

7 Reasons Your Teens Aren't Sharing Their Faith More Often

Do you ever wonder why teenagers, whom you have seen brought up in the church, aren't very forthright about spreading the gospel? There could be several reasons for this, including these seven:

1. Because you're doing it for them. Think "outreach" in youth ministry and we automatically think "event." The words go together like "dodge" and "ball." The challenge is that our teenagers themselves are our biggest outreach "event." Because the average teenager has around 400 online and face-to-face friends they must be inspired, equipped and unleashed to engage them in Gospel conversations. Think about that for a moment, the average teenager has more friends than the average youth room can hold! But we have an almost irrepressible appetite for doing outreach events instead of mobilizing our teenagers to be the outreach event.

To make the switch we must turn from quarterbacks to coaches. Instead of just saying, "Hey, kids, bring your friends out and watch me throw the touchdown throw of salvation in their lives," we must equip them to bring the "J" word up with their own peers. Of course, outreach events are fine and good and needed from time to time. But if they are replacing, rather than enhancing, our teenagers' personal evangelism efforts then they are limiting our true outreach effectiveness.

2. They don't understand the urgency. When's the last time you talked about the reality of hell with your teenagers? Yes, that's right, hell. Of the 12 times the word "hell" is mentioned in the New Testament 11 are mentioned by Jesus Himself. Perhaps the scariest story in all of the Bible is the

story of the rich man and Lazarus. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus paints a picture of eternity in hell in terrifying colors. Was he using scare tactics? Of course he was! In the same way a dad uses scare tactics on their 4-year-old child who is chasing a ball toward a busy street at rush hour.

It's out of love that Jesus "scares" us with what is at stake for those who are lost. And, of course, we want to motivate teenagers to share the good news of Jesus to their lost friends, not just because of the hell they are headed to but because of the "hell" they are going *through* apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself was clearly motivated by this: "But when He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted and were scattered, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

3. It's not a true priority in your youth ministry. I'll never forget getting a personal tour of a multimillion dollar nonprofit Christian ministry and asking the tour guide an awkward question. On a plaque this ministry had listed their values and priorities for all who entered their building to see. The first one was evangelism. I simply asked the tour guide which of their many divisions were focused on evangelism and how it was being fleshed out on a grass-roots level. She looked at me dumbfounded (as the other ministry leaders who were with me cringed.) Evangelism was a plaque priority but not a real priority in this ministry. The same is true in many churches and youth ministries.

D.L. Moody used to say that he could tell more about a man's priorities by his checkbook than his prayerbook. Why? Because we put our money where our heart is! I say that I can tell more about a youth ministry's priorities when it comes to evangelism by its Wednesday night program rundown than any clever missional slogan ("to know him and make him known," etc.) on their ministry flyer or website page.

If evangelism is truly a priority, then are youth leaders

scheduling time for evangelism training on their calendars and in their weekly meetings? Are you carving out time to have teenagers share stories (good, bad and ugly) about gospel conversations they are currently engaged in? Are you taking the time to give the gospel just in case any unreached teens showed up that week? Youth leaders schedule time for games, announcements, teaching, worship and even snacks on a weekly basis. Are you also scheduling time for the advancement of the most important message on the planet (aka “the gospel”)?

4. They don't know how to bring it up. If teenagers don't know how to bring up the gospel to their friends they probably won't. If their friend says, “It's hot in here” and they respond “It's hot in hell too,” that's probably not the best strategy. Teenagers must be equipped to naturally engage their friends by asking questions and listening. The free Dare 2 Share app has a simple strategy we use called “Ask, Admire, Admit” on the “How 2 Share” segment than can be very effective in equipping teenagers to bring the good news up with their peers. We also have developed high-quality, beautifully illustrated outreach books that youth leaders can receive free of charge on .

Over 260,000 of these books are being used across the nation to help teenagers engage in gospel conversations. Teenagers simply write a note in the front of the book, hand it to their friend, ask them to read it and then to talk with them about it afterward. A brilliant and simple plan for teenagers to bring the gospel up with their friends.

5. It's not being modeled by your leaders (and, yes, that includes you). Share the gospel. Have your leaders do the same. Set the pace as leaders. Enough said.

6. They suffer from a lack of gospel fluency. Could your teenagers pass the microphone test? If I put a microphone up to their face as they were leaving youth group and said, “You have two minutes to explain the gospel message to me” could

they do it in a clear and comprehensive enough way for a lost person to understand the good news? If not, then your teenagers are not fluent enough in the gospel message.

A few years back, Propaganda (Jason Petty) and yours truly did a youth group curriculum video series called Life in 6 Words: The Gospel Explored that is designed to build your teenagers' gospel fluency. Get it and use it. When you're finished your teenagers should be able to pass the microphone test.

7. Not enough intercessory prayer. "Therefore I exhort first of all that you make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for everyone, for kings and for all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

Is intercessory prayer for the lost a *"first-of-all"* level priority in your youth ministry? As someone once said, *"We must learn to talk to God about men before we talk to men about God."*

If every week in youth group you set aside some time for intercessory prayer for the salvation of the unreached teenagers in your community, God's unquenchable love for the lost will begin to marinate into the souls of your teenagers. As they yield to the person of the Spirit in prayer they will also yield to the passion of the Spirit in evangelism.

These seven obstacles to your teenagers sharing their faith can be removed if you are willing to prayerfully and persistently make evangelism a youth-group wide priority as well as one in your own life.

So let's get cracking!

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