



THE YOUNGER GENERATION



GREG PARSONS

/ GLOBAL DIRECTOR,
U.S. CENTER FOR
WORLD MISSION

It was the fall of 1946. Ralph D. Winter was 22 years old, already a graduate of Cal Tech. About ten years before, he had become friends with Dan Fuller, son of popular radio preacher Charles E. Fuller. He had also spent a year at Westmont, after

returning from Navy pilot training when World War II ended. During his time at the new Westmont College, he heard about Inductive Bible Study and learned that Princeton professor Howard Tilman Kuist was the best teacher of this method. So Ralph recruited Dan to go with him to Princeton for a year and learn what they could from Kuist and others—like world-renowned NT scholar Bruce Metzger. During that year, they met a man named Bill Bright! But that is another story.

The InterVarsity representative at Princeton was J. Christy Wilson. He and Ralph helped recruit other students to go to what was the first of InterVarsity's weeklong student conventions in Toronto, Canada. Later that year, Ralph also helped organize a student mission conference at Princeton, which brought together speakers Eugene Nida and Bruce Metzger. (He wanted to be sure they knew each other and could compare

their respective areas of scholarship.)

Every three years or so, Ralph attended what became known as “Urbana” until he was in his 70s. He continued to take any opportunity to influence young people with a broader view of the world and how God might want them to be involved in it.

Today, it seems easier and more tempting for older believers to “give up” on the younger generation. Any reason they are different from us seems reason enough to focus on some other area in our churches or in mission agencies.

It is no radical insight, but that is just shortsighted! As anyone who works with youth will tell you, they are the future of the church. They are the future missionaries, pastors, elders, business people... so what should we do?

Spiritually minded young people are looking for mentors. They may not fully understand you, just like you struggle to understand them, but they know you have lived your life and made it through rough times—keeping strong in the faith. We all have failures and shortcomings, but if you have learned from them, you have something to share. God is in the business of using people in spite of themselves.

So check with those who work with the young people (high school and college) in your church. Ask them how you can serve. You don't have

to dive in fulltime—just making yourself available will mean a lot and potentially make a great impact for the kingdom.

If you live near a college campus, contact the student groups on campus and see how you might connect with them.

If you are a young person, seek out those older than you who could be spiritual—and practical—mentors to you. You will have to work through how it will play out for you and you will learn helpful lessons in the process.

I've shared this before, but my brother and sister-in-law live right across from a large campus in the South. When their kids were in high school, they added on to their home and have had college students—often foreign students—living with them ever since. Now, they know former students all over the world who are business people, moms and dads, some in ministry, some believers, some not. Many of these students came to Christ, and most consider them to be as close (or closer) than their parents.

Naturally, they had to set up boundaries for those who live in their home. And not all of us could handle that kind of “live in” ministry. But there are many ways we open ourselves to opportunities God might use to work through us.

Pray that He shows you how to do that. 