



# GROWING YOUNG

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Growing through keychain leaders

# GROWING THROUGH KEYCHAIN LEADERS

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*The following general sermon outline can be adapted as needed to match your own context, teaching style, and theological nuance based on your tradition. We hope it is a starting point for a sermon that is infused with the type of language you would normally use.*

## Main Idea:

When we entrust leadership opportunities to others—in particular to young people—we are handing them a deeper sense of belonging and contribution to the kingdom of God. Similarly, in the midst of brokenness and failure, Jesus invites Peter to take the keys of leadership and continue the work.

## Scripture:

Primary: John 21:15-19

## Opening:

Talk about the day you first got the keys to the family car (or whatever may have been your first car) and the feeling of responsibility you felt when that day arrived. Or perhaps tell a story of a time a coach pulled you aside and said they believed in you to contribute to the success of a team (any kind of team).

## Scripture Teaching:

Explore the following points regarding this text:

- Peter has walked with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry, and appeared to be on the inside track to successful ministry. Then it all fell apart. We walk into this text after Jesus has risen from the dead and find Peter wallowing in the aftermath of his three-time denial of Jesus.
- Jesus invites Peter to enter into the work of helping to feed the sheep. This would also mean the sheep will need a shepherd to lead them. While Jesus is the Good Shepherd, he hands the keys of the work of kingdom to his followers to help care for and lead others. It's a risky idea!

- Jesus reminds Peter that despite his past failure, there is still work to be done. He's telling Peter, "I choose you! I'm giving you the keys, and you have what it takes. Go for it!"
- So often what can hinder or drive our attention are our failures, and our feelings that we aren't quite good enough. Here in this text, Jesus sees the worth in Peter as a necessary contributor to the kingdom regardless of his failure.
- This raises good questions for us about who gets to lead, and who should be invited to lead. Is it only experienced leaders? Flawless leaders? Leaders who have really proven themselves? Or is responsibility part of the way grace works itself through the church?
- Begin to think with your community specifically about whether young people among you are being given shared responsibility in the life of the church. Wonder whether they're being invited to contribute to the movement of the kingdom in your community. Wonder whether, in your congregation, everyone senses that they have a role to play in the work.

## Deeper Reflection:

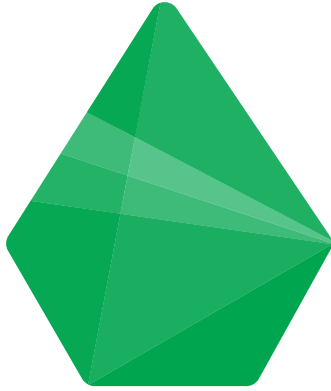
- New research from the Fuller Youth Institute has shown that people ages 15-29 are looking for a role to play right now in the church, and they want to learn it alongside other leaders who can show them the way. Those leaders are taking keys off their keychains and handing them over—keys of responsibility, authority, influence, and access.

- NT Wright reflects on this passage: "A fresh challenge. A new commission. Time to learn how to be a shepherd. Time to feed lambs and sheep, to look after them. Not only is this a fresh commission. Not only is Jesus trusting Peter to get back to fruitful work, and to turn his undoubted though wobbly love for Jesus to good account. It is more: Jesus is sharing his own work, his own ministry, with Peter."<sup>1</sup> This is what we can do for others around us, whatever our level of influence.
- This text invites us to recognize the invitation extended to us as followers of Jesus to take the keys of the kingdom offered to us and use them. It also invites us to recognize the gifts of those around us, inviting them into the role they get to play in the journey of our faithful community into God's future.
- Think about your own experience of someone believing in you and offering you an opportunity to contribute, especially in the church. Who has been that person in your life?
- There are churches across the country actively working to revisit the roles all ages play in the work of the kingdom. Exploring what it looks like to foster "keychain leadership" within the DNA of their church community. (You may want to share more here from chapter 2 of Growing Young—a story or an idea).
- Empowering young people to lead is an "everyone wins" approach. It is a win for those involved, it's a win for the church community, and it's a win for the future of the church too.

<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright, *John for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 164.

## Implications and Practices:

- The good news from this text is that we all have a part to play. What's more, we get to invite others to join in the work of the kingdom with us! Many are on the sidelines waiting to be invited onto the field. Your invitation could make all the difference for that person, you, and the kingdom.
- What if we began to explore each area of our church community and see where keychain leadership may be in existence and where we could do a bit more work?
- Share a meal after a worship service with someone and simply listen to their story. Listen for ways they were handed keys of responsibility and felt like they had a role to play. Wonder what that looks like in our congregation.
- Look at the committees/boards in our church community. Is every generation represented and actively engaged? If not, what could that look like?
- If our church—any church—is to go on, we must share the work. For many of us, that means we must find ways to share our keys. Let's start today.



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