

COUNTING WHAT REALLY COUNTS

GOSPEL ADVANCING VALUE #6:
BIBLICAL OUTCOMES MEASURE 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.

A few years back, Colorado youth leader “Mr. Bill” Friend decided to ask himself a tough question: “Is our student ministry producing fruit with long-lasting impact, or are we just producing apathetic students who’ve had a few fun memories along the way?”

His conclusion?

There was a big disconnect between what he and his leadership team were doing and what they actually wanted to get done—between the activities that filled their schedules and the long-term, transformational, spiritual impact they longed to see in the lives of their students.

So Mr. Bill developed a list of specific questions to help him and his team—and Gospel Advancing youth leaders like you—better assess the spiritual impact within the students. Questions like...

1. In what ways is it apparent that a student has a love relationship with Jesus?
2. Do our students actively engage in spiritual conversations with their friends?
3. What percentage of our student ministry are new believers?
4. Do our students need to be told to spend time with Jesus, or do they own that process themselves?
5. Are the students in our ministry currently making disciples within their circles of influence?
6. What does a fully disciplined follower of Jesus look like?
7. Do our students see Jesus as a part of their life or the center of their life?
8. Do we see our college/career students following Jesus long after they graduate from the youth ministry?
9. Do we see students growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control?





These were hard questions to ask—and even harder to answer, but Mr. Bill and his team asked them anyway. *“Fruit inspecting is both humbling and healthy,” he observed, “but if we’re going to have ministries that do more than offer a social club for Christians, we have to begin measuring our produce.”*

While their honest answers humbled them, they were resolved to do something about it—and God blessed their efforts! Here’s how Mr. Bill described what happened as he began to recalibrate his ministry efforts to produce Gospel Advancing fruit:



When I became the student pastor at Grace Chapel Castle Rock a few years back, we only had eight students—(two of which were my own flesh and blood, so I brought with me a fourth of our ministry!) But we began applying the 7 Values of a Gospel Advancing Ministry, beginning with prayer.

In the first 18 months, we grew from eight to fifty students. But the thing that really excited us was that we saw 12 students place their faith in Jesus and it was our students who led them to the Lord. Why? Because I was the coach, not the quarterback. Basically, I inspired and equipped them to reach their friends, and they DID! In four years, we’ve seen 34 students place their faith in Jesus. Our students are actively involved in sharing their faith, and a high percentage of our ministry consists of new believers! And if that weren’t enough, I regularly receive text messages from my college students who are sharing their faith on campus with their friends! Totally God awesome!

Now, please understand, ministry ebbs and flows. Some years will be more fruitful than others, and we are experiencing a less fruitful one right now ourselves. But if you help students to trust the Holy Spirit as they engage in the process of Prayer, Care, Share with their friends, you WILL produce fruit ([John 15](#))—fruit that lasts.

GOSPEL ADVANCING VALUE #6: BIBLICAL OUTCOMES MEASURE IT

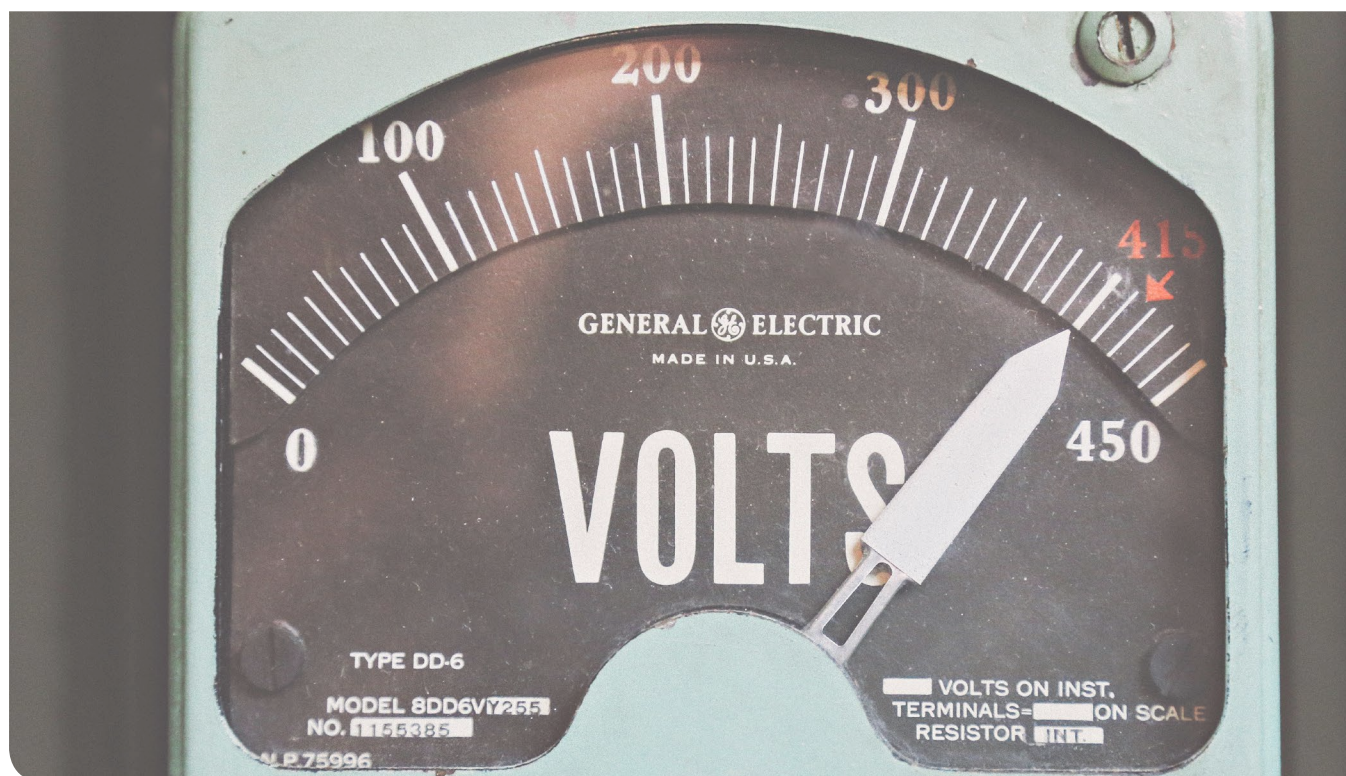
Many churches gauge their success by measuring their activity. Our good ministry friend, Doug Holliday at [Sonlife](#), refers to these metrics as the 3 B's: "budgets, buildings and butts in seats."

In the same way that senior pastors sometimes measure their success by these 3 B's, a youth leader can be tempted to measure his or her success by the size of the budget, the coolness of the youth room and how many teenagers attend each week.

But are these the right things to measure? Are they telling you anything substantive about the ultimate spiritual impact of your ministry? Not really, because they are measuring activity, not impact. If you want an accurate assessment of the longer-term spiritual impact of your ministry, biblical outcomes serve as a better measuring rod of effectiveness. This why [Gospel Advancing Ministry](#) Value #6 is: "Biblical outcomes measure it."

What are biblical outcomes? The word "outcome" sounds a bit technical and "businesslike." But outcomes are basically what "comes out" of your ministry efforts. Outcomes reflect the results of your labors—the fruit that is being produced as a result of your ministry efforts.

Now, on first consideration, you might be thinking that our grace-giving God doesn't care about outcomes—He cares about people, not performance. But if you take a close look at



Jesus' familiar words in [John 15:16](#), you'll find that God is all about outcomes.

"[Jesus told His disciples,] 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.'"

"Fruit that will last" is how Jesus described outcomes.

We also see God's heart for the fruit that comes from the advancement of the gospel in [2 Peter 3:9](#): *"He [God] does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent"* (NLT). The advancement of the gospel and souls saved are outcomes that matter greatly to God!

And consider the church in the book of Acts. When Barnabas visited Antioch in [Acts 11:19-24](#), he *"saw what the grace of God had done."* What did he see? He saw outcomes! He witnessed firsthand the fruit of the good news being preached and accepted. What did that fruit look like? It was both qualitative and quantitative. In other words, it was good and there was lots of it. In the same way, we want to see the evidence of God blessing our ministry efforts—"outcomes"—on both levels.

So it only makes sense to assess our ministry effectiveness by measuring the things God cares about—the things that give us a pulse on whether our ministry efforts are actually resulting in lives being transformed as the gospel advances both in and through our students.



QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE OUTCOMES

On a qualitative level, we want our teenagers to grow in their knowledge of and service to Jesus. As Peter reminded his Jewish friends in [2 Peter 1:5-8](#):

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

God wants our teenagers to develop godly character and be "productive and effective" for His kingdom. These are the qualitative outcomes He is looking for and working toward in them and in us.

On a quantitative level, biblical outcomes have to do with the number of people we are impacting with the gospel of Jesus. As [Acts 2:47](#) reminds us, *"the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*



You see, it's not just about numbers. It's about the right numbers. And the right numbers have to do with how many are coming to Christ and growing in Christ, as a result of you mobilizing your teenagers for making disciples who make disciples.

So, practically speaking, what does this process look like?

Let's take a second look at the passage in John 15 where Jesus is talking to His disciples about bearing fruit. Here are His words...

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing..."

"...You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you" (John 15:5, 16).

Jesus' promise is clear here! *"If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit...I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."* He assures us that we can bear much fruit—if we stay connected to the vine.

We do that through prayer, of course. And through plugging into the power of His Holy Spirit moment by moment. But another piece of the equation that can help us bear *"fruit that will last"* is to prayerfully, purposefully identify the specific, measurable, biblical outcomes that we are actually aiming towards. Identifying the outcomes we're looking for prompts us to rearrange our daily calendars, our ministry programs and our weekly rundown sheets so that they more consistently and purposefully drive toward the biblical outcomes God has laid on our heart. And then measuring and monitoring those outcomes on an ongoing basis gives us a standard by which to assess whether our ministry efforts are actually producing the fruit we want to see in and through our teenagers.

If our metrics indicate we aren't producing fruit, then at least we'll know it's time to make adjustments or go back to the drawing board.

MEASURING THE RIGHT QUANTITATIVE THINGS

What kinds of quantitative biblical outcomes should we be aiming for? Acts 2 gives us some clues...

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Act 2:42-47).

What activities are going on in this passage? Teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, sacrificial living, praise. And did you notice the powerful outcome at the end of this passage? *“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

Throughout the book of Acts—and much of church history, for that matter—one of the most powerful outcomes of a truly gospelized ministry is new believers. We’re not talking attendance numbers here as a result of church hopping—we’re talking about new believers who’ve come to Christ.



What percent of your teenagers have come to Christ as a direct result of your youth ministry? Is it 1%, 5%, 10% or more? At Dare 2 Share, we refer to this percentage as **new conversion growth (NCG)**.

We define NCG as the number of students who trusted Jesus as a direct result of the ministry or someone in the ministry. They come regularly and are beginning to get plugged into the life of the ministry.

So if you have 100 kids in your youth group, and 10 of those came to Christ from students being invited out to youth group or as a result of students reaching students, that would be 10% new conversion growth. If you had 20 kids, that would be 20% NCG.

To calculate your NCG for your current school year, you take the number of students who've come to Christ as a result of your ministry efforts who are now regular attenders (at least once every three weeks) and divide it by the number of regularly attending students you started your school year with.

What we love about measuring NCG, as opposed to just measuring attendance, is that it's the great equalizer. Say a youth group has 200 students, and another youth group down the street has 20 students. The smaller group doesn't seem as effective on an outreach level, right? But let's say that the larger group had 10 students come to Christ from students reaching students—that's 5% NCG. But if the smaller group of 20 students also had 10 students come to Christ from students reaching students, that's 50% new conversion growth. So that's 5% versus 50% new conversion growth, and 50% NCG is super, super impressive! Hopefully you can see that changing your metric from attendance size to a percentage of new believers makes a lot more sense, and will give you a much better feel for true impact.

MEASURING THE RIGHT QUALITATIVE THINGS

Likewise, when it comes to qualitatively assessing the spiritual maturity of your teenagers, you must also learn how to measure the outcomes that really count! So what kind of qualitative biblical outcomes should you measure?

Hebrews 5 provides several helpful insights as we consider this question.

"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil"

([Hebrews 5:11-14](#)).

This brief passage points toward five biblical outcomes that can help you assess your teenagers' spiritual growth. Did you spot them?



1. A desire to understand the things of God.
2. The ability to disciple others.
3. The ability to feed oneself from God's Word.
4. A maturing walk with God.
5. A spirit that can distinguish good from evil.

So here are five questions based on this passage that will help you measure the quality of your youth group's overall spiritual maturity.

1. What percentage of your teenagers are really trying to understand God's Word and grow spiritually?

"...you no longer try to understand." Hebrews 5:11

2. How many of your teenagers are actively reaching out to the lost and/or discipling other Christian teenagers?

"...by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again." Hebrews 5:12

3. Are your teenagers hungry for the deeper things of God's Word or content with the surface stuff?

"You need milk, not solid food!" Hebrews 5:12

4. What percentage of your teenagers are living by faith in Christ's righteousness to sanctify them (versus apathetic or trying to grow by keeping a spiritual checklist)?

"Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness." Hebrews 5:13



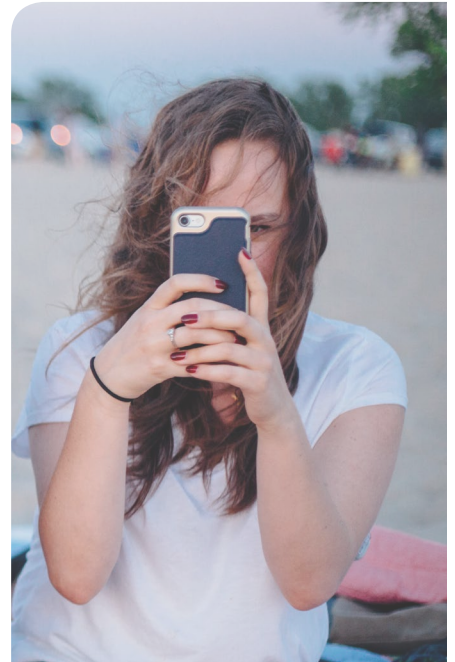
- Are your teenagers allowing their Christian convictions to shape their media and lifestyle choices?

“...the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” Hebrews 5:14

Additionally, instead of just applying these questions to your youth group in its entirety, it's also helpful to assess your student individually. Pull out your youth group roster and apply the following questions to each of your students.

Assess each on a scale of 1 to 5 in these same five areas.

- Is _____ really trying to understand God's Word and grow spiritually? (Hebrews 5:11)
- Is _____ actively reaching out to the lost and/or discipling other Christian teenagers? (Hebrews 5:12)
- Is _____ hungry for the deeper things of God's Word or content with the surface stuff? (Hebrews 5:12)
- Is _____ living by faith in Christ's righteousness to sanctify him/her (verses apathetic or trying to grow by keeping a spiritual checklist)? (Hebrews 5:13)
- Is _____ allowing his/her Christian convictions to shape media and lifestyle choices? (Hebrews 5:14)



You could also challenge your teenagers to do self-evaluation on where they see themselves in these five areas. And you could invite their parents to do the same. Then all of you could sit down together to talk about the results. School teachers hold parent conferences to discuss how individual students are progressing academically, so why not do the same when it comes to your teenagers' spiritual growth?

When you fold Gospel Advancing Value #6—Measuring Biblical Outcomes—into your ministry, great things will happen. So evaluate your ministry by asking the tough questions. Take a hard look at what outcomes your programs and calendars are producing. If the outcomes don't align with the kinds of biblical outcomes God told us He's passionate about in His Word, it's time to recalibrate your efforts!

Let's start counting what really counts so we can leave a legacy that lasts for all eternity!



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