

CHANGE THE WORLD

Be. Go. Do.

Youth and Young Adults

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GETTING STARTED: BE. GO. DO.

This is the youth and college companion to the Change the World material. Each week you will find several sections to use this material in many different settings. You should have the multimedia bundle when using this companion.

Be: This is the theological background for the week. Beginning with the Scripture, this section gives an idea of the lesson's overall direction, and then offers questions to discuss with the group or to help in developing an up-front style talk. For great tips on leading youth discussion, go to <http://tinyurl.com/youthdiscussion>.

Go: This section focuses on challenging people to engage others and offers an idea for a first step in that direction each week.

Do: This section focuses on engaging in an outbound/missional way with the theological theme for the week.

Social Media Quote: Copy and paste this into a Facebook status or tweet as a way to begin discussion online and raise interest in the week's topic.

Media Illustration: Each week, I have scoured YouTube for a funny or inspirational video to help you engage students around that week's topic.

If you have questions or ideas, please contact me via e-mail at cumcyouthpastor@gmail.com

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WEEK 1: “BEING A SACRIFICE”

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Romans 12:1-2*

Be

Read Romans 12:1-2.

It is easy to miss the drama in this passage. We often blow past the first verse to focus on what “not conform” means when the real drama is in the first verse. Put yourself into the world of the first century. With few exceptions, all religions focus on ritual. Most center on sacrifices of animals and physical goods such as grain. To draw close to God is to sacrifice something, and it is as costly as it is simple. What happens in the first verse is a total upheaval of that system. In this verse, Paul says people do not live out the religious life in the clear-cut world of physical sacrifices; it centers in the messy world of human relationships and personal identity. Wow. Paul severely raises the bar!

To clarify his point, he elaborates with the more popular second verse. Not conforming to the earlier pattern of externalizing faith, Paul challenges us to move into the messy business of transforming our minds. The reward of understanding God’s will is great, but the path is fuzzy. That is the part of our faith that is most difficult: being. It is difficult because it is subjective and multifaceted. How do we know when we have arrived? Is it even possible?

One way to refigure this concept is to focus on becoming. Becoming is great because it helps us think about our faith as constant transformation. This idea that the journey is a lifelong evolution can help us to avoid piling on the guilt. However, we must be careful that it does not rob us of motivation and passion. Though becoming is a lifelong process, we can mark it with beautiful mile markers that denote the beginning of good habits of mind, spirit and body and the ending of destructive ones.

Questions to ponder:

1. What are some of the most difficult mind patterns that distract you from who Jesus call you to be?
2. What patterns of this world draw you from “being”?
3. More specifically, what are some ways people look at the religious life that make it less about “being”?
4. How do you mark progress in your journey? How have you seen others do this?

Go

Jesus was all about relationships. He was all about living a life of faith that centers on relationships with people. We must echo his actions. We need relationships with people who will remind us when we make mistakes or start bad habits. We need people with whom we can celebrate. We need people who will mentor us and people we can mentor. That is not to mention the “other” to whom we are sent. (You will see more on that in the next section.) Use these questions to guide students toward those relationships.

1. Think of friends who can be honest with you in both good and bad times. From whom can you accept advice?
2. Think of people older than you whom you respect because of their faith as well as what they do. Who would you like to be like one day?
3. Think of younger people in whom you see yourself. Who is experiencing something you could help address because you have been there?
4. Take a moment to share your responses and decide with whom you would like to begin these different relationships.
5. How could you tell them what you want or need from them in this type of relationship?

Do

Participating in the mission of Jesus is more than going on a mission trip once or twice a year. It is about being part of what God is doing in the world on behalf of the lost, hurting, marginalized, poor and oppressed every day.

After we return from a mission trip or project, its affects fade. Many times, we choose to stop thinking about the pain or poverty we witnessed so something in our life will be easier. “I want to buy the newest iPod even though my current one works fine.” “I want a new pair of shoes even though I have plenty that work with my wardrobe.” If this happens after we return from a mission experience, we realize the money or time we might spend could change the life of the homeless people with whom we ate or the orphans we held, and we choose a different path. However, as time passes, we stop living (being) like someone who knows what is happening in our world.

What would it take for you to remember? What would you have to make an actual change? How would that change inspire others? Take a moment to brainstorm on these.

Identify one or two ideas and ask: What is the first small step toward making that a reality?

Finally, give yourself a timetable for starting and decide who will hold you accountable.

Social Media Post: True faith is one that changes us through relationships.

Media Illustration:

Watch "[Plastic Jesus](#)"

Talk about how real relationships change us, but also challenge us and make us uncomfortable. It is much easier to create a plastic version of Jesus so we do not have to experience the uncomfortable stretching, but then we do not get the uncomfortable stretching. Relationships are difficult and messy. That is what Jesus wants. That is what we need to give.

WEEK 2: "GOING IN OBEDIENCE"

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: Acts 9:10-19

Be

Read Acts 9:10-19.

This passage is layered intensely with meaning and connection to a rich history. When Ananias utters his initial response to God, he uses a word that corresponds to the Hebrew word of immense importance. It is the word with which Moses responds to God's voice coming from a burning bush. It is the word with which Samuel responds when he hears God in the night. It is the word with which Isaiah responds when God asks, "Whom shall I send?" It suggests readiness and surrender, but not passivity. Like Moses and many others, Ananias has reservations. After all, God is calling him to visit the chief persecutor of Christians.

He goes, and by the time he arrives, he is able to call Paul "brother." This is an amazing turnaround. God calls Ananias not only to go to the man who had arrested his fellow Christians and had orders to arrest more, but also to restore Saul's sight! Somehow, Ananias lets down his guard and allows God to transform his heart and mind. This is transformation of the highest order. It is far beyond allowing Ananias to be optimistic about Saul's character. It is transformation that moves Ananias to act. As a result, the first minister to the Gentiles is baptized and brought into the community of believers.

That is what God continues to do. God continues to call us over the static of television, chores and homework. God calls us to love people we do not even like, to bring them into the community of faith and to claim them as our own. This difficult task begins with a simple answer: "Here I am."

1. What was Ananias' strongest reservation?
2. If it were you, what would it take for God to change your mind?
3. How comfortable are you in expressing your reluctance to God? How do you do it?
4. How has God changed your mind about something or someone with whom you had serious issues?

Go

This passage is about loving and serving the unlovable. It is about taking seriously the idea that all people are of sacred worth to God. All means all: The dirty and the clean, the sick and the

healthy, the criminal and the righteous. This week, encourage people to cross the boundaries into the world of the unlovable. Ask them first to consider these questions:

1. List people or groups you dislike, distrust or would think society considers generally “unlovable.”
2. Pray over that list asking if God is calling you to those people.

Then, distribute a prepared sheet with information on how students can become involved in ministry to “unlovables” through prison ministry or other mission. Make sure the sheet includes contact information. Discuss the following:

1. What is different about talking about something theoretically and having actual things you can do and people you can call?
2. Which of these seems like a bad idea? Why?
3. Which of these would be the easiest? Why?
4. Which of these would be the most difficult? Why?

Do

It may be difficult to imagine mercenary soldiers bent on mutilation and every sort of horror imaginable as loveable. As often happens, when we know someone else’s story, something changes. When we learn soldiers are children forced to fight by Joseph Kony in northern Uganda, it changes things. Go to the Invisible Children website at invisiblechildren.com and learn. Truly horrible things happen in this world. They cause even the most innocent among us to act in horribly violent ways to preserve one’s life. We can be part of the solution.

Be advised that this site has graphic images.

Social Media Post: Who is the worst person you can think of? God loves him or her. God loves you. Can you also love that person?

Media Illustration:

Watch “Grace, We Just Don’t Get It” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9IOZfZBb4g>

Start with the idea that God’s grace covers everything. Then, explore how we extend grace to others. How can we love the unlovable so that they feel God’s grace in our presence?

WEEK 3: “GUIDED BY GOD”

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: Acts 16:6-10

Be

Read Acts 16:6-10.

This passage is more about theology than geography. It is about how founders of the faith believed God should direct all that they did. God guided their lives. When they thought they knew where they needed to go, they asked God, and stopped repeatedly because they discerned a prohibition to continue. If we follow their example, we can avoid some common pitfalls associated with trying to live a God-guided life.

God gave us a brain. That sounds obvious, but sometimes we act as if being guided by God means giving up our will and common sense in making decisions. When we allow ourselves to slip into this mindset, we look for “signs” of God everywhere and try to make all our decisions by interpreting the random “signs” we see. What we see in Acts is the apostles making their own decisions and setting out whenever they sense the spirit is blocking them. They do not stop and wait for a sign. They use their brains to make a reasonable decision about the next step and move forward.

Just as the pendulum can swing too far in searching for direction, it also can swing too far in the logic direction. God does not always call us to a logical next step. Often, God asks us to stop doing something logical and start doing something very unusual. If we are not careful, we can close ourselves off from the Holy Spirit’s leading by relying too much on reason. On the other hand, we can ask for God’s input before we make the decision and then close ourselves to the input of the Spirit once we begin the journey. Being guided by the Spirit is a mysterious combination of trusting in our reason while maintaining a connection with the Holy Spirit in which God has permission to tell us to stop in the middle of an activity.

Questions to Ponder:

1. What are some moments when you felt God give you a sign or clear direction about a decision or plan?
2. How might God have communicated to the apostles that God did not want them to continue down a specific path?
3. Ignoring God can have huge consequences. The call to Macedonia was the call to start the Christian church in Europe. If the apostles had not gone, the message and development of the faith in that region would have been delayed. What are some decisions you are making right now with potentially huge consequences?

4. At least two pieces of Wesley's Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason and experience) are evident in the decision-making here: The apostles used reason to decide where to go and experience in the same way Wesley spoke about it (allowing things to happen and seeing if what they thought was God really was). Can you find a way to see an explicit or implicit use of tradition or Scripture here?

Go

The life of the Christian is one of God guiding us to different places. These are often places where we would never plan to go on our own, yet God calls us. When I was beginning high school, I began pondering the meaning of Paul's call to be all things to all people in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Soon I noticed a group of people in my school that had no Christians in their group. They identified with a style of music called "grunge." I liked the music but saw that to become part of that group, I would need to become more like them in the way I dressed and behaved. I answered God's call and became one of them so they might meet Jesus through me. This was my call to Macedonia. This was my call to people who were different from me.

What boundaries might God call us to cross in our world so we can accomplish God's purposes? Which boundaries are the most difficult to cross? Economic? Ethnic? Popularity?

The beginning of thinking about this is identifying your boundaries. Use this activity to help see your fences and walls. Then take time to listen to where God might be calling you to hop the fence.

1. List your closest friends. These are the people you would invite to spend the night at your house or join you on a trip. They are the people from whom you hide very little.
2. List the rest of your friends. You might invite them to a movie or spend time with them in a group setting, but would not take to the next level.
3. Ask yourself these questions. What do these people have in common? Do they like the same style of music? Are they the same race? Do they have about the same amount of money as you?
4. Then answer these questions: Who is missing? Which groups or types of people are not on your list?

Do

We often do service projects or mission trips that take us to a different place culturally or economically, but doing so often places us in the role of the giver and the person of the other culture in the role of the receiver. While we can make some strides toward making that relationship feel equal, it will always have that element.

If we are going to cross those boundaries in the way we see in the Scripture and as Jesus modeled in the Incarnation, we need to position those boundary-breaking relationships much more as a sibling role than as a parental one.

To do this, begin networking with the people you know and contact a church that is significantly different from your own. Approach those conversations as a co-worker in God's family, and plan a joint mission trip or service project. Find as many ways as possible for your two groups to intermingle. Make sure nothing will happen without your groups intermingling. If you are fixing a fence, make sure your group only brings nails and the other only brings hammers. If you are tending a lawn, make sure one group brings the mower and the other brings the gas. Be intentional about forcing team-built relationships.

Social Media Post: What boundaries might God call you to cross to accomplish God's purposes?

Media Illustration:

Watch "The Stool" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3qh2dJxUy8>

What keeps us from allowing Jesus to guide our lives? Yes, sometimes Jesus takes us into places we do not want to go, but sometimes he is silent. What do we do then?

WEEK 4: “MAKING DISCIPLES”

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Matthew 18:16-20*

Be

Read Matthew 18:16-20.

Like week 1, this passage is one we like to skip to the “good part” in the middle or end. We do ourselves a huge injustice by missing the context. Before Jesus speaks in verse 18, we learn the disciples are worshipping and doubting. This is as powerful as it is beautiful. How many times are we unsure about some aspect of faith; yet we worship anyway? How many of us, having gone through losing the Savior and seeing him resurrected three days later, would be so shaken that we would be unsure about what this means?

This is the setting in which Jesus speaks. What do the future leaders of the church need to know in this emotional, confusing moment? They need to know Jesus is Lord of all and will be with them in their mission to make disciples.

That is the next element that needs some attention. Often, we focus on the word “go” because it is the first word in our English translation when, in fact, the central word or thought in the original language is “make disciples.” Everything else is subordinate to that concept. All the rest of the Great Commission is stated in support of this idea. Not only that, the idea of making disciples indicates an intense endeavor that seeks to create those who are committed to being students of the way of Jesus. Far from focusing on the initial proclamation of the gospel, this concentrates on the difficult, long-term task of growing people into disciples. Discipleship is our primary calling.

1. What difference would it make if you focused on “go” as the primary element of this passage?
2. Why do you think Jesus offered the comfort of his power and presence to the doubting disciples at this moment?
3. What are key elements of being a disciple?
4. What other callings does the church have? Which ones have you seen supplant making disciples as a church’s primary focus?

Go

If the point of being sent into the world is to make disciples, we must talk about Jesus. That may sound obvious, but it is, unfortunately, uncommon to find Christians who actually talk

about their faith to not-yet Christians on any regular basis. The culture in which we live has conditioned us to think of religion as a topic so sensitive that it is best left untouched. When we see someone witnessing poorly, embarrassment over it can lead many more Christians to remain silent.

We need not memorize laws or propositions. We need not have cheesy one-liners or warm, fuzzy stories. We need to remove the religion block and allow ourselves to let information about our faith seep into the rest of our life. When someone asks, "How was your weekend?" we should reply about the party we attended as well as the powerful worship service that inspired us. We need to allow people to see the most important parts of our life in casual, everyday settings.

Pair up and spend some time looking through an average week.

1. Where do you have opportunities to share your faith?
2. What simple things can you share that do not anger people or demand their response?
3. What struggles with faith could you share to show how a disciple grows through struggle?

Do

Much of our work with people in different parts of the world amounts to mission tourism. Short-term projects form relationships that generally do not last beyond a month or two from the time we leave a site. Though there is a place for this kind of work, it is not close to being the most important type of ministry.

Making disciples is a long-term project that requires people to build long-term relationships. Plenty of people and organizations do this. Consider forgoing your next mission trip and doing all the fundraisers you would normally do for a mission trip, but send the money to someone doing the long-term work of building relationships. If you need fundraising ideas, check out these two podcasts:

<http://tinyurl.com/UMfundriaser1> and <http://tinyurl.com/UMfundriaser2>.

Social Media Quote: What does it mean in a modern context to do what Jesus did?

Media Illustration:

Watch "Hell Over Coffee" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3LuYPpS-X4>

Making disciples is not about one-liners. In what other ways do we try to make discipleship easy or quick?