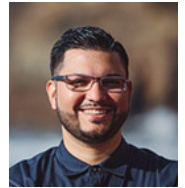


Finding the Plot: A Primer for Youth Workers



D. A. Horton

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Larry Acosta: Hey, urban youth workers. I'm here with D. A. My name's Larry Acosta, and we want to welcome you back to this next segment where we talk about our saving faith. You know, you're on this journey to unpack the Scriptures with kids and go deep with kids, so in this next story, it's going to be imperative that kids understand the gospel. And there are some subpoints that D. A.'s going to share with you in a moment. But this is going to be a vital series for your life. Some great conversations are going to happen. And so, D. A., when you wrote this, maybe share a little about what was on your heart and the theme and some of the micro-stories that are in this overall "Our Saving Faith" series.

D. A. Horton: Absolutely! Man, you know I really wanted students to be presented with the reality that the gospel message is the only message that carries the full power of God. We live in a day where everyone's searching for miracles, searching for power, you know. And I think that we miss it when we don't proclaim the power—God's omnipotent power that's encapsulated in this one message; the gospel. And so it's very important for the students to hear the whole counsel of the gospel. And I think for young people wrestling with identity issues, insecurities, you know they're barraged with all kinds of pressures at home, in the neighborhood, at school. Everywhere they go they're just constantly being told they're not good. And that's true in the reality of sin. And I think so often where we miss it is we start the conversation with sin. I think it's better to start it with the fact that we have a dignity about ourselves as human beings that we're actually created in God's image.

And so what we want to do is we want to start the conversation by helping the young people understand that God created us in His image. And we really unpack what that really means by basically saying we're separated from every other form of God's creation. He shared with us snapshots of His character that He didn't give

any other type of creation. So there's a dignity. But then we work towards the fact that we once had a direct relationship with God through Adam in the garden and his wife, Eve. But because of Adam's disobedience, our dignity was distorted in the fall. And then kind of what that leads the conversation towards is man; there is a debt that comes with our sinfulness. And youth leaders, that's where it's important to help them understand the progression away from God because of sinfulness, that there's this debt that hangs over them. And that champions the only qualified Savior, Jesus Christ. And what Jesus did was all that was necessary to be done, to pay for our ransom, to get us out of sin slavery so that we can have our dignity restored in Jesus Christ.

Larry Acosta: D. A. talk for a little bit, because I hear the passion coming through. But the gospel is something that's misunderstood today. And so maybe you could just talk a little bit, because you and I have both been transformed by the gospel. I mean, there's no way two Latino dudes should have been so transformed from the inside out—you know, coming from the mess we both came from. And so you and I believe at the core that the gospel changes everything. And so some of our youth workers who are hanging out with kids and walking them through this discipleship process, those kids have torn-up home situations. They live in tough neighborhoods. Man, they've got circumstances that are just pulling them down on every turn in the road, you know. But the gospel brings hope and life change, so talk for just a moment about the power of the gospel and why you're so passionate about helping youth workers message the gospel more clearly to kids.

D. A. Horton: Yeah, absolutely. I think the reality that I want to see the young people here communicated from you youth leaders is the fact that God is in the business of transforming lives, no matter how broken and shattered and messed up our background looks like or even what we're still living in. I love to champion the fact that God can turn our brokenness into beauty. At the same time, He turns our mess into a message. And I look at even the gospel's power in my life, and I love to communicate that to students. Because I said when God saved me, He didn't take me out of the hood. I didn't have a rich aunt or uncle to go live with. This wasn't the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* story. I had to stay in the same trap, walk the same block past the same friends on the same corner; but they saw something different in me. And they knew this wasn't just something that I was just buying into to get me by through a rough patch—met my girl, broke up, going to jail; all those. No, man, this was a message that gave me a new identity.

And that's the reality of the gospel. That's what makes it separate from every other message is the fact that God's power resurrects a dead sinner. And when young people understand, *Wait a minute. I'm not the old person I used to be. I need to reevaluate everything from the things that I'm doing to find comfort to my friends. Should I still be going to the same places?*

We want them to see that, man, when God is transforming your life He's transforming your world. And who helped me the most were my youth leaders. They helped me understand. Hey, God gave you a gift to rap. You don't have to rap about that stuff. Why don't you rap about what God has done in your life? Why don't you rap about the things that you want to see done in your community through the hands of God? I didn't even think about that. So I think, youth leaders, basically you have the whole opportunity in front of you to mobilize these young people, to hear this message, to grab a hold of it and say, This is mine. Jesus is mine, and I am His. And I'm going to go out in my neighborhood, to my school. I'm going to do better in my schoolwork. I'm going to treat my parents or my guardians in a whole different way than I did before, because that's the power of the gospel put on display; the transforming power of the God—the Holy Spirit—in our life.

Larry Acosta: Man, I love the fact that you brought it down to your personal story and now living that out, our saving faith. It's a message of hope, a message of transformation. And youth workers, I love the fact that in D. A.'s case, his youth worker was vital to redirecting him outward and to live out the message of the gospel in his every day, and to rap about Jesus in the hood, man. Your role is so key in this whole process as you have these conversations with kids, as each of these micro-stories within the overall story of our saving faith there's going to be a powerful time to get kids in Scripture, to get kids to answer questions with you, for you to share and redirect kids in their thinking and challenge them to live this out, that their saving faith would be lived out loud even in the hood, man. I'm so super excited about what God's going to do in this series, "Our Saving Faith," man. And so, D. A., any parting words that you might have for our youth workers that are out there as they get geared up to unpack this with their students?

D. A. Horton: Absolutely! I think you're in the perfect position to grow in your knowledge and understanding of the gospel and for the students to see your life still in process of transformation. That's what's going to connect the leader to the student is that

they're going to see that the leader is still a work in progress. And you're modeling for them what it looks like to navigate through the tensions of our world in a different season of life. Now they have somebody to look to for those next seasons in life, and you're in the perfect position. When it was me, the person who discipled me was a former Rollin 60s Crip; I mean, seriously. So don't even feel intimidated like, "Oh, I don't have a horror story or this or I'm still trying to work through the gospel." We both are. I'm still learning the reality of the gospel. So be encouraged. Stay faithful to the Scriptures. Stay faithful with being transparent, and show them this is what it looks like in the next season of life after school. This is what it looks like through young adulthood through adulthood—how God is still transforming us through the power of the gospel.

Larry Acosta: I like what you're saying as we close out, because it's our saving faith. It's continuing. It's going on, that maturing sanctification process. Man, we're still in it as well. So, youth workers, he's got you right where he wants you. You're a voice of hope, man. You are a champion in the lives of those kids. We hope that this discipleship toolkit helps you have those conversations that would lead to transformation. "Our Saving Faith"—rock it. You can do this. Till next time.