

# The NEXTGEN Movement

## In Pursuit of Transformation



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**NEXTGEN Movement** is a catalytic, transformational, and collaborative movement where we come together to strengthen and develop younger leaders to care well for their own souls and those they influence, so that Jesus is made known among the least reached peoples. (Check website: [nextgenleader.net](http://nextgenleader.net).)

### What transforms?

This question shapes how we press in to serve the next generation of cross-cultural workers. Think of all the challenges confronting those in gospel ministry in their home country, then compound that by all the variables that come with cross-cultural complexity and spiritual warfare.

This question emerged out of my own experience serving in Asia. When our team leader returned home, and I was tasked to lead our field in my 30s, it caused me to grapple with the demands of spiritual battle on so many fronts. It was then I began to appreciate the need to contend well for my own soul in the midst of seeking to bring 'union with God in Christ' to those we were serving in our host culture.

Added to this was another reality which helped to form and give generative impulse to our NEXTGEN Gatherings (as we came to call our events/conferences.) This occurred to me in loud inaudible whispers in my soul while leading overseas but came into focus after returning to the USA to train undergrad and graduate students in formal theological education.





### What was missing in our training?

True transformation is needed to address the reality of weakness, suffering, and pain in ministry, for the soul to survive and serve well in missions. I was hearing the same story from my students as they plugged into ministry and echoed to me this same inner refrain.

An idea emerged out of these experiences and insights to shape a collective gathering that could include workers from North America serving internationally along with Majority World young leaders and pastors and Minority Church leaders here in the USA. My wife Sterling, and I then created a safe space for younger leaders of a global variety. We typically host about 50 experienced delegates, ages 25–40, coming for a week to engage in the work of soul and team transformation. There is a glaring need for such transparency in the task of mission to the edges of the unreached.

Twenty years ago, we began our first gathering. We decided to bring workers from around the world together for a week. Our desire was to seek transformation for us all (not just our younger friends). We invited a gifted, multi-cultural Jesus-centered worship team, (see Proskuneo.org). We added a layer of great veterans long on the journey of mission with Jesus to mentor our younger delegates and build a theme that allows us to tend well to our souls over the long haul of global mission. The format took shape with a unique blend of teaching from both veterans, and younger voices to help create the desired space of mutuality and vulnerability in discipleship.

We have come to love and value the rich diversity of God's global harvesters. Often our weeklong

gatherings include 40 ministry organizations, serving in 20-plus nations, including many Majority World younger leaders.

### Still, how do we get to that place of soul transformation?

Many communities host trainings of a week and often longer. Does it result in such change? We added an element to enhance life change. In concert with our mentors, extensive small groups process the teaching, worship, and theme content, we asked each mentor to walk with their delegates over the next three months to apply two key takeaways/insights from the gathering.

For the delegates, we ask them to name the applications, hold them well, and seek to apply over the space of a year. If they do so, there is likely glorious transformation that spills over from them to team, to host culture, and to mission among the least reached.

### What is the result?

Due to the very organic nature and structure of our movement, we see vibrant movements by NEXTGEN younger leaders in their respective spheres of influence. It gets caught and then reproduced at an organic level in their settings. Structure for the movement to expand and costs are borne at a local level.

One additional piece to this story is taking the NEXTGEN gathering and hosting it internationally. This past March, for the first time, we held the gathering outside the USA in East Africa. Twelve African nations and 37 delegates joined us for the week to process how we might tend well to our souls in order to journey for the long haul of mission with Jesus.





### What do the stories sound like coming from 20 years of delegates?

While dramatic, this story from one of our delegates captures some of the transformational threads in our NEXTGEN gatherings.

*When I came to my first NEXTGEN, I was more broken than I understood. A close teammate had been assassinated, a close friendship had been torn apart, and my family had been living in an oppressive security context for more than two years. NEXTGEN gave me a place to cry, people to cry and pray with, and I discovered it was okay to take care of myself after being there for everyone else. NEXTGEN made it possible for me to return again to the field, which would include a car bombing at our home, ground combat in our city, and evacuation from the country within the next year. I would never have made it through that season of life and ministry if it had not been for NEXTGEN. I received ministry at NEXTGEN in ways that I have never experienced anywhere else. I met my mentor at NEXTGEN, who has continued to help guide me and coach me with his years of experience. NEXTGEN is a gift that can never be paid back, but the results continue to benefit my team, my family, and every person I minister to.*

You can find more stories from our delegates on the NEXTGEN website. We invite delegates to write blogs ([nextgenleader.net/blog-2](https://nextgenleader.net/blog-2)) to each other coming out of the theme of the week. This gives additional value to our younger friends as their voices get heard and the insights gleaned from both the gathering and their experiences enhance the transformative experience.

### So, what transforms?

How do we help younger leaders to learn to tend well to their souls? How do mission, transformation, and recruiting intersect a new generation of younger leaders to serve well in the hard places among the unreached? Our NEXTGEN gathering is one attempt to create such important attributes of life change and reproducibility.

Do consider joining us for a future NEXTGEN gathering as God guides you. 

