

4 WAYS TO CREATE A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM FOR STUDENTS

Thirty years from now, when people ask what the pandemic was like and what we did, what will we say? What will we say about the students we lead? If we say we binge-watched our way through the latest TV series, we will have completely missed a huge opportunity.

And yet, as we lead the next generation of God's people, it can feel like we're competing against the endless hours of streaming services when an invitation to participate in the greatest movement the world has ever seen is passing us by. Cultivating a culture of evangelism among this generation — in a pandemic no less — can feel daunting, if not impossible.

But we can and must do it. We have to empower and mobilize our students to go into the places that are closed off to us but wide open to them. Here are four truths to remember as we cultivate a culture of evangelism during the pandemic:

1. Create the standard

Let evangelism be an expectation in your student ministry. Our students will never do what we're not doing ourselves. We create the standard. As leaders, the challenging question is, "Are we are sharing the Gospel outside the church building?"

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul writes, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." We push our students to live on mission and

be evangelists, but are we doing that? When was the last time we shared the Gospel outside of a pulpit?

On a regular basis, share stories about how you've shared your faith with the person at Starbucks or in the grocery store or with the person working on your car. The only way we'll have these stories is if we are sharing the Gospel. Even if these testimonies don't end in someone coming to faith, share them.

2. Celebrate what you want to replicate

It's an old adage that has proven true: what's celebrated is repeated. I've seen this to be true in my own ministry. Whatever you celebrate the most is what you're either intentionally or unintentionally discipling your students to believe is *most* important.

What do you tend to celebrate? For many leaders, it's how many people are giving and how many people are at our events. In some ways, the pandemic has stripped this measure of success and has given us a great opportunity to celebrate things that truly matter. If evangelism and discipleship are most important, then that's what we should celebrate the most.

If one of your students shares the Gospel, celebrate it. Use it in your sermon illustrations. Create video testimonies. Make it a big deal. Then, celebrate the right success. Success is not end results because those are up to the Lord. Success is in obedience.

3. Coach them in the Gospel

Don't assume your students know how to share the Gospel just because they've been coming to church. Many people know how to share pieces of the Gospel, but they struggle to share the entire Gospel.

As leaders, we're called to *"equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12)*. It's our job to coach and train them to share the whole Gospel. Pick an evangelism tool and train them to use it. The best tool is one that shares the entire Gospel and that students will actually use.

Each time you preach, share the Gospel. When you do this, not only are you calling out unbelievers to salvation, but those who are saved are also hearing how to share the Gospel.

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4. Call out missionaries

All believers have the Holy Spirit inside them. Each believer is a minister of the Gospel and a missionary. This includes your students; they are missionaries, and they need help realizing it. If they have the Holy Spirit, they are the church right now. They have a calling on their life now.

How can we help students discover their ministry and mission field? The ground beneath their feet is their mission field. Help them see their school is more than a place to make good grades, and their job is more than a place to make money. Everywhere they go is a mission field. The same is true for their family and their neighborhood.

Our students are also digital missionaries. Social media is a tool that's pandemic proof. Their social media should be more than an account to post pictures of themselves. Help them see it as an opportunity to share truth through Scripture, to invite people to church or share the links to their student ministries.

People are looking for eternal hope even if they don't realize it. Thirty years from now, let's be able to say that we introduced people to the good and beautiful God who created them and that we inspired our students to do the same.

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