

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 8 ROOTS OF THE GOSPEL

Last week, I drove my family to Orlando, Florida. I've seen a map of the United States on more than one occasion, so I have a pretty solid idea of where Florida is. As long as I kept driving east, I would eventually get there. But I didn't want to get there *eventually*. I wanted to arrive in Florida as quickly as possible. To do this, I intentionally used a tool called GPS. I typed in the address and found a direct route to go. It still took 14 hours, by the way.

As youth pastors, we have a pretty solid idea of where we want our students to be spiritually when they graduate from our ministry. But like my drive to Florida, we don't want our students to *eventually* grow in their faith; we want to give them the most direct route. To do this, we must be intentional about our time with them. If we are somewhat aimless about our teaching strategy, bouncing around from one buzz-worthy topic to the next, we don't provide our students a deliberate pathway to spiritual maturity.

We know we are not only called to introduce students to Jesus but to make and multiply disciples. We are to help them grow toward a mature faith and encourage them to live out the characteristics of a disciple. This won't happen by accident. Without a strategic teaching plan, we may miss critical aspects of the Gospel, which contains eight core roots. Every Deep Discipleship lesson is grounded in one of these eight fundamental roots to ensure the whole gospel picture is presented. Similar to driving with GPS, a structured teaching strategy centered around The 8 Roots of the Gospel helps us provide a direct route to spiritual growth.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 8 ROOTS OF THE GOSPEL

These are **The 8 Roots of the Gospel** that underline the Deep Discipleship system:

The **Rescue Root** helps students understand their need for a Savior:

We are slaves, held captive by terrible enemies: sin and death. We need a rescuer in this fallen, corrupt, and shattered world—Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. In fact, he's the only One who can free us. And once we're free, we have the opportunity to join in the rescue mission for others.

The **Knowledge Root** helps students understand the basics of who God is:

God is enormous. He's too big, too awesome, and too complicated to fully wrap our minds around. Yet he wants us to know him. He wants a relationship with us, so he has revealed himself in a number of ways. We will never know everything about God. But to become his disciples, we need to know some essential truths about the One we follow.

The **Apologetics Root** prepares students to explain the hope they have in Christ:

The Bible encourages us to defend our faith: "but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15, ESV). That's the point of apologetics—to explain our hope in Christ to others. Your students will find ways to do just that in the Apologetics Root.

The **Worship Root** helps students explore what it means to have a lifestyle of worship:

Worship is more than just singing. It is a lifestyle. It's how you go about your day, and it happens when you get a vivid glimpse of God, his power, and his majesty. In the Bible, anyone who had a close encounter with God couldn't help but marvel at his glory. The angels, his messengers, are in a constant state of worship. We, too, can express a life of worship by encountering God daily.

The **Community Root** helps students understand the meaning of biblical fellowship:

We weren't created to be alone. Our emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being depend on deep, loving relationships with other people. God has created a family for us. They are his people and will help us grow in another essential connection—with God.

The **Kingdom Root** helps students understand how to live in the Kingdom of God every day:

When students embrace the Kingdom life, they begin to look at the small things differently. They realize the weight that their decisions carry, and they can start to live by God's value system instead of the world's tainted values.

The **Identity Root** helps students discover their unique identity in Christ:

God created humans in his own image, unique in all creation. Then sin entered the picture, and everyone developed a warped version of their original identity. Christ came and died on the cross and rose again to offer us a new identity, even better than the first. He took on our sin and shame so we could take on his righteousness. He identifies with us so we can find our identity in him—a redeemed identity.

The **Outreach Root** helps students understand their God-given mission:

Jesus gave his followers one last command: to spread the good news of his death and resurrection—the Gospel—to the whole world. When we become members of Christ's body of believers, the story doesn't end. That's just the beginning! Now we get to join in a remarkable mission to care for the least, love other people, and share Jesus as Lord wherever we go.

Ultimately, only God knows the heart of a student. Only he can measure faith. And while no one but the Holy Spirit can transform the heart of a student, we are responsible for reflecting, uncovering, and resembling the truth that saves lives and makes disciples. Intentionally focusing on **The 8 Roots of the Gospel** will help us do that.

