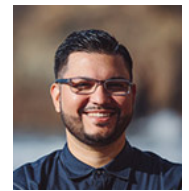


Finding the Plot: A Primer for Youth Workers



D. A. Horton
*Experience: Executive Director of
Reach Life Ministries*

Larry Acosta: Hey, Urban Youth Workers, we want to welcome you back. As you know, I'm here with D. A. Myself, Larry Acosta, from Urban Youth Workers Institute. We're continuing our conversation in order to equip you with the tools you need to go deeper with kids, to have those spiritual conversations that will result in the transformation and the growth that kids need to experience.

This story is called *Growing in the Faith*. It's really an overview of the core elements of the discipleship process. It's critical. Man, this is varsity now, and so youth workers, man, it's time to take kids deeper and to propel them out there to grow and to live this out. And so, D. A., man, these conversations are critical, I mean, really in the first three major stories, we've been laying some content, some background. A lot of these kids are biblically illiterate, I mean, just keeping it real. I mean, we're in post-Christian times and kids don't have some of those basics; and so the content was developed in order to download some of those foundational truths that kids need to know, even to make an intelligent decision, to follow Christ or not, to consider the claims of Christ. Right?

But now it's time to go a little deeper. It's really getting kids to take some ownership, and so we're going beyond the basics of the faith to now growing in the faith, and so maybe talk a little bit about that 'cause I know . . . I know you had in your own story, you had a time when you had to, you know, step it up and move beyond those foundational elements.

D. A. Horton: Yeah, absolutely, and in my life it was when I was introduced to a method on how to study the Bible. It was something as simple as that, but it revolutionized my life. When I was taught how to properly observe the Scriptures, how to work to interpret them, and then how to apply them in my life, that showed me that I just can't read a chapter a day to keep the devil away. And so, I think that's where it's imperative, leaders, for you

to kind of walk them through the reality of this is how we have to look at the Bible intently, not just glance over it; and as we begin to see the truth of Scripture unpack and we begin to see students have those “aha” moments where they’re starting to put the pieces together through true Bible study, it’s gonna lead them to begin to think, *Man, I’ve got to get this out.*

So that’s why we continue the conversation beyond, don’t just study the Bible, you’ve got to be about that life about making disciples, so we help them understand this is the Great Commission. As we told them before, like, God has called us to be disciple-makers, and so that’s the reality of the Great Commission, to make disciples of all ethnicities. That’s what God has called us to do.

And so with that, when you’re about to be in the process of making disciples, we know naturally then there’s gonna be some tension, there’s gonna be some enemies that are made, because Christianity is divisive. When you say that Jesus is the only answer for the world today, that doesn’t fly. Yeah, this is a post-Christian world that we live in where they’re like, *No, you mean, Jesus is one of the answers*, and we’re saying, *No, there’s a cost to follow Jesus Christ*, and that’s what we want the young people to understand. Jesus Himself said in Luke 9, “Consider the cost.” Like there is a cost for following Me. “You’ve got to take up your cross.” And that’s what we want the young people to understand when Jesus was saying that. We parallel it in such a way that when we see criminals on the news and they’re in handcuffs and they’re hiding their face, they’re ashamed, right? And that’s what Jesus is saying. Basically the world is gonna look at you like we look at criminals because you’re affiliated with Me. Because He was crucified as a criminal, although He was innocent, but the populace at large that day said, “He’s guilty, kill Him, crucify Him!”

The world hated Him; and John says in John 3 it’s because, I mean in John 1, that “the world loved darkness rather than light.” And we can’t allow our students to think, *Hey, you just say Jesus, everyone’s gonna say, how can I be saved?* That’s not gonna happen. You’re invading on somebody’s life which is enveloped in this affair with sin. You can’t just be neutral when you hear the reality of Jesus. And so that’s what we want young people to know. This is why you’ve got to be studying the Word. This is why you’ve got to be obedient to make disciples; and there is a cost filled with consequences socially, it could be physically, your home boys could want to come at you, man, like you can’t leave. It’s blood in, blood out. Or your family could be like, “No, you weren’t me in

raised to believe that. You're walking away from the family," and that's where we need the church to say, "We are your family with you." That's why it's imperative, leaders, to let the students know, "man, sometimes we're gonna feel like we're all we got." And if we're marching together as one family, that helps the tension, it doesn't relieve it, but it helps the tension to know I can get back out there—school is tomorrow and I need to study for that test so I can make a good grade, but at the same time I want to show people that I'm not who I used to be. And that's what we want them to see. A true disciple, man, is working on all the weak areas of their life, so we want to learn how does the Bible speak to my relationship with those in my house that may hate Jesus? How does it speak to my ethic when it comes to doing my schoolwork? How does it speak to me and my involvement with my community now that I'm saved: do I just want to stay in my house all day or do I need to get out there and continue to engage? That's it. So we want students to say, yeah, it's not just varsity like you're in the starting lineup. So you've got to get out there every day.

Larry Acosta: Man, no joke, no joke. Talk for a moment a little bit about in your own journey, because we don't see enough urban theologians, if you will, and so you're one of those guys who just has a love for God's Word and a love to teach God's Word in truth and help people understand God's Word, right? And so now these youth workers are out there, they're standing in the gap and they're trying to help kids not just fall in love with Jesus, but also fall in love with His Word. And so somewhere in your journey, you fell in love with God's Word and someone showed you how to unpack Scripture and study and maybe some study tools and such. Can you just talk for a minute about that? Because I think if our youth workers can give our students a little bit of that know-how, I really think that that's gonna open this whole growth element to this pathway to maturing and being a disciple for the long haul.

D. A. Horton: Yeah, absolutely. The way it was presented to me by my youth leaders was, you know, they told me discipleship was all around me. They told me that the streets taught me how to sell stuff, how to steal stuff, how to do what I want, how to pick up girls, like I was disciplined by dudes on the block OGs, big homies, like they disciplined me in the ways of the world. And so when the youth leader said, "Man, I want to take the place of the big homey on the street, but show you I'm a big homey in the Scriptures," and when they made that connection, man, that . . . yes, because what I would do is, like in the streets, if I had some good product or I did something or somebody threw a party, man, I would be a

billboard for that which was rocking me.

Larry Acosta: That's when you . . .

D. A. Horton: Exactly, man! And so when I was like, *Yo, this is what the Scriptures teach, this is who God is. I want to learn as much as I can so I can be a billboard for my God to make disciples so I can put them on the truth of God's Word the way that I was put on by my big homey in the faith.* And so I think that's what's imperative is that they know what discipleship is, they've been discipleshiped in a rhythm that is anti the Word of God. And now you have the opportunity to put their focus back on the cross and to show them, man, go as deep as you can in God's Word because this is an abyss. They can never reach the full bottom, if you will, the full depth of the beauty and the richness of God's Word. So every now and then when they've got to come back up to the surface, they're bringing more stuff up to show people. This is the beauty; and if you want what I got, you've got to dig deep with me.

Larry Acosta: I love it, man. I love it. So, youth workers, we believe you're gonna have some great conversations, truly. And what you're gonna do as you ground kids in the Word and engage the Scripture, but also as you equip them, and maybe you'll even bring in some examples of some study Bibles. Maybe you'll bring in a concordance and some different samples, either online that you teach them, or just some hard copies of some study resources, some commentaries, and just so you can expose kids in how to understand God's Word. I mean, that's gonna be a vital tool for some of these kids to learn.

And so, we're really psyched about this series. We feel like God's gonna do some amazing things. And so again, just to affirm you, man, you are critical to this discipleship process in the neighborhood, in the kingdom. Thank you, urban youth workers, for who you are. Thank you for repping Jesus personally, and thank you for taking kids under your wing and walking this out with them on this discipleship journey as you help them grow and mature in Jesus Christ, man. We need you. We love you. We believe in you like crazy, man. Keep repping Jesus and keep making disciples. Until next time, we're out for now. Thanks so much.