

# Evangeophobia

## Five Reasons Teenagers Don't Share Their Faith – and How to Help

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Do your teens have evangeophobia? In their “live and let live” world, evangelism can seem like an antiquated idea. We shouldn't be surprised that evangeophobia has spread like an epidemic through our youth groups.

Jesus clearly stated that He came to seek and save the lost, and He's charged us with spreading His message to those who don't know Him. Sharing the Gospel is not optional simply because of the times in which we live. It's something we're commanded to be about until His return.

So what's a youth leader to do? I've identified five key reasons teens don't share their faith. I've also uncovered a few insights that can help you address their evangeophobia and help you mobilize them to share the Gospel with their friends.

### Reason #1: Fear

*What will my friends think if I talk about Jesus?* Fear of rejection looms large, but you can help your teens overcome their fear straight from the pages of



Scripture. Show them that they're not in this faith-sharing thing alone. God goes with them and promises to provide His power as they share His love and truth with others. 2 **Timothy 1:7-8** assures us: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord.” Help your teens learn to rely on God's power and promises. Encourage them to pray for their lost friends and to

ask for God's assistance. This can give teens the courage they need to step out bravely.

### Reason #2: Lack of Urgency

*What difference does it make anyway?* Hell is a very unpopular concept these days. But, Jesus spoke matter-of-factly about a literal hell. Jesus used the word *gehenna* (“hell”) eleven of the twelve times it appears in the New Testament. He never described hell as figurative, temporary, or anything less than horrific. The Bible describes hell as “for real” and “forever.”



Sometimes, the twenty-first-century version of the Christian God is just loving instead of *just AND loving*. The just part of God (which demands absolute justice, holiness, and perfection) has been minimized and the loving part of God (which shows mercy, grace, and forgiveness) has been emphasized. As a result, teens have begun to view God as more of a cosmic Santa Claus who caters to their every whim instead of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (**John 14:6**) By helping your teens understand the reality of hell and the hope of heaven, the urgency of the message of the Gospel comes alive. They need to see that their friends' eternal destiny hangs in the balance.

### Reason #3: Live and Let Live

*Other's spiritual beliefs aren't my business.* Sometimes teens think evangelism is all about standing on a street corner with a bullhorn and yelling, “Repent!” They may see spiritual conversation as inappropriate or intrusive. Evangelism, however, is actually about reaching out with Jesus' grace and truth.



Whether their friends know it or not, they need Jesus. At the core of every human is a gaping hole, a hole that can be temporarily filled with stuff, sports, or sin. Only a relationship with Jesus can truly, fully, and permanently fill the gaping hole. Life without God is like having a car without an engine or a cellphone without a service provider. The existence of God gives us the basis for hope in life, both now and forever. Teens need to understand that they can help their friends fill that invisible, unquenchable need for God by sharing the Gospel with them.

### Reason #4: Anybody But Me



*It's not MY job.* Many teens don't see the importance of sharing their faith because they think evangelism is someone else's job. It's something their pastor or the Young Life guy gets paid to do. It's something the little old ladies at their church do with their sock drives. It's not part of the teen repertoire.

Recent research shows that a friend has one hundred times more influence on a person than a stranger does. Your teens can play a critical role—perhaps the most critical role—in reaching their friends for Jesus. God has purposefully planted each of them in their circles of influence to reach into their friends' lives with His love. When teens bring God up in conversations with their friends, they are already speaking in the context of a caring relationship. They know their friends' needs, hurts, and longings and have insights that can help them reach deeply into their friends' souls.

### Reason #5: Ignorance

*I won't know what to say.* Many teens have no idea how to explain the message of the Gospel. **1 Peter 3:15** challenges us to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” It's your job to train and equip your teens to share their faith in a clear and compelling manner. Provide them with a short, succinct way to share the Gospel. For help with this, check out the free GOSPEL Journey resources found at [dare2share.org/gospeljourney](http://dare2share.org/gospeljourney). Because you're the coach, help them to learn the basic skills they need to confidently and clearly share the Gospel.



Help your teens overcome their evangeophobia and unleash them to turn their world upside down with the message of the Gospel. God has given them the important job of reaching their friends for Christ. Your job is to motivate and mobilize them to do it!