

5 KEYS FOR INFUSING PRAYER INTO YOUR MINISTRY

GOSPEL ADVANCING VALUE #1:
INTERCESSORY PRAYER FUELS IT



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GOSPEL ADVANCING MINISTRY

GOSPEL ADVANCING MINISTRY

Your youth group was made to advance the gospel and multiply disciples! A Gospel Advancing Ministry is one that's based on the seven time-tested, biblical values found throughout the book of Acts. These values help build a mindset—not just a method—of advancing the gospel through teenagers. Visit gospeladvancing.org for more information on how you can transform your youth group and reach the world for Christ, one teenager at a time.

DARE 2 SHARE MINISTRIES



Founded in 1991, Dare 2 Share's mission to "Energize the Church to Mobilize youth to Gospelize their world" has led them to train and provide resources to hundreds of thousands of students and youth leaders. The focus on relational evangelism training has made Dare2 Share the go-to teen evangelism training resource for youth leaders and churches globally who want a Gospel Advancing Ministry that accelerates the spiritual growth of their teens and impacts their communities with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Visit dare2share.org for more information.

GOSPEL ADVANCING MINISTRY

You pray. You plan. You use bad puns. And yet your youth ministry still isn't experiencing the spiritual and numeric growth you hoped for. Something's missing. But what?

A Gospel Advancing Mindset!

Gospel Advancing Ministry is not a method or a model. It's a mindset of ministry built on seven time-tested values that can be applied in any youth ministry context.

"Go and make disciples..." was the call Jesus gave His followers. And their faithful response to this call infused a passionate intentionality for gospel advancement into the very DNA of the early church.

A radical new paradigm that's 2,000 years old.

Whether you're just starting out in youth ministry or you're a ministry veteran, you have the potential to ignite that same God-given passion in your teens. They have a vital role to play in the rescue, reconciliation, and redemption of their friends.

When your students begin reaching students with the gospel, the kingdom of God will grow with new believers, your teenagers will grow in their faith, and you will experience a renewed, refreshed passion for God and youth ministry!

This is exactly what Gospel Advancing Ministry is all about.

Prayer is the lifeblood of ministry. Yet we oftentimes fall into the trap of busyness and just power through the work of ministry relying on our own skills and abilities, instead of inviting the God of the Universe to guide, empower and intervene in the spiritual trajectory of our students' lives.

We all know how easy it is for prayer to become the caboose of our ministry, instead of the engine. Why is this? What drives us to become so busy that we forget to prioritize praying with passion that our students would grow deep in their relationship with Jesus, and go wide with His message by sharing the hope of the gospel in their circles of influence?

This is not a guilt trip. These are honest, soul-searching questions each of us should ask ourselves if we're serious about building a [Gospel Advancing Ministry](#) that has lasting impact in the lives of our students and their unreached friends. In many respects, the priority prayer has in your life and ministry serves as a barometer for how you are doing both personally and as a leader of the youth God has placed under your spiritual care. That's why it's so important that you understand deep in your own soul how critical prioritizing prayer really is.



Staying Connected

TO THE VINE

Did you realize that on Jesus' very last night with His disciples, as they walked from the room where they'd shared their final Passover meal together (The Last Supper) to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus made time to give them a final lesson? It was a lesson about dependency on Him. Along that walking route—with Jesus very possibly pausing by a roadside vineyard to give them a clear visual illustration—He drove home this vital lesson:

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:1-5).

Think about it! The absolute priority of prayerful dependence on God is what Jesus chose to talk about on that momentous night! In fact, His teaching throughout [John 14-17](#) contains some of the most powerful lessons on prayer, faith and the Holy Spirit in the whole of Scripture.





Gospel Advancing Value #1:

INTERCESSORY PRAYER FUELS IT.

Intercessory prayer is Value #1 of the [seven values of a Gospel Advancing Ministry](#) because prayer is the fuel that should power every conversation, relationship, lesson, meeting and event.

Prayer is the portal through which we yield ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit. The act of prayer is an act of dependence. It demonstrates to God that we recognize our limits and acknowledge our need for God to act on our behalf. It's how we stay connected to the Vine so that **transformational impact** actually occurs as a result of our ministry efforts. Plus, if you want your students to be pray-ers, they need to see you modeling authentic prayer well.

Just consider the benefits that will flow out of prioritizing prayer:



1. Your ministry efforts will be more Spirit-infused.
2. Your students will see prayer modeled transparently and authentically, helping them grasp its centrality to all of life. That's what Jesus did for those He was discipling!
3. You'll bless and encourage your students as your prayers demonstrate that you deeply care about them and their walk with God.
4. And of course, most importantly, you'll see the hand of God move, because prayer changes things and helps propel the advancement of the gospel both *in* and *through* your students!

So how do you increasingly prioritize intercessory prayer in your ministry? By making prayer part of the way you live and breathe! Pray with your teenagers. Pray for your teenagers. Pray in private and in public. Spend time pouring your heart out to God. Let your teenagers hear and participate in your intercession. Your prayers don't have to be long and elaborate; sincere and succinct works just fine. Like Charles Spurgeon put it: "True prayer is measured by weight, not by length."

Let's unpack five keys that can help you increasingly prioritize prayer in your ministry.



Key 1:

DEVELOP AN INTENTIONAL INTERCESSORY PRAYER RHYTHM

As you build intercessory prayer into the DNA of your youth ministry, it's important to develop your own personal rhythm of prayer, while still keeping it fresh and vibrant. Here are a few creative ideas to help you intentionally pray for your ministry and your students. Or feel free to come up with your own.

1. Do you have a youth group contact list on your phone? Pray through the list on a regular basis.
2. Put a photo wall up in your office and pray through the faces.
3. Write your students' names on note cards, then go for a walk each day and talk to God about them.
4. Set up a daily appointment on your calendar that's blocked off to connect with God about your students, their unreached friends, your weekly program, annual calendar and leadership team.
5. Keep a prayer journal.
6. If you need help being accountable, find a prayer partner and pray together for your students and ministry—in person or over the phone on a regular basis.
7. Pray for one or two students per day. As you pray, jot down a Bible verse and some personal encouragements on a postcard and mail it to them.
8. Pray specific prayers found in the Bible over your students, for example:

- **Ephesians 1:17-18**

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

- **Ephesians 3:16-19**

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- **Philippians 1:9-12**

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.



- **1 Thessalonians 3:12-13**

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else . . . May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

- **2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

9. Pray by applying selected Scripture to your students' lives, for example:

- **Psalms 102:18-20** > Pray that through your students Jesus' message will go forth to this generation.

*Let this be recorded for future generations,
so that a people not yet born will praise the Lord.
Tell them the Lord looked down
from his heavenly sanctuary.
He looked down to earth from heaven
to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to release those condemned to die.*

- **2 Corinthians 5:18-21** > Pray your students will be inspired and deeply grasp the message of Jesus' love and their high calling as Christ's ambassador to their friends.

And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him. For God was in Christ, restoring the world to himself, no longer counting men's sins against them but blotting them out. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors. God is using us to speak to you: we beg you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, receive the love he offers you—be reconciled to God. (TLB paraphrase).

- **Ephesians 6:12** > Pray for spiritual covering for your students.

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

- **Colossians 2:3** > Pray your students will reach out to their lost friends with share the gospel.

Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ.

10. Pray using a prayer resource like Tony Souder's book **Pray for Me**.

Pick one idea and try it out. Then move on to another. Keep it fresh and authentic. The goal is to make intercessory prayer a key part of the way you roll, but to do so you have to build the habit, which takes discipline. So you just have to jump in and actually do it! For the next seven days, find a way to let one of your teenagers know that you prayed for them (at least one student for each day)! This can look like...



- Texting "I prayed for you today."
- Praying with them over the phone.
- Doing lunch or coffee with a few of your teenagers and praying for them on the spot.
- Praying for them during youth group.
- Praying for them on Sunday morning.
- Praying with them about their struggles and concerns after a one-on-one conversation.



Intercessory prayer is the foundational first step in building a Gospel Advancing Ministry. Here's how one Gospel Advancing youth leader described the importance of building prayer into his weekly rhythms:

One of the reasons why we pray is so our hearts align with His heart. And His heart is that nobody perishes. His heart is that everyone would come to know Him.

When I started as a youth pastor, I struggled like any youth pastor. Sometimes you're just showing up, and you're, like, I don't even really love these people, you know?

I'm just being honest...

But through prayer, God got me on my knees, and gave me His compassion, and so my heart was aligning with His through prayer.

As I prayed, my heart broke—kind of like when Jesus went down the mountain and He looked on the crowd and saw all these people that were lost without a shepherd, He had compassion. That was the first mark of His ministry. That is why He came—to seek and save the lost.

So I started to spend my Thursdays with my notecards that had the name of every single student in my group. I would pray for two hours. After that God starting growing the ministry.

I learned that prayer empowers us to really love what God loves—which is for all to come to know Him. And it empowers us to hate what God hates—which is for people not to come to know Him. Prayer is like a catalyst for evangelism. It compels us to go out. And because the ground is softened through prayer, more will come to know Him. Then after people know Him, discipleship happens, and those students begin to get trained to share the gospel, as well.

—John Curiale, Florida youth leader

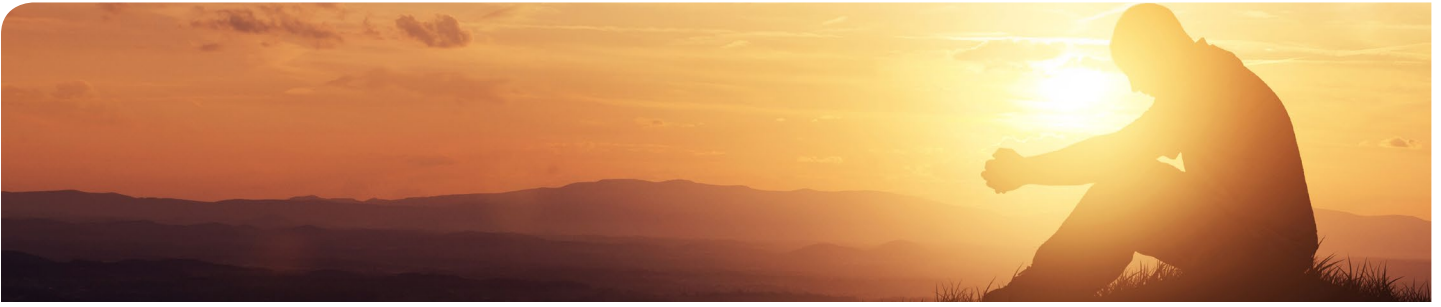


Key 2:

TEACH YOUR STUDENTS TO PRAY

Another essential step in building intercessory prayer into the DNA of your youth ministry involves teaching your students how to pray. What's more basic and elemental to a Christian's growing relationship with God than learning how to cry out to our heavenly Daddy in prayer?

Of course you can purchase or develop a good series on prayer that will show your students how to pray with power, but there are also a couple of different simple acrostics you can use to teach them to pray. Either the PRAY acrostic (**P**raise, **R**equst, **A**sk, **Y**ield) or the ACTS acrostic (**A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication) are helpful, holistic prayer outlines that are easy to grasp and simple to remember. that are easy to grasp and simple to remember.



At Dare 2 Share's [Lead THE Cause](#) summer training events, we teach the PRAY acronym which is structured around the Lord's Prayer in [Matthew 6:9-13](#). If you haven't seen this before, or could use a quick review, here's how it breaks out.

PRaise:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name."

These eight words embody who our loving, personal God is (Our Father), how sovereign He is (in heaven) and how holy He is (hallowed by your Name.) Help your students grasp the core truths packed into this singular sentence so they know how to personally approach and praise God.

REQUEST:

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is done in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread."

The first request we bring to God is not our Santa Claus wish list...or even our own personal needs (although these are important to God!) No, the first request is for HIS Kingdom to come and HIS will to be done. Teach your teenagers to pray for God to do mighty things in their own souls, in your youth group and at their schools. Teach them to pray for God's kingdom to advance one gospel conversation at a time, until it saturates their campus and community. Then, of course, teach them to ask for their "daily bread"—the ongoing provisions that they need and want.

AdMIT:

"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us."

Teach your teenagers to confess their sins to God and claim His promised forgiveness ([1 John 1:9](#)). This trains them to refuse to wallow in the mud when they fall, and to get cleaned up through confession as they passionately pursue their relationship with God.

YIELD:

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Equip your teenagers to yield themselves to the Holy Spirit, as they learn that the spiritual battle between good and evil rages all around them. Teach them to put on the [full armor of God](#) so they can stand against the temptations they face each day.



Key 3:

NURTURE PASSIONATE INTERCESSORY PRAYER IN YOUR TEENS

We all know that there's more to prayer than the mechanics of an acrostic like PRAY.

But how do you help teenagers develop a passion for prayer that moves it beyond a "wish list" or a "duty" to a passionate connection with God? Here are three triggers that help make that happen.

TRIGGER 1: FALL IN LOVE WITH JESUS.

The more deeply your students fall in love with Jesus, the more passionately they'll connect with Him on a regular basis through prayer. Mountaintop experiences like retreats or [summer camps](#) are good settings for taking students to the next level in their prayer lives.

What stirs our hearts deeply about Jesus? That He loves us passionately, deeply, sacrificially and unconditionally. In other words, it's the very message of the gospel, understood deep in one's soul that unleashes the floodgates of emotional connection to our God, because that's where we find His love and grace and mercy. So helping your students [understand the profound theology of the gospel](#) and the depth of Jesus' love for them are critical elements in helping them cultivate a passion for connecting with God in intercessory prayer. This is what we mean here at Dare 2 Share when we talk about building a Gospel Advancing Ministry where the gospel is advancing BOTH deep into the souls of your students AND out into their world as they share the gospel with their friends who need Jesus.

Consider Paul's words in [Ephesians 3:17-19](#) and use them as a prayer prompt to lay the foundation for taking your students to the next level in prayer,

And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God (The Message).

Like the Apostle Paul, pray for the depth of Jesus' love to penetrate into the souls of your students.

TRIGGER 2: LEAN IN TO DESPERATE TIMES.

While mountaintop experiences are an awesome, powerful means for taking students to a deeper level of prayer, so are desperate times, as hard as it may be to hear. Quite honestly, there's nothing like desperation to amp up our prayers lives and help us learn how to storm the throne room of heaven. We learn some of the deepest truths about life with God and others desperate need for Him in the toughest times—including the truth that we can't make it through without clinging to Jesus.

Tough stuff will inevitably slam into the lives of many of your teenagers and their friends: their parents' divorce, the death of a grandparent or loved one, bullying, a romantic break up, being stabbed in the back by a friend and on and on the list goes. Look for ways to gently use those personal crises as an opportunity to teach them how to pray with

passion—both for themselves and for others. Point them to the Psalms, which show them how to lament. Teach them that it's okay to cry out, "How long, O Lord?" or just ask, "Why?" Come alongside and teach them how to pray through the fears and frustrations of faith... just like David did again and again throughout the Psalms. (Did you know that roughly 40% of the Psalms are considered to be Psalms of lament?) Some of your students may be open to journaling their prayers to God like David did.

On a community-wide level, desperate times are also triggered by tragic events like a car accident, suicide or overdose. While these are incredibly painful times, God can redeem the suffering they bring by using them to draw students' attention toward Him and the eternal realities of life and death. These can be significant Gospel Advancing Ministry times that get teenagers praying passionately—including praying for the souls of their unreached friends. At Dare 2 Share, we saw this happen firsthand years ago when the Columbine school shooting tragedy occurred a few minutes down the road from our office.

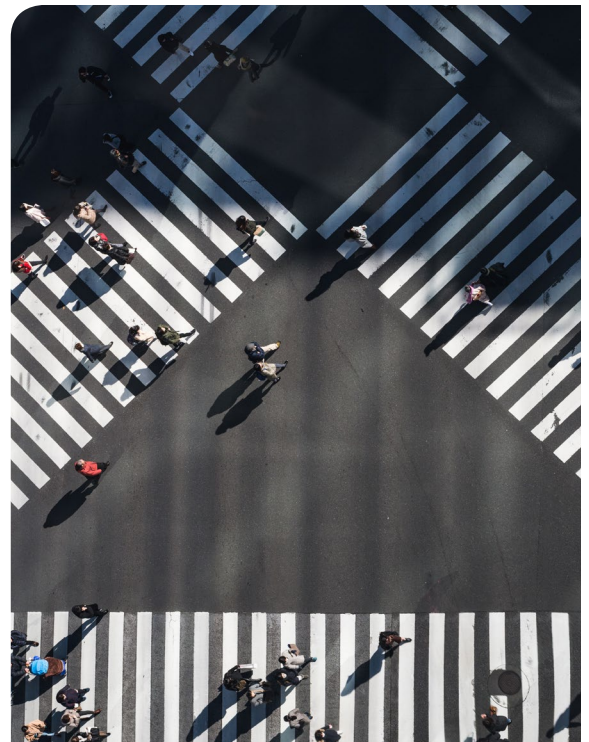
While no one wants to see tragedy strike, when it does, join God in His redeeming work of bringing good out of what was intended for evil. This provides a powerful prayer training ground. Remember too, that the Gospel Advancing spiritual vibrancy of the early believers was borne out suffering and extreme persecution.

TRIGGER 3: GET THEM OUTSIDE THEIR COMFORT ZONE.

Getting your students outside their comfort zone is another effective catalyst for nurturing a more passionate prayer life. And there's nothing like evangelism to shake things up. The prospect of going out and engaging others in gospel conversations creates a tension that can burst out in the form of worry or prayer. By pointing teenagers upward toward God, as you are challenging them to look outward and engage others with the gospel, it can transform them inwardly in powerful ways.

When Jesus unleashed His disciples on an evangelistic mission ([Matthew 10](#)), He told them not to depend on their provisions, but instead, to depend on the Spirit. Surely the prospect of going town to town to preach the message of the gospel to potentially antagonistic crowds caused them to pray like never before! The same is true for your teenagers!

Get your students outside their comfort zone. When you challenge them to start a gospel conversation with their friends through a text or mobilize them to go



on an evangelistic mission trip, you will see new opportunities to get them praying more passionately.

Peaks, valleys and faith-sharing—these are three impactful triggers to help your teenagers' prayer life move from a wish list to a passionate connection with the God of the universe. your teenagers' prayer life move from a wish list to a passionate connection with the God of the universe.



Key 4:

PROGRAM PRAYER IN YOUR GROUP

The typical youth group meeting (or church service, for that matter) generally dedicates more time to announcements than to prayer. What do you think might happen if you try to change that?

Groans? Whining? Revolt...as in voting with their feet?

Regularly folding prayer into your group programming can feel risky. But it's a risk worth taking if you're serious about increasingly becoming a [Gospel Advancing Ministry](#)!

You may be surprised by how willing your teenagers are to pray. Or not...in which case, they just don't understand how powerful prayer is quite yet. Which is exactly why they need to see it done and practice it themselves!



Key 5:

JUST DO IT

Weekly, creatively programmed times of intercessory prayer will help your students grow in their own personal prayer lives, AND it will increasingly shift your youth group focus off the "what's in it for me?" mentality and toward Kingdom impact by reaching teenagers who need Jesus.

We've collected some of the best practices and creative prayer ideas from youth pastors all across the country. You can check them out on the [Gospel Advancing](#) website. But here are five practical approaches you can try that we've seen gain a lot of traction among Gospel Advancing Youth Ministries.

- 1. Incorporate intercessory prayer into your worship time.** During the singing, have a group of leaders available to pray individually with students who want prayer. We have seen this simple adjustment to the weekly program become such a huge draw for teenagers that they begin inviting their unreached friends, just so they can get prayer for a particular struggle or challenge in their personal lives.
- 2. Pray in small groups by school.** Gather your students into small school-based prayer clusters and give them five minutes to pray together each week for their friends who need Jesus. This weekly rhythm will help them stay focused on reaching out to their friends with the gospel. If possible, spread your student leaders around among these

groups to help lead the way.

3. **Develop a Cause Circle wall.** Put up a whiteboard or chalkboard with [THE Cause Circle](#) drawn on it so that students can write the first names of their friends who need Jesus. Or you can get more sophisticated and draw a Cause Circle on a wall with some chalk paint and have students put their friends' names on sticky notes on the wall. Incorporating a time of prayer into your weekly program around THE Cause Circle wall is a great way to encourage students to pray regularly for their friends.
4. **Close your weekly meeting by praying for revival.** The key is to get the whole group involved. If you are able to encourage your student leaders to pray first on behalf of their schools and friends, they will set the example for the rest of the students at youth group and you will be on your way to shifting the culture. Switch up the mechanics on a regular basis to keep it fresh by using prayer partners, school clusters, large group popcorn prayers, prayer circles and so on.
5. **Gather your leaders for prayer before and after your weekly meeting.** Admittedly, this one takes some guts and extra commitment! Place an expectation on your leadership team to arrive at youth group 30 minutes before the program starts so that you can pray for students by name and pray that the gospel would advance both in and through them. Then after youth group is over, take 10 minutes to debrief the night, address roadblocks and pray that your students would engage their friends in gospel conversations in the coming week.



Although prayer is often a missing element in youth ministry programming today (and in the church at large), in the early church it was a staple. [Acts 2:42](#) reminds us: *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."* When believers spend time praying for others, our Heavenly Father hears and acts! And when our teenagers get a taste of the power of God working in them and through them, it will reinforce how essential it is that they stay connected to God through prayer.

These five keys can help you build prayer into your ministry's DNA. Don't just give lip service to the importance of prayer. Make it a core value of your ministry! Walk like you really believe Jesus' words in [John 15](#) when He told us that *"apart from me you can do nothing"*!



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