

## **Twentysomething Handbook**

### **A Step-by-step Approach for Pastors and Faith Leaders:**

#### **How to Use the Faith-based Twentysomething Handbook Discussion Guide**

Whether you're starting a new ministry to young adults, looking for programming for a current young adult group, or providing outreach to college students or former youth group members, The Twentysomething Handbook can be a great resource for your faith community as you seek to connect with twentysomethings. The content of the book offers guidance for the practical aspects of life—work, food, money, a roof overhead—while at the same time addressing the hunger for meaning, connection, and purpose.

Our free downloadable faith discussion guide takes the content of the book a step further and provides both topical and faith-based questions connected to each chapter, helping young people view their day-to-day struggles in the light of their spiritual journey.

Here's a step-by-step method for using our free discussion guide as well as a list of creative ideas and helpful hints to make your effort a success.

#### **Step-by-Step**

1. Recruit Peer Planners – find two or three young adults who are willing to make a short-term commitment and help you plan. They may or may not continue as part of the discussion group but their input on everything from publicity to venue to meeting times and frequency will be extremely valuable.
2. Have one or two planning sessions online or in person to decide the who, what, where, and when. Include plans for publicity, personal invitation strategies, hospitality, who will lead, and don't forget to make a plan for evaluating at the end.
3. Publicize early and often. Use all your usual methods but listen carefully to your peer planners and be sure to contact young adults individually using the ways they connect with each other.
4. Have a plan to provide copies of The Twentysomething Handbook (digital or print). Consider offering them ahead of the first session for anyone interested but be sure to have some extra copies on hand on opening night in case anyone brings a friend. For bulk buying information visit [TwentysomethingHandbook.com](http://TwentysomethingHandbook.com)
5. Host your first session making sure doors are unlocked and signs are posted. Consider having someone greeting at the door. If your session will be online, provide a virtual greeter who can help troubleshoot for anyone having difficulty joining by providing that person's information ahead of the session.
6. Always, but especially if any of your participants are new, take the time for introductions (even at the expense of discussion time). It levels the playing field between the been-here-forever folks and the newly arrived. For the discussion, consider methods where everybody gets a turn (go around the circle or alphabetical order) rather than whoever wants to speak. The talkers will recognize that they need to make space for others (if you're lucky) and the quiet folks will feel better about talking when it's their turn.
7. After your first session talk with leaders about what went RIGHT first, and then make a plan to fix any glitches. Be sure to spend more time saying thank you and affirming the good than you

allow for complaining about the bad. Focus on fixing rather than fretting when it comes to evaluating.

8. Provide reminders and outreach between sessions via text or social media, real paper mail is nice too! Invite feedback at every step of the way.
9. Evaluate and invite anyone who has participated to help with planning and leadership for whatever comes next!

### **Creative Ideas and Helpful Hints**

- Your group can meet in person or online or could be a hybrid to include folks who've moved away but want to stay connected.
- Consider offering the book discussion as an ecumenical or interfaith endeavor. Both the book and the faith discussion guide are designed to be used by any faith group, including an interfaith one. In addition to building bridges between congregations and faith groups, a mixed group may better meet the needs of twentysomethings especially if you have a smaller congregation or fewer young adults in your area.
- Generate a list of young adults that might participate and send them the book with an invitation to participate along with the discussion questions. Whether or not they attend you've provided them a tool they can use in their life right now.
- Consider sending out the discussion questions ahead of your session via email or social media and/or Invite participants to choose a question to journal on.
- Invite older members of your congregation to support the group by sponsoring a book or two, providing meals or snacks if your group is meeting in person, or committing to pray for one of the young adults in the group.
- Beware of the mindset "we tried that once and it didn't work" and "we've always done it this way" especially when dealing with young adults. Openness to new ideas and new methods is vital when working with twentysomethings.
- Younger twentysomethings are looking for connection and opportunities to show competence. Invite them into leadership in small groups and offer real responsibility, not decision-making that will get overruled by older stakeholders in your community.
- The pastoral role in young adult ministry is often one of space-making. That means doing the advocacy that makes room for twentysomethings to have a place that feels right for them and not allowing others to insist on how things ought to be. From planning, to meeting spots, to communicating, to ways to express faith, be sure your approach offers young adults real responsibility, allows them the opportunity to learn by making mistakes, and encourages them to try again when something they've planned doesn't work out the way they'd hoped.
- It's important to keep in mind how different the religious landscape of today's twentysomethings is from those of previous generations. Twentysomethings may or may not be attending religious services but that does not necessarily mean they do not believe.
- Make the book interactive/add video: invite participants to imitate the "twentysomething talk" feature from the book and offer their own tips for each chapter. Post them on your social media as outreach and invitation. Tag #twentysomethinghandbook and we may feature them on the website.
- Seek out healthy peer leadership. No one needs to be perfect but be sure to invite both those that need the group and those that the group needs. A group full of (or lead by) only needy

people will struggle to get off the ground or attract new members. A group with a balance will serve the needs of all.

- Consider keeping the group “open” and allowing people to jump on board at any point.
- Pay attention to welcoming new people and those who are at the fringe. Level the playing field for new folks by using name tags, doing icebreakers/warm ups, explaining any guidelines, and assigning specific peer leaders to an ongoing welcome effort. There’s no resting on your laurels- never let up-when it comes to welcoming. A group is only as welcoming as the newest person feels welcomed.
- Choose your chapters. No need to start at the beginning and go to the end. Begin where your group has the biggest need or the most curiosity.
- Connect scripture and teachings, music and art to enrich your dialogue. A focusing piece of music or art to open or close your session can tap into different senses and emotions than talk alone can.
- Consider offering a retreat using the content of the book and the faith discussion guide. Whether a weekend away or just onsite all-day Saturday and Sunday, extended time together can help your group bond.
- Do you have any experts in your congregation that can speak on any of the chapter topics? Money, mental health, cooking, cleaning, relationships, grief, work/HR, Think about which chapters generated the most discussion or where the group had the most questions or greatest frustration and start there. Invite everyone back for a second round of sessions to hear these speakers or if they are willing offer them as people who can answer further questions.

My own ministry with youth and young adults in the church has taught me that faith communities have a lot to offer young people. They can provide stability, support, connection, mentorship, real leadership opportunities, and a gateway to belief. This work also taught me that even though faith communities may not know it, they need the many gifts that young people have to offer. Young people can bring vitality, energy, challenge, not settling for the status quo, relevance, new ways of seeing, new ways to communicate our ancient truths, hope for the future, and practical help right now. I pray that these tools-the discussion guide and this Step-by-step resource are a help to you as you use The Twentysomething Handbook in your ministry.