How to build a Gospel Advancing Ministry!

Leaders Fully Embrace & Model It

**Opening illustration:**

Loading the truck during the Dare 2 Share tour…guy we were hiring from another major organization…we wanted leaders who fully embraced and modeled it.

Value #3 Leaders fully embrace and model it.

I want you to think back to the leaders who invested in your life as a teenager. What made them unique? What was it about them that made such an impact?

I thank God for the adult and student leaders who invested in my life as a street kid whose family had been radically transformed by the Gospel of Jesus. If there were a Christian version of The Academy Awards to celebrate people who’ve made an impact on my life, there would be a long list of people I’d thank:

* I’d thank Kenny Sanchez. He was not only my youth leader, he was one of my mentors and, for years, my boss on the roof. I’ll never forget the all night drive we had in a school bus full of junior high kids. I was barely old enough to go on that camp and he asked me to talk to him as he drove the bus through the night so he wouldn’t fall asleep. That conversation marked me for life and helped solidify my calling into ministry.
* I’d thank Mark Schweitzer for teaching me how to live with intentionality for the Gospel without getting caught up in all the legalism. He and his wife Kim invited me over to their house consistently and helped me understand the power of living fueled by love instead of the list.
* On a student leader level I’d thank Richie Martinez. He was that cool upperclassman who led the way on a teen level. He didn’t leverage his popularity for his own benefit but so that younger teenagers like me could learn to passionately follow Jesus and tell others about Him.
* But that list wouldn’t stop there. I’d thank Coach Bill Adams. My teachers Renee Younger, Brenda Widgren, Joe Potter, Dave and Lisa Cannon, George Heckman and so many more.

These were leaders who led the way. They didn’t just tell me what to do—they showed me what to do. They lived out the message and spoke it out as well.

The reason I’m leading Dare 2 Share today is that I saw it modeled by countless adult and student leaders in my youth group. To me, living a Gospel Advancing lifestyle was not some ethereal, pie-in-the-sky theory. It was fully embraced and modeled by those who discipled me. In our youth ministry you couldn’t be a youth leader unless you were willing to set the pace and when it came to incarnating and advancing the Gospel.

Who you choose to lead your teenagers is crucial. Your teen and adult leaders set the pace for the rest of the group. They are the bar you are setting for your teenagers. It’s a non-verbal way of telling your teenagers, “This is what I want you to be like. Here’s what it means to be an on-fire Christian. Take a look at their lives and follow in their path.”

That doesn’t mean that they have to start fully matured and ready to go. But it does mean that they need to be willing to get there.

This is exactly what happened with the ministry of Jesus. He chose leaders who were willing to set the pace, pick up their cross, die to their own ambitions and show others what it meant to live and give the Gospel.

After 3 ½ years of relational investment, they were ready. It’s kind of interesting that most of the disciples were probably teenagers when they began to follow Jesus and that it’s basically the same amount of time a teenager is in high school from their Freshman to the Senior year, minus summer breaks.

After Jesus ascended into heaven and sent his Spirit to indwell them, all of that relational and theological training Jesus had invested into his leadership time was activated and incarnated in powerful ways.

By the time we get to Acts 4, we see that Peter and John were a different level of leader. They had been transformed from teenagers into teen leaders and, after a night in jail for preaching the Gospel, stood before the ruling council of Jews, the Sanhedrin, and boldly shared the Gospel. In Acts 4:12,13 they tell the same council who had Jesus crucified these words,

*“‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.’ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”* Acts 4:12,13

How do we, like Jesus, invest in our teenagers to the point that they set the pace? And what do we look for and go for when it comes to Gospel Advancing leaders? Those answers are riveted right into the wall of this passage. In this podcast we are going to see the **3 defining characteristics of Gospel Advancing students and adults** who should be the leaders who lead the way for the rest of your youth group.

Leaders who model a Gospel Advancing Life are…

1. Clear in their message

*“‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.’”* Acts 4:12

Jesus preached a clear message to the disciples (John 3:16 and John 14:6) and they preached that same simple message to the Jews in Acts 3 and 4. They were clear in their message.

This brand of leader boldly proclaims the clear and simple truth that Jesus is the only way of salvation. And they keep it simple as they communicate it.

Why is this important? Because if the message is not clear, then teenagers won’t understand it, and if they don’t understand it, they won’t embrace it.

There’s an old preacher’s saying, “If there’s a mist in the pulpit, there’s a fog in the pew.” That means if the preacher is not clear in his or her message then the people won’t be clear in their message.

What’s true of preachers is true of adult and student leaders. We need to help them understand the core of the message of the Gospel and be able to communicate it clearly.

* 1. It is an exclusive message

v. 12 reminds us, *“…there is no other name under heaven…by which we must be saved.”*

And what is that name? It’s mentioned by Peter in the two verses before. He tells them,

*“It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’”* Acts 4:10,11

Preaching in India…Multiple gods….Cobra problem… “Stand upon the chair!”

We must make sure our leaders have the message down and are fully convicted that, to be saved, they must stand fully and exclusively on Jesus in faith.

* 1. It is an inclusive offer

Again v. 12 reminds us of another truth that seems to stand opposite of exclusivity. It’s inclusive. In the words of Peter the way of salvation is, *“…given to mankind….”*

There’s no person on the planet who can’t receive Him. Salvation is open to all who believe. No matter what race, religion, color or creed all can receive this good news of Jesus through faith!

What if someone is gay? Doesn’t matter!

What if someone is a criminal? Doesn’t matter!

What if they’re a Satanist or serial killer? Doesn’t matter!

They can receive Jesus through faith and then Jesus will begin His good work to transform them from the inside out.

Someone once said, “You don’t have to get cleaned up before you take a bath” and you don’t have to get cleaned up before you come to Jesus. Come to Jesus and He will clean you up!

By the way… (give the Gospel)

Make sure your leaders, both adult and student, have Gospel fluency. That’s why I love the GOSPEL acrostic (go over!)

Zane Black, the guy who’s been preaching at my side for the last 15 years or so, tells the story of teaching a class on evangelism at Timberline, a Torchbearers Center…Kid who stands up and quotes it…

**Do your leaders have Gospel fluency?**

1. Courageous in their witness

*“When they saw the courage of Peter and John….”* Acts 4:13

There’s something about courage that inspires more courage.

In the Old Testament we read about the courage of Jonathan and his armor bearer who broke away from the safety of the camp to challenge some Philistines on a cliff. God used their courage to inspire courage in the rest of the Israelites.

The courage of David who took on a giant with nothing but a sling and a stone. His courage inspired courage in the other Israelites and they catapulted out of their foxholes and chased the Philistines down.

**What’s true in the Old Testament with war is true of the New Testament with evangelism**. Peter and John’s courage in this passage inspired courage in the rest of the church at the end of chapter 4. As a result of their courage the rest of the church shares their faith!

The same thing happens when your adult and student leaders share their faith courageously! The rest of your group gets the faith sharing fire!

And courage is not only essential for the evangelism process. It is also essential for the discipleship process.

In their book, Faith for Exiles, David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock describe in detail the 5 characteristics of resilient young Christians who aren’t just surviving in Babylon but, like Daniel, Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego, thriving in it. One of the key characteristics is that they engage in a countercultural mission. On page 181 of their excellent book they write,

*“Among more than forty statements and factors in the category of countercultural mission, the most commonly embraced among resilient disciples is ‘I want others to see Jesus reflected in me through my words and actions.’ Nine out of ten resilients strongly agree. Three-quarters strongly feel that ‘I, personally, have a responsibility to tell others abut my religious beliefs,’ and two-thirds are ‘excited by the mission of the church in today’s world.’”*

And installing courage into teenagers is key to this. The book challenges leaders to help young people take, in their words, “epic risks” to say and do what is right.

And there is nothing more epically risky than evangelism. That’s why for the last 28 years we have mobilized teenagers to take epic risks when it comes to evangelism:

* The videos we have teens post during Dare 2 Share LIVE.
* The calls we have them make at Lead THE Cause.
* The outreaches we have them go on.

The palpable nervousness in the room and the conquering courage they experience as a result.

* + The “sound of evangelism” after the outreach

Kinnaman and Matlock write, “*Here’s where things get tricky: the Christian community, including parents, church leaders and other well-meaning stakeholders, sometimes works at cross purposes with regard to young disciples’ participation in countercultural mission. We try to keep them insulated. We helicopter parent them. We imagine that safety and security are kingdom values. We want them to change the world around them, but only at a reasonable distance. We like the idea of countercultural mission, but in practice, here in exile, it’s kind of terrifying. Living faithfully in Jerusalem, when everything is neat and predictable, is a different animal from faithfulness in Babylon. Too many of our ministry efforts prepare people for a world that doesn’t exist, undercutting our witness and passing flimsy faith to the next generation. Because honestly we are scared*.”

Boom!!! Talk about this.

Think about this! If you are not giving your teenagers regular opportunities to stretch their faith by sharing their faith, then you maybe have a helicopter style, not of parenting, but of pastoring.

More than just mission trips and outreaches.

(I think youth leaders often check off courage under these…Instead of “epic risks” they give them “Micro risks” of inviting their friends to an outreach meeting or doing service projects in the inner city.)

But the biggest risk you can give your teenagers is to help them live a life on mission. And to do this your leaders must be leading the way.

I go back to the adult and student leaders who I was raised with. I saw them ALL taking epic risks…FRIDAY NIGHT SOULWINNING!

Story telling culture

Do your leaders have Gospel courage?

1. Credible in their lifestyle

I’m sure you’ve heard the old saying, “You’re actions speak so loudly I can’t hear what you are saying.” This is so true when it comes to youth ministry.

*“…and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”* Acts 4:13

* 1. Not rooted in their schooling, work, title or background.

Peter and John are speaking to the Jewish rulers, elders, and scribes, including the high priest, giving an account of how they had healed a crippled man the day prior. The leaders use two words here to describe Peter and John:

(1) Uneducated (*agrammatos*;) which means: unlettered, illiterate or unlearned.

(2) Untrained (*idiótés;* phonetic pronunciation: id-ee-o'-tace) which means an ignoramus (compare idiot), ignorant, unlearned. This is where we get our word “idiot.”

Now, I’m a big believer in theological training. Although I never went to seminary, I always wanted to. But, sometimes when people go to seminary, their passion for Jesus begins to wane. And it’s our time with Jesus that keeps us going and growing. It gives us the courage that we need to proclaim the Gospel in a hostile culture.

* 1. Fully rooted in their time with Jesus.

For them, what did this mean? Actual time with Jesus when He was on earth and on-going time with Jesus through prayer, worship and the Word.

What does this look like today?

* Time in the Bible, prayer and worship on a regular basis.
	+ Not just the New Testament by the way. Not just the Gospels by the way….they’re all red letters!
	+ Great resources out there for teenagers and adult leaders: Streetlights Bible App, Read Scripture App, YouVersion Bible …A Solid Study Bible…A journal.
		- Accountability without legalism… help them identify and keep their own rhythm.
* A moment-by-moment quest to live empowered by the same Spirit who empowered Jesus.
	+ Jumper cable Christians vs. Spirit Charged Super Saints….the steady current of the Spirit!

Do your leaders have Gospel credibility?

Not perfection but progression! Willingness to go for it! Willingness to learn and grow!

Gospel Advancing leaders are clear in their message, courageous in their witness and credible in their lifestyle.

I think of Luke Long