

How Can Young Leaders Emerge if Old Leaders Remain?

President Joe Biden is facing the biggest challenge of his 54 years in government service. After his disastrous debate June 27 debate performance, some members of his own party went into panic mode. They realized the 81-year-old politician may have neither the physical stamina nor the mental acuity to lead the U.S. for four more years.

But Biden isn't ready to quit. After the debate fiasco, Biden went into damage-control mode during a July 5 interview with ABC's George Stephanopoulos, saying he is sharp and agile. "Can I run the 100 in 10 flat? No," Biden said. "But I'm still in good shape."

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When I travel overseas, I often hear the question "Why are America's leaders so old?" It's an honest question. If Biden wins in November, he'll be 86 if he stays in office for a second term. Former President Trump, now 78, would be 82 at the end of a second term. Ronald Reagan was 69 when elected and 77 when he left the White House.

I'll let the pundits argue about whether octogenarians should be president. But this issue has huge implications for the church too. Everywhere I go I notice that we have what I call a "succession crisis." Leaders are getting older and weaker, and young leaders aren't always being trained to fill their shoes.

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If something doesn't change, this won't end well. We need three huge paradigm shifts:

– We must shift from a professional clergy culture to a discipleship culture. In the New Testament church, Paul trained Timothy, Peter trained Mark and all believers in Christ invested in younger people. That is normal Christianity. But many American churches are graying, and older Christians have no interest in caring for and training up younger believers.

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