

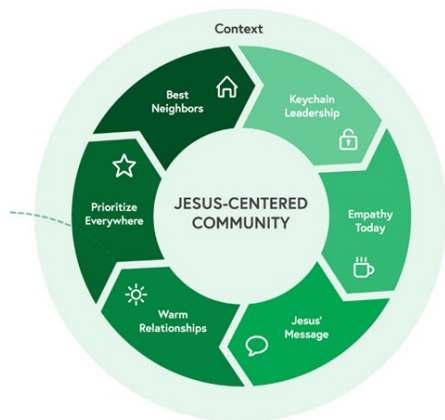


### Commitment #3: Take Jesus' Message Seriously

*"Instead of asserting formulaic gospel claims, welcome people into a Jesus-centered way of life."*

#### From the Fuller Youth Institute:

The teenagers and emerging adults you know face a long list of obstacles that threaten to hinder their pursuit of Jesus, including not only our pluralistic culture and their own extended adolescent journey but also churches drained by a thin gospel. But in churches [effectively reaching young people], Jesus reigns over poor theology, and his words ring true for young sojourners hungry for life-giving direction. Proclaiming Jesus as the centerpiece of the story of God and seeking to live out his message in everyday relationships, these churches are reclaiming the very heart of the Good News.



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#### A "thin gospel":

Researchers describe the dominant, de facto religious belief system of teenagers and adult Christians in America today as *moralistic therapeutic deism*.

It is *moralistic*, meaning that religious young people equate faith with being a good, moral person (generally, being *nice*).

It is *therapeutic*, so faith becomes a means to feeling better about themselves.

And it is *deistic*, meaning God exists, but this God is not involved in human affairs with any regularity.

#### The Gospel of Jesus:

According to [FYI's] research, churches that communicate the gospel of Jesus as the centerpiece of God's story are more likely to have young people with greater faith vibrancy and maturity. They are making three key shifts in how they describe the message of Jesus:

**Shift 1:** *Less talk about abstract beliefs and more talk about Jesus.* Instead of simply agreeing with abstract theological truths, young people are drawn to the person and work of Jesus Christ. They want to know the meaning of tradition-laden religious terms and to dig up the soil around them to rediscover the roots of what Jesus said and did. The Good News of Jesus Christ, nothing less, is what young people want to take seriously

**Shift 2:** *Less tied to formulas and more focused on a redemptive narrative.* Rather than insist the Good News is about specific words or linear steps to obtain salvation, young people use story language to describe God's work in the world. What's more, those who talk about the gospel in narrative terms also tend to rate their churches higher on teaching people how to interact with culture, and they rate themselves personally higher on responding to current social issues in light of faith.

**Shift 3:** *Less about heaven later and more about life here and now.* Salvation means more to young people than the assurance of heaven later; it also invites us into a new way of life in the present. In other words, young people, leaders, and parents seemed compelled by faith that promises not only reward at the end but also transformation now, in everyday life. This gospel is not simply something from two thousand years ago for two thousand years from now. It's for *today*.



#### Your Growing Together Team:

Robby Bales, Nate Bass, Tina Burleson, Cherise Gregory, and Stacy Nowell