



Episode 30: Letting Millennials Leave

Featuring: Mingo Palacios & Megan Fate Marshman

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Transcript:

Mingo Palacios: Welcome to the PD Podcast.

Megan F. M.: I'm on the bus. I made the RV!

Mingo Palacios: My goal personally is really to advocate for next-generation leaders, and it's really to help season leaders become seasoned leaders – leaders who have been at the wheel for a long time in ministry – understand a common language to give them a translation from what the mission vision and core values are of every millennial stepping into big ministry.

My two, maybe three questions will all line up into how have you, with as many platforms as you've been given access to – I think of the women's stuff, I think of now the church that you're leading Young

Adult Ministry – are you a collaborative pastor? Are you doing that with somebody? Or is that solely your responsibility?

Megan F. M.: Solely my responsibility.

Mingo Palacios: That's excellent. And then you've also got basically your whole brand. If you could articulate it, how have you earned the ear of several seasoned pastors or seasoned leaders or seasoned ministry directors over the time that you've started to become more of a circuiting leader? I guess that's a better question.

Megan F. M.: I'll say the biggest life skill I've learned, especially when it comes to people who are "above" you or further ahead of you – and also whether it's ministry leader or people in general, or you walk into a party – which what parties do we go to? [laughs] But no matter where you walk, I would say the number one thing that earns you an ear is, ironically, having one. That's the answer.

There's a quote I heard a long, long time ago that my dad has at the bottom of his email signature. It says "Be interested more than interesting." So the minute I walk in with any leader – for one, not care who they are, but care who they are, ironically. I don't know if that made any sense.

Mingo Palacios: No, it does.

Megan F. M.: But it's walk up and then be obsessed with them. Ask questions of them. Really want to get to know them.

I took StrengthsFinder; my number one was what it was, my last one was empathy. So I recognized that was always going to be something to work on.

Mingo Palacios: Like, last on the [list of] 30?

Megan F. M.: Yeah, it was the last one.

Mingo Palacios: It wasn't like your bottom five?

Megan F. M.: No, no, no. I think we should all look at our bottom five. I was just curious to find my least strength and then know that that was going to be an active place – which ironically, the strength space is like “live in your strengths, live in your strengths!” I was so curious what I wasn't naturally.

Mingo Palacios: You're saying bottom of the barrel is empathy for you?

Megan F. M.: It was. So I recognized, yikes! All that to say – and I see that it's so heavy with Jesus that I knew that that was the one thing I was going to grow in.

So, how did I earn an ear? By having one, to every leader. And then learning. A disciple is just a learner, a learner, a learner. I feel like I come into everywhere hungry to go “I need you to understand the Lord better.”

You don't want to do it for the objective of getting something, but the weird part is doors have opened because people have recognized – people can learn how to learn; they can't learn how to have all the answers.

Mingo Palacios: You care, at the end of the day. That sounds like such a simple answer, but I think that we get caught in a race of saying “I’ve got four other people chasing that same potential position or that opportunity.”

I’ll share a mutual struggle with you, because you have history in this place, when Hume Lake – Eric Simpson – Eric usually watches the feed – when Eric Simpson, Eric, the legend of high school programming, Ponderosa Camp – I remember this ball got tossed in the air, and it was like “but who’s going to replace him?” They were searching around.

I was kind of buried inside of the human ecosystem, doing these back-hill, off-the-mountain, not really in the limelight – people didn’t know who I was. I remember wrestling, going “I wish I could get that, but there’s probably five amazing other people that would get it also.”

Cliff Carey, one of the program directors there, an incredible seasoned leader – Gen X, definitely – he goes, “You know Mingo, every day that you chase that stupid platform is another day that your loving, very well-knowing-you Savior is going to keep you from it because it’ll be early disaster for you. It’ll be early disaster.”

Megan F. M.: It’s so funny that you had that encounter with Cliff Carey. Cliff Carey, if you know the guy, shoot him a text and just say hello, because he impacted me with one random, offshoot phrase – you know those really powerful phrases? But when people use them not as a powerful phrase, they just use it, and then it is powerful.

He said something to me once similarly. He gave you that line; my line was: “Show love, not importance.” And I was like, “ – Cliff Carey.” End quote.

The best part is, it was just normal conversation. Again, we all know when you preach you want to put together a phrase that really gets them or whatever.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, something that people can...

Megan F. M.: Right, but when people just live like that – and Cliff Carey was one of those people for me. So I love that you had that. Don't chase after it, just be.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, that's good. Okay, end that note. Thank you for that.

Megan F. M.: Goodbye. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, end that note. [laughs] The next one.

Megan F. M.: This is so cool that you have a bus.

Mingo Palacios: It's awesome. You can come on tour with us any time. I just got done at Catalyst; we had all these roundtable leaders. Charles, he teed up a ton of millennials for us. That'll be on the podcast also. You can go catch that episode.

But when you hear the words “millennials are leaving” – you read the articles, they show up everywhere – “they're leaving the church, they're not interested, they're post-Christian” – what's your reaction to that, or what is your observation in that? And as a young adult

pastor, how are you leaning into that? What are you seeing by way of trend? Is all the hype true, or are you having to put those fires out? Give me your sense on the matter.

Megan F. M.: Man, it's such a big topic. I don't feel equipped to be able to answer it with any certainty or statistics or what not, but I will just say that the thing I've found is that for some people – not all people, but for some people, it's good for them to leave for a season.

Mingo Palacios: Wow, that's like "stop the presses!" That's not the typical answer you would hear from a shepherd of a generation.

Megan F. M.: I say it for two reasons. One, I prayed for a girl who left, and then when she came back, I think she understood the prodigal son story as the older brother more than she ever had before.

The second reason is a friend of mine is homeschooling. Everyone has their thoughts on homeschool, but there was a moment that he was talking through this incredible conversation he had with his daughter who's being homeschooled, and she was sharing about – and she's young – "I just don't know. Why don't I want to pursue God? Why don't I want that?"

Mingo Palacios: Honest question.

Megan F. M.: Which is really cool from a 10-year-old, right? And he gives this really profound *blah blah blah*, and I preached on that sermon because it was just so powerful.

But the thing that it made me think which I found really interesting was, she is only in the home, and she has very little experience of life

outside the church. She has very little experience with any non-Christians. Now, I'm not saying I'm pro- or anti-homeschool. I'm not making any statements on that.

But what I am saying – and it's so interesting; our conversation led him to bring her to more places where she could meet people who weren't like her, to see why it is compelling to live for Christ, why their family and what they do around a table, which is a success story, is so different than anywhere else. She didn't know there was a difference because she hadn't experienced it.

Mingo Palacios: Being in such a great family, not realizing – I feel like I have that story too, where you don't understand how much you're privy to or privileged with the kind of love you experience.

So you're saying with an entire generation.. [laughs]

Megan F. M.: Everyone needs to leave and then come home, and then run home and the father will run out.

Mingo Palacios: "I'll wrap my coat around you," right? [laughs]

Megan F. M.: Put the ring on the finger. [laughs] No, okay.

Mingo Palacios: But what does that look like? Are you experiencing that?

Megan F. M.: I don't freak out by that.

Mingo Palacios: You're not fearing a season of other.

Megan F. M.: I'm not freaking out by it, but to be honest it's making me a lot more dependent versus just strategic. Part of me just wants to get strategic, go to a lot of events, write a lot of things, and be really incredibly strategic on it.

And then I realize how simple Jesus did it. It really was love a few, and then love them in such a way where they're going to love a few.

Mingo Palacios: They'll be compelled to do the same.

Megan F. M.: If they don't show up to my ministry, of course I'm going to go where they're at, but I realized the people that I do have, those people of peace, if you will, that are right around me, they're going to connect with people that I never will.

Mingo Palacios: They have access uniquely to groups of people that you don't.

Megan F. M.: And if they understand how I model to them, that like Jesus, it's just love a few in such a way where they know they're responsible to love a few, and love them in such a way that they know that they're responsible – so the strategic piece is understand truly what Jesus did. Yes, there's all these different strategies, but it doesn't freak me out, I think.

I think this probably is because my deepest, most intimate times with the Lord have been after epic failures. For me, I look back on my story and I go "it was worth it to experience grace in that way." So I think about their stories, and I don't freak out. I'd rather ask God, "What are you up to in the life of these people right here, and how do I come alongside it?"

And then when they screw up, I'm not freaking out about it. I don't freak out about sin; I just go, "God, what might you be doing through that?" So that's how I'm looking at this entire generational problem. God, what are you up to in this, and how do I come alongside it?

Mingo Palacios: I love that. Last question, because we're 10 minutes in. This is like a hyper-podcast.

What were you looking for when you were deciding where to lay your future career, in essence? A lot of times I think as millennials, we're looking for hefty amounts of opportunity, significance. We want to make sure that the lane we choose has zero end and the widest potential.

When you were choosing what ministry was going to look like for you, what are some of those keys that you were looking for? I imagine in the audience, that's like "I'm thinking about doubling-down here, but man, it's a long road and it's not coming quick."

Megan F. M.: I think everyone has a unique story, so I want to say that I'm just like everybody else, but my unique story is I've applied for one job, ever, and that one job I didn't get.

Mingo Palacios: Was that devastating?

Megan F. M.: Very. I botched – *botched* – the interview.

Mingo Palacios: Did you fail in the interview process? Is that what it was?

Megan F. M.: I got brought in – I'm sure I was in the last four or something. They asked me a question; I started crying. They were praying for me in

the interview. For a job where I would be ministering to others.
[laughs]

Mind you, at the very end I'm like "Maybe that was just showing how dependent I am. See, I'm needy. We're all needy. We're all needy!"

So I have a unique story with regard to – I'll just say I read a book title. I didn't actually read the book. Some woman in the women's ministry world wrote a book called *The Best Yes*. Never read the book, but loved the title, which basically is there's going to be a lot of yeses.

Mingo Palacios: Ministered to you deeply just through the title. That's how powerful that book is.

Megan F. M.: You should probably read it. I haven't. But the best yes. You're going to get a lot of opportunities for yeses, maybe, but then how do you find the best yes? And then recognize every "yes" is a "no," and every "no" is a "yes." I didn't understand that.

I always heard when you say "yes" to something, you're saying "no" to your family, but if you're saying "no" to something, you can actually say "yes" to your family. I always heard that balance.

I feel like in my season of life, it's being prayerfully discerning, asking the Lord. And I love when it doesn't make sense. I'll go say "yes" to a big conference, which seems really obvious, but then I'll say "yes" to a zero-pay event, because discerning that's the best "yes" for my soul.

When people ask, “What’s your standard for saying yes to this event?” or whatever – or this job – I said yes to a part-time, two-day-a-week young adult pastor that in everyone else’s world looked like a step back. I’m running a few different ministries, and then I say yes to this. My local church had a need.

But that’s the discerning best yes. That best yes for my soul, in the midst of standing on stages where people assume you’re the most spiritual person in the room, to then having to physically set up chairs for young adults who are transient and all that. It’s probably one of the best yeses I’ve ever made.

Mingo Palacios: I want to rearticulate this, because it’s such a powerful point.

Megan F. M.: Please. Make it sound good. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: No, you made it sound perfect. I just want to re-highlight it. To everybody else, it looked like a step backwards.

Megan F. M.: Yes.

Mingo Palacios: You have to be okay with that, because you’re not – well, I should say this: in application, don’t judge what God might be doing in your spirit by way of opportunity by the way other people perceive it. They’re like “Oh no, but why would you do that two days a week? It’s young adults. You’re about to start a college, you’re speaking all over the nation, you’ve got a family.”

If that is clear enough between you and your Maker, no matter how much perceived advancement or retreat it is, the Lord is able and capable to work through every single one of those.

Megan F. M.: Just the other day I happened to have a conversation where I gave a quote that was really amazing, but it was in the midst of conversation, so I believe it was so genuine. The quote was basically “I used to fear missing out on something until I recognized when I was fearing missing out, I was ironically already missing out on my present moment.” I was like, oh, that’s it.

So my best yes is precisely where God has me. And then you have the prayerful discernment – we can have another podcast in 10 minutes one day.

But learning to discern the voice of God, saying the best yes, and being confident if it’s what He has for you, not what you think you should have for yourself.

Mingo Palacios: Wow. I’ll probably just leave it at that. Megs, thank you so much for wandering onto the bus.

Megan F. M.: Thank you for asking questions.

Mingo Palacios: Yeah, absolutely. I love it. If people want to get a hold of you, if they want to track your life, your story, if they want to see your gorgeous little kid or your super-awesome husband, how do they do that?

Megan F. M.: They would – it’s so weird. I don’t know.

Mingo Palacios: What do you want to promote?

Megan F. M.: I don’t want to promote anything.

Mingo Palacios: You don't want to promote, okay. Then they just have to find Megan in the wild.

Megan F. M.: Find Megan in the wild. No, if we happen to cross paths, I would love to sit down and ask you 40 questions. That's what I want to do with my life, and I recognize the minutes, ironically – it's not to demean that question. It's a great question, and I should, but –

Mingo Palacios: Everyone's like "boo, boo." [laughs]

Megan F. M.: We know social media. Use a google. Use "a google." [laughs] Use Google.

But let me just say this: I'd rather get to know people. The following piece is so interesting, but if you follow me, I hope that it's following me to follow Christ. I want to discern what I do on social media, that it's not glorifying to myself, but it's hard.

Mingo Palacios: Wow. Mic-dropping answer.

Megan F. M.: So with that question, Google if you want to figure out where I'm at so we can have a conversation. That's exciting. I feel like I actually need to lean in.

Mingo Palacios: Just get in there. Get in there. Are you seeing this?

Megan F. M.: Mingo, you're so cool.

Mingo Palacios: Megs, thank you so much for your time. Even if it's a short – 16, that's not short – even if it's a short 16-minute convo, your heart matters, and I love that.

Megan F. M.: Thank you, Mingo.

Mingo Palacios: I pray there are 10,000 Megan Fates in the making. I think we'd have an incredible church if we were so lucky to see just a fraction of your heart emerging in whatever generation is choosing to lean in right now.

For our followers, love you guys. Share this conversation because I think it's worth sharing. I know that your space is sacred, and it's always weird to be like "share, share, share." But sometimes there's something that rattles your bones, and you wonder, you know what? I wonder if this will rattle somebody else's bones. That's the only reason I asked.

Megan F. M.: Cool.

Mingo Palacios: I'm ending this. Thanks for tuning in. Thank you to Saddleback Church and Purpose Driven.

Megan F. M.: Purpose is driven. I love – how fun that it's driven?

Mingo Palacios: It is driven.

Megan F. M.: It is driven indeed. [laughs]

Mingo Palacios: We are driving purpose everywhere.

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