



## DEEPER CONVERSATIONS REQUIRE DEEPER DISCIPLESHIP

Deeper conversations are at the core of Young Life. We meet kids and build relationships not only because teenagers deserve to have adults who genuinely care about them, but also so we can eventually engage in deep and meaningful conversations about life, God, Jesus Christ, and faith.

Our own life of deep discipleship, that is continually *deepening*, is the most important preparation for having deeper conversations with our friends.

How do you regularly and intentionally feed and nurture your life of discipleship on your own?

How do you regularly and intentionally feed and nurture your life of discipleship within a local church community of believers?

What are some ways you can give more focus and attention to your own life of faith and practices of discipleship? What are some specific ways you will increase your knowledge and understanding of the larger story of scripture, from creation to new creation?

Deeper faith conversations with our friends can range from first-things about God to the bigger story of God to the salvation message to the joys and challenges of faithfully following Jesus and more. Think about the most recent deeper conversations you've had with your students. How did your own discipleship prepare you, equip you, and impact your interaction? In what ways, if any, did you sense a lack of deep discipleship on your part?

With what students do you need to initiate deeper conversations? When and how will you do that?

For those who are interested, these books examine a life of deep discipleship from unique perspectives:

*Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation - expanded edition* (M. Robert Mulholland Jr., IVP, 2016)

*The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling* (John Stott, IVP, 2010)

*Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (N. T. Wright, Eerdmans, 1994)

*A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (Eugene Peterson, IVP, 1980)



## DEEPER CONVERSATIONS REQUIRE PASTORAL LISTENING

In deeper conversations, *knowing what to say* matters less than ***knowing how to listen***.

Henry Nouwen wrote:

*"To listen is very hard, because it asks of us so much interior stability that we no longer need to prove ourselves by speeches, arguments, statements, or declarations. True listeners no longer have an inner need to make their presence known. They are free to receive, to welcome, to accept.*

*Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings. The beauty of listening is that, those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their own true selves. Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality by which you invite strangers to become friends, to get to know their inner selves more fully, and even to dare to be silent with you."*

Who listened to you well when you were a teenager? Who listens to you well now? Describe what it was/is like to be heard in that way.

What is most challenging/difficult for you when it comes to listening well? How can you work to overcome those things?

When have you listened well? How did you know you'd listened well? When have you not listened well? How did the conversation go?

How might *listening to God* be connected to *listening to others*?

Consider the connections between relational ministry, pastoral listening, and hospitality.

For further reading:

*Hearing Beyond the Words: How to Become a Listening Pastor* (Emma J. Justes, Abingdon, 2006)



## DEEPER CONVERSATIONS REQUIRE FAITHFUL TESTIMONY

To *testify* or *bear witness* simply means to articulate what one knows to be true by virtue of having seen, heard, or experienced it.

Telling the whole story of Jesus Christ, truthfully and reverently, is the most important “testifying” we do. And yet, if we only share *information about* Jesus, we will not have testified fully. We must also be able and willing to share our own *encounters with* and *experiences of* Jesus.

How have you *encountered God* in the past several weeks — in your mind, in your heart, in your living?

How has a recent encounter with/experience of God impacted you, challenged you, transformed you, etc (whether in your mind, your heart, or your actions)?

What is one thing God is currently at work on in your life? How is he doing that? How are you responding? What is happening?

How can we best testify about Jesus — be his faithful witness — without shifting the focus to ourselves? When and how have you seen this done well? When and how have you seen this done in a way that becomes centered on the person rather than the Lord?

How do you mark and remember the ways God has worked/is working in your mind, heart, and life? What have you learned from the marking and remembering themselves, i.e. what have you learned through the process of remembering what you’ve experienced?

This PDF provides some questions, reflections, and templates for articulating specific moments that testify to the living presence of God in someone’s daily life of discipleship: [DOWNLOADABLE LINK](#).

For further reading on the power of spoken testimony in adolescent spiritual formation:  
*Saying Is Believing: The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development* (Amanda Drury, IVP, 2015)