

The Power of Networking with Other YA Leaders

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C. S. Lewis once said, “Friendship . . . is born at the moment when one person says to another, ‘What! You too? I thought that no one but myself . . .’ ” I’ve found this to be true personally in that some of my best friends on planet Earth are other young adult ministry leaders. My experience is that I haven’t needed to explain myself to other young adult pastors—they just get it. It’s a unique ministry, a lot of times a newer ministry, and it’s been such a blessing in my life to not feel alone!

This looks like having others to celebrate wins with, share openly about challenges, pray together for each other’s needs in life and ministry, and text the things we can’t post publicly on social media.

It’s so often said that leadership is lonely. *Ministry doesn’t have to be lonely.* Life doesn’t have to be lonely, either! Many next generation leaders find themselves pastoring their peers. This could be their friend group, acquaintances, and a mix of people a few years older and a few years younger than them. I know over the past decade, at times I’ve had to ask the questions: “Can I just speak to you as a friend right now?” or “Do you view me as your pastor, mentor, or friend?”

If you’re reading this article, you’re wanting practical ways to network with other young adult leaders. Here are a few:

1. Become an *initiator*. This means being a person who makes the first move. A few years ago, our family changed roles in ministry and that came with a new home church. After a few months where people were nice but nobody came to me, my wife and I made the commitment that we would make the first ask, extend the first invitation, and be initiators who are people of the first move.
2. Become an *encourager*. People love being encouraged and lack encouragement all at the same time. The fastest way I’ve learned to make friends is to genuinely ask questions, sincerely care, and authentically encourage. I never want to simply think a compliment. If I think it, I want to share it out loud!
3. Become *available*. Time is the great equalizer—we all have twenty-four hours in a day. Busy isn’t an excuse as we all prioritize our priorities. If you want to make new friends or go deeper in community, this takes time. And I’ve always found that what I put on my calendar is what gets accomplished. So where is the white space where you’re open for

friends?

4. Become *curious and considerate of others*. When I got hired in my first ministry job right out of college, our lead pastor had a rule: if he caught us at a district council or a conference talking about ourself then we were fired! It's a good idea to become a curious person and have a list of questions ready to go that you could ask any leader at any time.
5. Become *intentional*. When it comes to networking—building communities and trust within friendships—this looks like remembering people's names. In his bestselling book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie talked about how everybody likes to hear their own name. With intentionality, you can help everyone feel special—because they really are!

Relationships can last a lifetime. More than likely, this will be a mix of mentors, friends who are other pastors, and friends both inside and outside of your home church. I love the saying, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." Let's be leaders who go far for God's glory. Let's be leaders who go together at the pace of God's grace. We are better together!

Reflection Questions

- When was the last time you made a new friend?
- Are you open to making new friends?
- In your area, who are two young adult ministry leaders you could meet with for coffee?