

HOW TO PROGRAM FOR GOSPEL ADVANCEMENT

GOSPEL ADVANCING VALUE #7: ONGOING PROGRAMS REFLECT IT



PRAYER

VISION

EVANGELISM

MULTIPLICATION

LEADERS

OUTCOMES

PROGRAMS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Unskilled, Overlooked, Underestimated Bundles of Potential __ 6

Step 1: Take a Snapshot _____ 7

Step 2: Infuse Prayer and Evangelism into Your Weekly Program _____ 9

Step 3: Build a Vision-Driven Annual Calendar _____ 11

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.

Commitment to a cause is a powerful thing. Jesus called His disciples to a cause when He told them to “*go and make disciples of all nations...*” ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). In obedience to this call, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, these early Jesus followers kept gospel advancement central to all they did. The results?

They turned their world upside down with the revolutionary message of the gospel!

In the same way, when your students are challenged to live for THE Cause of Christ and become disciples who make disciples—they can turn their world upside down too! Don’t buy into the common misconception that teenagers are not developmentally mature enough to accomplish anything significant for the Kingdom. Teenagers are hard-wired to want to be in the game. Given an opportunity, they want to be more than spectators, and along the way, they begin to develop their own competency and autonomy. When they join Jesus in His search and rescue mission for the lost and get out of their seats and into the action, they grow deeper in their walk with Jesus and begin to own their faith.





UNSKILLED, OVERLOOKED, UNDERESTIMATED BUNDLES OF POTENTIAL

The early disciples and your teenagers might have more in common than you thought...they both represent the kind of unskilled, overlooked, underestimated bundles of potential that God loves to use to confound the wise and change the world. So what can you learn from these revolutionaries whose stories fill the pages of Acts? They embodied the [7 Values](#) that undergird effective Gospel Advancing Ministries! From the first page to the last page of Acts, the book drips with the relentless pursuit of the mission of Jesus. A few short verses in Acts 6 actually bring their efforts to prioritize these 7 Values into focus for us. Let's take a closer look...

At this point in the life of the early church, things were chaotic and a little out of control. People were putting their faith in Jesus in droves. And along with the influx of new people came new challenges. Some of the people were grumbling about not having their needs met and not being treated fairly. (This never happens at your church, right?)

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" ([Acts 6:2-4](#)).

In response to the rumblings of discontent, the apostles could have gotten caught up in the minutiae and micromanaged every aspect of the problem creating the churn. They could have poured hours of effort into designing a food distribution ministry—a legitimate need—but they didn't. They delegated some ministry responsibilities so they could stay focused and take care of their top ministry priorities.

What were their top priorities? When you look closely at this passage, you see evidence of all 7 Values being prioritized...

Value #1: Intercessory Prayer – They programmed prayer.

Value #2: Relational Evangelism – They programmed evangelism, because part of the ministry “of the word” is evangelistic in nature.

Value #3: Leaders Aligned and Modeling – They had built into leaders who reflected these same values as evidenced by results described in Acts 7 and 8.

Value #4: Disciple Multiplication – All of this is a result of the fact that “the number of disciples was increasing.”

Value #5: Bold Vision – This rapid multiplication was an outgrowth of the bold vision Jesus laid out in Acts 1:8.

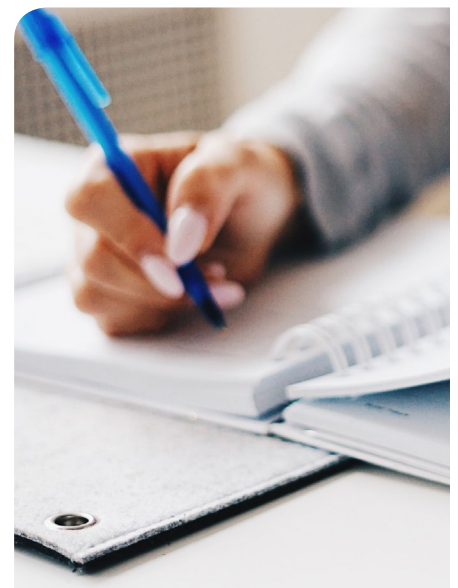
Value #6: Measurable Biblical Outcomes – Feeding the poor is definitely a biblical outcome, as is the number of disciples being multiplied.

Value #7: Programming Priorities – Since this is a key passage for programming your priorities, it’s hard to miss this one!

As a result of the apostles’ relentless commitment to programming their priorities, the early church was a gospel advancing powerhouse. They didn’t let other priorities, or other people’s priorities, hijack the plane. Instead, they delegated other duties to qualified leaders and kept their eye on the end goal.

In the same way, you must program these 7 Values into your daily schedule, weekly programs and annual calendar. This is the only way Gospel Advancement will truly become a ministry priority. What dominates your schedule dominates you. If you don’t purposefully and passionately incorporate the 7 Values of a Gospel Advancing Ministry into your programs and your calendar, they’re just empty words.

As with any change, this takes prayer, creativity, leadership and a willingness to try new things. There are potential landmines when it comes to change, so pull the right people close to help you navigate the change. Be motivated by your vision and conviction, be decisive and clear, but most importantly let any changes be driven by a season of prayer. Cover each of the following steps with prayer and seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance so that any change will be born out of your time with God.





Step 1:

TAKE A SNAPSHOT

Write out a list of everything you do on a typical youth group night and estimate how much time you dedicate to each item. After you've identified **what** you do, spend some time really asking yourself **why** you do each one. How does each piece fit within the grid of your mission and vision for your ministry? Don't apologize for having crazy games or fun food challenges, just think through the purpose behind each activity.

ASSESS YOUR GROUP'S CULTURE.

How effective is your weekly program at getting you where you want to go? Ask the Holy Spirit for insight as you do a prayerful evaluation. Then invite a few key, godly, adult leaders and insightful students to respond to some of the following questions:



- What's the purpose of our youth ministry?
- What do new people say about our group?
- What are some roadblocks that keep you from inviting other teens?
- What elements of our group meeting time are most relevant and engaging? Least?
- What is central that should never change?





The more thoughtful your assessment, the more clarity you'll have about potential changes. Overlay what you learned during your evaluation process with the mission and vision of the church as a whole, and consider how the youth program fits into the direction of the larger church body. Jot down a quick summary of what you've learned in a "How's It Going?" column.

So your snapshot might look something like this...

What	Why	Time	How's it going?
Fellowship	Connection	0:10	Eats up a lot of time
Announcements	Housekeeping	0:05	Too boring
Games	Attendance hook	0:20	Fun, but uses a lot of time
Worship	Praise	0:15	Awesome, engaging
Teaching	Discipleship	0:30	Could be more relevant
Small Groups	Relationship/accountability	0:10	Too chatty
Prayer	Connection with God	0:00	Ran out of time...

#2

Step 2:

INFUSE PRAYER AND EVANGELISM INTO YOUR WEEKLY PROGRAM

As you assess what's working and what needs adjusting, look for ways to create some margin in your programming where you can try a few new things that prioritize intercessory prayer and relational evangelism. Here are some options to consider...

- **Program time for students to pray for their friends who need Jesus.** This lays the foundation for the Holy Spirit to work and serves as a prompt for students to consider their own role in the process of introducing their friends to Jesus.
- **Equip your students to share their faith.** Get your students trained and equipped to initiate spiritual conversations and share their faith. Role play how to conversationally share the gospel. Consider using a faith-sharing tool like the interactive, seeker-friendly [*Life in 6 Words app*](#).
- **Create a storytelling culture.** Challenge students to share stories about their own faith-sharing efforts—the good, the bad and the ugly—including missed opportunities that occurred to them after the fact. This can be as simple as “I started praying for...” to “I brought Jesus up and...” Challenge your student leaders ahead of



time to get things started by sharing first. No matter what's shared, be consistently encouraging. After each story, ask the students' small group leader to pray for the people involved. Then encourage all your teens to share their faith.

- **Talk about sharing *your* faith.** Appropriately incorporate your own personal faith-sharing efforts into your teaching and encourage your adult leaders to do the same in small groups.
- **Give the gospel weekly.** With a little forethought, practically *any* lesson topic can transition into the good news. Like the great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said: "I take my text and make a bee-line to the cross." Basically, every lesson you teach simply needs a "salvation segue"—a few transitional sentences that "make a bee-line to the cross." After all, redemption is the theme of Scripture, so creatively working the gospel into your message is essentially a matter of tying "a part" into "the whole." And as you do, make sure to extend a grace-filled invitation to trust in Jesus! Segue your lesson topic into a gospel presentation. As your Christian 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.

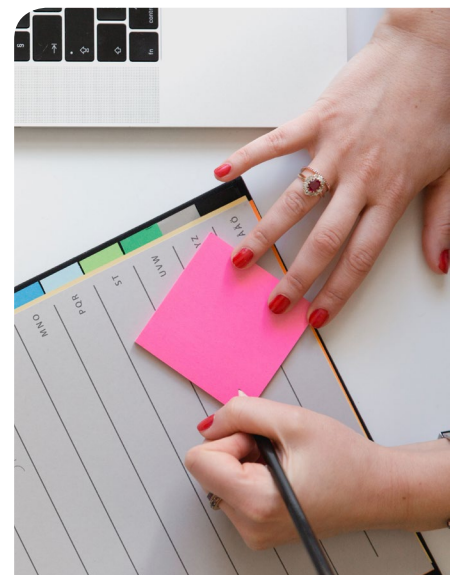
REASSESS AND ADJUST.

Pray, be creative, take a few risks and try some of these new ideas. See what happens. Let it play out for four to six weeks. Then ask yourself:



- How does it affect your group?
- Are the students warming up to the idea?
- Is there a student or adult leader who's really latched on and could take on some additional leadership? (Like the early disciples, delegate some responsibilities where appropriate.)
- What did you learn?
- What did the students learn?

If God doesn't seem to be blessing your new initiative, pray and try a different idea. Just keep trying until you find the right fit for prioritizing Gospel Advancement in your group's weekly programming!



#3

Step 3:

BUILD A VISION-DRIVEN ANNUAL CALENDAR

It's no secret that youth ministry moves at a fast pace. Sometimes it can feel as if you are barely coming up for air before you have to plunge back down into the depths of the next sermon series or event that's right around the corner. This makes it challenging to develop a strategic plan for your youth ministry that looks a year or more down the road. Yet **developing an annual calendar is essential to the success and health of any ministry.** While it may seem overly ambitious, it is not as intimidating as you may think. And if done correctly, developing an annual calendar can help you effectively build relational evangelism into your ministry strategy.

Here are a few insights that might help you develop an annual calendar:

REVIEW (OR DEVELOP) YOUR VISION STATEMENT.

Annual calendars should blossom out of your ministry's vision statement. Picture yourself at a bus stop. You are trying to figure out how to get home, so what do you do? You begin to look around until you notice the top panel on each bus is flashing its destination. Once you find the right bus, you hop on board. Similarly, a vision statement acts as a final destination; it informs your ministry about where you're planning to go.

ADD DATES.

As you may know, there are multiple routes that can take you to the same destination—some better than others. An annual calendar is like mapping out your ministry's route to reach its vision statement. Put things on the calendar that will help you achieve your goals the best possible way by avoiding unnecessary detours. For instance, if part of your vision is for [students to grow and engage in relational evangelism](#), then formulate your calendar accordingly. You can schedule a [series on relational evangelism](#), set up a social event and add anything else that works best for your ministry given the resources that you have. This will help set the pace for you as well as those who are a part of leadership.

BRING LEADERS INTO THE CONVERSATION.

If you need input, don't be afraid to ask! Set up a calendar meeting with your key leaders who can help develop the calendar itself. Hold a leadership breakfast or coffee meet up to discuss the calendar. Send out an email in advance inviting the leaders to brainstorm some ideas. Be sure to help them focus on what you are trying to accomplish, so try to be

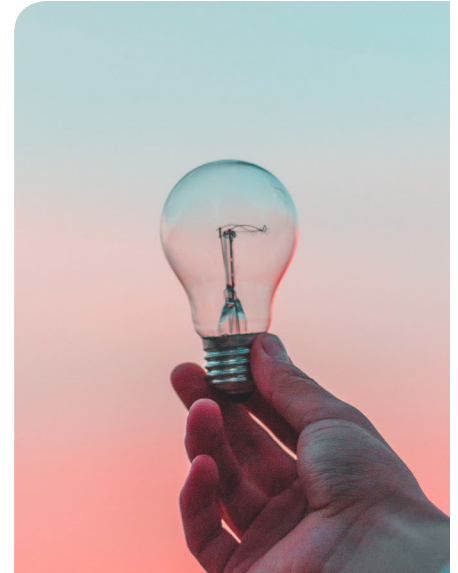
as specific as possible. For example, if you would like your students to each have 10 gospel conversations by the end of the year, then ask your adult leaders to come up with two ideas each for promoting gospel conversations. Once you are together, discuss the details and figure out the best practices for your ministry to achieve its goals. This way your leaders will really feel like they are contributing to the ministry, plus it will inspire them to own the ministry's goals.

HOST A CALENDAR MEETING.

Losing sight of your ultimate target is one of the worst things any ministry can do. Sometimes it's tempting to shoot an arrow at the wall and then paint the bull's-eye around it. But over time you just become busy "doing things," instead of accomplishing the mission God's called you to. Instead, help the church and your leaders know what you are aiming for and how you plan on getting there in your yearly calendar meeting. You can invite whoever you think will help you best commit to the calendar objectives. Communicate with the parents and leaders what the year will look like. This could even help you gain support from your parents if you have resource needs! Everyone will appreciate your intentionality.

As youth leader Andy McGowan put it, "Go ahead and fill your calendar, but only with things that advance the Kingdom. This will insure you will not be busy without a purpose...because nobody's got time for that." And once you build your calendar, remember that it's OK to adjust. Sometimes things just don't go as planned. Scripture reminds us how *"we make our own plans, but the LORD determines our steps"* ([Proverbs 16:9, NLT](#)). In the same way, it's OK to make adjustments during the year. There are moments within every youth leader's life when circumstances—whether triggered by tragedy, celebration or the urging of the Holy Spirit—will require you to recalibrate. The ministry wasn't created for the calendar; the calendar was created for the ministry! But as the old saying goes, "if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."

As you pour your efforts into building a laser-focused youth ministry, watch out! Expect explosive impact. When you run everything through the filter of your love for Jesus and your drive to help every teenager in your community (and beyond) encounter Him, exciting things happen. You'll put a sizeable dent in your students' spiritual apathy. Your teens will grow deeper with God as they go wider into the world with the message of His love. They'll begin to see how they can make an impact and live a life that counts for more than just the accumulation of stuff (materialism) or the pursuit of personal pleasure (hedonism).





Perhaps you've noticed that this article has been primarily focused on infusing Value #1 (intercessory prayer) and Value #2 (relational evangelism) into your daily, weekly and annual programming. Here's why—because all of the other values overflow from these first two values. Think of it like this...

Value #3: Leaders fully embrace and model it. *This is you and your leaders—both adults and students—modeling prayer and relational evangelism.*

Value #4: A disciple multiplication strategy guides it. *This is you and your leaders teaching your students how pray for and lead their lost friends to Christ, so they can, in turn, teach those new believers to pray for and lead their friends to Christ.*

Value #5: A bold vision focuses it. *This is you envisioning the impact your youth group's prayer and relational evangelism strategy could have on your community.*

Value #6: Biblical outcomes measure it. *This is you identifying and monitoring measurable, biblical outcomes related to your prayer and relational evangelism strategies.*

Values #7: Ongoing programs reflect it. *This is you building intercessory prayer and relational evangelism into your programming, so you can achieve those measurable, biblical outcomes.*

As you increasingly prioritize intercessory prayer and relational evangelism in your daily, weekly and annual calendars, the other five values will begin to take shape as you consistently model, teach, envision, measure and program for the advancement of the gospel.

Just like that motley crew of unskilled, overlooked, underestimated early disciples turned their world upside in the book of Acts through Holy Spirit-empowered prayer and evangelism, your students can too!



www.gospeladvancing.org | www.dare2share.org

© 2019 Dare 2 Share Ministries. Reprint/redistribution permission is granted for up to 50 copies. Not for resale.