

THE  
DISCIPLESHIP  
PLACE

Youth Ministry Academy

*Created by Nazarene Youth International (NYI) and  
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**SESSION 11**

Youth Ministry Discipleship:  
Witness and Evangelism

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# Youth Ministry Discipleship: Witness and Evangelism

## SESSION OVERVIEW

**Motivation for Evangelism**

**Models for Evangelism**

**Building Relationships and  
Overcoming Diversions**

**Methods for Relational Evangelism**

**Teaching Youth How to Share Their Faith**

**Application**

**Exam**

**Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant**

## INTRODUCTION

Youth ministry serves God as we witness and proclaim the gospel to young people. Youth leaders and youth should share this responsibility. This session teaches how to understand and effectively lead youth in witness and evangelism.

## LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should be able to:

- understand the importance of witnessing as a sign of one's Christian life.
- define relational evangelism with youth.
- identify and develop different evangelistic approaches.
- teach youth how to share their faith with peers and their families.

## MOTIVATION FOR EVANGELISM

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### NOTES

When youth leaders seek the proper motivation for evangelism, the Scripture offers a major source. Anchored in the message and mission of Jesus, revealed through the power of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, many of the writers in the New Testament constantly exhort Christians to reach out with the message of salvation. There may be other resources to help us understand the nature of evangelism in our contemporary culture, but Scripture provides the logical beginning point for understanding the importance of our Christian witness in every situation including youth ministry.

There are a number of key insights from the Scriptures. Some of the most important begin with the good news. God takes the first initiative to save people from their sinful, hopeless condition. Our witness serves as a response to what God has done and is already doing in our lives. We are called to practice the gospel by our very presence in society. Our actions as Christians often speak louder than merely talking about our faith. Evangelism must be the proclamation of the gospel in both word and deed, providing the message of Jesus by living lives modeled after Jesus. That is not what all Scripture says, but these ideas challenge us to take seriously everything we do as ministers as part of our Christian witness.

## MODELS FOR EVANGELISM



### NOTES

Our witness as Christians, particularly our efforts to evangelize people, occur only as we prayerfully, patiently, and persistently, work with individuals regardless of their life circumstance. Such an approach proves crucial when reaching out to young people. Depending on culture and personal context, the moment of presenting the gospel message, of evangelizing youth, may take different expressions. Historically the Church has adopted several approaches that seem to relate to various approaches in the Bible.

#### *Confrontation*

This approach confronts a person with the logical direction their current life will take them (personal and spiritual destruction) and offers a frank but redemptive alternative. Sometimes confrontation arises through negative critique and challenging a young person. Sometimes young people find themselves confronted through radical healing or unexpected expression of love and care in someone's life. Confrontation may be either positive or negative, but the moment of confrontation opens the opportunity to show a redemptive alternative.

The biblical imagery that undergirds this approach rests in Acts 9 with the apostle Paul's Damascus journey where Saul (Paul) finds himself confronted by the resurrected Christ, knocked off his feet, blind, but ultimately understands the full meaning to his encounter with Jesus. He then proceeds with the same zeal in proclaiming the gospel and testifying to his transformation. Youth ministers who use this approach should always avoid the danger of manipulating youth emotions with extreme and fearful images. Nevertheless, real confrontation allows youth to accept for themselves the claims of the gospel.

#### *Invitation*

This approach acknowledges a person's life is a journey but also invites people to allow Jesus to enter into that journey. Rather than focus on negative aspects of a young person's life, this view often includes the assertion the Christian life provides a sense of meaning and fulfillment to what God has in mind. Ministers do encourage specific decisions but many times based on the strength of their relationship with the youth and the possibilities of what God might accomplish. Often young people are already active within the youth ministry but have not made a specific commitment until the youth minister engages them and makes them aware of the different ways Christ can become even more important to them.



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Often this form of evangelism finds biblical imagery in Luke 24:13-35, the Emmaus Road journey. Christ joins travelers on the journey, opens their minds to the importance of His life from the Scriptures, and never pushes. It seems almost to move on until an act of hospitality by the travelers allows Jesus to be recognized, only to disappear again so the travelers now changed can continue their journey.

Specific conversion experiences may seem more elusive in this approach. Often youth merely see themselves continuing the journey, but their hearts are indeed made warm by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Youth ministers using this approach have to make sure youth do not accept Christ just to meet personal needs. Jesus not only fulfills longings but also challenges young people to follow Him instead of their personal desires. Nevertheless, this developmental approach often allows youth to embrace Jesus at a level consistent with their personal journey.

Borrowing a term from Chris Folmsbee, in his book *A New Kind of Youth Ministry*, this approach encourages youth to bring their friends for an engaging activity, a brief gospel invitation, or an opportunity to discuss the event over food. This particular approach reflects a seeker sensitive approach that encourages a real love for the unreached while also seeking approaches that will invite them into the church through the youth group. The blend of friendship evangelism and event-based evangelism allows youth ministers to offer nonthreatening opportunities with the hope that, on occasion, these events will result in energizing moments of deep encounter. Folmsbee admits this approach may not always prove effective since there are a number of challenges, including the tendency for youth to not think about their Christian witness beyond the events themselves. Often discipleship can be lacking, so youth evaluate the ministry based on the quality of these events. However, limited use of these gatherings can provide an opportunity for moments of deep awareness and commitment.

### *Participation*

This approach begins through a person's regular participation in a community of faith and sees salvation occurring in the midst of regular practice. Sometimes participation includes growth in one's spiritual journey until young people suddenly come to an awareness they have to embrace their Christian faith as part of their growth in grace. At other times participation begins in the mission of God, serving others until the person comes to the reality they need to embrace authentic faith, or until they discover they now possess a faith they did not know they had.

The biblical imagery that undergirds this approach often begins in Exodus with God's efforts to guide the children of Israel through the wilderness and the many practices and observances used to shape them into God's people. This imagery

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continues in the New Testament in Acts 2:42-47 and through the New Testament writers. The church is encouraged and exhorted to be open yet consistent in engaging youth in ongoing practices until they “reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Youth leaders must be careful not to assume that activity always indicates a clear sign of salvation. Young people need to embrace God by faith. Nevertheless, young people often awaken to this faith under the strong relational bonds of the youth group, a consistent vision of the gospel as the reason for the existence of the group, and carefully designed practices that embody the Christian life.

Chris Folmsbee notes the future may call for a life-dynamic evangelism that calls us to enter into the lives of non-believers rather than attracting them to the church and using our daily walk as the form of witness that encourages others to see God’s love through us. Following Luke’s account of Jesus, this approach assumes God is at work in the lives of youth regardless of where they live. Youth ministers must go and live incarnationally by witnessing with their lives.

Pete Ward in his text, *God at the Mall*, asserts this approach often calls youth ministers to engage youth who are often outside the traditional influence of the Church. Ward notes this strategy often requires not only contact, but extended contact with youth who require considerable time before they will trust someone different. Even after initial evangelism many youth require extended nurture before incorporation within the Church. Youth ministers must be willing to enter into the lives of youth and spend time in their world in order to make a difference in their lives.

Context, cultural expectations, and personal life experience all influence our evangelistic approach. Approaches may be confrontational or developmental, they may occur over long periods of time in community or in strategic moments. Even these approaches do not adequately summarize the myriad ways God uses human beings as instruments of Christ’s saving actions through the Holy Spirit in the lives of youth.

Perhaps the best known of all approaches still relies on relational evangelism. Jim Burns and Mark DeVries, in *An Uncommon Youth Ministry*, note the majority of people become Christians through influential relationships and family relationships. People respond to Christians with a vibrant, genuine, lifestyle.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND OVERCOMING DIVERSIONS



### NOTES

Engaging with youth in relational evangelism is vital, so when the opportunity arises we can address their life in a way that opens the door to evangelism. We must acknowledge evangelism with youth begins with our ability to build relationships with young people. There are a number of key concepts to creating a quality relationship so we can offer the good news of the gospel.

#### *Key Concepts for Building Relationships*

- *Consistency builds friendships.* Relationships often begin informally with consistent communication. Communicating with youth and promoting the efforts of young people reveals an interest in their lives. For instance, basic practices like circulating a regular monthly newsletter or general correspondence through church publications may appear impersonal; however, these actions remind young people you want to stay in regular communication with everyone on a consistent basis.
- *Demonstrate hospitality.* Invite young people to your home or a public meeting place for a meal, beverage, or just sharing. You do not have to force these opportunities but a lot can happen over cokes and conversation.
- *Cultivate common interests.* Discovering a similar interest or hobby creates real opportunities to build relationships. We must be willing to invest ourselves in a young person's personal passions. Take time to discover and share mutual interests in topics you both enjoy.
- *Develop a care-giving mindset.* In our contemporary society we see a number of hurting young people. Youth face family problems, broken marriages, health issues, feelings of rejection, times of failure, interpersonal pain, and the challenges go on. Simply providing Christian care and guidance when the opportunity arises in these situations sets the stage for building bridges to evangelism.
- *Develop practical service.* Youth may also build relationships through compassionate service. There are a number of lonely or hurting people, including the elderly and children, who will appreciate young people calling and spending time with them. These efforts create opportunities for relationships that may lead to witness and evangelism. Youth may be either the agents or the recipients of the gospel through these encounters.



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Building relationships proves important not only for presenting the gospel but for living out our Christian witness based on what God calls us to be. We must take care not to build relationships just to present an evangelistic message or to pursue our personal agenda. We build them to make a difference in every aspect of a young person's life. Sometimes relationships merely serve as a supportive presence when a young person needs support. Other times those relationships will open up opportunities to address spiritual issues and evangelize the youth.

Relationships do not end once we have presented the gospel. They must continue as we extend opportunities to build Christlike lives and empower youth to make a difference in the lives of their friends and family. Building relationships may be the beginning of evangelism but establishing relationships reflect our witness. Maintaining relationships establish our desire to work for the best in every young person.

Reaching global youth remains a prime concern for the Church particularly as we note their personal challenges which may sometimes include diversions such as:

- loneliness.
- lack of boundaries.
- struggle with self-worth.
- preoccupation with popular culture (music, technology).
- escapism as a solution to problems.
- rising anger.
- loss of meaning.
- tendency to live only in the present moment.
- premature callousness.

No one can read the gospel records without noticing Jesus' care for each person. Our witness and evangelism is effective only when we prayerfully and persistently work with individuals through their experiences and personal challenges. In youth evangelism, our disciplined, respectful investment in the life of youth can establish receptivity to the message we preach or share personally.

## METHODS FOR RELATIONAL EVANGELISM



### NOTES

Regardless of diversions, we can move from building relationships to bringing the good news to people. There are some basic approaches that help us much like Jesus used in engaging others.

#### *Key Principles for Relational Evangelism (John 4)*

- *Establish natural contacts.* The best opportunities for evangelism occur naturally in ordinary settings. If we are learning to live and walk in the Spirit, things will just happen in our everyday life: in a school cafeteria, in a coffee shop, during casual talk within our neighborhood, or other settings. Jesus dealt with the Samaritan woman in a common daily setting and built appropriate bridges to talk with her.
- *Cultivate interest and eagerness.* When we make initial contact we need to develop an engaging conversation that sparks ongoing curiosity through stimulating or intriguing statements. Jesus neither quoted Scripture to the Samaritan woman nor uncovered the gospel before she was ready for it. Her curiosity was aroused when His conversation pointed beyond her present experience. We need to get a person to a stage where he or she asks questions or requests our help. Reality, integrity, and testimony can make people curious about Christ. Young people often ask, “Is it real?” or “Where is the evidence for what you are saying?” Our life will show the truth if we live what we say. Relational evangelism requires integrity, modeling consistent wisdom, discernment, faith, and initiative that must flow out of our lives. Finally, personal testimony can make people curious to know more since such testimony carries its own authority and conviction.
- *Engage life issues.* Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman brought out the disappointments of her life. Jesus showed concern for those issues that mattered most to her. In personal evangelism, touching core problems remains a necessary task in leading a person toward a commitment to Christ.
- *Redirect diversions.* Bringing the person back to spiritual issues is important. Young people can divert the conversation which detracts from the main focus.

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- *Engage personal commitment.* Ultimately we seek to bring youth to a personal commitment. Jesus came face to face with the reality of the Samaritan women. One approach may begin with giving our own testimony and inviting the young person to also open his or her own life to Jesus. Often we can use a simple strategy once we have reached the level where young people are ready to hear the gospel. The ABCs of evangelism includes:
  - A. *Admit and Accept.* Admit our life does not match God's intent and accept that even when we have failed God loves us enough to reach beyond our limitations
  - B. *Believe.* God has provided a means for our salvation through Jesus Christ. We do not need anything else other than to believe this strong enough to put our trust in this fact.
  - C. *Confess.* The final stage is to put our belief on the line by confessing to God not only where we are but more importantly our trust in Jesus Christ.
- *Prayer and commitment.* Ultimately we must bring a person to pray and commit. Often the moment of personal commitment may appear quite different depending upon the young person's personal context. We must be ready to respond and encourage a commitment. Scripture provides resources that speak of God's response to different circumstances.

As noted, diversions present a key challenge to our efforts in Christian witness. Jesus' engagement with the Samaritan woman takes us through Jesus' method of dealing with a seeker. His gentle approach to the needy Samaritan woman and his responses to diversions prove instructive. Once a young person has made a commitment, youth ministers must be ready to follow-up with ongoing discipleship. Evangelism proves incomplete without a commitment to disciple a young person after they have made a decision for Christ. This commitment involves the local church. We must motivate the entire congregation in reaching young people.

## TEACHING YOUTH HOW TO SHARE THEIR FAITH



### NOTES

Young people serve a key role in evangelizing their peers. Sharing faith with fellow youth will influence the entire church. Often young people respond well and invest in the congregation if we take seriously their role in reaching youth for Christ. Youth need preparation if they are to be faithful evangelists and witnesses both in relational and group evangelism.

#### *Learning to Prepare an Evangelistic Message*

While often considered preparation for large group evangelism, understanding the basics of an evangelistic message prepare youth not only for speaking but also for a deeper understanding of the gospel in relational settings. There are a number of considerations when preparing an appealing evangelistic message.

Youth must invest in prayer and personal holiness for clear insights into their own personal journey and a deeper understanding of human frailty, as well as a deeper appreciation of God's good news. Youth need to learn how to understand their listeners. Knowledge of the intended audience remains an important factor in selecting the Scripture on which to base their message. Young people need to understand the heart of the gospel; that good news of salvation is in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They must spend time studying their Bible, reading, rereading, and discovering questions which bring out the facts.

Youth need help constructing their message. When we construct our message we trust the Holy Spirit is the supreme evangelist; however, we must choose a message that will stay in the hearer's mind. Good beginning texts include Luke 15:11-24 and John 3:1-16. Youth need your supervision and guidance as they engage in this activity. Finally it is essential youth include some application points to insure their message reaches youth.

#### *Learning to Share Personal Testimony*

Youth need assistance in sharing their personal testimony with peers. Church scholars note in the Early Church a person's personal testimony revealed the truth of the message. One way to train youth involves three steps:

- my story/life before God
- hearing God's story
- my story/life with God



Sometimes it is better for youth to start with their contemporary testimony; where they are today. They need to include how God is working in their lives. Sharing their own experience with the power of Jesus in their lives often provides both the method and motivation for the need to share the gospel with others.

#### *Learning to Reach the Home*

It is important to value home or family-based evangelism. Family evangelism offers positive advantages and provides several important opportunities for spreading the gospel for you as a leader and for the youth. The sheer informality and relaxed atmosphere of the home, not to mention the hospitality associated with the family, all help to make this form of evangelism particularly successful.

Youth may not always serve as the best evangelist in this setting but often they can create a hospitable context that allows ministers or other Christian adults to engage in evangelistic conversations. Home visits offer a powerful medium for reaching people. Bible study at home provides the entire family, especially children and youth, a stable environment for Christian faith formation.

When youth encounter Christians who remain genuinely respectful of them as persons, taking full interest in every aspect of their lives, these young people will find themselves receptive to the message of the gospel.

## APPLICATION

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**NOTES**

1. Spend time talking with at least five young people about their salvation experience both in coming to faith and also in being nurtured as Christians. Write down a summary of your conversations. How important was relationship building in those conversations?
2. Using the material in this session, prepare a class session for teaching Christian youth the basic skills for evangelizing youth and others they might encounter or know closely. How would you use the format of this lesson (motivator, introduction, covering basic information, incorporating discussion and small groups, closing) in developing your lesson with youth? Bring the prepared lesson with you when you meet your mentor.
3. Develop a plan for how you are going to use your youth group to teach, preach, witness, and serve others.



## EXAM



### NOTES

1. Youth leaders and youth should share the responsibility of evangelism.
  - A. True
  - B. False
2. Evangelism must be the proclamation of the gospel in both word and deed.
  - A. True
  - B. False
3. Youth leaders should assume that activity always indicates a clear sign of salvation.
  - A. True
  - B. False
4. The majority of people become Christians through influential and family relationships.
  - A. True
  - B. False
5. Evangelism may call us to enter into the life of unbelievers rather than invite them to the church.
  - A. True
  - B. False
6. Key concepts for building relationships include \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. consistency
  - B. hospitality
  - C. cultivating common interests
  - D. develop a care-giving mindset
  - E. all of the above
7. Youth evangelism should always include follow-up and discipleship.
  - A. True
  - B. False
8. Youth need preparation if they are to be faithful evangelists and witnesses both in relational and group evangelism.
  - A. True
  - B. False



9. Youth are always the best evangelists in their own family.
- A. True
  - B. False

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

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NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Which approaches to youth evangelism have you seen at work in your context? Why do you believe certain approach might be more important in light of youth culture in your setting?
2. When thinking about the key concepts that build relationships, which offer the best chance for developing relationships with youth in your setting? Why?
3. What are some key diversions people use to detract from the gospel message?
4. What are some advantages to concentrating on preparing young people for reaching youth for Christ?
5. Do your youth have the opportunity to preach? Not just the ones that have felt a call to preach but everyone? How valuable would that be to both the group and the individuals? What kind of church leaders would these young people become? Have you thought about a regular schedule where each week one of your youth gives a 5 minute sermon?
6. Have any of you had experience with helping youth prepare their testimony? What helped them the most? How often do you have the youth in your group give their testimonies to the group?