



Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry

David P. Setran , Chris A. Kiesling

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The shift from adolescence to adulthood, a recently identified stage of life called "emerging adulthood," covers an increasing span of years in today's culture (roughly ages 18-30) due to later marriages and extended education. During this prolonged stage of exploration and self-definition, many young adults drift away from the church.

Here two authors--both veteran teachers who are experienced in young adult and campus ministry--address this new and urgent field of study, offering a Christian perspective on what it means to be spiritually formed into adulthood. They provide a "practical theology" for emerging adult ministry and offer insight into the key developmental issues of this stage of life, including identity, intimacy and sexuality, morality, church involvement, spiritual formation, vocation, and mentoring. The book bridges the gap between academic and popular literature on emerging adulthood and offers concrete ways to facilitate spiritual formation among emerging adults.

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From Reader Review Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry for online ebook

D says

I wish Doroteo Arango would have read this book

Paul Batz says

Setran and Kiesling are great writers. The overall structure of this book is straightforward and easy to follow. I'm sure it will remain a helpful resource in the future for me in whatever I do. That being said, I would have preferred more practical suggestions as to how emerging adults should go about cultivating spiritual formation. The book was lacking in this respect. That being said, the book is still worth a 4/5.

Rory Jones says

Lots of practical stuff here and helpful life stage theories

Jesse Kane says

This is it. This is THE book on spiritual formation in young adults. It has everything. There's like a 40 page bibliography at the end. It cites all the meaningful studies and theories. It's profoundly ecclesio, Christ, and Theo-centric. It even discusses Attachment Theory. Here is a book that's going to shape Christian thought on spiritual formation in young adults for the next 50-100 years. My only critique is that it's already a bit old, so many of the statistics are from the early 2000's. That being said many of the trends discussed have progressed faithfully, so the book remains relevant and helpful.

Jim says

“Proposing an approach that seeks inner transformation, costly discipleship, and embodied disciplines that facilitate communion with God, we hope to cast a vision for emerging adult formation that describes the contours of the “with God” life at the cusp of adulthood.”

As a minister who began my ministerial work at age 23 one year out of college and have spent most of my adult life in parish ministry, I was glad to be able to read a galley copy of this book as the issue of declining young adult attendance and participation in churches has been the subjects of numerous books, seminars, and

articles over the past several years and because it is an issue and a concern in the small town congregation I serve as well.

David Setran, a professor of Spiritual Formation at Wheaton University and Chris Kiesling, a professor of Human Development and Christian Discipleship at Asbury Seminary have written a very insightful, wide ranging and helpful book on the contours of what is now called “emerging adulthood.”

Published by Baker Academic books, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood; A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*, is a book that needs to be read alongside both faith based and non faith based books on the issues facing adults as they navigate their late teens through their late twenties.

Using current research as well as being helpfully ground in scripture and theology, Setran and Kiesling take the reader on a journey through the challenging cross currents and hopeful beach heads of emerging adulthood by addressing nine key factors they believe need to be addressed in helping emerging young adults with faith development: faith, spiritual formation, identity, church, vocation, morality, sexuality, relationships, and mentoring. These nine factors are addressed in individual chapters.

As they do so, they move beyond a mere programmatic mode and offer a detailed, honest, and helpful set of ideas to help ministry leaders gain clarity about the challenges and opportunities to help young adults gain a solid foothold on the faith dimension of their lives. A set of “quick fixes” are not offered by the authors. Rather the important aspect of mentoring and aiding young adults in their faith journey is prescribed.

I was given both new hope, new information, and new inspiration as I read this book.

Note: I received a galley copy of this book from the publisher via Net Galley in exchange for a review. I was not required to write a positive review.

Ethan says

A most excellent discussion of faith and emerging adulthood.

"Emerging adulthood" is defined primarily as the college years and the time spent between education and full adulthood (marriage, children, etc.). This book is designed to speak to the challenges of existing worldviews of emerging adults and how to most effectively encourage emerging adults in the Gospel of Christ in terms of spiritual formation: identity, the church, vocation, morality, sexuality, relationships, and how to mentor them.

This is no "how to have more effective Bible classes" type of book. This is far more comprehensive and holistic. The authors do well at contextualizing emerging adults in our 21st century context: the prevalence of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism as default theology, the influence of consumerism and entertainment culture, the breakdown of moral instruction and sexual ethos, etc. The authors point a way forward for encouraging emerging adults to develop a holistic spiritual identity grounded in Christ, rejecting the MTD God for the Creator God, participating in the life of the church and its community, understanding vocation in Christian terms, and finding full satisfaction in God so as to be able to maintain a healthy sexual relationship with a spouse and healthy relationships with others. They recognize the dangers of both a self-sufficient mentality (and its attendant arrogance, lack of humility, and cynicism) as well as the dangers of self-

absorption (and its attendant dependence on others, resistance to responsibility, and selfishness), and try to pave a middle way forward, exhibiting proper responsibility while maintaining humility and sharing in community.

A critical book for those who minister to Millennials.

**--book received as part of early review program

Linsey Adair says

Great book. Lots of big words. Difficult read, but TONS of wonderful information.

Sara says

The important thing to realize about picking up this book is that it is meant as a toolbox and guide for leaders in the ministry. When I started reading it, I was viewing it from a sociological stance, which meant that I was often caught off guard by the authors' perspective from inside the church.

Having read many of the works cited and used in summary, there was not much new material that was covered (no primary research), or really much in the way of demonstrable results from this practical theology -- ie, examples of applications that worked in churches, testimonies from young adults reached through ministries based on this research, etc.

Joel Jackson says

Setran and Kiesling present a wonderful text that challenges the church to realize that the Emerging Adult generation does not provide an obstacle or concern in ministry, but rather a beautiful opportunity. Emerging Adults are poised to become the tool of revival within the church. The church must seek to make itself available to this generation.

The authors explore various sociological issues within the Emerging Adult generation that provide possible challenges to ministry. Yet, when each is shaped within the light of orthodox theology, each challenge becomes the answer to a deep need within the church. The authors encourage the church to consider the contributions of this generation even though this generation is highly mobile. This generation can contribute and affect the life of a church.

The exploration of relationships/morality/sexuality that the authors go through is eye opening. They present a message that is not just for the Emerging Adult generation, but for all those seeking to follow God, a message that challenges us toward wholeness and holiness in these areas of life. If we look to God's design and truly understand the benefits of embracing God's design we will be liberated from much of the traps that exist in our society, traps that are slowly dragging the younger generations to hell's gates.

Other topics explored also offer great guidance for the church and for those seeking to minister among this wonderful generation.

Rod says

I have worked with college students in some capacity for over 10 years and I have worked with seminary students for over 20 years. I have also raised 4 children who are just beyond the "emerging adulthood" category. I could not put this book down. It was an all absorbing book in many ways because the authors constantly provide helpful and well resourced information on what it means to understand, work with and minister to the rising generation of high school students, college students and young adults. I recommend this book to anyone doing campus and/or young adult (single or married) ministry. It is very insightful and helpful and it will now be a required textbook for my course on discipleship.

Kent Kessler says

If not, the best book so far I have read on the subject. Whereas so many are good at exploring the problem and giving guesses in the form of structures how to fix it, this book goes the root and gives deeper applications.

David Smith says

Helpful look into ministry to emerging adults

Really solid biblical portrayal of mentoring emerging adults in their faith journey's. The book identifies many struggles that emerging adults go through in life, and the authors do a good job at describing how mentoring helps these emerging adults with those struggles.

Deslynne says

A very insightful discovery about the spiritual formation of emerging adults. Their world view is starkly different from the modern, or post-modern mindset. Churches would do well to understand 18 - 29(30) year olds, from the context of a meta-modern worldview. This is definately one book that I will be keeping. Overall, a very good read.

Dave Leung says

Really good and current book on some of the practical ministry issues and tools in working with young adults. Can be a little dense, but overall highly recommended for those ministering to this age group. His insight on the struggles of young adults in our culture is spot on.

Phillip Cole says

There is a lot of information in this book. Setran and Kiesling did a thorough job of describing the issue of young adults moving away from church. Setran and Kiesling go over how young adults view Christianity differently than previous generations, and how they can be reengaged by the church.

Different areas of life are looked at, including identity, work and relationships and how to address each one spiritually.

This book would be useful to any church or ministry leader that works with young adults, and even older teenagers. It is clear and easy to understand, but it can be a little dry at times. However, that is to be expected, since this is aimed to be a straight forward book, not one written to be entertaining.

I received a copy of this book as part of the First Reads program, but that did not influence my review in any way.
