together their religious identities partially in isolation from their parents and independent from older adults.

Being absent from church for a long time may make it more difficult for a young adult to return—a phenomenon not seen in former generations. Recommitting may not be easy. Jonathan Hill, who studies the impact of higher education on religious commitment, writes,

> If young adults spend a long time outside the church developing meaningful networks of relationships and establishing career trajectories, then they may be less likely to return even if they do marry and have children. Understanding the full implications of this extended period of disengagement appears to be the next step in understanding religion in early adulthood for the current generation.

It is also important to ask, what are the implications of delayed religious identity formation for reevangelism, incorporation, and discipleship among those absent for a decade or so? For young adults who have conformed to the ways of the world in their attitudes, destructive behaviors, and syncretistic theology, it will include an orientation or reorientation in christocentric and orthodox theology.

When I traveled to the Burning Man festival, I interviewed eighteen- to thirty-five-year-olds about their religious journeys and identities. Most of the young adults I interviewed grew up in Christian, Jewish, or Mormon homes, but they were very eclectic in their spiritual beliefs and practices.

The Sacred Spaces Villages Camp at Burning Man offered an imposing variety of spiritualities to choose from. To give you a sense of what I mean, here are some of the spiritual movements and practices I saw represented on the menu boards: Alchemy, Deeksha Prayer Circle, Buddhist Wisdom, Kirtan, Yoga, Healing Arts, Sound Healing, Native Wisdom, Shamanism, Krishna Consciousness, Transcendence, Ambient Trance, and Sacred Geometry. The syncretistic pluralism on display was often bewildering: many attendees were happy to give away rocks with special powers or take drugs in an effort to gain an esoteric experience of heightened awareness—while still holding to certain Christian beliefs from their upbringing.

Bricoleur, a term that has its roots in the work of French social anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss, was popularized in the United States by Robert Wuthnow, who used the word *bricolage* to refer to young adult's religion and their reuse of available materials and whatever is at hand to solve problems and create new tools—something like spiritual tinkering. Many of the young people I met at Burning Man were spiritual bricoleurs or do-it-yourselfers. They had a cut-and-paste approach to religion or spirituality, picking and choosing from a plethora of choices and resources to put together a spiritual life that worked for them.

Experimenting with Christian Identity

Churches effective in reaching and incorporating unchurched young adults seem to be helping with identity exploration by supporting cohesive identity development. Bright-spot churches provide the social moratorium that Erikson believed to be crucial to identity development. That moratorium may look different in each church, but a pattern emerges where young adults have opportunity to experiment with roles and identity commitments in various Christian social settings, such as young adult internships, and incorporating emerging adults into communities like small groups and mentoring communities. When churches give emerging adults the opportunity to explore and experiment with Christian identity through belonging to a church and becoming involved

in a Christian community, those young people are likely to make new faith commitments, including committing to Christ.

Churches that do well at serving emerging adults give them opportunities to "try on" and "try out" Christian identity. By participating in Christian community and Christian practices like prayer, worship, Bible reading, small groups, and service, emerging adults explore and experience Christianity. The church community, its small groups, and its ministries function like those institutions and structures described by Erik Erikson's social moratorium, in which young adults take a recess from their normal life and play in a new sandbox, experimenting with Christian identity. They try Christianity on to see if it fits, to see if it's comfortable. They have a space and a place to consider whether it is the faith community and the Christian worldview they want to commit to at a time when they are exploring identity commitments.

When churches give emerging adults the opportunity to explore and experiment with Christian identity through belonging to a church and becoming involved in a Christian community, those young people are likely to make new faith commitments, including committing to Christ.

I believe bright-spot churches are giving emerging adults room to explore what it means to identify as a believer in Christ. By attending worship, small groups, or ministries and by participating, they experiment with adhering to the norms and values and practices of the Christian community. All the while they also observe the community and the way community members live out their faith and lives in the way of Jesus, caring for one another and for the broader community. What I appreciate about these standout churches is that they have high expectations for non-Christians, but they don't pressure them. They offer invitations to a culture where everyone is welcome and invited and expected to serve and enjoy community—but are not coerced or obligated to do so. This type of participation and contribution lets emerging adults experiment before deciding whether a Christian identity commitment will work for them.

One of the most critical findings in my study is that churches that effectively help emerging adults move forward in their conversion journeys provide them opportunities to try out Christian identity before committing to it. Practically, that means they give non-Christian young adults access to Christian community and involvement that aligns with and affirms emerging adulthood as a life stage in which identity exploration is an intense part of young adults' work and in which they settle on identities that are most satisfying to them. For these standout churches, community participation, religious involvement, and mentoring catalyze young adults' new and renewed faith commitments. So supportive community and religious involvement truly do propel identity formation.

CHAPTER REWIND

The process of becoming an adult has gotten significantly longer in the last several decades due to the global economy and changing cultural expectations and factors. In turn, identity exploration and formation have too. Young adults are consolidating their ethical, moral, and belief commitments during emerging adulthood to form their values, norms, and identity. The conversion process is often extended, in part due to identity exploration taking longer.

This is the season when emerging adults make commitments to intimate relationships and work associations. When they do so with the assistance of supportive adults, mentors, and mentoring communities, they experience productivity and competence, which are essential to healthy identity work. Community and religious involvement help emerging adults find meaning in their lives, make sense of difficulties, and experiment with and critique contradicting beliefs and belief systems, ultimately rejecting some and integrating others into their identity.

Plenty of evidence demonstrates that in the recent past, people were first invited to engage in a supportive Christian community where they experienced belonging and then came to faith in Christ in that community. However, the emerging adults in my investigation

followed a slightly different spiritual journey toward faith in Christ. They participated not only in supportive community but also in the social moratorium that bright-spot churches provide, where they are able to experiment with Christian faith and practice through community and involvement. Certain steps in these emerging adults' conversion process allowed them to experiment with Christian identity within a moral, life-giving Christian community that validated pursuing a new identity commitment. And this enhanced their spiritual journey. Giving young adults space, time, community, and roles greases their wheels and ultimately leads to commitments to the Christian faith.

When church leaders, pastors, mentors, and mentoring communities guide emerging adults during this identity stage, they provide space for emerging adults to try on Christian identity to see if it's right for them, and they land on what developmental psychologists call a cohesive identity.

Specifically, when church leaders, pastors, mentors, and mentoring communities guide emerging adults during this identity stage, they provide space for emerging adults to try on Christian identity to see if it's right for them, and they land on what developmental psychologists call a cohesive identity. Basically, as the church community assists young adults in figuring out how the world works, where they fit in, and how they can contribute to making it a better place, they assist young adults in their identity work, and this work encourages their spiritual journeys, concluding in new and renewed faith commitments.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

- How are you inspired or challenged by how young adults explore and form identities?
- Who are the young adults attending your church, and who are the supportive church adults in their lives?

- How does your church guide emerging adults toward vocation? How does it help unleash gifts and passions by offering them opportunities and communities in which they can find purpose and their place in the world God created?

ACTION STEPS

Know who's out there. Identify the young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five attending your church—and their friends.

Know where they are. Identify any communities within your church that young adults are a part of.

Draw them in. Connect young adult church attendees to supportive church adults and mentoring Christian communities.

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