

Everything But Preaching

Dick Hardy

Podcast Transcript

Jeff Sandstrom: What Every Pastor Needs to Know About Hiring 22-Year-Old College Graduates

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**Jeff Sandstrom:** Thanks. Nice talking to you too, Dick.

**Dick Hardy:** You and I have talked about this business of graduating seniors coming out. What does the market look like for them when they're hitting the streets in ministry? We've also talked about the fact that senior pastors...30-year-old, 40-year-old, 50-year-old, or 60-year-old senior pastors who hire these young guys and gals...how they need to configure their thinking about them. I know this is a hot button for you. Why should a pastor even care about the whole sense of hiring a 22-year-old college graduate?

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Well, Dick here's what I'm thinking. In all walks of life, especially in pastoring, if a senior pastor in a church pours into a 22-year-old graduate who is going to become a pastor...if they give that new pastor their best, that new pastor is going to give that church their best. I think it just goes hand in hand of both giving their best and seeing what God can do through two amazing men or women who can do things for the Kingdom of God.

**Dick Hardy:** Well, I mean, if we think about that, the generations, (I'm told anyway) generational change is coming about every five years now in terms of the way people think.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Right.

**Dick Hardy:** So I think of a 40- or 50- or 60-year-old pastor out there listening to this podcast...when they're approaching somebody like you or your peers, coming out of college, what should they be thinking about in terms of these candidates because they are not the same as when these pastors were 22 years old?

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Exactly.

**Dick Hardy:** How should they think about these young pastors?

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Dick, it's like you said, this generation is changing about every five years. Right now we're evolving in a post-modern generation, and soon this will die and something new will come about. It's important for a senior pastor, I think, to know what kind of person they are looking to hire so that they can best help them become successful in their environment because if everybody just treats everybody the same, I think we're going to find a lot of young pastors who are frustrated and burnt out. With that, the senior pastor will get frustrated and burnt out, and there will be no connection working together. So it's important for a senior pastor to know what kind of person they're hiring and what generation they come from so they can best know how to work with whatever that may be.

**Dick Hardy:** Well, from your perspective, Jeff, what's scary and what are some red flags for new young pastors coming out? What are some things that the new young pastors need to be watching for?

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Being a recent, almost graduate of Central Bible College, I would say that our students here...the biggest thing that we're probably afraid of is abusive leadership. So if there are signs...

**Dick Hardy:** What? Say that again.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Abusive leadership.

**Dick Hardy:** Abusive, oh, okay.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** It's abusive leadership. We have all kinds of classes in college that teach us about what abusive leadership is. I think more than what we give credit to, students have been hurt by churches in the past due to careless leadership. So if someone is being hired to a church, they're looking for not a church that can meet every single one of their needs, but just a senior pastor and a church that cares about them and that is going to pour into them.

The postmodern generation is really not looking for a style of leadership that looks very hierarchical. I know that it's pretty popular amongst baby boomers and even those preceding, but this new generation, I think is kind of looking for more of a team effort...people working together for one common good.

It doesn't mean there is no respect for authority. That's not what I'm suggesting at all, but I do think that there's more of a sense of everybody having a say in what's going on. not to tell a senior pastor how to run their church or anything like that, but just to give them a little bit of an insight...hiring a new pastor coming from a postmodern generation...they're probably going to crave authenticity more than just regard for a position. I don't know if that makes sense or not.

**Dick Hardy:** Yeah, it does.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** I think it's just what this generation is looking for.

**Dick Hardy:** Well, talk to me a little bit about that. Here I am. I'm a boomer, I'm a mid-boomer, I'm just right smack dab (40 years old)...right smack dab in there, and you're an early 20's guy, I think 23 years old, and there are pieces of each generation's thoughts that are probably...every generation has pieces that are better or worse than other pieces.

So let's suppose that you have some 50-year-old pastor out there who understands that you as a 23-year-old want a more collaborative team approach to ministry, even while you still highly respect the senior or lead pastor, but this 50-year-old guy out there says, "Listen, at the end of the day, I want the job done." I can tell you, in growing churches you tend not to have passive, laissez-faire guys at the top. They tend to be pretty driven.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Sure, sure.

**Dick Hardy:** So I'm trying to think through...how does that pastor appreciate what the college graduate needs today, and all the while being able to expect a level of performance that is going to continue to move the church forward? Is any of that making sense...what I'm trying to ask you?

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Yeah, yeah.

**Dick Hardy:** I mean, it's like two different generations, and how do you blend the two of them while the guy at the top, in this case...I mean you'll be there 20 or 30 years from now, but right now you have these boomers who are at the top with their hierarchical mentality, so how does that mesh? That's what I'm trying to figure out.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Yeah, Dick, I would say it's kind of...it's pretty relative to even a marriage relationship. It's all going back to give and take. There are going to be some things from an older generation where they think that respect and high regard for position is important, and it definitely is because at the end of the day the senior pastor is a CEO of that church, and everything rises and falls on him or her, so they have the ultimate say.

At the same time, to empower a young pastor, they have to know that they have been invested in, and they have to know that what they say and what they do is valid. I think in order for them to reach their full potential, they are going to have to know when they say something that a senior pastor is listening to what they say and maybe even willing to take a risk and even do something they say some times. Newly graduated pastors are sometimes overeducated and under-experienced...

**Dick Hardy:** Well said.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Sometimes they may have some of the best ideas just because they're not in the everyday ministry. They have been in the classroom. They have been working with a youth group. They haven't had that position and that title, so they're kind of thinking outside the box. So for a senior pastor to look inside of a new, young pastor and say, "Hey, let's take some of these innovative ideas even though they're kind of crazy, even though it may not work..." For a senior pastor to invest their time, their efforts, and their energy into some idea a young pastor has, will create a bond between the two pastors that will show it kind of like a trusting relationship.

From there on out it's just about building that and feeding off of each other and the respect towards the senior pastor, but from that the trust and the love that goes to the young pastor. I think it works hand in hand. There is no perfect chemistry for it, but you're right, there are a lot of well, bold, driven pastors who are the senior pastors who oversee everything, and their gift is administration. They're very good at it.

So at the end of the day, they do have a final call and the final shot, but it's important for that young pastor to trust them and to believe in them. As they do, I think they have no problems submitting their dreams, their goals, as long as they know that they're being taken care of and that their best interest is at hand with the senior pastor.

**Dick Hardy:** Wow that is so well said. That is just absolutely right on. One of the things with that...I think I'm hearing you say (correct me if I'm wrong on this) is that if the senior pastor could *truly* listen, even if it's a dumb idea, but *truly* listen, that just validates the younger pastor's role there at the church.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** That's it. That's it, Dick.

**Dick Hardy:** I'm hearing young guys just say, "My senior pastor doesn't listen to me." I'm thinking, "What is that senior pastor thinking?"

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Right, right.

**Dick Hardy:** They *need* to listen. It just seems to me that if the 30-, 40-, 50-, 60-year-old pastor will listen to the 22-year-old and validate those things that are right, and even be willing to tell him or her, "Hey, we're not doing that."

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Exactly.

**Dick Hardy:** Of course the younger pastor has to be strong enough and have the internal strength to say, "Okay, I threw it out." If he genuinely listens, the senior pastor is going to be miles ahead.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** That's it Dick. I call it my 'momism.' My mom and dad kind of have this relationship where my dad is very driven and my mom sometimes just wants to be heard. I think that's a lot of the young pastors who are graduating; sometimes they just want to be heard. They don't want anything to change; they don't even want to have responsibility over a certain project. They just want to be heard. It's amazing how many times my dad won't sleep on the couch when he just listens to my mom even if he doesn't agree with what she's saying.

**Dick Hardy:** Yeah, I hope you remember what your dad just did there buddy.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely.

**Dick Hardy:** I'm your little resident guy here giving you good advice on your romance. You don't forget that, man.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** I appreciate it Dick; I appreciate it.

**Dick Hardy:** Hitch this thing up for me, Jeff. If you can give a parting shot to a senior pastor...you know there are a bunch of good folks graduating from our colleges all across the country, and if you could give some encouragement to the senior pastor as to why they should

look at a young pastor as a new hire and what they could do to bring that pastor along, what would you say kind of as a wrap up?

**Jeff Sandstrom:** Man, if I could just say one thing to senior pastors who maybe are looking toward hiring a new, young pastor, man, I would just encourage you to do so and to look into it, and to even read up on the postmodern generation because those are the people who are affecting tomorrow.

As much as it's not important to keep a church relevant with lights and light productions and all that kind of stuff, it *is* so important to be in the culture where we are. We send people all over the world and we train them to learn about cultures and to learn about Africa and Indonesia and India and all these different places. I think we need to do the same thing here in America because our culture is constantly changing.

If we're stuck in our old church culture and not willing to change or move away from that to seek the new generation that's coming, pretty soon we won't exist, so it's a great investment to look into a new, young pastor because they have the intuition and the innovative ideas to bring the truth and the gospel of Jesus Christ to tomorrow's generation. Something like that...I don't think you can put a price tag on.

**Dick Hardy:** Well, man that is great. Jeff, I really appreciate you taking time to hang with me on the podcast today.

**Jeff Sandstrom:** No problem.

**Dick Hardy:** Again, Jeff Sandstrom is the student government association president of Central Bible College in Springfield, MO. If you want to contact Jeff, feel free to email him at [jeffsandstrom@msn.com](mailto:jeffsandstrom@msn.com).

If you want to contact Dick Hardy or the Hardy Group, go to [www.thehardygroup.org](http://www.thehardygroup.org).

On behalf of Jeff and the Hardy Group: thanks for listening.