

Two Sides of Young Adult Ministry: Redefine your ministry “win”

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Regardless of how long you have been in ministry, it's good to pay attention to the difference in doing ministry *for* young adults and doing ministry *with* young adults.

Leaders who do ministry *for* young adults are generally in the center of the planning, speaking, and coordinating. And it's not a bad thing because generally ministry leaders commit more time and have the life experience that brings a different level of maturity.

The outcome of ministry for young adults is a prioritization of young adult participation (how many), their reaction (did they love it), and their response (did they grow). These are not bad metrics, and every young adult ministry should consider these as part of their regular evaluation. When the responses to these measures are positive, the leader feels affirmed and energized. This is because the measure of success is based on the leader's ability to “hit it out of the park.”

But there is another style of young adult ministry that is often overlooked—a way that begins with defining a different win. This win is not about the leader hitting a home run; it's about the leader coaching home run hitters. It's ministry *with* young adults.

This style of young adult ministry is often messy and often more time-consuming at the beginning. But the rewards are longer lasting. Each young adult who is involved *with* the ministry is engaged not as a spectator, but as a participant. They have a sense of ownership and buy-in that is different from a ministry exclusively built around showing up. Ministry *with* requires understanding delegation, coaching, and empowerment.

Jesus, as one could expect, was a master at both styles of ministry. The Gospels recount times when He spoke, He worked miracles, and when He did ministry. But they also contain accounts of times when He released the disciples to minister, to participate in the miracles, and for them to carry the message. Jesus first modeled for the disciples the way to do ministry, but He didn't stop there. He engaged them in a mentoring relationship that empowered them to participate with Him in the mission. And that opportunity still exists today.

A healthy young adult ministry will have ministry opportunities *for* young adults, but will also include ministry *with* young adults. As leaders, make sure you understand that both types of wins are valuable.

Which is the more natural win for you? Do you strive to hit the home run or do you strive to coach home run hitters? Whichever comes easier, why not give the other a try? What would the first step look like for you?