Determine Your Ministry Age
Jimmy Long

In recent years we have entered into lengthy discussions about how worship, spiritual formation, and evangelism are transitioning in the church. However, the most crucial area of transition, leadership, has received minimal attention. For more than 35 years, I have been overseeing the ministry of young InterVarsity staff and college student leaders. In that time I have seen a significant swing in how these young leaders view leadership. The emerging generation of leaders desires a context that fosters community, trust, journey, vision, and empowerment.

If we are going to transition the church to the next generation, both existing and emerging leaders will need to understand and appreciate each other's values. This quiz, developed in conjunction with the editors of *Leadership*, is a helpful start.

This tool is intended to foster dialogue between older and younger leaders about their divergent views and contribute to greater understanding between the generations. No test can fully reveal the nuances that exist within an entire generation, and you may agree with more than one answer for a question. For each statement, mark the single answer choice that best fits your approach to leadership.

A. The predominant role of the senior pastor should be to:

   1) Facilitate a team of diversely gifted peers.
   2) Manage and set the vision for the organization.
   3) Preach and care for the congregation.

B. Evangelism happens best in:

   1) Coffee shops where relationships are fostered.
   2) Worship services where relevant teaching is encountered.
   3) Special events where gifted evangelists proclaim the gospel

C. Leaders foster spiritual growth best by:

   1) Training others in personal spiritual disciplines.
   2) Creating programs that address specific life issues.
   3) Teaching correct doctrine and biblical knowledge.

D. I would be likely to adopt a new ministry practice if it was:

   1) Spiritually transformative for the community.
   2) Proven to be measurably/quantitatively effective.
   3) Shown to be more doctrinally sound.

E. My greatest fear for the 21st century church is that it will lose its:

1) Authenticity.
2) Effectiveness.
3) Purity.

F. The church's leadership exists primarily to:

1) Empower the people.
2) Lead the people.
3) Protect the people.

G. The church is most effective when its vision is determined by:

1) A team of diversely gifted leaders.
2) A pastor with the gift of leadership.
3) A board of deacons/elders.

H. A pastor's leadership credibility is earned by:

1) The authenticity of his/her relationships.
2) The record of his/her effectiveness.
3) The certification of his or her credentials and education.

I. The success of a church staff depends on:

1) The trust they have with one another.
2) The success each one has in his/her ministry sphere.
3) The commitment each one has to biblical truth.

J. I would prefer to spend one day with a:

1) Monk.
2) Marketing expert.
3) Military commander.

K. I would be most likely to encourage a new believer to:

1) Connect with a mentor.
2) Connect to a small group.
3) Connect to a Bible class.

L. The internet and social networking websites are:

1) Indispensible to my relationships and ministry.
2) Tools I occasionally utilize in my ministry.
3) Irrelevant to my ministry.

M. When seeking leadership guidance, I would be most likely to read a book by:

1) Henri Nouwen.
2) John Maxwell.
3) Oswald Chambers.

N. The philosophy of ministry I find most appealing is best exhibited by:

1) Alan Hirsch.
2) Bill Hybels.
3) Billy Graham.

O. Art should be used in worship gatherings primarily to:

1) Help worshipers express themselves to God.
2) Illustrate the theme or point of the sermon.
3) Make the space more visually appealing.

P. Social justice is:

1) At the core of the gospel.
2) An implication of the gospel.
3) A distraction from the gospel.

Q. Church traditions:

1) Provide rootedness and should be contextualized.
2) Impose limitations and should be abandoned if ineffective.
3) Establish boundaries and should be preserved.

R. When hiring a new staff member, the non-negotiable element is:

1) Chemistry (how well he or she fits relationally).
2) Competency (how well he or she can accomplish the work).
3) Character (how mature he or she is in faith).

S. A sermon has achieved its purpose if:

1) People are inspired with a vision of God.
2) People are equipped to live better lives.
3) People are taught biblical truth.

T. Secular corporations are:

1) An undesirable source for leadership wisdom.
2) A valuable source for leadership wisdom.
3) A neutral source for leadership wisdom.

U. People in the church primarily need to be:

1) Challenged.
2) Comforted.
3) Convicted.

V. Church programs should be:

1) Minimized and people encouraged to be involved outside the church.
2) Expanded and geared toward meeting the needs of non-believers.
3) Focused on helping members of the church.

W. Corporate gatherings are attractive because:

1) The sacraments are observed.
2) The worship experience is uplifting.
3) The Bible is rightly preached.

X. My church is structured so that if I left tomorrow its ministry would:

1) Proceed more or less unhindered.
2) Suffer a severe and prolonged setback.
3) Face a season of decline before recovering.

Y. To help people in their struggle against sin, I am typically:

1) Transparent about my current struggles.
2) Transparent about my past struggles
3) Not transparent about my struggles, instead teaching truth about struggles.

How did you score?
Tally your ministry age by adding the numbers for each of your answers. (For example, if you selected answer number 3, that equals 3 points.) Your total score will determine your ministry age:

My Ministry Age: _____

Ages 25 - 41: Younger Leaders
Ages 42 - 58: Pragmatic Leaders
Ages 59 – 75: Traditional Leaders

Your Age, Our Analysis
It is possible that your "ministry age" is incongruent with your actual age. This is precisely the intent of the quiz. Ministry perspective may or may not be a direct product of one's generation. A younger leader may fall into the Traditional or Pragmatic categories because he or she is more concerned about doctrine or effectiveness. Similarly, an older leader may discover he or she has more in common with those younger in spirit. In either case, a better understanding of one's own leadership style is critical for healthier team dynamics.

This begins by understanding the context from which each leadership style emerged and the different strengths each brings to the church and its mission. The Traditional leaders were at the forefront of the church from 1950 to 1970. They came into prominence soon after World War II when people longed for stability and when the church was embroiled in significant theological battles. These leaders wanted to ensure the church's survival, remain doctrinally pure, and lead in an orderly manner.

By the 1970s, a new generation of leaders was less concerned about denominational stability and more concerned with helping the church become more effective in a rapidly changing culture. These Pragmatic leaders dominated church leadership from 1970 until 2000. They incorporated the successful management practices of companies like GE and IBM to assist in church expansion. Excellence in programs, effectiveness in strategy, and relevance in teaching that led to numerical growth was the goal of these leaders.

In the late 1990s, younger leaders began to question the pragmatism of the earlier generation. These leaders have been increasingly influential in the church since 2000. They are more concerned about authenticity than excellence, recognizing that churches need to be loving, vulnerable communities if they are going to draw a skeptical generation toward faith. For them, leadership needs to stem more from cooperation and trust than from individual competency or measurable effectiveness. These values have made the Traditional leaders nervous that the Younger leaders focus too much on belonging and not enough on believing. And the Pragmatic leaders are concerned that Younger leaders are not as committed to quantitative growth as they are to qualitative growth.

The church needs all three types of leaders, and they need each other. We need the church to remain doctrinally pure, and we should desire more people to become followers of Christ. However, as I continue to work with younger leaders, I am convinced that if the church is going

to thrive in this emerging culture, then we who are more traditional and pragmatic need to willingly and gradually hand over the leadership of the church to the younger generation. But the Younger must also be willing to listen to the wisdom of those who have preceded them.

As you discuss the results of the quiz with others on your leadership team, I hope the sharing will lead to an ongoing dialogue about why you lead the way you do, why divergent values may be the root of some conflicts, and ultimately what type of leadership is needed to carry the mission of the church into the future.

Jimmy Long is the Blue Ridge Regional Director for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and author of The Leadership Jump.

The quiz questions and age categories are based on Robert Webber's distinctions between Traditional, Pragmatic, and Younger evangelicals found in his book, The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of a New World *(Baker, 2002).*