

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



**Greg:** Well, I'm really excited to have my friend Hannah on the show today. And Hannah, you're just a delight to be around. When I first met you. We were at exponential conference at a crew luncheon. You were speaking and there's so much going on. So thank you for joining The Church Planting Podcast

**Hannah:** It's such an honor, so much just respect for what you are doing, what Stadia is all about and so I'm just grateful to be a part of it.

**Greg:** Hannah, you're the founder of an organization, founder and CEO called Generation Distinct. That's tell us a little bit about what makes the generation distinct. What's the organization about?

**Hannah:** Sure. So really what we long to do is we wanna use conversations that the next generation is already having. Conversations around passion, purpose, and justice, to bring the next generation to conversations about Jesus, the gospel and the great commission. And this was really sparked from this moment that I had when I was around 20 years old, I was working full time at my local church kids and student ministry. And I noticed a lot of my generation was walking away from the church, but what they were walking away to was very interesting. What they would say is, well, I wanna go change the world. I wanna go fight for justice. I wanna go after my passions and my purpose. And for some reason there was this disconnect from them, walking, those things. And then following Jesus. And for me, that was so hard to believe because I had been discipled and this is my unfair advantage in life to understand that the greatest way we can chase after purpose in world change and justice is by following the one who actually gave us the desire for those very things. And so. I thought, where is a disconnect and what if this generation, the best way to reach a generation that is so distinct because of their passion, because of their long to make wrong things right in the world, because of their desire to be a part of so larger than themselves. What if. We could use those, those innate desires of this generation to point them to the one who I believe gave them those desires. And so that's really what we were built off of. And so, we ended up creating a six month program. It's entirely virtual. We took two and a half years to build, and beta tested it. And we collaborated, collaborated with 50 of the top leaders from around the world who. Build it. And we released it about a year and a half ago now, and it's a six month entirely virtual program called The Launch Your Passion Program, where we talk about things like justice and passion and purpose, but also use those conversations to lead them to who Jesus really is. What is the gospel? What is the work of redemption? And we help them understand what's their unique purpose, train them on that purpose, give them goals. We have them create a whole strategy. They graduate the six month program with a strategy for how they were uniquely born to change the world. But they not only know that they also understand who Jesus is through this program and how their unique purpose connects with the mission of Jesus in the world.

**Greg:** Well, I don't fit that demographic, but I, I would love to see that. So, Hannah, I think our, a lot of our listeners and watchers are asking the question now, "So how do we access?"

**Hannah:** Yeah. Yeah, sure. So we actually launched church partnerships in the past six months or so, because what we realized is we were getting some really good feedback from young leaders who were reaching out and saying, this is changing my life.

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



You know, this is helping me rediscover who Jesus is. And those were all really encouraging you know, feedback pieces to get. but I was a local church person first. Like I was working at a local church. I loved the local church. So when I left to start a parachurch ministry, it was kind of surprising that God called me in that direction. And I got this one quote, back from a young woman named Jessica, and she said swing along the lines of I was really struggling with my face. Faith. And then she, she shared why, but then at the end of the quote, she said, but then generation distinct and she went on to share how we helped her rediscover, who Jesus really is. And her faith is stronger than ever. And, and that was really good, but there was a catch in my spirit. And I thought, well, that's great, but Generation Distinct, I don't want that to be the hero of this girl's story. I want there to be something deeper, something larger, something that I believe Jesus is coming back for And that is the bride that is his church. And so I thought, man, what if we can actually partner with local churches? And we'll continue to have our virtual cohorts that go through our program online. And that's where we have young leaders from all over the world. We're in about four or five different countries now, and people can come on as individuals and they register for our program through these cohorts. But what if we could also resource local churches with the same exact content we've already developed, but offer 'em as in person experiences. So now we're launching in person cohorts going through our launch, your passion program on local church campuses around the country so that the local church is the place where the next generation knows. Man, my local church was the place where I discovered my passion, where I understood my purpose, where I was trained on injustice and then where I was sent out into the world with a clear strategy on how I can accomplish the mission of Jesus in the world. And so that's really how we're saying local churches can now be a part is they can launch in person cohorts right on their campus, right in their church community for young adults, because we wanna see the young adults in your community, not come to us. We actually wanna see them back in your church. We believe that the church is planning to reach the next generation.

**Greg:** Okay. So is there a website for all these church leaders?

**Hannah:** Absolutely

**Greg:** How, how do they get that? Yeah, tell us what that is.

**Hannah:** They can go to [Generationdistinct.com/partner](https://generationdistinct.com/partner) and that's where they can find all, all the information and set up a time to talk with us.

**Greg:** [Generationdistinct.com/partner](https://generationdistinct.com/partner) Okay. So everyone go, go check that out. I'm going to. Alright, we talked about generation distinct. This is fascinating to me. Just unpacking a little bit of what you've talked about, you know, in, in my generation, obviously older passion and purpose were big deals, right? Yeah. No question. That's been, that's been around for a long time, but, but justice wasn't even on the radar when I was younger. Right. It is now, but it wasn't when I was younger. So talk, talk about why that's one of the big three for you now, you know?

**Hannah:** This generation more than any other is so aware of what's happening in the world, because they constantly have access to it through social media. Most of the young women that I disciple and then the young men and women in our program, they don't even get their news from typical news channels. They

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



get it from Twitter. They find out about it on TikTok. I had so many young leaders reach out and say, I found out what was happening. About in Ukraine through TikTok, like that's their news channels. And so because of that, they're just really aware. They just, they know about the injustice happening on their street corner, but they also know about the injustice happening across the globe. And so because of this mass awareness, we now have, there's also more caring. There's, there's just a deeper, longing to be a part of fixing it. They can see the images. It's not just. Statistics. It's not just something they're hearing on the radio. This is they're seeing actual video people being, not even journalists, people, themselves that are suffering, getting on their own social medias and talking what it feels like. So the beauty of that. the opportunity in that is again, we have a Jesus that modeled what it looked like to pause for the forgotten and the oppressed and the overlooked and the marginalized. And so the, the, but, but at the same time, the danger is that our generation sometimes wants justice without Jesus. But what we need to be teaching the generation is not, you can have Jesus, but no justice. What we need to, I believe lead the next generation to understand is Jesus. Is a way to understand how to bring justice into the world. We can't have justice without the originator, the creator of justice. And we also, if we're actually following Jesus, I think it's inevitable that he will lead us to the margins. He will lead us to the places absolutely where he walked as well. And so I think that's the beautiful opportunity. In the heart for justice that the next generation has.

**Greg:** Okay. So you were part of a church plant at a young age. Tell us a little bit about that.

**Hannah:** So I was a megachurch kid, so I was raised from zero to 16 in a very large megachurch. And I actually had a great experience. So it was actually good. I like to say I was the megachurch kid gone, right? I believe God can use all different forms of church, absolutely. To bring people to him. And it worked really well. So when my parents said at 16, we were gonna go try out this church plant. And I walked in and there was no escalators for waterfalls. It was a , it was a middle school cafeteria and a guy playing a guitar. And a 32 year old pastor came up and introduced himself to me. I. I have no context for what this is. And I walked out and I was getting a lot of opportunity at the megachurch I was at. I was getting a lot of platform and ability to speak and all of that. And but when I walked out of the middle school cafeteria, it was called Stratford middle school in the Chicagoland area. I looked at my older sister and I said, I don't know why I liked. So much, and I really didn't want to, but there was something about the fact that the pastor knew my name. There was something about the fact that I was a part of starting something and building something from the ground up. That was really exciting. And I will honestly say being a part of church plant Changed my life forever. I mean, it was one of the best things that could have ever happened for my leadership. I was given the change to lead at a really young age. The church leaders did a great job of mobilizing me as a young leader, giving me opportunity to execute my gifts. And now today my husband and I actually feel called to planted church in the city of Chicago in the future. And so that church planting was woven into my DNA even at 16 years old and, and it really changed how I see the church. It changed that it was not just something that I attended on Sunday or got involved in. It was a community that I was a part of building and my church did an amazing job of doing that. So it, it changed my life.

**Greg:** So I, I can't wait to talk to you and your husband. He's amazing too about planting a church with Stadia. So Hannah we'll have that conversation one time. So Hannah, you know, lots and lots of church planters listening to this. Sure. And watching, but also existing church leaders. And everyone nobody's... Well, I shouldn't say nobody. Most people aren't forgetting about the next generation they're...Most of us

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



are clueless about how to fully engage. So let's say I'm, I'm going out to plant a new church. Give us some insight, how do we reach Generation Distinct? How do, how do we reach that next generation?

**Hannah:** You know, the cool opportunity I have. So I'm a 26 year old leader, myself who, you know, feels called to reach my generation and the generation after me. And so I spend almost all my time studying this, trying to figure this out and also living it. It's my lived experience as a young . . . And so I have the honor of a lot of leaders and pastors who are way wiser than me who have way more experience than I do asking this question. And so I diverse, just wanna say, I'm just so grateful. I'm, I'm only a product of the fact that they were older, wiser pastors who even taught me what church is. And so I I'm deeply grateful for that. And as I've been studying scripture, One thing that I love in the life of Jesus is that if we look at the team that he compiled to first build what the church would be, I mean, many theologians would agree that at the time when Jesus called the disciples, they were young. I mean, they were probably late teens, early twenties, many theologians believe. And so because of that, it's intrigued me. Why, why is it that today the church is struggling so much to reach the same demographic that Jesus built the church on. Right. And so what was it about Jesus's invitation to the disciples that was so effective, that engaged, what was really the next generation of, of his day 2000 years ago. And I, I identified two things that I really do feel. Really engaged the next generation of Jesus' day. And also we can also model in our invitations to the next generation of our day. And it's just very simple. It's first of all, we see that GS didn't invite them to an event or a club or a hangout. In fact, he, he really challenged them. He actually invited them to rebuild the ruptured parts of our world and to find a family to fight alongside. Those are the two things I see. Jesus did. So effectively, he wasn't giving them a comfortable, safe, invitation. This was not come to a great moving night. This was not come to a bonfire and, you know, meet a girl that you can start dating. And again, none of those things are bad, but that was not the extent. Like that was not the height of the invitation of Jesus. And so I really think that if we, as church leaders today, Can model that same kind of invitation to young people in our cities and our communities of are you just inviting them to come to your events, to come and see what you're putting on? Or are you inviting them into some sort of experience where they can then be sent out to rebuild their ruptured parts of our world with a family to fight alongside translating to more of the missional talk of today? Are you setting them out to be missional in their. With a community around them. Right. And so, again, they're not gonna probably create those lifelong relationships in your small groups that you're setting up for them. That can be a great starting point, but how are you sending them out to be on mission together? We seen the life of the disciples, this community, this family was forged because they were being sent out into communities and having to figure out how do we, how do we share the love of Jesus, but people are persecuting us and people are pushing us out and, and. Fight that they were in is where their family was forged. And so, yeah, I think we, we can also implement that in our invitations to the next generation in our churches. Are we equipping them to rebuild their up extra parts of our world with a family to fight alongside. Okay.

**Greg:** So Alan Hurst would say that's common to us as you know, a family on mission together. Right? Love Hurst. Yes. And yeah, he just did a, a podcast with me just a couple days ago. I love Alan too, so nice. But it's really just what you're saying is really grounded in great theology is my point. Yes. Okay. So let's talk about age because, you know, I think one of the fears of, of church leaders is okay, are they too young? And right. I, I was just thinking about it while you were talking. My daughter, Tabitha is 23 years old, just a few years younger than you. And she's the worship leader for a brand new church plant. Right. Awesome. And leading the. The whole team and the whole thing, and 23 years old and, and Hannah, I went, I moved to

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



Dublin Ireland when I was 23 years old by myself. Yeah. Because I believed God called me to plant a church. Right. And and I think about those experiences and I'm not sure how, how good I was as a church planter, but. I'll tell you what I, I, I learned a whole lot and learned what it meant to follow Jesus and so forth. So talk about that barrier, if you will, of age and how young should we look and how, what would, should we make sure of, you know, or, or is there anything, should we just engage?

**Hannah:** I think it's a really important question because I think in some ways the next generation is clamoring for leadership and. Good in a lot of ways. There's some really good things about. and at the same time, we're in a society where we're seeing a lot of leaders fall out of ministry because their platform outgrew their character. And so we, I think it's an actual tension we have to live in. Right. Are we asking? All right,

**Greg:** I gotta stop you there. I've just gotta stop you because I, I was just thinking about that. Yes. Because we we're worried about them failing because of character, right. As we're watching that. But the reality is it's a whole lot of the older generation that, that we're seeing fail morally. And just as you were saying it, it just struck me thinking, Hey, that's kind of a universal principle.

**Hannah:** Yes, yes, yes, absolutely. Right. And so we have. I, I think some young people are saying, no, just, just give the keys over to the, you know, the church. Right. And I, I, I understand what they're saying. And I actually do think that we need to be more open handed, but I, I do think there needs to also be discipleship. Yes. My personal experience is that when I was 12 years old, Yeah. And there was an incredible woman at the megachurch that I was at. And again, I think my megachurch experience was so great. Not because of any famous pastor or large building. It was because of this one leader and her name was Allison and she was on staff in the kids ministry. And she knew that I was a theater kid. I did theater. And because of that, she said, I bet you would be so good at teaching Bible stories to the kids. So she noticed my gifting. And she gave me opportunity to lead. And before I knew it, you know, she was first on stage with me teaching the Bible stories. And then all of a sudden I was teaching and she was on stage, but she was supporting me. And the next thing I knew, she was in the back of the room and I was on stage teaching the Bible stories to the kids. So she gave me opportunity to lead. Now she also met with me. She also was getting to know my life, making sure that I had, you know, good spiritual disciplines in my life. So she was, she was discipling me while giving me opportunity. And then when I went to my church, , you know, before I knew it, when I was 17, they invited me to start a ministry because they knew I had experience in doing ministry at my old church. And so I was doing that, but again, there was somebody meeting with me often to check in on my spiritual rhythms and who was I? And, you know, am I, am I pursuing Jesus? Right. And so and then when I got to about be about 19. My pastor looked at me and said, I see communication skills in you. And I, I think you're a speaker. And so he put me on stage when I was 19 to do announcements for all of, you know, the main service. And they were giving me leadership and I was leading a team of 40 volunteers at age 19, you know, and. And they continue to give me more and more leadership opportunities and speak words of, I see this ability in you. And so I think we need as, as church leaders to be doing that in the lives of the next generation and generation distinct, that's a huge part of our cohorts is we have cohort facilitators who are looking at our young leaders saying, I see this ability in you. I see that ability in. I believe in you. And we have so many young leaders that reach out and say, I've never had a leader tell me that they believe in me ever. And that's the most transformative part of this experience for me. And at the same time I have for my entire life have had people discipling me. I've had a, a woman

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



named Aubrey Sampson who has discipled me for about six years now. And I, you know, she's actively making sure that. Healthy human. I have a spiritual like an, a spiritual health counselor that I meet with every other week. And so I, I think it's, it's a, both, and it can't be either, or yes, I think senior leaders look for ways to give opportunity away. Like Lisa bere recently said this quote that I thought was so powerful, she said, and she's in her sixties. And she was talking about passing the Baton on. She said, you know, I don't see the next generation as my replacement. I see them as my reinforcement. And I felt like that was such a beautiful picture for both sides that we, as the next generation, we need to realize we're not trying to replace them and kick out the older leaders so we can finally have a platform, but we're also the older leaders need to realize not to be threatened by the next generation of leaders who are hungry to lead. What if it could be this reinforcement idea where we're partnering together, where I know I need the wisdom of the older generation and they can utilize the energy of the younger generation. So I think it's both.

**Greg:** I, I watched a tremendous Ted talk recently. And it was talking about mutual mentorship, Hannah. Yes. Where perhaps there, if, if I were to enter into a mentoring relationship with you, the idea would be we'd, we'd enter into a mutual mentoring relationship where I may have more wisdom from leadership experience of 30 plus years. But there is so much I can learn from you as well, and both are equally valuable. Wow. And, and when we, when we start getting older and getting experience in leadership, I think a lot of times we forget that we have so much to learn from the next generation as well. Wow. Wow. My, my wife and I attended a, a, a church launch this past Sunday up in Cleveland, Ohio. We drove up and it was this amazing Hispanic church launching and Lumar is this younger lady who is the lead pastor, but she sent me a picture the next day. It was a picture of her being commissioned at the age of 14. Yeah. Commissioned to be a church planter. Incredible at 14 years old. Right. Incredible. Yeah. It's that? Can we I'm I'm gonna speak words of truth. I'm gonna speak words of blessing over you. Yes. And this beautiful portrait. All right. So I think though, the, you know, in, in, in leaders that I encounter, there's still this oh yeah. The, the next generation. They're not hard workers. They, yeah. You know, they wanna do everything virtually they dah, da, da, da. Talking about that a little bit. And I, I personally don't believe that's true, but, but that's out there and. You know what, what's the best way for us. If, if we're gonna engage younger leaders, let's say we're bringing them on staff at the church or we're putting them in a volunteer role. Sure. I mean, how important is our technology our own, you know, ability to perform in that space and so forth. Give us some insight.

**Hannah:** I think what you just said about mutual mutual mentorship is absolutely the key for every relationship when it comes to multi-generational, whether that's, you know, church, pastor to volunteer boss to employee, wherever that might be. I think that mutual idea that we can learn from each other is beautiful. I think you can choose to see the, the longings and the, the desires of the next generation. Frustrations or as opportunities, right? So the next generation's love for more of a virtual work experience where we can travel while working can be frustrating, or it can be, wow, look, the next generation prioritizes work life balance in a way that the previous generations have it. And we actually wanna have a great quality of life and be healthy humans in body, mind, and soul. And that's a really big move. I think is really positive considering all of the mental health crisis we're facing as a country. Right. And so that's just a little picture of where's the opportunity here. And also the younger leaders, if there's younger leaders that are listening, there are also reasons that we have to submit to leadership in some seasons. Wow. And that makes us stronger. I hear a lot of young leaders say, I just can't wait till I'm my own boss. And even as a CEO of my own nonprofit, I am not in charge of myself. I have a board that I report to. I have mentors that

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



I'm submitting to. I have wiser people that I still wanna be under. And so if we ever think that we're going to get to a point where we could just get to be our own boss and make all of our own decisions, that's actually really. For us to ever want to get to that point. So submission to a, a senior leader in a certain season can actually be a really great coaching so that when we do lead, when we are the one in charge, we've already developed the ability to submit to people, whether that's your board, your elders, your pastoral team, whoever that is, we should always have leaders that we are saying, Hey, where do we need to be wrong? Where do we need to be pushed back? If, if we don't develop that skill when we're young? Well, we won't have it when we're older.

**Greg:** okay. Let me ask you another question. So let's say you know, I'm a church planter, I'm out there or a church leader and I'm 30 years old or 40 years old or 50, or maybe like me, I'm 59. Does the next generation do, I mean, do they have any desire to engage with me, you know or are we too old and it needs to be young with young and so forth?

**Hannah:** I have so many young people that reach out to me and say, how do I find a mentor who will invest in me? Yeah. They're longing for it. I think we know that we're not as smart as we make ourselves out to be like publicly. We can, we can have a really strong face, but there is a desire. There is, there is a belief that we have things to learn. And so I'm so grateful for the many wise Wes who have noticed that in me. I will say, I believe it's, it's the job of the next generation to ask for what we want. Like, it is our job to find mentors, not vice versa, but if you see young people in your life that you can tell are looking open yourself up to those relationships, they're longing for it.

**Greg:** Okay. Your latest book it's titled generation distinct. The discover the wrong you were born to make. Right. Give us just a snapshot. Give a summary

**Hannah:** of the book. Sure. The book is really designed to help young leaders understand what it means to live a life that matters. And we break it down into these four movements of. Of what that looks like. How can we develop the ability to live a life that matters? What's the strategy, what's the belief system? What do we need to do? How can we actually leave a lasting legacy? And so if you have a young leader in your life who wants to make a difference who wants to create lasting change, that might need some more direction on what that actually looks like and means this, this could be a great book for them. Okay. You can get on Amazon. You can get at Barnes and noble target. All the awesome. All right.

**Greg:** It's everywhere. Good. Great books are sold. Hey, Hannah, what a joy to have you on The Church Planting Podcast. Thank you. We're gonna be praying for you and look forward to having you with us again in the near future.

**Hannah:** Thank you so much, such an honor.