

REGGIE JOINER

A
New
Kind of
Leader



**WHAT YOU BELIEVE CAN OPEN A DOOR
FOR A KID OR TEENAGER'S FUTURE**

6

THERE'S A NEW KIND OF
LEADER WHO BELIEVES

DOING GOOD MATTERS

IF YOU'RE HUMAN





YOU AND I BOTH KNOW SOME PRETTY REMARKABLE
NON-HUMANS.

ROBOCOP

HAL 9000

R2-D2

BAYMAX

But even in the best stories, like ones where the robot aids the destruction of the Death Star, the robot is never fully the same as its human companion.

Maybe they are programmed to recognize evil. Maybe they have enough rationality to win at chess. Maybe they learn how to imitate social behaviors like a fist bump. But a robot doesn't feel the kind of empathy we talked about in the last chapter. A robot doesn't imagine. And a robot doesn't show compassion. That's distinctly human.

There's actually nothing in all of creation that has the same capacity to care,
empathize,
or imagine like a human.
(Who do you think programmed all those robots?)

I believe humans have a unique capacity for one reason. They were made in the image of God.

In case you haven't noticed, *kids are human too*.

Stop for a moment and think about it. If every kid is created in the image of God, then every kid has a divine capacity . . .

to believe, imagine, and love.

to care, relate, and trust.

to reason, improve, and lead.

That's a lot of potential.

Some of us have been so programmed to see what's wrong with kids and teenagers, we have forgotten to see what's right about them.

It's easy to think that because they aren't . . .

old enough,

smart enough,

mature enough,

important enough,

or even spiritual enough,

they can't really do anything significant.

I actually think it's ironic that some non-Christian organizations understand the potential of a kid better than many churches.

Just look at Disney.

Not only do kids have a divine *capacity* to do good, kids were made to do good.

See if this makes sense:

If God is good

and God made people in His image,

then people were made to do good

. . . *and that includes kids and teenagers.*

For over 10 years, Orange has been championing the potential of kids and teenagers, which means we hear a lot of remarkable stories about what kids and teenagers are doing in our country and around the world. When I hear about some of the good things that kids and teenagers are capable of doing, I am actually reminded of how good God is.

When you remember that every kid is made in the image of God, it can change . . .

how you see them.

how you see God.

When you remember that every kid is made in the image of God, and you give them opportunities to do good, it can change . . .

how they see themselves.

how they see God.



What if you started acting like

**WHAT A KID DOES CAN ACTUALLY AFFECT WHAT
A KID BELIEVES.**

Okay. This might sound backwards, so let me clarify. A person's beliefs obviously influence their behavior. We seem to talk about that a lot.

But I sometimes wonder if we have forgotten that, practically speaking, our behaviors can also influence our beliefs. I actually think the things a person does sometimes have a transformative impact on what they believe.

Think about this for a minute. Let's say you're going to teach a class on mountain climbing. You talk about climbing, show pictures from climbing, maybe even pass around some climbing equipment. If you did all of these things, but the students in your class never experienced climbing for themselves, how motivated do you think they would be to go climbing?

Here is a profound question: Do you think climbers climb just because they have heard about climbing, or because one day they started climbing? Experience can have a profound impact.

When we started North Point Community Church, we decided we were not going to create programming for teenagers on Sunday mornings. We didn't want them to go to a class where they would sit and have a Bible study. Instead, we decided we would give them opportunities to serve with us on Sunday mornings. We wanted teenagers to serve not just because we needed their help, but because we instinctively knew it would be essential for their spiritual growth.

Consider how this has worked in your own life. Was there a time when you plugged in and served? What did that do for your faith? If I had to guess, I would imagine that it affected what you believe about people, about yourself, and maybe even about God. If that's true for you, why wouldn't it be true for teenagers as well?

One of the best ways to stimulate faith is to give someone an opportunity to have a personal ministry.

It's kind of like that mountain climbing illustration.

If you never actually climb . . .

you will miss the wonder of seeing the view.

you will miss the discovery of personal capacity.

you will miss the passion of engaging with the mountain.

If you want a kid's faith to grow significantly, give them something significant to do.

It's important to understand how what a kid does relates to what they believe as a Christian.

Doing good is a response to the Gospel.

It's not a substitute for the Gospel.

A kid's ability to do good can be a reminder of what Jesus has already done. It reinforces the power of the Gospel to work in your daily life.

Doing good reflects the nature of Jesus.

It doesn't earn you points with God.

God's love is unconditional and your salvation is a result of His grace. When a kid reflects on the nature of Christ, it is a reminder to them that He doesn't measure their behavior and that He loves them unconditionally.

Doing good stretches your faith.

It's not a replacement for faith.

There is a subtle difference between putting your faith in what you can do and what God can do through you. But when kids and teenagers experience the difference, they will continue to mature in what God designed them to do.

In fact, I think you should probably be cautious about any theology that says you shouldn't help kids do good things. Why? For a lot of reasons. But here's at least one.

Sometimes kids will understand a little more about God when they do something God made them to do.

That can actually be true for non-Christian kids as well.

Doing good sparks the image of God in every kid.

When you help a kid discover what they were made to do, you have an opportunity to introduce them to the God who made them.

Doing good connects every kid to a bigger story.

Serving others turns one's mind and heart outward. It reminds us that this life is bigger than just our story. And when a kid begins to see a bigger story at work, you have an opportunity to talk about the One who is redeeming the story.

So, what if your job as a leader is simply to . . .

appeal to the nature of Christ in every kid who believes.

appeal to the image of God in every kid who was created to know Him.



KIDS NEED A NEW KIND OF LEADER WHO WILL
ENLIST TEENAGERS TO SERVE.

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I know what you're thinking, "Wait, teenagers? Why just teenagers? Shouldn't every kid serve at every phase?"

Sure. Go ahead. Try that.

Have your toddlers organize the food pantry.

Ask your kindergartners to fund a missionary family.

Enlist your second graders to raise awareness for sex trafficking.

Okay. Maybe those aren't the best ideas—unless of course, you have a Plan B for funding that missionary family.

But you're right. Every kid at every phase should experience what God can do through their life. So maybe you should consider how to . . .

prompt preschoolers to share.

rotate elementary kids to help each other.

invite middle schoolers to serve alongside adults.

enlist high schoolers to develop a weekly personal ministry.

The truth is this: The more we learn about different phases, the more we are convinced that serving becomes a bigger deal as a kid gets older.

Brain research actually gives some interesting insight into teenagers. Researcher Ronald E. Dahl put it this way: “Adolescence is a developmental period when an appetite for adventure, a predilection for risk, and a desire for novelty and thrills seem to reach naturally high levels.”¹

In other words, teenagers are experience magnets.

One of the reasons some students struggle to connect with church is because we invite them to something that is static and uneventful. They never experience the intoxicating kind of faith that comes when they allow God to work through their lives. They don’t have a hands-on encounter with ministry that gives them a personal sense of God’s mission. They miss out on the passion that results from colliding with humanity when caring for someone in a crisis situation.

Teenagers are especially drawn to anywhere they can find adventure and significance. So, if you want to engage a teenager, give them somewhere to serve.

¹ Adolescent Brain Development: A Period of Vulnerabilities and Opportunities
Keynote Address Ronald E. Dahl Psychiatry and Pediatrics, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213, USA pg. 7- 8

Here's another reason to focus on teenagers: Enlisting teenagers to serve will change everyone.

Kids need to experience teenagers serving.

Have you ever observed a second grader as they watch an eighth grader? Teenagers have a lot of influence. Enlisting teenagers to serve can change a lot of kids.

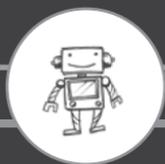
Teenagers need to serve alongside adults.

Even though they might not show it, teenagers are learning how to become adults *from* adults. And what they see adults do will influence them more than what they hear adults say.

Adults need to see teenagers serving.

When adults see teenagers serving, both inside and outside the church, it changes how they see teenagers.

So the question is: *How will you enlist teenagers to serve?* What is your role in inviting someone to experience doing good—not so they will put their trust in good, but so they will put their trust in God? That's when they will see how God wants to work through their life. And that's when they will begin to say, "I was made for this!"



DOING GOOD MATTERS

IF YOU'RE HUMAN



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KIDS NEED
A NEW KIND
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WHO WILL

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WHAT TEENAGERS DO YOU PERSONALLY KNOW BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH? WRITE DOWN A FEW IDEAS FOR HOW THEY COULD SERVE OTHERS AND MEET A NEED.

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IF YOU ARE A TEENAGER, CONSIDER THE NEEDS THAT YOU SEE IN YOUR CHURCH OR COMMUNITY. WRITE DOWN A FEW IDEAS FOR HOW YOU CAN HELP.

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