A SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

This is a complicated time for all of us. There seems to be so much going on. Everywhere we go we're surrounded by the noise of modern life. We're constantly connected and in demand, under pressure to succeed, stand out, and get ahead.

Imagine how challenging it is to grow up at this time. Young people are navigating this complex world as they try to figure out who they are, where they belong, and what their purpose is. They are developing their identity, but trying to find a solid foundation in an ever-shifting world is complicated. Young people are looking for people and places where they can be themselves and find acceptance, but they feel the pressure to conform or change themselves so others will like them. As young people try to find their place in the world, they can struggle to find what is real and what matters.

Young people are trying to answer the questions of their lives: who am I? Where do I belong? What's my purpose? But underneath these challenges, there are questions that all of us are asking: am I important? Do I matter? Do I have any effect on the world? We are all looking for significance, to know that our lives mean something. We need to know that we have worth and value. We need to feel like there are people we are important to, who know and love us for who we truly are. We want to know that our presence in the world makes a difference, that we have something to offer, that the world is a different and better place because we're in it. We want to know that our lives have meaning in the grand scheme of things.

As young people struggle to find their worth and value, the Good News is that God loves them. They are valuable because God has created them (Mt 10:29-31). They don't have to earn this love or be exceptional (Rm 5:8). They don't have to have it all together. This love is for all of us, whether we are impressive to others or not (1 Sam 16:8). Whilst we talk about God's love a lot, as young people come to understand the depth of God's love for them, they can learn to love themselves. When they question or doubt their worth or significance, they can remember how much they matter to God.

This is the hope we can offer young people. When they know that they are significant no matter what happens, they can be confident in themselves. They can be brave and resilient to face life's challenges. They can be friends and bridge-builders, connecting positively with others. They can face the future with hope and think about the needs of others. They can find their life by giving it away for others.

When we consider the challenges that young people face today, it can feel daunting. It's difficult to see how we can make a difference in the complicated circumstances young people are growing up in. But the Good News is that we are not on our own. With God and each other, all of us can work together to make a positive difference in the lives of young people.

Young people need communities to show them how important and special they are. They need people who can show them God's love. **They need you, and they need me. They need all of us.**

