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# HOW TO SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH YOUR “GRAND-TEENS”

*“You have to earn the right to be heard.”*

This is an old adage in youth ministry, and foundational to evangelizing people of any age. When we are in love with Our Lord and His Church, it's only natural to want to lead others to Him. For those who aren't there yet, however, simply preaching the Gospel or sharing a Church teaching isn't enough. We have to follow Christ's example of walking with his Apostles and growing in friendship with them, and sharing the Truth within that context. Earning the right to be heard means authentically caring for someone and building up a genuine relationship with them, so that when you do have something important to say, it carries more weight.

The good thing for many grandparents is that, in many ways, you have already earned the right to be heard! Your grandchildren look up to you, trust you, and admire you. Your witness has more power than most and what a great grace that is. That said, it can't hurt to remind yourself of these tips when considering your relationship with your grandchild.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

- Good evangelizers don't start by speaking. They begin by listening. Everyone wants to be heard, and not just heard, but *listened* to. There is a difference.
- Active listening is the practice of being engaged and focused on the person speaking, seeking to respond in ways that benefit them and help them express their feelings authentically, not in ways that coincide with our own agenda.
- Often, we are tempted while someone else is speaking to immediately think of how we are going to respond or what we are going to share about ourselves. Active listening, however, involves getting invested in the story the other is telling, asking follow-up questions, and trying to put yourself in their shoes.
- Active listening does not mean that you end up in total agreement about everything with the other person. You can't compromise your own convictions and values. In order to effectively share the Word of God, though, you need to earn trust. Proving yourself to be someone who listens carefully and empathizes, even where there is disagreement and discord, is the best means of earning that trust.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PRESENCE

- Another great trust builder is what some might call a “ministry of presence”. Young people are acutely aware of those in their lives who “show up” and are there for them, especially for the things that are important to them.
- Are there opportunities to show up at games, concerts, other school functions to show support for them in the things that matter most to them?
- If getting around is a challenge and an obstacle, is there a way to reach out consistently – text or phone call to just let them know you are thinking of them?
- Do you have the kind of relationship with your grandchild in which you can ask them to come and help with a project or task which would give you a time to be present to each other, perhaps share a meal, and initiate conversation?
- In all these instances you might not share a bible verse or break down some key Church teaching, but you are laying a foundation. You are witnessing to Christ by your presence and dedication, and further establishing yourself as someone who truly cares.

## FINDING COMMON GROUND/AFFIRMING THE GOOD

- We may be coming from different places and there may be much we don't understand about someone we desire to share the faith with. Those differences are not typically the best to lead with. As best we can – start with the common ground.
  - How are we alike?
  - What about their values and passions are aligned with mine?
  - Where is Christ and his Truth present in them already
- As we build our relationships, actively listening and spending quality time with teens, be on the lookout for those good values and traits that we can affirm, especially those that point to life in Christ.
- We are all made in God's image and likeness, and therefore, we always have what it takes to reveal Him to the world. Identify where this is true already, before attempting to point out where it is lacking.

*“Be prepared to have something worth saying.”*

There is a second part to “earning the right to be heard” and that is to be ready once you have earned the right, with something of substance that is worth sharing. It doesn't mean you have to memorize some eloquent statement of faith or perfectly crafted Gospel pitch. It simply means that you have thought, and prayed, about what the Gospel means to you, of how God has moved in your life, and you are confident and comfortable in sharing that when the right time comes. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when planning to share the Gospel.

## PERSONAL WITNESS/TESTIMONY

- While it's important to know and understand what the Church teaches, especially in light of the challenges to faith in the modern day and the issues that keep young people disconnected from the Church, your own personal story of Christ in your life carries with it a unique and powerful force for evangelization.
- When you have the opportunity to share how a personal relationship with God and being a part of the Body of Christ has impacted your life, especially as someone who has earned the right to be heard, it can be especially effective.
- Write down the moments when Jesus has acted in your life or when you have witnessed His power and goodness. Practice telling those stories, so that when the time arrives, they pour naturally out of you.

## MEDIA

- Don't be afraid to use movies or other media to engage young people. There are great resources out there. More than ever before the lives of the saints, teachings of the Church, and commentaries on Sacred Scripture are offered in clear, concise, and engaging ways, geared for today's youth, via video.
  - YouTube Channels: Ascension Presents, Life Teen
  - Bishop Barron's Catholicism Series
  - Formed
- There are even some contemporary films that are not necessarily Catholic, but which contain a redeemable message or lend themselves to deep, religious discussion. Use these as conversation starters, meeting the young people where they are at and discussing the faith in a way that interests them.
  - A few examples: Fatima (2020), The Truman Show (1998), Remember the Titans (2000)
  - Wingclips.com – hundreds of popular movie clips, searchable by theme and message

## DON'T WATER DOWN THE TRUTH, BUT DO EXPRESS THE TRUTH LOVINGLY

- As mentioned earlier, it is ultimately important to know and understand the Truth of Christ. We should be able to express Christ's story readily, as well as have a good sense of what we believe in as a Church. When it comes to sharing it, we must be careful not to water it down or compromise it for fear of rejection. We can still do that in a loving, compassionate way.
- By earning the right to be heard, we set ourselves up, by the grace of God, for that moment "to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (1 Peter 3:15).

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