

BUILDING A

DEEP

**AND
WIDE**

YOUTH MINISTRY

...Help Your Teens Become Disciple Multipliers

A Youth Leader eResource
By Greg Stier



DARE 2 SHARE

Greg Stier

Greg Stier has been used by God to impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of teenagers across America. He combines amazing true-life stories with his own unique brand of humor to communicate Biblical truth in a way that not only inspires, but equips teenagers for action. As founder and president of Dare 2 Share, Greg leads his team toward the single goal of mobilizing teenagers to reach their world with the good news of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). He is the author of fifteen books and numerous resources, including *Life in 6 Words*, *Dare 2 Share: A Field Guide for Sharing Your Faith* and *Firing Jesus*.



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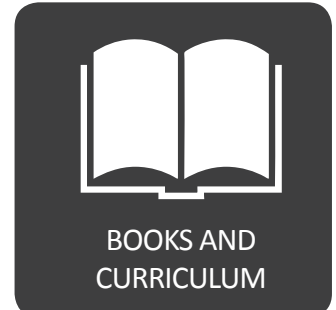


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BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Introduction	5
Section 1 - What is Deep & Wide Youth Ministry?.....	6
Section 2 - Steps to Launching a Deep & Wide Youth Ministry	17
Step 1 - Model it Yourself.....	17
Step 2 - Adopt and Adapt the Deep & Wide Grid.....	18
Step 3 - Identify Where Your Teens Are at Spiritually.....	21
Step 4 - Assess Your Youth Ministry's Effectiveness.....	28
Step 5 - Start to Nudge Your Teens Wide with the Gospel.....	30
Step 6 - Help Your Teens Grow Deep with God.....	37
Step 7 - Pray and Purify.....	39
Our Vision for THE Cause	42

Jesus made disciples who made disciples. You can too.

How? By building a youth ministry that's based on His discipleship model: a gospel-advancing, disciple-multiplying ministry model. At Dare 2 Share (D2S), we call this Deep & Wide Youth Ministry.

Deep & Wide is not a program, but a philosophy of youth ministry that's 2,000 years old. The paradigm shifting principles you will learn and apply in the pages that follow can transform the way you view and do youth ministry. These principles are failsafe because they come from our Lord Jesus Christ. Incorporating them into your ministry may be messy, but we're convinced that a Deep & Wide ministry approach will yield growth, both numerically and spiritually.

In a youth ministry world that is full of "the next new thing," it's easy to forget the basics of what Jesus has called youth leaders to do: make disciples. So pause right now and ask yourself this simple, but dangerous, question: "Are you making disciples who make disciples?"

Too many times it's easy to think we are because of the ministry stuff that we cram into our schedules week in and week out. And while youth ministry programs, game nights, curriculums and camps can be good, they should only be kept if they are helping us reach that one overriding goal.

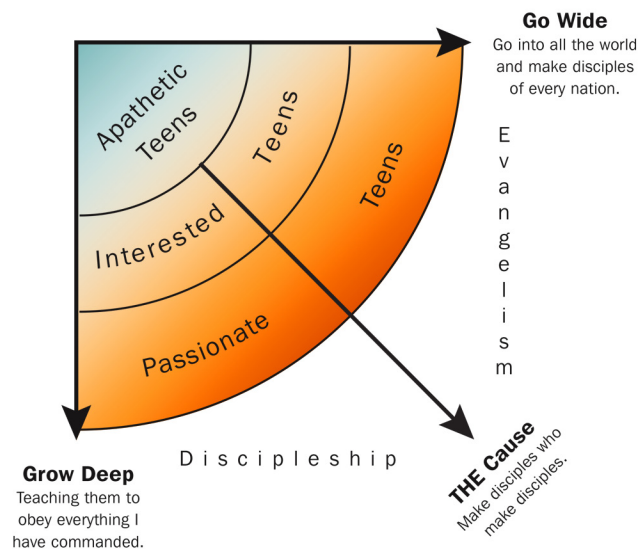
Making disciples is messy work. Implementing what you discover in the pages that follow will be messy work as well. But, with the help of the Holy Spirit and guidance from God's Word you can see real discipleship erupt in your youth group.

...ask yourself this simple, but dangerous, question: "Are you making disciples who make disciples?"

SECTION 1: What is Deep & Wide Youth Ministry?

Deep & Wide Youth Ministry is a ministry philosophy that prayerfully pushes our teenagers to go wider into the world with the gospel (evangelism), so that they will grow deeper in their relationship with God (discipleship). This ministry approach is most effective when the teens in your group are making disciples who make disciples. In other words, going wide, growing deep, and then taking others on this journey with them.

Check out the Deep & Wide ministry graph below. The grid becomes the filter through which you can run everything you do to make sure your efforts are pushing toward that one goal of making disciple-multiplying teens. As you put every lesson, retreat, conference, camp, exercise, etc., through the grid, it will force you to answer, "Does this further our efforts to make disciples who make disciples? Does it nudge teenagers deeper or wider?" If the answer is yes, it stays, if the answer is no, then it goes. Simple, right?



BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

But please don't mistake *simple* for *easy*. Although this is a simple philosophy to understand, it takes courage, discipline, wisdom and power from God to execute effectively. In a youth ministry culture that often values entertainment over evangelism, meetings over mission and topical issues over Biblical theology you may find yourself pushing against the grain of the youth ministry culture at large and maybe even in your own church.

But we are convinced that most youth leaders got into youth ministry because they love Jesus and they love teenagers. We believe that most youth leaders want to truly see their teenagers own their faith and spread it through active, effective evangelism and discipleship multiplication. If this resonates with where you're at, then the Deep & Wide Youth Ministry philosophy will give you the tools you need to see this happen.

Deep & Wide Youth Ministry has a goal that is summed up in Colossians 1:28-29,

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Paul's goal for the Colossian believers should be our goal for the teenagers in our youth groups and in our communities. Our goal is for every teenager to hear the gospel clearly (that's why "*we proclaim Him*") and for every one of them who responds to be presented "*mature in Christ.*") This is why we continue to admonish and teach with all wisdom in our youth group efforts. And, during this entire process, we remind ourselves to struggle through this with all of God's energy instead of our own. The word for "*strenuously contend*" in the Greek language is where we get our word for "agonize." In other words, as we seek to reach every teenager in our community and take every teenager who responds deep and wide, it can be a very painful process. We must remind ourselves to operate out of God's strength and not our own.

"A Mile Wide and an Inch Deep"

You've probably heard some ministries described as "a mile wide and an inch deep." On the flip side, you've most likely encountered a youth group that digs deep into the Word of God with their teenagers, but is not very effective when it comes to reaching out to the lost. Many youth leaders may dismiss the dichotomy between these two kinds of youth ministry approaches as merely stylistic.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

But Jesus grants no such reprieve to youth leaders. After all, His last and lasting mandate to His followers was:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

This “Great Commission” directive is **THE Cause** Christ has called us to—making disciples who make disciples.

Do you see the Deep & Wide elements laid out within these verses? *“Go and make disciples of all nations”* compels us to help our students “go wide” with the gospel (evangelism), while *“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded”* charges us with helping them “grow deep” in their walk with God (discipleship). But this doesn’t mean we run two sequential programs—discipleship and then evangelism. It’s **both/and** from the start! It’s Deep & Wide.

This turns much of our modern-day thinking about disciple-making on its head. Many tend to think of evangelism as an outcome of the discipleship process. But Jesus thought the opposite! He used evangelism as a trigger for discipleship. Here’s why we say that.

Jesus’ Discipleship Model

The first thing Jesus said when He called His disciples was, *“Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men”* (Matthew 4:19). Then soon after He called them, He sent them out in groups of two—long before they were well-trained or highly polished ambassadors for His message. And the last thing He said to them was, *“You will be my witnesses...”* (Acts 1:8).

“From the beginning, it was central to His call to His followers! He made spreading His message a centerpiece of His discipleship strategy.”

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

You get the definite picture here that Jesus didn't see evangelism as a "phase two" part of the Christian life. From the beginning, it was central to His call to His followers! He made spreading His message a centerpiece of His discipleship strategy. He challenged them. He pushed them. He coached them and He trained them along the way to spread the good news.

And when you read the Book of Acts, despite the fact that the disciples faced a hostile spiritual culture, repeated pressures to abandon their faith and an onslaught of trials and suffering, they were never content to simply hold on for dear life and survive. They turned their world upside down! How? They made disciples who made disciples who made disciples.

They didn't sit back in their comfortable, insular church world looking for fun and games and three keys to a better life. No matter the cost, no matter the challenges, they kept their focus outward and spread the message of the gospel. And their dynamic, disciple-multiplying movement transformed life after life, until it became unstoppable. Each new generation of believers steeled and sealed their faith as they risked everything to share Jesus' good news with others.

These early believers rocked their world because they wouldn't shut up about the gospel and because they allowed their growing relationship with God to impact every aspect of their lives. The same can happen today. Your teens can rock their world for Jesus too!

Accelerating Teens' Spiritual Growth

But a Deep & Wide approach to youth ministry will do more than spread the good news of the gospel to a world in desperate need of Jesus, important as that is. It will also accelerate your Christian teenagers' spiritual growth on several levels, because evangelism is a powerful trigger for discipleship. Here's a quick look at some of the ways it can impact your students.

It will provide them with purpose. Teenagers today want to be part of something bigger than themselves that has value. They're waiting for a cause to live for that can transform their world. And the very act of unleashing them to carry the ultimate cause—THE Cause of making disciples who make disciples—into their world, will bring a seismic attitude shift from "What's in it for me?" to "What's Jesus calling me to?"



BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

It will advance the kingdom of God exponentially. As we all know, teenagers are a ripe mission field. In fact, 85% of Christians come to faith before the age of 18. Millions of teenagers across the United States need the good news of Jesus and are far more open to hearing about Him from a friend, than from a stranger. The multiplying approach of making disciples who make disciples results in teenagers reaching teenagers who reach even more teenagers. Wouldn't it be incredible to have Christian teens on every middle and high school campus actively sharing their faith and making disciples?

It will help your teenagers become more like Jesus. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, *"The Son of Man has come to seek and save what was lost."* If you really want your teens to be transformed into His image, then their hearts must be broken for their lost friends and they must become more passionate and purposeful about reaching them. The more your teenagers are seeking and saving the lost, the more they are becoming like Jesus.

It will push your teenagers into a deeper relationship with God. As your teens begin to share their faith, they will encounter conversations and questions that will make them hungry to better understand who God is. Questions about salvation, the Trinity, freewill and eternal life will arise as they seek to explain Jesus to their friends. These questions will drive your teens to the Bible and to a deeper understanding and ownership of the basic tenants of their faith. And, more importantly, sharing the gospel will give your teenagers a deeper dependence on Jesus as they take the risk of sharing their faith with those they know and love.

Christian author Timothy Keller puts it like this, "Teenagers have a lot of information about God, but little experience of Him. Teens need to be put in positions where they are forced to rely on God."

It will give you a newfound excitement for youth ministry. Between ministry meetings, complaining parents, apathetic kids and painfully small paychecks, it's easy to become discouraged. But the real payday in youth ministry is, not only seeing teenagers come to Christ, but seeing them reach and mobilize their friends for Christ and helping them grow deeper in relationship with Him along the way. Seeing them go wide and grow deep will give you a reason to, not just survive, but thrive in youth ministry.

Cultivating a Heart like Jesus'

We all want to see our students making an impact for Christ. But too often, our ministry goals get watered down to simply hoping our students will hold on to their faith after graduation. And this is precisely the problem. Without a commitment to Jesus' vision and mission of making disciples, many of our students can easily shrug their shoulders and view their "faith" as simply a moral lifestyle option to dabble in or not. Their faith is not vibrant, living and active, but a faint wisp that will easily crumble under the slightest pressure.

Of course there are many contributing factors to the disturbing trend that shows our young people abandoning their faith in droves, but we believe that one of the key reasons is simply this: Many of these teenagers have missed the very core of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. What is that core? Developing a heart like Jesus'—a heart that burns and breaks for the lost and is passionate about God's mission to reach out with His message of grace and hope.

Because without a heart that burns and breaks for the lost, deep down where it really counts, they're really nothing like Jesus at all. We **MUST** do more than simply get them to go through the motions of being "Christian" during their high school years. Otherwise, they're in danger of becoming like little Pharisees who know the truth, but lack the heart and passion to live for Christ.

If we want our teenagers to be like Jesus, then we must help them cultivate a heart like His. As His followers, we must get serious about His driving passion and purpose: seeking and saving the lost. Jesus' directive is clear: *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"* (John 20:21).

Cause-Focused Living

As mentioned earlier, Jesus' cause is laid out for us in Matthew 28:19-20, the passage of Scripture we often refer to as "The Great Commission." At Dare 2 Share, we've found that the term "The Great Commission" (first widely used in the 1700s to recruit missionaries to go to far-flung regions of the world), doesn't really resonate with teenagers. When teens hear the word "commission," they think of the 20% commission the cell service provider sales guy just made on their 12 month phone contract.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

A “commission” is no longer understood to be a resounding call to a grand mission, like it was in the 1800s.

But what does resonate with teenagers these days are “causes.” Whether it’s “Stop Bullying” or “Go Green” or some other worthy social cause, teens are willing to join movements that will make their world a better place.

So why not explain the one cause that rises above all others, in a way teenagers can connect with? It’s the ultimate cause Jesus has called all of us to—making disciples who make disciples. Because, in the end, it’s the only cause that will transform lives both now and for all eternity!

That’s why we call it **THE** Cause.

Dangerous Discipleship!

You may be thinking about now that a shift to Deep & Wide Youth Ministry and making disciples who make disciples might be too demanding for your students. Well consider this, our teenagers are getting challenged everywhere. They get challenged in sports. They get challenged at school. They get challenged by their friends to give into peer pressure. About the only place teenagers don’t get challenged is in church.

But Jesus called His disciples to a challenging life of “fishing for men.” In Matthew 10, He warned them of the dangers they were about to face and then He sent them off to face those dangers via a community-wide mission trip.

Well consider this, our teenagers are getting challenged everywhere. They get challenged in sports. They get challenged at school. They get challenged by their friends to give into peer pressure. About the only place teenagers don’t get challenged is in church.”

Today, we tend to go in for safe, incremental discipleship programs that risk little. If I’m a teenager, I have nothing to lose in a typical youth group except an hour of time. The closest I’ll get to danger is a paper cut from turning the pages of Scripture during a lesson.

But when a teenager is put in a position of sharing their faith with their friends, everything changes. Now they have purpose.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Now they have a vested interest in understanding their faith so they can explain it to others in a clear and compelling way. Now they are hungry for spiritual truth that can reach into the lives of their lost and hurting friends. Now they are motivated to pray with passion as they see that heaven and hell stand in the balance for their friends' souls. Plus, they're scared to death—further cultivating a growing dependence on the Spirit and prayer!

Let me put it this way. Say your church leadership decided they want you to sit through a mandatory six week, 12 hour a day bomb-defusing class. You don't have to pass it. You just have to sit through it. Do you think you'd be bored after about a half an hour?

But what if you were told that after the class was over you were going to Afghanistan?

There's the problem right there. We are forcing our teenagers to sit through what feels to them like a 12 hour a day, boring, bomb-defusing class, but never deploying them into Kandahar Province! Where is Kandahar for them? It's their school. It's their Facebook page. It's their circle of friends.

The average teenager has over four hundred online and face-to-face friends. Did you know that academic research has documented what we all already know from firsthand experience? Friends have far more influence on us than strangers. In fact, one study showed that teenagers have **one hundred times** more influence on their friends than a stranger does.

Let's get our students motivated and equipped to reach their friends with the gospel and make disciples who make disciples!

Before You Begin Your Deep & Wide Journey

Here are a few things you should know before you begin this exciting journey of taking your teenagers wider into the world with the gospel and deeper into their relationship with the Lord.

1. Your ultimate guidebook to effective youth ministry is God's Word.

What you are about to discover in this Deep & Wide e-resource is a radical paradigm for youth ministry that's 2,000 years old. The something new is

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

something old in this case, a rediscovery and full recovery of a Biblical model of youth ministry.

The Word of God is the only book on this planet that is God-inspired and inerrant. It guides us in every matter of life, faith and ministry. Although it doesn't address youth ministry directly (youth ministry, after all, is a 20th Century "invention"), it presents some powerful principles that directly apply to the postmodern world of youth ministry. It will be your guidebook on this journey of discovery.

2. Your personal Guide is the Holy Spirit Himself.

The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, the One who dwells inside every believer (*"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit"* (Ephesians 1:13-14)) will enable you to take and lead this journey into Deep & Wide Youth Ministry. He will guide you and your teens wider and deeper. He will provide you with the wisdom and strength that you need to navigate the always tricky and sometimes dangerous journey into spiritual maturity and exponential growth.

Check out these verses on how the Holy Spirit is involved in the maturation process for believers:

- He will teach your teenagers to grow deeper in their relationship with God.

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

The indwelling Holy Spirit who lives inside every one of your believing teenagers will be the ultimate teacher of your teens as you seek to take them deeper and wider. While you are only with your teenagers a few hours a week at best, He is with them for the entire 168 hours. Every hour of every week and every second of every hour, He is there. He is much more serious about taking your teenagers deep and wide than you could ever be. You are not alone in this quest for the spiritual transformation of your youth group.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

- He will empower your teenagers to go wider with the gospel.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us, one of His first agenda items is to make us witnesses in ever expanding circles of influence. Just like the early disciples started in their immediate sphere of influence (Jerusalem) and spread outward, our teenagers, under the power of the Holy Spirit, can do the same. They can start sharing the gospel with their closest friends and then spread out to their acquaintances and others. The Holy Spirit provides the power for this to happen effectively.

So as you challenge your students to join THE Cause and begin to share their faith, just remember the Holy Spirit of God is echoing your challenge from the inside. But not only that, He also provides the power for them to actually follow through.

- He transforms your teenagers into the image of Christ.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

It is only the Spirit of God who can produce spiritual maturity and true transformation. As we seek to nudge our teenagers wider and deeper we must never forget to depend upon Him to do what only He can do.

But the Holy Spirit of God desires to use every lesson you teach, every conversation you have with a teenager and every prayer you utter on their behalf to transform them into the image of Christ Himself. You are truly the associate youth pastor at your church. The Holy Spirit Himself is the real One. So stay dependent and in step with Him as He seeks to take your teenagers deeper and wider.

What’s the balance between what we do and what the Holy Spirit does when it comes to making disciples of our teenagers?

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

In the words of the old sage we must, "Pray like it all depends on Him and work like it all depends on us."

If God is pleased to grant accelerated spiritual and numerical growth during this process, then you will experience the joy of seeing true and lasting revival in your midst. If not, then you will still be rewarded for being faithful to leading your teens toward Biblical youth ministry and not some entertainment-based program or "next new thing" paradigm. Our call is be

faithful to do what God has told us to do in the power that He provides, whether He chooses to grant revival or not.

"...we must, 'Pray like it all depends on Him and work like it all depends on us.'"

So how do you begin to build the framework for a youth ministry that is actively making disciples who make disciples? Obviously, prayer has got to be a central thrust from square one. There will be no move of God without us dropping to our knees in true intercession. It is in our times of prayer where God will guide us and direct us into His pathways as we seek to lead our teenagers.

As you deepen your prayer life, you can begin to build a Deep & Wide Youth Ministry framework for ministry.

3. The goal of this e-resource is to give you a different way to think about youth ministry.

Deep & Wide Youth Ministry is more of a philosophy of youth ministry than a plug-and-play program, so here are some practical steps you can take right away. You know your youth group best, so be creative! Customize, expand and develop your own ideas.

Section 2: Steps to Launching a Deep & Wide Youth Ministry

Step #1: Model it yourself.

If we are going to be effective in calling our teens to take up THE Cause and make disciples who make disciples, we must be doing it ourselves! In other words, "Don't pass out flyers to places you have never been." We must go there ourselves before we can take our teenagers there.

Remember what Jesus reminds us in Matthew 10:24, "*A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.*" In other words, the teenagers under your leadership will not likely go beyond your evangelistic or spiritual maturity level. If you are not continuously pushing yourself deeper and wider, then you are sure to plateau the spiritual development of your teenagers.

What happens when we teach our teenagers to go wide and grow deep, but aren't leading the way ourselves? Jesus tells us in Matthew 23:1-4:

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them."

We cannot be tying up heavy loads on our teenagers' shoulders (evangelism, discipleship, spiritual multiplication) if we ourselves are not willing to do the same ourselves. If we do, we are no better than these Pharisees that Jesus rebuked for hypocrisy 2,000 years ago.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

The thing to remember in this process is that you don't need to be a master evangelist or theologian; all you need to be is one step ahead of the teenagers you are leading. Don't present yourself as perfect; your teenagers will appreciate your authenticity and accessibility.

As you pray, seek God's wisdom and ask the Lord to live through you, He will help you make an impact on the lives of your teenagers. He will guide you as you make disciples.

Step #2: Adopt and Adapt the Deep & Wide Grid as a filter for all of Your Youth Ministry Programs.

Print out the Deep & Wide grid and hang it on your wall. Talk to your pastor about it and make it your own. Write out your own youth ministry philosophy statement and make it the filter you run everything you do in your youth group through.

Remember Deep & Wide is not a Dare 2 Share "thing," making disciples who make disciples is a Jesus thing.

As you move in the direction of Deep & Wide Youth Ministry, pastors and parents must be brought into this process. How can you do this? One way is to provide them with this Deep & Wide e-resource. Give a copy to your pastor first (to read and approve), and then to the parents of your teenagers. You will want to do this before you take this to the teenagers. It is far better for you to launch into a Deep & Wide Youth Ministry approach having the pastor and parents behind you, than to go in without their full support. They may be able to give you insight and ideas of how to best implement this strategy in the context of your particular youth group setting. Why is it important for pastors to be brought into this process? Because these are the ones who are responsible for the spiritual growth of the entire congregation! Without your pastor's full approval of Deep & Wide Youth Ministry, you will have a very tough time implementing it.

But you are sharing this material with your pastor(s) not just because you want their thumbs' up, but because you desire the entire church to adopt Deep & Wide as a church-wide ministry philosophy. Again, the truths of Deep & Wide are not a manmade methodology of ministry, but timeless truths, rooted in Jesus' discipleship model.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

And a Deep & Wide Youth Ministry philosophy thrives best in the context of a Deep & Wide church-wide approach.

Where do parents fit into the Deep & Wide process?

Right at the center of it! God's parental mandate is found in Deuteronomy 6 and centers on mom and dad being at the epicenter of the spiritual development of their own children.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).

This same principle extends into the New Testament and is seen in Ephesians 6:4:

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Christian parents are responsible for the spiritual development of their own children. Youth leaders must do their best to enable this process. How? By encouraging the pastor to challenge and equip the parents to shepherd their children, and by providing tools to help accelerate this process in the home.

How can you do this effectively? First of all, don't try to tell parents of teenagers how to raise their teenagers. The younger you are, the more important this is. Think about it. If a twenty-something youth leader tries to tell a forty-something parent how to raise their teen-something kid, how well do you think that would go over?

Instead of trying to educate them, why not enable them instead? How? There are a variety of ways. Here are a few ideas:

- Hold "Parent/Teacher" conferences once or twice a year (but please don't call them that). Meet with the Christian parents of the teenagers in your youth group to talk about the spiritual progress and challenges of their teens. Schedule meetings just between the parents and you over the course of a few weeks.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Again, the goal of these meetings is not to educate the parents, but to engage and enable them. Work together to come up with ideas to help their teenagers progress spiritually. Again, make sure that your senior pastor is on board with this approach and encourage him to speak into this process.

- Develop a weekly e-mail for all the Christian parents of your teenagers. What are you sending? A summation of the lessons that you are teaching their teenagers that week. You may also want to include a list of open-ended questions for them to use with their teenagers at the dinner table. The goal of these questions would be to get teenagers to talk about the spiritual truths they are learning in youth group. When parents and teenagers communicate in any way, it's a good thing. When they talk about spiritual truths, it's a transformational thing.
- Have all the parents of the teenagers in your youth ministry read this Deep & Wide e-resource.
- Involve the parents of your teenagers in as many youth group activities as possible. Get them involved in your group's local service projects or missions trips. Bring them out as sponsors for events and retreats or encourage them to lead a small group of your teenagers.

What about teenagers whose parents are non-Christians or spiritually apathetic themselves?

This is where godly adult sponsors come into play. The godly men and women in your church have a spiritual responsibility to pour into the next generation. Check these verses out:

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us (Titus 2:1-8).

You see a pattern here of older men and women teaching younger men and women. These were the first “adult sponsors,” so to speak. Titus himself was called to be one of these examples to the next generation. He was to “*in everything set them an example by doing what is good,*” specifically with the young men. Younger women were to be mentored and disciplined by the older women.

Look for the godliest adults in your congregation and pray, pursue and persuade them until they say “yes” to being an adult sponsor. It doesn’t matter how old they are. Someone once said, “Teenagers are looking for adult sponsors who can answer “yes” to three questions. “Do you love Jesus? Do you love me? Are you real?” Adults who can honestly say “yes” to all three of these questions are qualified to be an adult sponsor who can pour into the lives of all the teenagers, especially those whose parents are spiritually apathetic themselves.

Step #3: Identify Where Your Teenagers Are at Spiritually.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers, “*Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.*” When Paul wrote these words in 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, he was making a value judgment on the spiritual condition of the believers in Corinth.

The writer of Hebrews told the Jewish believers,

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. Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God (Hebrews 5:11-6:1).

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Evaluating the spiritual condition of the Christian teenagers God has put under your care is part of your responsibility as their “pastor.” You’ll be much more effective at helping them growth spiritually if you’ve taken their “spiritual temperature.”

A teacher provides report cards. A coach identifies his or her starting team. How much more important is it that we individually consider each teenager under our care and take action based on that prayerful, thoughtful evaluation?

But how do you go about assessing your teens’ level of spiritual maturity?

In the two passages referred to earlier, Paul and the writer of Hebrews identify three levels of spiritual involvement: apathetic, interested and passionate. Although these passages were written two thousand years ago, these same three levels can be used to gauge the spiritual temperature of teenagers in the typical youth group today.

The apathetic believers of Corinth were worldly. They were following the ways of the world instead of the ways of God. As a result, they were fighting with each other (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), living lives of selfishness (2 Corinthians 12:20) and living in sexual immorality (2 Corinthians 12:21). Paul reminds them that they are living like “mere men.” In other words, there was no visible difference between their lifestyle choices and the choices of the unbelievers around them.

According to one survey, the same is true of the typical teenager in the typical youth group today. Worldliness has become chic to the average Christian teenager and the statistics show this to be the case.

While the believers referred to in the book of Hebrews were in a spiritual holding pattern (let’s say their spiritual development was more of a casual interest than a passionate pursuit), the writer of Hebrews challenged them to press on toward spiritual maturity with intentionality and determination.

Many Christian teenagers are in the same holding pattern spiritually. Instead of being leaders, they are followers. Instead of pursuing spiritual maturity, they are pursuing the status quo. Some may be genuinely interested in spiritual things, but have been content to coast, instead of stepping on the accelerator when it comes to their walk with Jesus.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

1 Peter 5:2 reminds us that we are to *“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care....”* As shepherds we must understand which of our sheep are straying, which are hungry and which are thriving. Our goal is not to be popular or perceived as cool by our sheep, but to protect them and guide them in the ways of God.

So how is the flock under your care? Which of your teenagers are spiritually apathetic? Interested? Passionate? Here are some descriptions that may help you identify where your teenagers are at on the Deep & Wide grid.

The Apathetic Teenager

Meet John. He is 16 years old and, you guessed it, he was raised in the church. Inwardly, he is just along for the ride. He is not concerned for his lost friends and is counting the days to graduation. He comes to youth group because he has to, not because he wants to grow deeper or go wider. He has his ticket to heaven punched, but he is living for the world.

How do you deal with John? The same way Jesus dealt with His disciples when they were living for themselves. You love him by challenging and confronting him. This tough love approach may hurt (and could get you fired), but you speak the truth in love. At the same time you pray for John, talk to his parents and do whatever you can to motivate him to grow deep and go wide. You don’t give up on John, because Jesus never gave up on His disciples.

The Interested Teenager

Meet Ashley. She is 15 years old and trusted in Christ two years ago at a middle school camp. For the first few weeks, she was “on fire.” But it cooled down after that. Of course, every year at camp she recommits her life to Christ. This yo-yo spiritual diet results in occasional evangelism, irregular devotions and a middle-of-the-road Christian walk. Although Ashley would say that she loves God and would like to see her friends come to Christ, she has yet to pursue Him and them with all of her heart.

How do you deal with Ashley? Jesus told the Laodicean believers in Revelations 3:15-16, *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”* Strong words.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

If we really want Ashley to be all that she can be spiritually, then we need to challenge her to take her relationship with God seriously and to begin actively and consistently sharing her faith. We need to let her know that we know that she knows better. Of course these strong words flow out of a heart of love and a desire for her to go wide and grow deep. In addition, perhaps we encourage a godly woman in the church to take Ashley under her wing, pour into her life and hold her accountable (Titus 2:3-5).

The Passionate Teenager

Meet Kyle. Kyle is sixteen years old and takes his Christianity seriously, some would say too seriously. Kyle is the first one to stand up and the last one to shut up. He witnesses boldly and can sometimes turn people off. He reads his Bible daily and can quote Scripture freely, sometimes irritating the rest of the kids in the youth group with his unbridled passion for God. Although Kyle has his faults and quirks you see in him a genuine excitement for the things of God that, down deep inside, convicts even you.

Kyle has had the Romans 12:1 experience in his spiritual life. He came to the point where he has offered his body as a “living sacrifice” to God. In the original Greek this offering is a one time commitment with ongoing implication. In other words, this decision to follow Christ is real in Kyle’s heart. Because of this he is living out Romans 12:2 and is no longer conformed to the pattern of this world but is being transformed into the image of Christ by the renewing of his mind.

While Kyle is passionate evangelistically and theologically, you need to coach him to be just as relational as he is relentless. Just like the older apostle Paul coached his much younger protégé in 2 Timothy 2:24-25, *“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.”*

Kyle doesn’t need motivation nearly as much as he needs coaching. He is excited for the things of God and THE Cause of Christ, but to be all that God has meant for him to be, you need to become the chisel in God’s hands to knock off the rough edges.

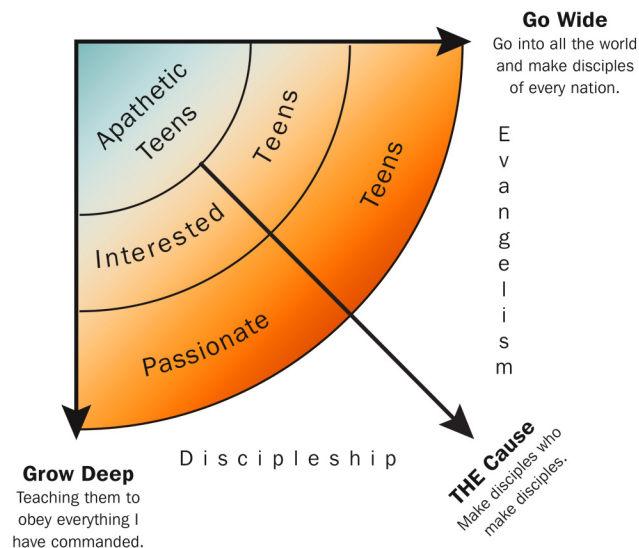
Why not sit down and do a prayerful evaluation of each of the teenagers in your youth group?

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Using the Deep & Wide Grid

Of course, there are different gradations of spiritual intensity at each spiritual interest level as well. So expect to see varying degrees of apathy, interest and passion. For instance, some apathetic teenagers are close to being flat out rebellious, while others are progressing toward being interested in spiritual things. Not every teenager fits neatly into the above categories, but you get the idea. Why not sit down and do a prayerful evaluation of each of the teenagers in your youth group?

This is an exercise that you can do individually or with some of your mature youth ministry staff or volunteers. Ask yourself, is this teenager spiritually apathetic, interested or passionate? Maybe write their names where you feel they are at on the Deep & Wide grid.



Afterward, you could begin to make some kind of personal action plan with steps to help each go deeper and wider, depending on where they are at spiritually. Why not meet with each at some point and talk about their spiritual excitement level? Challenge them to do a self-evaluation and then compare notes.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Here is a list of possible questions you could discuss together.

Questions to Ask your Teenagers

- 1) What do you honestly think of Christianity?
 - a. A nice story that I'm not sure of.
 - b. I know it's true but I'm not sure it's worth living totally for.
 - c. I know it's true and worth living for.
 - d. I know it's true and worth dying for.

- 2) How would you honestly rate your internal spiritual desire to fully live for Jesus in every area of your life?
 - a. Kind of cool.
 - b. Pretty warm.
 - c. Hot.
 - d. Blazing Hot.

- 3) How often do you spend time reading God's Word and praying about how to apply what you've learned to your life?
 - a. Never.
 - b. Sometimes.
 - c. Often.
 - d. Just about every day.

- 4) How often do you talk about your faith with those you know?
 - a. Never.
 - b. Sometimes.
 - c. Often.
 - d. All the time.

- 5) When's the last time you shared the gospel with someone?
 - a. I never have.
 - b. I have, but I can't remember.
 - c. In the last year.
 - d. In the last month.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

- 6) Describe your closest friends' passion for Jesus?
- Very cool.
 - Pretty Warm.
 - Kind of Hot.
 - Blazing Hot.
- 7) To what degree are you depending on Jesus to live through you every day, instead of trying to serve God in your own power?
- I'm not sure what you're talking about, but am sure that I'm not doing it.
 - I'm not sure what you're talking about, but hope that I'm doing it.
 - I think I know what you're talking about, and think I'm doing it.
 - I know what you're talking about, and I'm totally depending on Jesus as much as I can every day.
- 8) If Jesus were to show up right now and evaluate your spiritual life to your face, He would describe you as:
- Apathetic.
 - Interested.
 - Passionate.
- 9) Are you willing to do what it takes to grow deeper in the truth of God's Word and go wider into your circle of influence with the gospel of Jesus?
- To be honest, no.
 - Yes, but I'm not sure if I want to start right now.
 - Yes, I'm very willing.
 - Yes, I'm already doing it the best that I can, but am willing to do whatever it takes.
- 10) Are you interested in learning how to make disciples who make disciples?
- I'm not sure what you're talking about, but I'm sure I don't want to get involved.
 - I'm not sure what you're talking about, but I'd like to know more about it.
 - I think I know what you're talking about, and I'm trying my best but am discouraged because I'm not very good at it.
 - I know what you're talking about, and I'm totally on fire and doing it.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

*NOTE: There is no failsafe way of identifying spiritual levels of growth and maturity. All of these questions are designed more for discussion and self-evaluation. Only God truly knows the actual, accurate level of spiritual maturity and evangelistic effectiveness in the hearts of believers. These questions are designed to get you talking and thinking and to give you a more accurate picture of where your teenagers are on the Deep & Wide grid.

Then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you can begin to formulate a customized action plan that will help propel them deeper and wider.

Step #4: Take an Honest Assessment of Your Youth Ministry's Effectiveness

After you've taken an inventory of where your individual students are at spiritually, it's time to assess the health of your youth group as a whole.

Questions to ask yourself and your staff:

- 1) What percentage of your students are actively making disciples who make disciples?
 - a. 0-2%
 - b. 2-5%
 - c. 5-20%
 - d. 20% +
- 2) Where is your greatest strength, taking your teenagers deep or wide?
- 3) How does your greatest strength show itself in your youth ministry programming and relationships with the students?
- 4) Where is your greatest weakness, deep or wide?
- 5) How does your greatest weakness show itself in your youth ministry programming and relationships with the students?
- 6) What are some immediate steps you can take to improve your area of weakness?

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

8) What percentage of the students in your youth ministry came to Christ through your youth ministry efforts (either came to Christ through a youth group activity or through one of the teens in your group who led them to Christ)?

- a. 0-2%
- b. 2-5%
- c. 5-20%
- d. 20% +

9) How many of your teenagers have a good grasp of the basic theology of the Christian faith (the Trinity, inerrancy of Scripture, salvation, sanctification, etc) and can explain the gospel to others?

- a. None.
- b. A few.
- c. A core of them.
- d. Most of them.
- e. All of them.

10) What percentage of your teenagers do you feel will retain a strong and vibrant faith throughout their college years, without giving way to the party life or the philosophical attacks on their belief system?

11) Would you describe your teenagers more as missionaries or a mission field? Why?

Step #5: Start to Nudge Your Teenagers Wide with the Gospel

Go Wide *“Go and make disciples of all nations....”* Matthew 28:19

Here are five practical things you can do right away in your youth group to begin to prioritize evangelism.

1. Give the gospel every week in your main youth group gathering.

When you do this, you are doing more than making sure every teenager in your youth group has an opportunity to hear and believe the gospel; you're also indirectly equipping teens to share their faith.

When they hear you give it week after week then, over time, they will master the gospel and not even know how they did it.

2. Tell stories.

Relentlessly inspire your teenagers by telling stories of transformed lives as a result of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tell both stories from the Bible, church history and teenagers down the street.

3. Let teens tell stories.

Creating a climate where your teenagers can share stories of God's movement in and through them is essential if you are going to see THE Cause thrive in your youth group. These stories can be the good, the bad and the ugly ones. The point is not to hear how many teenagers are coming to Christ every week, but to see that those who are participating in THE Cause are purposefully initiating spiritual conversations with their friends. Some of these stories may include teenagers coming to Christ,

others may be about new believers committing to THE Cause, while others may be about how the evangelizing teenager got shut down by their friends.

“Have at least one teenager share a Cause-centric story with the rest of the group”

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

One strategy for creating a climate of storytelling in your youth group is [*“Take 5 for THE Cause.”*](#) Take 5 entails setting aside 5 minutes of every youth group meeting to keep THE Cause front and center through storytelling.

Have at least one teenager share a Cause-centric story with the rest of the group at some point during the meeting. When teenagers share their stories, it inspires others in your youth group to join them and makes THE Cause real, not theoretical.

4. Make baptisms a big deal.

However you do it (sprinkle them, dunk them, or send them down a slip-n-slide), do it. Baptism is a big deal. It is a public declaration of an inward transformation. When a teenager in your youth group puts their faith in Jesus and gets baptized, make it a party of Biblical proportions. Have it match the party that happens in heaven every time a sinner repents (Luke 15:10.) Have them invite all their family and friends, especially the non-Christian ones, and use this as an opportunity to spread the gospel even more!

5. Mobilize your teenagers for consistent evangelistic action.

To mobilize means to “inspire, equip, and deploy a group for action.” Have an evangelistic training program for your teenagers that’s consistent, practical, Biblical, relevant and calls them to action. Dare 2 Share has loads of tools and resources to help you with this. Let me familiarize you with just a few of them.

The GOSPEL Acrostic. It is essential for your teenagers to be able to articulate the core tenants of the good news if they are going to effectively share Christ with their friends. You must equip them to share the message in a clear and compelling way. One way to do this is by equipping your teens with the GOSPEL acrostic found below. It’s not a method of evangelism, but the message of the entire gospel from Genesis through Revelation.

G od created us to be with Him.	Genesis 1-2
O ur sin separates us from God.	Genesis 3
S ins cannot be removed by good deeds.	Genesis 4-Malachi 4
P aying the price for sin Jesus died and rose again.	Matthew-Luke
E veryone who trusts in Him alone has eternal life.	John
L ife with Jesus starts now and lasts forever.	Acts-Revelation

BUILDING A DEEP & WIDE YOUTH MINISTRY

Remember that the goal is not reciting, or even explaining, a memorized litany of gospel bullet points. The goal is to equip your teens to have a real conversation about the message of Jesus so that the other person clearly understands.

Dare 2 Share Mobile App. Have all your teens with smartphones download the FREE D2S app. Thousands of teenagers and youth leaders are using it to get some great evangelism training. The app motivates and equips Christian teens to explain Jesus' message of grace in their own unique, compelling way. It features short training videos about the GOSPEL acrostic mentioned above, along with other faith-sharing insights and tips. The app also includes Jason Petty's ("Propaganda's") virally popular YouTube video *Life in 6 Words: The GOSPEL*, so that teens can sit down with their friends on the spot and watch this evangelistic video.

Life in 6 Words Outreach Book. Tens of thousands of gospel conversations have been initiated using this short, visually engaging book. Based on the YouTube video of the same name, these books clearly explain the good news of Jesus. They include a page at the beginning for your teenagers to write a note to their friends. Students can personalize the book and give to a friend to begin the gospel conversation. Dare 2 Share also has a campaign to get free books into the hands of youth groups. To find out more about the campaign, go to www.share6campaign.com.

SomethingAmazing.net and **Lifein6Words.com**. These two seeker-friendly, evangelistic websites each feature different videos that present Jesus' gospel message in a relational, relevant, teen-friendly way. Make sure your students are familiar with the sites and know how to use them with their unreached friends.

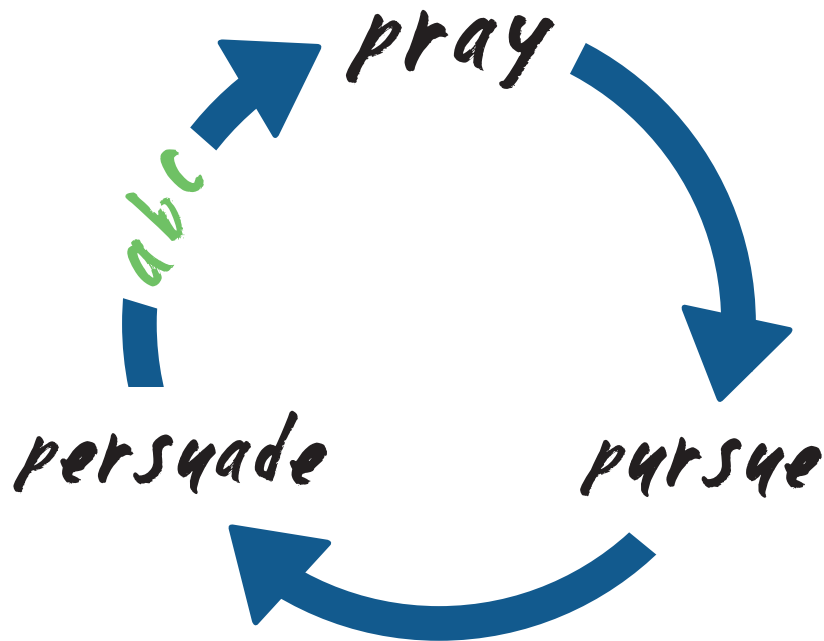
The Cause Circle. To make disciples who make disciples, teens must learn to be purposeful about sharing the gospel with their friends. This process starts with prayer, moves into initiating spiritual conversations with friends and progresses toward helping others explore the message of Jesus on a deeper level.

One approach to encouraging your teens toward more purposeful, relational evangelism is THE Cause Circle. The Circle is a tool designed to help your teens identify the friends they are going to pray for with passion, pursue with love and persuade with truth. It involves the following elements.

Pray with Passion



BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY



Prayer connects us to God—His presence, His power and His wisdom. Challenge your students to identify three friends they want to reach with the gospel, and start to pray for them. Ask God to prepare their hearts for His gospel message. Ask Him to provide courage and wisdom as they step out and share their faith. Ultimately, your teenagers are not alone as they seek to reach their friends, because the Holy Spirit of God is the one who is moving in the hearts of their friends to do the real work of convicting, convincing and persuading (John 16:13-15).

Pursue with Love

Pursuing friends spiritually simply means caring for them with the love of Christ and being purposeful about weaving spiritual topics into your conversations. This can be done by just asking questions and listening, and simply bringing God up in conversation. For practical how-to's on reaching friends who are coming from a wide variety of spiritual worldviews, please check out Dare 2 Share's free ["How to Share Your Faith With..."](#) web pages. As your teenagers seek opportunities to lovingly pursue spiritual conversations with their friends, they are moving into the "pursue" area of the circle.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Persuade with Truth

As your teenagers find opportunities to go deeper in their spiritual conversations with others, they can move those friends forward along the circle to the “persuade” section.

Don't be afraid to persuade! The Greek word for persuade is used eight different times in the New Testament in direct connection with evangelism. This is not a used car salesman-type pitch, but a sincere, yet convincing appeal to the heart and mind of the unbeliever. It's the same approach that Paul used when he wrote, *“We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Sure, persuasion can easily become manipulation or coercion if done in the flesh. But when we persuade others out of a pure heart that is overflowing with the Spirit of God, it becomes a powerful thing.

But making disciples who make disciples is about more than bringing people to a decision point of trusting in Christ. We want to see them grow into followers of Jesus and then, in turn, make disciples who make disciples.

So here are the three actions we're persuading our friends to embrace—these are the ABC's of making disciples who make disciples:

Accept Jesus.

This is the point in time when they believe the gospel message and trust in Jesus as their only hope of salvation.

Belong to a church.

The Bible says in Hebrews 10:25 that we shouldn't forsake the assembling of ourselves together. It is vitally important to help newly converted teenagers connect to other Christians so that they can get strong roots in their newfound faith.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Commit to THE Cause.

Teens that come to Christ and connect to a church should be challenged to commit to THE Cause. They must be motivated to grow deep in their relationship with God as they go wide to accomplish THE Cause.

Remind your teenagers that they are not alone as they seek to persuade their friends to go through these life transforming action steps, because the Holy Spirit of God is moving in the hearts of their friends. This is part of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise in

Matthew 28:20 that He will be with us to the very end of the age as we are seeking to accomplish THE Cause. His Spirit dwells inside your teenagers and goes forth to do the efficacious work of divine persuasion. This should create a tremendous confidence in the hearts of your teenagers as they realize they are not alone.

"...the Holy Spirit of God is moving in the hearts of their friends to do the real work of convicting, convincing and persuading..."

THE Cause Circle is a simple tool that may help your students be more purposeful about sharing Jesus' message with their friends. It will remind them to pray with passion, pursue with love and persuade with truth. The goal is to be both relational and relentless about sharing the gospel with those in their circle of influence.

For more on how to pray, pursue and persuade, check out [The Cause Circle](#).

[Dare 2 Share Training Events](#). Our large-scale, weekend student training conferences are catalytic events that will jumpstart evangelism in your youth group. Our weeklong, deeper-level leadership experiences—Lead THE Cause University—will create true student leaders who are disciple makers. And our live and online youth leader training will help you hone your skills and prioritize evangelistic discipleship.

[Evangelism Training Curriculum and Books](#). You're not in this alone! Don't feel like you have to reinvent the wheel. Utilize our award-winning evangelism training curriculum and books to get your students trained and equipped. We've trained hundreds of thousands of teenagers to share their faith, so you can be confident our resources will engage and equip your students.

Step #6: Help Your Teens Grow Deep with God

Grow Deep *“Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...”* Matthew 28:20

We all want our teenagers to grow more and more like Jesus. After all, Jesus commands His disciples to obey everything that He commanded. Obedience to Christ, in the power that He provides, results in us becoming more and more like Him. As 2 Corinthians 3:18 reminds us, *“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

When evangelism is seen as a trigger for discipleship, you’ll find your students are increasingly motivated to understand God and the core theology of the Christian faith so that they’re better able to explain their faith to their friends who need Jesus.

Here are a few of the essential elements of this process.

Teach them God’s Word.

Charles Spurgeon once said that we should be so into God’s Word that our blood is “Bibline.” What he was talking about was that the Word of God should flow through our spiritual beings like blood through our veins. To help your teenagers experience this, we must equip them to read the Word on a consistent basis and apply it to their lives.

This may include teaching them basic principles of hermeneutics (how to interpret God’s Word) and exegesis (how to draw out the meaning of a particular text.) Although this may sound technical and scary, it is key for your teenagers to be able to dive into God’s Word, discern its meaning and apply it to their lives.

Barry Shafer wrote an excellent book that equips youth leaders to train teenagers to interpret and apply the Bible called *Unleashing God’s Word in Youth Ministry*. Use this resource to help you train your teens.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Ground them in sound theology.

Today's teens live in a culture that encourages them to believe in a God of their own making—a God who's been conveniently custom-designed to fit their own personal preferences. So although the words “theology” and “doctrine” can sound intimidating, they are essential if you are to help your teens grow deeper in their relationship with the One true God. Over 40 times in the New Testament, the word “doctrine” is used as a central component to the Christian life. Paul reminds Timothy to *“watch your life and doctrine closely, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”* (1 Timothy 4:16).

The word “doctrine” simply means “teaching,” and “theology” means “the study of God.” These words do not and should not divide us as Christians, but rather unite us on the same foundation of historic orthodox Christianity.

Guide them into a lifestyle of spiritual disciplines.

“...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:7,8).

If you were training for a marathon, you would run. If you were training for a body building competition, you would lift weights. In the same way that competitive sports require ongoing, intensive physical training, spiritual growth requires ongoing, intensive spiritual disciplines. These are the habits that we develop and that we challenge teenagers to develop so that they are experiencing God's presence and power moment by moment.

This is the spiritual regimen that you model and equip your teenagers to practice, so that they have a depth in their relationship with Jesus that is unshakeable when the winds of temptations blow in.

Psalm 1 reminds us that this type of person delights *“in the law of the LORD and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.”*

So what are some of these disciplines? Obviously prayer is at the top of the list. You must teach your teenagers to communicate with God intimately and consistently.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in Matthew chapter six. He set the pattern for us as we equip teenagers to pray.

Consistently entering into an awareness of God's presence through worship can also serve as a powerful, transforming spiritual discipline. No one can experience the power of God's presence in worship and walk away unchanged and unmotivated to serve Him. We must teach teens how to individually use music, the Word and prayer to enter into authentic worship.

Spiritual disciplines also include memorization of and meditation on God's Word. This means that you motivate and train your teens to set aside times throughout the week to read and reflect on passages from the Bible. Although rote memorization may not be popular in today's culture of convenience, it is nevertheless essential if teens are going to be able to grow deep spiritually. If Jesus, the perfect Son of God, quoted Scripture to deflect Satan's attacks when He was being tempted in Matthew 4, then how much more do we fragile, sinful beings need to master the Word of God and get teenagers to join us? If your teenagers are not equipped to memorize and marinate in God's Word, they stand little chance against the devil's temptations.

For many teens, spiritual journaling can be a powerful and practical discipline that pushes them toward reflection and accountability. Journaling can add depth and perspective to their walk with God and help shape their efforts to share His message and mission with others.

Teach them to walk in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

One of the most crucial elements of growing deep in their walk with God involves learning to walk in dependence on the Holy Spirit on a day-by-day, moment-by-moment basis. When Jesus told His disciples in John 15:5, "*apart from me you can do nothing*," He was reminding us all that the key to the Christian life is to abide in Christ. As you equip your teenagers to allow Jesus to live His life through them,

then they will
be unstoppable,

"As you equip your teenagers to allow Jesus to live His life through them, then they will be unstoppable, because it will no longer be them living in their own strength, but Jesus living through them."

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

because it will no longer be them living in their own strength, but Jesus living through them.

When teenagers find their strength in God, as opposed to their own fleshly efforts, they will become compelling, effective witnesses as they live THE Cause out in their own lives. We need to consistently remind Christian teenagers who are taking the mission of Jesus seriously that it can only be accomplished through the power of Christ in them.

The Apostle Paul lived this balance in his missionary journeys. He writes, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me”* (1 Corinthians 15:10). He rested in the power of the Holy Spirit made available through the grace of God and then unleashed it in the form of hard work. In the same way our teenagers need to learn to rest in God, to grow deep in relationship and dependence on Him and then unleash the power of God in the form of hard work for THE Cause.

Equip them to help new believers grow.

As your teenagers grow deeper in their relationship with God, a natural outflow of their spiritual walk will be an enhanced ability to disciple others they have led to Christ. Equip them with resources that will help them do just that. We encourage you to check out the *Ignition Seven* new believer video series available free on SomethingAmazing.net or take a look at Dare 2 Share’s downloadable, reproducible *Now Grow!* discipling Bible study resource. There are tons of helpful discipleship tools on the market, so research the options and choose one to use in your youth ministry.

Step #7: Pray and Purify

This last “step” may be the most important. Why? Because the kind of transformative youth ministry we’ve been talking about can only happen when we’re on our knees, asking Him to bring revival and renewal.

Why is prayer so vital if we want our youth groups to make disciples who make disciples?



BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

1) Because it is God who brings numerical growth.

Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

As seen again and again throughout the book of Acts, it is the Lord who adds souls and multiplies disciples. We must call out to Him in prayer consistently, asking Him to exponentially advance the numerical growth of new disciples to our youth ministries.

2) Because it is God who produces spiritual growth.

God is central to causing spiritual maturity to happen. This is seen in Hebrews 6:1-3,

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.

We must pray that God produces it in us and in our teenagers as we seek to push them and ourselves wider and deeper.

We must pray and we must call our teenagers, their parents and our entire congregation to pray for accelerated spiritual and numerical growth in our youth groups. The power of prayer is that it moves the hand of the King of kings to act on our behalf and on the behalf of our teenagers.

The vital role of purity

As we pray we must also purify our souls. Why? Because God will not answer the prayers offered with sin-soaked hearts. David reminds us in Psalm 66:18,

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened...

In the Old Testament, God brought a military campaign to a screeching halt because of the sin of one man, Achan. In the New Testament, Annanias and Saphira died for lying to the Apostle Peter. God will not tolerate sin in the lives of His people. He will only listen to our prayers when we have purified our hearts.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

Remember that *“the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power”* (James 5:16).

1 Peter 3:7 reminds us that even the way we treat our spouses can hinder the impact of our prayers,

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

The more we allow sin to fester in our lives the less our prayers have an impact. The more we purify our lives, the more leverage our prayers have in heaven. This is clearly seen in the life of Daniel. When Gabriel appeared to him, he made this very evident to the man of God,

“As you push deep and wide, call out to God out of a pure heart, and ask Him to send His Spirit and bring fruit to your efforts.”

...“Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed... (Daniel 9:22-23).

As we push our teenagers deep and wide we must purify our souls from sin. We need to deal with sin radically if we want to see real and lasting revival.

Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Timothy 2:19-21).

Your youth group can be the epicenter of transformative ministry that reaches the school campuses in your community, your city and beyond. As you push deep and wide, call out to God out of a pure heart, and ask Him to send His Spirit and bring fruit to your efforts.

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

In Acts 1:8 Jesus told His disciples, *“You will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses....”*

When the disciples were in the upper room in the book of Acts, the sound of a mighty rushing wind blew across the room and the Holy Spirit came in and empowered them. That same Holy Spirit will give you the wisdom and power to implement these principles in your youth ministry. And He will work in and through your teenagers, empowering them to live for THE Cause and make disciples who make disciples.

Our Vision for THE Cause

What could happen if those of us in youth ministry across America got serious about THE Cause of making disciples who make disciples? We could see teenagers on every high school and middle school in America reaching their peers with the gospel and mobilizing other teens to do the same.

At Dare 2 Share, this is our vision for THE Cause: teenagers unleashed on every one of the 67,342 school campuses across the US, relationally and relentlessly reaching their generation for Christ. Think of it! An ongoing cycle of peer-to-peer, Spirit-empowered, disciple-multiplying teenagers bringing God-breathed transformation! And who knows? It may even please God to use these teenagers to launch a revival that rocks their world and leads the way for the often complacent adults in our midst who have lost their passion for Christ’s mission to reach the lost and make disciples.

But we fully realize that our small D2S staff of a couple dozen people in Colorado can’t possibly launch this kind of Deep & Wide movement without youth leaders and champions like you inspiring and equipping your teenagers to make disciples! But together, with God’s help, we can work to see every campus reached for Christ!

BUILDING A **DEEP & WIDE** YOUTH MINISTRY

With evangelism as a driving force behind your discipleship strategies, we believe it's possible to see just such a movement. We can all be a part of seeing this amazing transformation happen. Not only in teens' lives, but in youth groups, churches, schools, communities and nations!

So shift your discipleship paradigm and get ready to watch THE Cause of Christ propel your teenagers wider into their world with the message of the gospel and deeper in their walk with God.

Let us, by God's grace and through His strength, accomplish THE Cause for His glory and energize this generation to evangelism their world.

