

Young adults and stewardship: What gives?

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Does Christian stewardship look different for millennials who grew up in our increasingly post-Christian world replete with Facebook, Justin Bieber, and legalized marijuana? Is the sky blue? Is North Dakota cold in winter?

The good folks at Luther Seminary's [Center for Stewardship Leadership](#) and I have been in some conversations recently about young adults and stewardship. I confess, I hadn't thought much about this particular connection before they inquired. Though Roger Nishioka broached the theme in [Presbyterians Today last year](#), and Carol Howard Merritt nibbles on the edges often in her insightful posts ([e.g.](#)), there isn't a whole lot out there on the confluence of young adults and stewardship—at least, there's not a fancy program you can buy and easily (with theological depth) make the cash fly. But, here's the deal: that's a good thing.

The same old church stewardship campaign will not connect with your average young adults, and that's good news. The world is changing; the church must change with it and our old stewardship campaign wasn't that good to begin with, certainly not good enough to speak compellingly to those outside the church.

My guess is that the word "stewardship," means pretty little to most young adults other than those that take it as code for "we want your money."

Of course, a robust theology of stewardship is about so much more than finances, but that complex understanding has been long lost in the culture. So, we get to take it back! To do so will require new language, cultural awareness, and smarts.

Yes, some generational issues do particularly affect young adults — student loans are ridiculously burdensome, housing is expensive, the down economy will hurt recent graduates for many years to come — and yet, young adults still spend a ton of money. Those iPhones don't grow on trees. Funky glasses and hair gel cost money. Craft beer, even at happy hour, adds up.

After thinking a bit on such matters, I've come up with a few ideas for churches to kick around when it comes to stewardship and young adults. They're only a start — mostly thinking out-loud — and a small one at that. So, please, add your comments and wisdom in the comments.

What Young Adults Have to Offer the Church When it Comes to Stewardship

Environmental Concern: 20/30-somethings haven't known a world without global warming as a going concern. Though I wish it were even more intense, many young adults care deeply about the earth, buy "green," factor the environment into their life choices, etc. [Science Daily](#) cites a 2011 UN study that sounds well on the way to a robust theology of stewardship:

"What emerges from the research is that young adults in the [surveyed cities] share the dream of a better-balanced way of life, inspired by more just and humane values and distinguished by fulfilling work, family and social lives."

A Willingness to Give to Specific Causes, Cutting Out the Middle Man: If YAs know whom they're giving to, they'll give. Churches would do well to connect giving campaigns to specific projects, not the annual budget bottom-line. My friends who run races for charities raise a ton of money. I feel certain Kickstarter.com does not subsist on grandparents' sponsorships.

Stewardship of Facebook Wall and Twitter Feed: When I led a local young adult ministry and made a related Facebook event invite, friends with hundreds of Facebook friends would often like the event and share it on their wall. Rarely did they actually come to the event. What were these social media users doing? Being good stewards of their social media presence, getting the word out about an event they supported even if they couldn't attend in person.

Civic Minded Not Church Minded: 20/30-somethings give to their communities and are invested in their tribe, whatever it may be. OK, so it's probably not the church. That's cool because the church has a great opportunity to learn from their connections, and show how a compelling Christian community looks. That's communal stewardship.

But that's just a start of some young adult and stewardship thoughts. Help me out, Internet. What else? What resources do you recommend? What gives?

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