



# *Who Noticed You?*

Be part of creating a  
culture that nurtures  
the next generation

BY **DR. SHARON SIMMONDS**

**A** QUESTION I POSE when talking about developing others is, “Who noticed you?” Every human longs to be seen, loved and positioned to flourish. For Christ-followers, we know this is only truly possible when people come alive in relationship with Jesus in the context of community. For those who walk with Jesus, we now become more like him by investing intentionally in the next generation, for them to also know and experience fullness of life with Christ.

### ***The Importance of Family***

Ideally, this noticing and developing occurs in the family context. Moses outlined this key responsibility in Deuteronomy 6: 4–9: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Creating a culture of authentic Christian community and teaching the way of life in Jesus Christ in our homes

is a beautiful gift to our children, even if they don't recognize or appreciate it until many years later. Solomon reminds parents, "Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it" (Prov. 22:6, NLT).

I recognize not all family situations are as described above, but if you are creating this type of culture, realize you are well positioned for your home to become a beacon of light and hope; a place where you can uniquely and intentionally bring people together and cultivate the next generation.

One of my best memories was a season when my husband and I and our four children (then late-teens and 20-somethings), hosted family nights with four families from our church. It was special to form relationships between generations (adults, teens and children coming together). Each family took one of the gatherings to choose the theme, plan the food and activities, and bring a devotional focus. I remember one father expressing, "this is the most authentic expression of church I've experienced since we moved to this area." Years later, we continue to see the impact of these relational connections and the development of faith, hospitality and service that continues to flow from these families into the next generation.

### ***The Importance of Church***

A beautiful aspect of being the Church is that regardless of your upbringing or home experience, you are now part of a new family where we must, together, invest in developing the next generation. Research affirms this. Dr. Kara Powell and her team of researchers at the Fuller Youth Institute have identified two important insights for churches to pay attention to when thinking about nurturing the next generation. The first is the power of intergenerational relationships. She writes, "bringing the generations to sit shoulder to shoulder or look eye to eye was more important for long-term faith than any other youth group activity" ([karapowell.com/2018/08/preventing-teenage-faith-drift](http://karapowell.com/2018/08/preventing-teenage-faith-drift)).

The second insight she calls the five-to-one principle: Her research reveals that 18 percent of youth group graduates who remain connected to the church had five or more adults invest in them spiritually and personally between ages 15 and 18.

For mentoring guidance, see **Great Mentoring for Real Life Change**, Doug Ward and Sharon Simmonds (An Arrow Leadership Resource), [arrowleadership.org/store](http://arrowleadership.org/store).

# 18%

of youth group graduates who remain connected to the church had five or more adults invest in them spiritually and personally between ages 15 and 18.

I propose three practices that you, your groups and your church can do that will make a significant kingdom impact:

**1. *Be committed to pray for the next generation.***

Be specific in your prayers for the unique challenges and needs they are facing. Join with others to make this a regular practice.

**2. *Be friendly.*** Say hello to teens and young adults.

Learn their names. Be consistently and genuinely interested in their lives. Develop meaningful connections.

**3. *Intentionally come alongside someone in the next generation.***

Mentoring relationships vary in format, but there are six consistent qualities that we notice from Jesus the master-mentor: genuine love, commitment to prayer, providing perspective, being an example in life and faith, bringing encouragement, and teaching (telling your story in God's story and sharing about lessons learned). Like Jesus, we can choose to invest deeply in a few relationships over time. Ask God to reveal who he wants you to invest in and take the first step by going out for coffee, providing hospitality in your home, going for a walk, or inviting this young person to join with you in a service activity.

Who are you noticing in the next generation? It's not always easy or natural to take a step towards someone in the next generation, but I encourage you to pay attention to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and step out in faith. You may never know the full impact of your investment, but you can be confident that seeds planted now will bear fruit. "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow" (1 Corinthians 3:6). What's a practical next step you can take to cultivate the next generation? ①

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