

HOW TO PRIORITIZE RELATIONAL EVANGELISM IN YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY

GOSPEL ADVANCING VALUE #2:
RELATIONAL EVANGELISM DRIVES 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.

Doug Fields, a youth pastor for over 30 years and the author of 50+ books, once voiced the unease many of us feel when we hear the E-word. “Evangelism,” he said, “is the one biblical purpose that, for the most part, we suck at. Most of us want to believe we’re passionate about evangelism, but if we are being honest we’d admit we’re unsure how to do it in a way that’s natural and effective...and because of that, we remain frustrated.”

Perhaps Doug’s blunt words echo the voice you sometimes hear in your own head.

Still, there’s another voice beckoning to us, as well, isn’t there? Do you remember Jesus’ famous words when He was calling His first followers? *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people’”* ([Matthew 4:19](#)). It’s clear from this familiar story that evangelism is intended to be a key aspect of what it means to be a Jesus follower.

Despite our unease when it comes to evangelism, deep in our souls, most of us truly do want to embrace what it means to be a disciple who makes disciples. And we want to help our students do likewise. Still, the honest reality is that shifting toward an increasingly evangelism-focused approach to life and student ministry can feel like a daunting task, particularly if you’re starting with a group of teenagers who currently wouldn’t be caught dead talking about Jesus at school.

But take heart! This is why focusing in on [Gospel Advancing Value #2](#): “Relational evangelism drives it,” can really help you gain some traction. Jesus wants to use your students to impact their world! And it all starts with motivating and mobilizing them to be intentional about sharing the Good News. So let’s unpack four keys that can help you build a relational evangelism focus into your youth ministry.





Key 1:

LEAD IN DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

About now, some of you may be asking yourself this question: “Getting my students to share their faith with their friends feels overwhelming, how will I ever pull this off?” It’s a fair question. Student apathy is a challenge many youth leader’s encounter in their ministries. But the short answer to your question is—YOU won’t.

It takes the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells inside every believer, to drive this kind of realignment in your ministry. And here’s why—Jesus said so! Here’s how He put it in [Acts 1:8](#): *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere...”*

When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us at the point when we first put our trust in Christ, one of His strong desires is to make us witnesses. And He provides the power for this to happen effectively. But don’t use this spiritual truth as a fallback excuse to do nothing, because you still play a significant role in partnering with the Holy Spirit in this process. God has placed you in the role of spiritual shepherd for your students, so you are responsible before God for helping them understand what Jesus tells us about sharing the Good News and making disciples. You have a critical role to play in motivating and mobilizing them to share His message of hope with others.

But before you wade into the nitty-gritty of prioritizing evangelism in your ministry, it’s critically important that you never, ever forget that the Holy Spirit of God will be echoing your challenge to your students from the inside. And even more importantly, He will be providing the power for them to actually follow through, share the gospel and see their friends’ lives impacted for all eternity.

Check out this verse where Jesus promises that the Spirit will be involved in every believer’s maturing process: *“But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you”* ([John 14:26](#)).

The Holy Spirit dwells inside every one of your believing teenagers. He is the ultimate teacher of your teens as you seek to take them to a place where their hearts break for their lost friends. He is even more serious about seeing them grow and mature in the area of relational evangelism than you are!



Key 2:

TEACH YOUR STUDENTS HOW TO RELATIONALLY SHARE THE GOSPEL

A youth leader who doesn't teach their students how to share the gospel is like a guitar instructor who doesn't teach their students how to play guitar chords.

Think of it this way. Learning some basic faith-sharing skills is much like putting in the prep work needed to play a guitar. First, the student needs to be taught to play chords. Chords give someone the basics, and as they master even just a few of them, they can begin to play a simple song that others are willing to listen to! Then as their musical abilities continue to improve with further practice and experience, they'll progressively improve until they reach the point where they're able to improvise and be creative and make their own beautiful music.

In the same way, some simple faith-sharing training will go a long way toward providing your students with the basics they need to share the gospel. Once they learn the "chords," and plug into the power of the Holy Spirit, they'll be able to clearly share Jesus' message with others. And as they continue to improve with more practice, they'll become increasingly comfortable engaging in genuine, relational, give-and-take conversations about the gospel.

Basically, there are three essential skills that will build your students' competence and confidence when it comes to sharing the gospel effectively.

1. How to Bring It Up
2. How to Explain It Clearly
3. How to Invite Someone to Make a Decision

Let's drill down and take a closer look at each of these.

HOW TO BRING IT UP

In [Ephesians 6:19](#) Paul says, *"Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel."* Paul is asking for prayer for two things here. The right words and that he would be fearless in making known the gospel. If even the great Apostle Paul, arguably the most effective evangelist who's ever lived, recognized how important prayer is when it comes to sharing the gospel, it's safe to say that prayer is an essential first step for us too. Why? Because sharing Jesus' message takes us into the spiritual realm where, when all is said and done, our friends are impacted not by smooth talk or great debating skills, but by the power of the Holy Spirit touching their hearts and souls.

So prior to your students even trying to initiate a gospel conversation with someone, teach them to start with prayer. It's the means through which we can plug into the power of the Holy Spirit and ask for the insight and courage we need to talk about Jesus with others.



Ask - Admire - Admit

But how do you teach them to take that initial plunge and bring the gospel up in conversation? Whenever we're launching into a spiritual conversation, it's always a good idea to lead with questions. In fact, there's a simple conversational approach I want to unpack for you that will go a long way toward helping you bring the gospel up more naturally, it's called "[Ask - Admire - Admit.](#)"

Here's how it works...

1. **Ask:** Ask the other person questions about what they believe, not to trap them, but to understand them and to help break down any relational barriers that might be keeping them from considering Jesus.
 - Example: So you might ask...
 - "Did you hear about that ____ (accident/news story/shooting ____)"?
 - "How did it made you feel?"
 - "What do you think happens after we die?"
 - "Tell me more about your own spiritual beliefs?"
 - "Did you grow up with a spiritual background? Tell me about it."
2. **Admire:** As you ask questions and listen, look for things you can admire about what they believe in order to help them open up. Find areas of common ground you can compliment them on. If you can't find anything to admire, compliment their honesty

Example: Depending on their beliefs, you might say something like...

- "I really appreciate how you believe that people should respect each other."
 - "I admire your willingness to ask honest questions about life and God."
 - "I admire your desire to be a good person."
3. **Admit:** This is your transition to the gospel. After you ask and admire, admit that the reason you're a Christian is that you know you've fallen short and need someone to rescue you (Jesus).



Example: You might say something like... “I admire your honesty in sharing with me about what you believe. Would it be OK if I shared with you about why I’ve decided to follow Jesus? I put my trust in Jesus because I’ve fallen short and messed up and Jesus’ gospel message of forgiveness resonated with something deep inside me that knew I needed a Savior.”

As you ask honest questions, admire what you can and admit your own need for Jesus, their guard will drop and you can share the gospel with them. For more help with the Ask – Admire – Admit approach, Dare 2 Share’s app and website coaches you and your students through faith-sharing with 13 different [worldviews](#).

HOW TO EXPLAIN THE GOSPEL

At Dare 2 Share, we use the GOSPEL acrostic as a short, simple way to train teenagers to explain Jesus’ gospel message to someone. Again, it’s helpful to think of the acrostic like chords on a guitar. Once someone learns the basic chords, with practice and experience they’ll progressively improve until they reach the point where they’re able to improvise and be creative and make their own beautiful music.

Here’s how the GOSPEL acrostic goes...

God created us to be with Him.

Our sins separate us from God.

Sins cannot be removed by good deeds.

Paying the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again.

Everyone who trusts in Him alone has eternal life.

Life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever.

These six simple truths basically summarize the big picture story of the entire Bible. God made us to be with Him, but we messed up and turned away from Him—we sinned. This created a chasm between us and our holy, perfect God. The Bible makes it clear that our sins can’t be removed by the good things we do. It’s only Jesus’ death and resurrection that make it possible for us to get back into a restored relationship with God. But everyone who trusts in Him alone can receive the free gift of eternal life that begins in the here and now and last for all eternity.

Keep in mind that this acrostic isn't designed to be a "presentation"; think of it more as an "outline" that will help you cover the core truths someone needs to understand in order to make an informed decision about trusting in Christ. Encourage your students to download Dare 2 Share's Life in 6 Words app so that they will always have easy access to the GOSPEL acrostic.

Let your students know that if they ever find themselves in a conversation where the other person wants to debate or argue about Jesus and they don't know how to respond, they can just say, "I don't know, but I'll find out. Let's talk again soon." This simple, honest response allows us to step out of a difficult situation and then go do the research to find an answer. If they need help finding answers, invite them to come talk to you or some other trusted adult, and encourage them to get familiar with the Christian website gotquestions.org. It's got answers to loads of FAQs about Christianity. Just be sure to follow up and keep the conversation going.

HOW TO INVITE SOMEONE TO MAKE A DECISION

Wrapping up a gospel conversation can be one of the toughest parts of sharing our faith. But it's critically important that we help others reach a point of decision on what they are going to do with Jesus' gospel message—accept it, think about it more, or reject it. So here are two critical questions your students can ask...

1. "Did what I say make sense?" (If not, explain the gospel again, or follow up with further research and conversation.)
2. "Is there anything holding you back from trusting in Jesus right now?"

As a general rule, people's responses to the gospel fall into one of the following categories:

- **"I'm ready now!"** If someone indicates they are ready to trust in Jesus right away, we want to help them do exactly that! And while saying a prayer isn't what opens the door to this life-transforming relationship with God—it's what happens in someone's heart and soul that actually matters—a prayer can be one way for someone to express their newfound faith in Jesus. If you think it would be helpful, you can walk them through a prayer.

If you have the privilege of leading someone to Christ, it's important that you also help them get plugged into a Bible-teaching youth group or church so they can experience the love and encouragement they need as they begin to follow Jesus. And they'll also need your help when it comes to learning how to share their faith with their friends, as well!

- **"I have more questions..."** Some people you talk to about the gospel will be intrigued and want to find out more. They may need time to process, think and wrestle with questions. Continue the conversation. Help them find answers to their questions. And keep praying for them!

- **“You can’t be serious!”** In all likelihood, there will also be times when you walk away from spiritual conversations with rejection ringing in your ears. The other person may even mock you for your attempt to share your faith with them. But let me remind you of Jesus’ powerful words in **Matthew 5:11**: *“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.”* So though it’s certainly never easy to be mocked, Jesus tells us that we can count it an honor.

Give your students opportunities to pair off with a partner and practice role playing what you teach them, where one is a believer who is trying to bring God up and share the gospel, and the other is someone who doesn’t know Jesus personally.



Greg Stier’s **A 4 Minute Crash Course in Sharing Your Faith** video is a great overview of these basic faith-sharing skills we’ve unpacked in Key 2, so check it out, then share it with your students as part of your relational evangelism training.

Find the video here: <https://youtu.be/HK9lsiEcW7k>



Key 3:

ACTIVATE YOUR STUDENTS FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

Relational evangelism is at the heart of a Gospel Advancing Ministry, in fact, relational evangelism is what drives it.

Many youth leaders feel guilty, inadequate or overwhelmed with just the mention of the E-word. And for some, it carries such a negative connotation that they ignore it, tip-toe around it or just sweep it under the rug. But it’s time to take back this lost ground and reclaim this noble, missional word!

Being Christ’s ambassadors for the life-giving message of the gospel is a privilege and a high calling! Scripture lays it out so eloquently for us. There are some passages that should make our heart pound every time we read them:

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” **(John 20:21)**.

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” **(2 Corinthians 5:18-20)**.

Yet, somehow, we’ve come to this place where many of us miss it—we ignore it or we believe that it’s not our role and we don’t really have to do it.

How do we get back on track? THE Cause Circle is a great place to start!

THE CAUSE CIRCLE

THE Cause Circle is a simple tool that serves as a reminder and provides direction for our faith-sharing efforts. The Circle can help you, your leaders and your students become more relational and intentional about engaging others using a Prayer, Care, Share approach to sharing Jesus' message. It's easy to remember and helps keep the priority of sharing the gospel front and center in your relationships with those who don't know Jesus personally.



Check out this brief Cause Circle video, then share it with your students.

Find the video here: <https://youtu.be/qZgqb8J5tV0>

Prayer, Care, Share—it's that simple. Spend time in Prayer, then look for opportunities to Care. How can you practically serve those you are trying to reach? Maybe you could invite them over to your house for a meal, bring them food when they are facing struggles, meet them for coffee or shovel the snow in their driveway—the ideas are limitless. The point is to love people with the love of Jesus and show them that you care about them as people, not projects.

God longs to have everyone everywhere come to a saving knowledge of Him through a personal relationship with Jesus. What can you do that will help your friends, family, neighbors and so on bump into Jesus and get to know the real Him? Pray for them, Care for them and Share with them!

PRAYER: Blow your apathy out of the water through prayer.

If we struggle with being apathetic about sharing our faith, we need to start with a passion infusion. Many of us have drifted into the mindset of the culture we swim in. It tells us that "other's spiritual beliefs are none of our business." But if you possessed the cure for cancer and had a friend who was stricken with this life-threatening disease, would you feel compelled to share the cure? Of course!

Similarly, if we truly believe that Jesus' message of grace and forgiveness is a life-giving message of hope, inviting those we care about into a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe is the greatest gift we can give them ([Colossians 1:15-17](#)). For those not feeling very willing to put out the effort to share the hope of Jesus with others, praying that God would make us willing to be made willing ([John 14:15-17](#)) is a good place to start. Then start praying for lost friends, family, students, neighbors and so on. When we start to pray that God will open our eyes to the spiritual needs and conversational opportunities to talk about Jesus that are all around us, we start to actually see them when they cross our paths!

CARE: Hatch a plan.

After we start with prayer for those we are seeking to reach with the gospel, it's time to hatch a plan to spend time with them and love them with the love of Christ. The point is to build a sincere, caring relational bridge to them so that asking questions about the

important issues of life that drive toward spiritual conversations can unfold more naturally.

Below are some practical ideas for what this could look like, or you and your students can always come up with your own. The point is to take action! Lay the groundwork and get it on the calendar so it actually happens. Invite someone who needs Jesus to...



- Go for a walk.
- Meet for coffee.
- Eat ice cream.
- Meet for lunch.
- Do homework together.
- Go to a park.
- Eat dessert together.
- Go somewhere and people watch.
- Go hiking.

SHARE: Talk about what really matters.

When we get together with that someone God has laid on our heart to reach, we can't just talk about the surface stuff of life. We start there, of course. But we must purposefully listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit to take the conversation deeper. We must pray for the right opportunity to ask gently probing questions like...



- "How are you *really* doing these days?"
- "What's the best thing you've done since we got together last?"
- "Are you happy with your life?"
- "What's your biggest challenge these days?"
- "How do you feel about _____?"
- "What's the one thing you'd change about your life if you could?"
- "Where do you go to find strength when life gets hard?"
- "What are you looking forward to? Why is it a big deal to you?"

Our role is patiently listen with care and then look for opportunities to talk about Jesus and share from our heart about what He means to us and how He infuses meaning and joy into our lives—even when everything isn't going great. This opens the door for us to share the gospel.



Key 4:

GIVE THE GOSPEL EVERY WEEK

Now maybe you're thinking *there's no way I can give the gospel in my lesson every week, my regular students will get bored and never grow deeper*. But this kind of "either/or" viewpoint is actually a false dilemma. It's not a matter of "I either teach a deeper lesson, or I share the gospel." Instead, it's "both/and."

We catch a glimpse of the Apostle Paul's "both/and" ministry model in Romans 1.

Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by spreading the Good News about his Son...When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours...So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News...For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. **(Romans 1:8-10; 12).**

SALVATION SEGUES

Like Paul, we must let the gospel message bleed across everything. And because redemption is the theme of Scripture, *any* lesson can transition into the gospel. Working the gospel into your lesson application simply requires a **salvation segue** or transition statement. Here are a couple of examples of how this works:

- **Self-Image Salvation Segue:** One of the things that can really help people's self-image is when they find out that someone has sacrificed something for them. I know I definitely feel more valued when I find out someone has done something special for me that cost them a lot. Did you know that the God of the Universe made the ultimate sacrifice for you and for me? Here's how it happened...
- **Anxiety Salvation Segue:** It's easy to become fearful about the bad things that might happen to us. We could be diagnosed with a deadly disease, injured in a car accident or killed by a gunman on a shooting rampage. But an amazing thing I've discovered is that while I don't have a lot of control over what happens in this life, I do have a choice in what happens in the afterlife – and so do you. Here's how it works...

EXTEND THE INVITATION!

Each time you present the gospel, it's important to include an invitation to respond. Without providing students an opportunity to put their trust in Christ, it's almost like telling them they've just won a brand new car, describing it in detail, then not letting them in on how to claim their prize. When you share the gospel, you give students the greatest opportunity of their lives and they must be given a chance to take action. You can invite them to raise their hand, fill out a card or give some outward indication of their commitment so that you can follow up with new believers.

When you give the gospel weekly, both evangelism and discipleship are happening simultaneously! Jesus' message is being shared **and** you're discipling your Christian students by modeling how to bring the gospel up. As your teens hear your salvation segues each week, it will help them learn how to think about virtually every conversational topic as an opportunity to point people toward Jesus.

And once you build this habit into your weekly program, your students will know that anytime they bring a lost person to youth group, he or she will hear the gospel. This is psychologically invaluable when it comes to the typical teenager in the typical youth group. The typical teenager is uncomfortable bringing up the gospel and sharing the message with his or her friend. So instead of risking the embarrassment of messing up, they shut up. But if that same teenager knows that every single week the gospel will be presented in the youth group setting, there is a strong likelihood that, with some prodding, he or she will invite unchurched friends out to youth group. And when students bring lost friends to youth group, they get a new perspective. All of a sudden they are rooting for you to pull off a good lesson, praying for you to give a clear gospel and asking God to do a mighty work in the lives of their friends.

Plus, you never know when the gospel will "click" for the very first time and a soul will pass "out of darkness into His wonderful light"! So never apologize for sharing the Good News every week and letting it bleed across **everything** you do.

These four keys will help you build Gospel Advancing Ministry Value #2: "Relational evangelism drives it," into the DNA of your youth ministry week-to-week and year-to-year. May the Holy Spirit guide you and empower you as you take on the incredibly important challenge of prioritizing relational evangelism in your life and your ministry! It will take time, effort, wisdom, determination and prayer to build a **Gospel Advancing Ministry** where the gospel is advancing both **in** and **through** your teenagers. But it will be worth it—because the rewards are eternal!



www.gospeladvancing.org | www.dare2share.org

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