

The New Thing Model

Description

“Out with the old, in with the new,” typifies the New Thing Model. Treating every moment as though it’s New Year’s Eve, virtually everything in existence seems worthless compared to anything new coming around the corner or down the pike.

On the other hand, such an approach places such a high priority on newness that value, quality or purpose might not count for much. Instead of discernment, date of release determines acceptability.

This automatically places the New Thing Model squarely in the realm of fads. This makes it expensive, for “new” usually is, and its shelf life always seems to be quite limited. This can take the form of new equipment, new methods, new materials, new leaders, new everything. It also makes every element in your ministry disposable or easily put into storage. Do you have to have the latest computer or software technology? What about a new and better sound system? Will you fly the newest, hot speaker or singer across the country so your church is the first one to feature her? Must you start your youth group meeting with a YouTube clip that just got posted?

The New Thing Model stands in direct contrast to the Traditional Model. If you have two leaders, from both orientations, you will

have perpetual differences and discord. One or the other will go since both can’t co-exist. Most of us have a bent one way or the other, but probably aren’t completely extreme. Or are you?!

Critique

The new creates curiosity and anticipation for some people, but fear and trepidation for others. It is usually fresh, but also untested and sometimes flawed. The desire for originality accepts beta versions, which means they are still too new to be fully functional. But the new can also be exciting and refreshing simply because it is new. Sometimes things that are good get discarded just because they aren’t new. Such a superficial orientation hardly contributes to depth.

Relationships can suffer when the new trumps what has been established. Would you drop all of your existing friends just for the possibility of gaining a new friend? Would you dump your friends for a chance to hear a new musician in concert? If you have an

orientation towards the New Thing Model, the answer would be, "Of course!" And your relationships would probably suffer.

When the new gets accepted without any merits other than not being old, you need some different criteria for evaluation. When someone gasps, "We've gotta do this because it's the latest!" someone needs to ask, "But is it any good?" And "Why?" There might be some occasions in which you or your youth group might try something simply to test it out for evaluation purposes. You might choose to drop that item, adjust it, or fully endorse it. But that shouldn't be your regular practice (unless you're following this model!).

Possibilities

Going with what is new provides a great way to tap into young people because they have or want to have new perspectives. If you are a creative person, test things on your youth as a focus group. If you aren't very creative, get your young people to be the creators. Your role may be to coach them, encourage them, guide them, or shape them.

When young people create things afresh, challenge them to take the good that may be classic and give it a new face. Challenge them to take what is current and call it into question based on the Gospel and the examples from the life of Christ. Challenge them to create with quality and not just quantity. Challenge them to appreciate what has stood the test of time because it did communicate for more than an instant.

How does a young person internalize faith? By wrestling with it personally and applying it to one's life. The New Thing Model might be the avenue for young people to take a fresh look at something they know is worthwhile but seems too staid or boring to adopt until later. This could set them on the path for a lifetime of new discoveries with God.