

HOW TO BUILD A BOLD MINISTRY VISION

GOSPEL ADVANCING VALUE #5:
A BOLD VISION FOCUSES IT

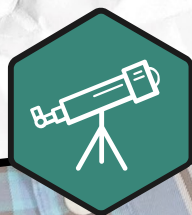


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GOSPEL ADVANCING MINISTRY

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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.

"I was losing passion for youth ministry as a whole. I really cared about students. And I really cared about the gospel—the story of the Bible and God. I was really passionate about those things, but the students weren't. Most of my job centered around planning games and bowling trips. Very little of it was actually preaching the gospel and discipling people. Most of it was activity coordinator and teen counselor. I didn't want to do that anymore. I didn't want to beg them to be Christians. I didn't want to entertain them so they'd stay at church. I thought that was tricking them. And that was not what I'd signed up for..."

"It was a paradigm shift for me to see my whole faith and my whole ministry in a different light...to realize how we're supposed to be on mission for telling people about Jesus."

—Nathan Williams, Southern California youth pastor





Think back to when you first got into youth ministry. What was your motivation? No doubt it was your love for God and your love for teenagers. You got into ministry, not for the paycheck, but for the payoff—helping students know God and make Him known. Yet sadly, many youth leaders find themselves walking the same road Nathan Williams found himself on—cast into the role of a youth group activity director who’s responsible for making sure church is “fun.”

If you sense a “holy discontent”—a deep longing for something more, you’re not alone. As youth workers, we instinctively sense that there should be more to ministry than setting up chairs, planning games, ordering pizza and throwing in a five-minute devotion. We also sense that our young people have untapped potential to become passionate, growing disciples who make disciples.

How do we unleash into our students’ potential and passion for making a difference in their world? How do we keep our ministry efforts focused on the things that will help our students grow into disciples of Jesus who live and give His message to others? By staying focused on a vision that builds deep, transformative, world-changing, Gospel Advancing values and habits into the lives of our students.

KEEP THE BIG PICTURE IN FOCUS

Seminary professor and author Mark Senter III once observed, “Too many ministries focus on what they are doing, rather than on what is getting done.” These wise words point to our critical, continual need to keep an eye on the big picture of what we’re driving toward. It’s all too easy for us to simply get sucked into the busyness and pressure of going through the motions and commotions of week in and week out student ministry activities.

Do you have a bold, Gospel Advancing vision for your youth ministry? In other words, are you doing ministry on purpose? Are your efforts and activities strategically focused by a bold vision that drives transformative impact?

Identifying your own specific bold vision statement for your youth ministry efforts is actually freeing, because it clarifies your call before God when it comes to what your ministry should be focused on and driving toward. It gives you a grid to run every plan and program through, so you can make informed, purposeful decisions about “good, better, best.” A vision shapes what goes in the calendar, where money gets spent, what to teach on and how to train leaders.

So how do you go about finding your ministry vision? Here are six steps that will help you walk through the process. The first three steps may come together fairly quickly, but be aware that the final three steps may take you weeks or months to work through, so pace your expectations accordingly.

For steps one through three, arrange a time away from the daily grind so you can spend a block of time praying, reflecting and crafting a vision statement for your youth ministry. (Make sure to go somewhere with the least amount of distractions...and put your cell phone on silent.)



#1

Step 1:

START WITH PRAYER

If we're honest, many times our prayers are self-focused. We come with an attitude. It may sound like this: "God, here's what I want to accomplish in the next year...will you please come and bless my efforts?" It's more of a "My will be done" attitude, instead of a "Thy will be done" passion.

As you lead into your prayer time, read and pray over [Luke 22:39-46](#). Humbly seek His direction for your time of prayer, reflection and focus on discerning a vision for your youth ministry. William Law described prayer as a mighty instrument, "not for getting man's will done in heaven," but, "for getting God's will done on earth." Jot down some thoughts.

Next, move to a time of "audacious prayer"—not for your own sake, but for the sake of God's glory and the advancement of His kingdom. Read and pray over [1 Peter 2:9](#), [Matthew 6:9-10](#) and [Matthew 28:18-20](#). Keep Gospel Advancement front and center as you pray about how God might want to use you and your ministry to invade enemy territory and bring light to the darkness. Jot down some thoughts.

#2

Step 2:

REFLECT ON WHAT GOD'S CALLING YOU TO

Look for a vision so big that God has to show up! Think back to your original call into youth ministry. What got you into it in the first place? What about it made you wake up excited to begin a new day? Spend some time acknowledging those things to God.

Next, look at your students using a list or photo. If your group is large, focus in on your student leaders, specifically. What's your dream for them? What outcome do you want to see in their lives before they graduate from high school and evacuate your ministry? What does "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done" look like in their lives? Dream and pray about mobilizing your students to make disciples who make disciples. Jot down your thoughts.

Next, move to a time of "transforming prayer." Ask God to give you fresh eyes for the lost and broken, and a fresh call to see your place in helping "His kingdom come, and His will be done." Dare to believe in the transformation of your students individually, to become wholly devoted followers of Jesus who make disciples who make disciples. Reflect on what this would look like in the lives of your adult leaders, as well.



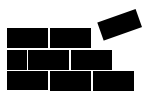
Dream big about your youth ministry, the school campuses represented in your group, your community, your church. Pull up a map of your community and pray over it. Pray for revival, pray for specific students and pray for your leaders. Jot down some thoughts.

#3

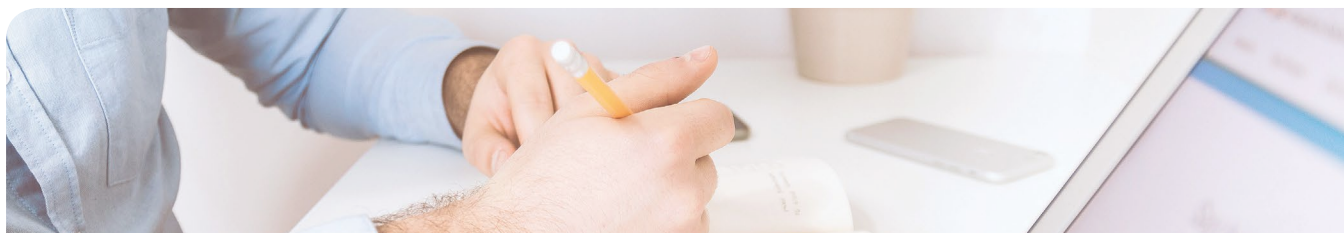
Step 3:

TURN YOUR IDEAS INTO A CLEAR, CONCISE, WELL-CRAFTED BOLD VISION STATEMENT

Go back over your notes and look for common themes. A well-crafted vision statement includes the following elements:



- **Geographic Scope.** What's the geographic scope of your vision? What area of your community is God calling you to impact for the Kingdom in the next 12 months? Maybe it's a specific school, or maybe it's a city or maybe it's an area bounded by particular streets. We call it your "Cause Turf."
- **Spiritual Boldness.** Is your vision spiritually aggressive? Over the next 12 months, what do you want to see the Lord do? Aim for something so big and bold that God will have to show up for it to be accomplished!



- **Measurability.** What specific biblical outcomes are you aiming for? Are they specific enough to be measurable? Prayerfully aim for a balance between faith and foolishness. Make it time sensitive. Focus here on one or two outcomes—things like gospel conversations, new believer baptisms, increased new conversion growth, student-led campus ministries or a specific percentage of students actively sharing the gospel.

Here are a few examples of bold vision statements from real world Gospel Advancing youth leaders that will give you a sense of what a bold vision might look like. Feel free to adapt and adopt them to fit God's call on your life and ministry.



"To have 1,380 gospel conversations and 90 professions of faith, getting 50% into disciple multiplication relationships by the end of the school year."

"To train our students to reach every student in our Cause Turf with gospel, resulting in 50% new conversion growth by the end of the school year."

"To have 60% of our students actively engaged in relational evangelism, resulting in 35% new conversion growth by the end of the school year."

"To give every high school and middle school student in Castle Rock, Colorado, the opportunity to hear, understand and respond to the gospel, through prayerfully training, inspiring, mobilizing and equipping students to engage their friends."

"To mobilize our teenagers to have 1,000 Gospel conversations this year resulting in my group growing by 20% by next summer."

You've prayed, dreamed and drafted your bold vision statement—what's left to do? Plenty. Don't play the Lone Ranger! God has called His church to be the body so we can help each other accomplish His Kingdom work here on earth. A bold vision is about advancing God's Kingdom, so it should come as no surprise that others need to be involved in the process of both identifying it and accomplishing it—including your senior pastor.



Step 4:

CONSULT WITH YOUR SENIOR PASTOR

There are a boatload of reasons why running your bold vision by your senior pastor is an essential step in the process of identifying and unpacking your ministry's vision statement. Here are a few of them:

Your senior pastor...

- ...likely has wisdom and ministry experience that can help you mold and shape your statement for maximum impact.
- ... will hopefully "catch a vision" for your ministry's vision because you've invited them to speak into it early in the development process.
- ...will "have your back" as you move into the implementation stage of your vision and begin to make changes that might ruffle feathers among your church board, parents or students. (If you haven't read Greg Stier's book, [*Firing Jesus*](#), we encourage you to check it out.)
- ...is your boss, and Scripture tells us to respect those in authority over us.

You'll find that engaging with your senior pastor in this process will actually help you cultivate a healthier, more professional, God-honoring, focused and purposeful relationship with each other. Plus, it will help get you on the same page when it comes to your roles and responsibilities as a youth leader!

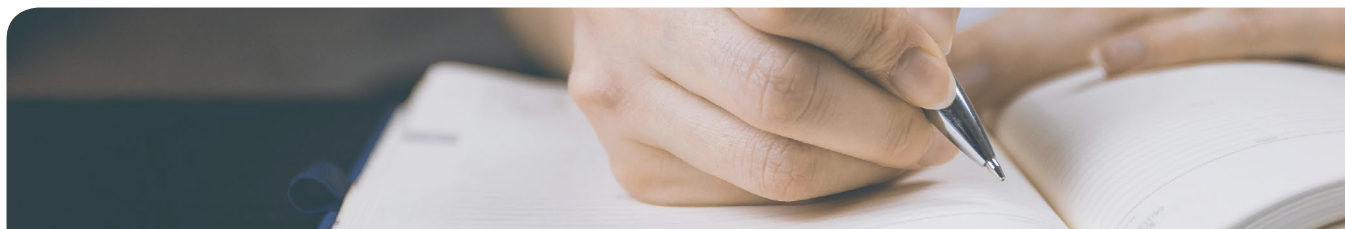
10 PRACTICAL TACTICAL TIPS FOR YOUR DISCUSSION

Here are ten practical tactical tips on how to prepare for and best utilize your meeting time with your senior pastor.

1. Set up your meeting time in advance and indicate that you are seeking insight and advice about something you sense God is laying on your heart about your youth ministry.
2. Pray, pray, pray about the meeting in advance.
3. Be on time and dress nicely. These simple actions will help communicate that you are serious about this.

4. Come well prepared. Don't wing it. Prepare a handout or Power Point so you can present your draft vision statement in writing. Have notes and have what you need on hand to take notes about your discussion time together.
5. Open your time together with prayer and ask for God's guidance and for courage, boldness and wisdom as you seek to glorify Him and advance His kingdom through your student ministry.
6. Present this as a **draft** vision statement that you've spent lots of time in prayer over. It is still a work in progress, that's why you're seeking insight and advice. Explain what a bold vision is and why you think you need one. Explain why it's so big that God has to show up in order for it to be accomplished!
7. Share how accomplishing this vision would help the church as a whole (new kids coming to Jesus and bringing their parents to church, new excitement for the whole church as a crop of young people are coming to Christ, the creation of a "farm club" of superstars, gospel advancing momentum, disciple making young people who will soon be productive and spiritually reproducing members of the adult congregation, being known as the church that reaches out to the young and hurting and transforms them, etc.)
8. Present an initial assessment of "what we're doing now" and "what might need to change in order for us to pursue this vision"—including the implications for families in your church.
9. Ask for input and be open to it.
10. Based on your discussion, together begin to identify a few next steps in the process. For example, does your vision need major recrafting? If so, set up a time to meet again about it. Discuss the timing you're considering for communicating the vision to a few other key student ministry leaders (both adults and students)—which is Step #5 in your process of Building a Bold Vision Statement. You'll want to get their input before your vision statement is finalized and distributed more widely.

As you process the feedback and continue to mold and fine-tune your vision over the next few weeks, keep praying, keep focused, and keep moving forward for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom!





#5

Step 5:

GET YOUR KEY LEADERS ONBOARD

It's one thing to charge forward as a single individual—just you and God—in pursuit of your bold vision for your youth ministry. It's something else entirely to bring your key leaders onboard as you seek to incorporate your vision statement into your youth ministry's philosophy, plans and programs. It requires a special spiritual mix of being both the visionary God has called you to be as the youth leader, but also the caring, nurturing shepherd-discipler who lovingly guides and cares for those God has placed under your leadership.

If you can successfully bring your leadership team onboard with your vision statement, the transformative impact of your ministry will be greatly enhanced. This is just simple math. The more leaders you have actively engaged with the vision, the more its impact will multiply.

But as we like to say at Dare 2 Share, “The way to the head is through the ribcage.” Lasting, transformative change rarely happens unless God gets ahold of our hearts. That's why engaging your key influencers on a heart level is so critically important—both in terms of their heart for God AND their heart for teenagers. The power of story is very helpful here, so if you have a specific story of a teen's life that's been transformed by the power of the gospel and the impact of an effective youth ministry, consider sharing it with your team. It will help pave the way for real engagement.

VISION CASTING PRINCIPLES

Your own distinctive mix of spiritual gifting, leadership style and relational equity with your youth ministry leadership team will significantly influence the approach you'll want to take for getting your key leaders on board. But here are a few general principles you'll want to consider as you develop your own unique plan for sharing your vision statement with your key influencers.



- Pray, pray, pray. Ask God to guide, soften hearts and unify your group.
- Start with a few.
- Communicate why you need a vision statement.
- Walk people through your process for discerning this vision. Share specific verses and how God used them to get your attention.
- Make room for questions, comments and concerns.
- Identify an ongoing means for consistently meeting with your core group so that together you can pray for your youth and get a deeper, fuller understanding of what God wants to do in and through your ministry.

HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT THIS?

Of course there are a hundred different ways to do this well. But let's walk through a specific example of how this process might unfold.

1. Prayerfully select the top two or three adult and student leaders (for a total of four to six individuals).
2. Invite your core group of ministry leaders over for dinner, so you can discuss your vision statement.
3. To make the most of your time together, send out an email a few days ahead of the dinner that includes your current draft of your vision statement and a brief description of the process God used to lay it on your heart. Ask your team to bring any questions, comments or concerns they might have to your gathering.
4. Open your discussion over your meal with an icebreaker questions that will propel your conversation deeper. For example, you might ask each person to respond to the questions: Why are you involved as a leader in student ministry? What was the catalyst and motivation that caused you to step up to leadership?
5. Share your own personal response to that question. This is where the power of your own personal story of your journey into youth ministry can help you reach their heart for God AND their heart for teenagers. This is also



a great opportunity to share an experience where you've been deeply impacted by a time you saw the power of the gospel change a teen's life for all eternity.

6. Share in greater detail why you think your youth ministry needs a vision statement and relate on a more personal level the process God took you through as you prayed and reflected about what it should be. Explain why your vision is so big that God has to show up in order for it to be accomplished! Communicate that you've met with the Senior Pastor about this. Invite questions and comments. Discuss any concerns they might have.
7. Together, begin some initial brainstorming about what it might look like to begin to implement this new guiding focus across the next few months.
8. Explore the possibility of meeting as a leadership team more frequently while you are making shifts in your focus so you can pray, learn and plan together—if possible, offer to provide childcare and food for each gathering. The team might read a book together that would help motivate and equip you toward accomplishing your vision. Some good options might be: the book of Acts, *[Gospelize Your Youth Ministry](#)* by Greg Stier, or *[4 Chair Discipling](#)* by Dann Spader. Consider bringing your group to a catalytic training event like *[Lead THE Cause](#)* or *[Dare 2 Share LIVE](#)* to turbo-charge your efforts.

Prayerfully crafting a specific, bold vision statement is a process. Be patient, listen carefully and trust the Lord to provide the vision and help you make the shift toward your new Gospel Advancing focus. In the weeks and months ahead, your vision statement will serve as the “North Star” that guides all your team’s ministry efforts.

#6

Step 6:

PROGRAM FOR YOUR VISION

Change is never easy—especially when it involves recalibrating the expectations of your students and their parents. But moving toward a more vision-driven approach to youth ministry IS worth it when you're confident that is what Jesus is calling you to. Still, it can feel like you're trying to turn a massive, ocean-going vessel. It doesn't turn on a dime. It takes time. It takes prayer. It takes effort. And it takes programming. Why? Because in youth ministry, we program out our priorities. Daily, weekly and annually.

Consider your weekly youth group programming. If you think games are an important element of your Wednesday night gatherings, you build them into your programming. Same with announcements, worship, small groups and so on.



So what needs to change in your programming if you want to recalibrate your youth ministry around your vision statement?

To help you unpack the answer to this question, let's take a second look at one of the youth ministry vision statements mentioned earlier:

To give every high school and middle school student in Castle Rock, Colorado, the opportunity to hear, understand and respond to the gospel, through prayerfully training, inspiring, mobilizing and equipping students to engage their friends.

How can a youth group reach every student in their community with the gospel? Clearly evangelism and disciple multiplication need to be central priorities that are consistently built into his annual youth ministry calendar, weekly youth group program rundown sheet and daily ministry priorities. Here are some examples of what this particular vision statement's programming implications might look like:

ANNUAL MINISTRY CALENDAR PRIORITIES

- Prayerfully create a "What NOT to Do" list in order to free up programming space and mitigate clutter.
- Identify an ongoing means for consistently meeting with the youth ministry's leadership team for prayer and strategic planning that emphasizes your vision. Schedule specific times with the core group to focus on training in prayer and evangelism, so they can lead the way for the rest of the group.
- Actively recruit adult leaders who share a passion for the vision and can multiply your efforts. Delegate what you can.
- Select [curriculum](#) that supports the vision's emphasis on prayer and personal evangelism.
- Schedule retreats and "external training" opportunities that support the vision, i.e., [Dare 2 Share LIVE](#), a [Dare 2 Share Fearless Event in a Box](#) weekend or a [Lead THE Cause](#) weeklong summer training intensive.
- Build creative, engaging Outreach Events into the calendar where the gospel conversation can happen naturally and the gospel will be given.

WEEKLY YOUTH GROUP RUNDOWN SHEET

- Program time for students to pray for their friends who need Jesus. Focused prayer time lays the foundation for the Holy Spirit to work in hearts and minds, and also serves as an internal prompt for students to consider and pray about their own role in the process of introducing their friends to Jesus.
- Program time to pray for the vision.
- Incorporate personal faith-sharing experiences into the large group lessons and encourage adult leaders to do the same in small groups.
- **Create a storytelling culture.** Some youth leaders call this time “Take 5 for THE Cause,” or “Pause for THE Cause,” or simply “Open Mic,” but whatever you call it, this is a time where teenagers can share stories about their faith-sharing efforts during the week—including missed opportunities that they didn’t think of until after the fact. Kevin Bussema, who is National Director for Youth For Christ Core, explains the value of creating this kind of storytelling culture like this:

Stories are essential for developing young leaders, both as they grow in their personal walk with Christ and as they are mobilized for authentic Christ-sharing relationships with friends. Stories are a tangible, accessible way for Christian teenagers to talk about Jesus and connect with their friends. They become like viruses (in a good way!) that are easily caught and passed on. Sharing stories becomes less an evangelism method and more a way of living and creating connections to God in every relationship.

Teenagers shouldn’t just share the exciting stories of radical conversions, but also the shut-me-down stories of getting dissed by their peers. Make this a time where teenagers can pray for each other, encourage each other and even coach each other.

- **Give the gospel weekly.** Segue the lesson topic into a gospel presentation so the gospel is clearly presented to any non-believers present, and also to model for Christian students how to bring the gospel up. As teens hear these salvation segues each week, they’ll learn how to think about virtually every



conversational topic as an opportunity to point people toward Jesus. Include an invitation to respond. Sometimes youth leaders feel resistance to giving the gospel every week because they feel like it's overkill. But check out what veteran Gospel Advancing youth leader Nathan Smith has to say about this important program element:

- We feel it's really important that we share the gospel every week for two reasons. First, hopefully there are lost kids at your youth group, and if they don't hear the gospel, how in the world are they going to know how to get to heaven...and let's face it, they may never come back. This may be the only opportunity you ever get to give those kids the gospel. This is the most important thing we do! I also love it because if I'm sharing the gospel, it tells my kids who know Christ, 'Hey, I got your back. If you can get your friends to youth group, they are going to hear how to get to heaven.' Some of your Christian kids may not be ready yet to share their faith out loud, but they'll know their friends will hear about Jesus if they can get them to youth group.

DAILY MINISTRY PRIORITIES

- Pray daily for the vision.
- Pray daily for students to be effective witnesses for Christ with their lives and specifically for their efforts to reach their friends with the gospel with their words and deeds.
- Get out of the office. Meet with students and their friends for discipling or outreach. Schedule discipling times with student leaders and specifically help them grow in the areas of prayer and evangelism, so they can help lead the way in youth group.
- Share the gospel yourself. Keeping the evangelism focus front and center in your own personal life allows you to model the priority to your students. Plus, it will give you some great personal illustrations you can share in your lessons.

Moving to a more vision-driven approach to ministry takes a powerful engine. So bathe everything you do in prayer and plug into the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the engine that must drive any course change. If you feel overwhelmed, take courage from [Acts 1:8](#): *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Remember, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish..."* ([Proverbs 29:18](#), KJV).

