

### 2010 Youth Unlimited Commissioning Litany

“Who Cares?” based on James 5:10-11 (The Message)

A litany prepared to use when commissioning your youth before going out to serve

Before reading the litany the leader may invite all participants (students and volunteers) up to the front and share briefly with the church some relevant details such as:

- when the group is leaving and returning.
  - the name and place of the YU event.
  - what they'll be doing.
  - what they'll be learning (based on the theme “Who Cares” taken from James 5:10-11 (The Message)).
- The support and blessing of the entire congregation is vital to your team's experience. Crafting a time of commissioning with your church can be a concrete way to express and receive this blessing. Although the litany is provided here, please think ahead of time about how you (or your team) will introduce the YU experience to your larger church community. Having team members be introduced at this time also gives your congregation an opportunity to put faces with names as they pray for the team during the week.
- Consider printing a list of participant names, dates of the experience, and this year's theme verse for the congregation. These specifics help communicate and provide the opportunity for remembering your team in prayer throughout the experience.

**Leader:** Together we form a community, whose hearts long to respond to God's calling. We commit to seek God together step by step. We witness God's Kingdom present both now and in the future. As one in Christ, we offer ourselves to God in this time of our mission experience.

**ALL: May God transform our hearts into God's likeness.**

**Leader:** So what would it mean for our hearts to be like God's? As we reflect on God's passion, we are reminded in James 5:10-11 to “Take the old prophets as your mentors. They put up with anything, went through everything, and never once quit, all the time honoring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course! You've heard, of course, of Job's staying power, and you know how God brought it all together for him at the end. That's because God cares, cares right down to the last detail.” (The Message) Will you commit to exploring the depths of God's care for you and others?

**Participants: Joining with God, we declare our intentions to learn more about caring as God cares. We desire eyes to see as God sees, ears open to God's voice, hearts saturated with God's love, and hands and feet to be agents of God's Kingdom today.**

**Leader:** As a sign of your commitment, lay your hand on your heart while you respond to these next three questions. In both the community we go to serve and our home community, needs surround us. Who will care?

**Participants: I will. God open me to see the needs.**

**Leader:** When you are physically and relationally exhausted from hard work and it is time to serve others for a new day, who will care?

**Participants: I will. God sustain me to love and serve those around me.**

**Leader:** When you are tempted to build up your own reputation, who will care to point the way to Jesus?

**Participants: I will. God humble me to join in your work and give you glory.**

**Leader:** Students and leaders, thank you for your commitment to pursue God's heart actively this week. Congregation, to spur on our mission participants, will you promise to faithfully pray for our students and leaders?

**Congregation: We commit to surround you in prayer as we send you as God’s ambassadors into the world. We pledge to pray for your travel, relationships, service, health, and opportunities to draw near to Christ.**

**Leader:** How can our hearts be like God’s? Looking at the prophets, we are reminded time and time again of a deeply passionate heart for God and all people. Isaiah exhibits God’s passion in his response to God’s call. In Isaiah 6:8 he writes, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’”

**Participants: As Isaiah responded, so do we: “Here am I. Send me!”**

**Congregation: As you go, we go with you. You are not alone; you are joined by our community as you seek and serve God.**

**All: May God bear fruit through our response to God’s call.**

**Leader:** As you close this commissioning time in prayer, encourage one of your student leaders to pray for your entire group. He/she may use the suggested prayer below or pray in his/her own words.

**Prayer:** Compassionate God, we offer ourselves in the variety of roles you call us to as we serve you and others. Thank you for the opportunities to participate in this mission experience. Sustain us to keep our commitments. Teach us to care as you do. Cultivate our compassion and shape our hearts. Open us to the transforming journey of passionately pursuing Christ, and make us into people who seek justice all of our days. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we pray, Amen.

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## 2010 Youth Unlimited Teaching Ideas

Topics relevant to today’s youth to share with your whole congregation

The following are outlines based on **James 5:10-11** to share with your congregation.

### IDEA 1

**Title: Who Cares?**

Engaging God’s (com)passion for us can fuel our passion for God and others.

**Scripture:** James 5:10-11

**Opening: Dead Battery**

- Invite your listening community into an imaginative story of preparing to go somewhere. Describe how you would clean your car and make it spotless—inside and out; engage your audience by developing your climax with lots of energy and excitement that suddenly fizzles when you get into the car, turn the key, and nothing happens.
- Why? Because there is no power—the battery is dead. Similarly, apathy can drain our spiritual batteries such that we lose motivation to care about others, God, and even ourselves.

**What is apathy?**

- A “who cares?” attitude. Incorporate some questions that help listeners assess their own level of apathy, such as: When you see pain or brokenness in the world around you, do you shrug and go about your own business or stop to notice? Do you think it matters whether we tell the truth, keep a secret, or pay our taxes?
- When no one notices your troubles, do you put up a wall that communicates indifference about yourself and others?

**Where does apathy pop up?**

- In our relationships, school, work, bodies, minds, and spirits. Apathy can creep into every area of our lives.

**What causes apathy?**

- Apathy is often not simply a result of boredom or moral relativism in culture—it’s a way we posture ourselves in relation to God.

- At the root can be our own choices (themselves rooted in our sinful nature; Romans 3, 5)—our failure to passionately engage God and others.

### **What is the result of apathy?**

- Death: spiritual and relational destruction. Apathy seems to be a strategy of the enemy whom Jesus describes as coming to “steal, kill, and destroy” rather than give life (John 10:10).

### **Choose one of these scriptural examples to flesh out further:**

- Job—scripture sets him up as the ultimate example of someone who could say “God doesn’t care about me.” But Job’s response is radical faithfulness.
- Revelation 3:15-16—a letter to a “who cares,” lukewarm church: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (NIV)

### **What’s the cure for apathy?**

- As we recognize and embrace God’s deep compassion for all people, our own passion can be reignited. Passion leads to compassion as we see beyond ourselves to care for others.
- Passion isn’t always instant—it’s usually something that needs to be nurtured over time, like a campfire that can alternately flame up or die out based on what’s fueling it.
- The Holy Spirit is ultimately the One who enlivens us, replacing our dead-battery hearts of stone with hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26) so that we are able to feel and care deeply as we begin to live out of a core of true compassion.



### **Title: Why Care?**

Nurturing passion in our lives by engaging in justice.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 61:8

### **Opening: Our Numbness to Injustice**

- You may want to begin with a story of your own about a time you realized your own numbness to injustice. For instance, you were faced with a person in desperate need and had an opportunity to get involved and ignored it; OR the great need somehow stirred you to action.
- Alternatively, you could begin by sharing some facts about world injustices that show our numbness to the needs of the world. If possible, try to include examples with a personal connection. Contrast the needs with our posture of apathy—when it comes down to our day-to-day living, we probably don’t know and don’t care about most of these needs.
- Another reason we are numb, according to psychologists, is that we are literally “thrilled to death”—we have become so overstimulated in our culture that we are numb to emotion, so we seek out thrills in order to feel something. This is called anhedonia: an inability to experience pleasure. For more insights and examples to potentially use in this message, see Archibald Hart, *Thrilled to Death: How the Endless Pursuit of Pleasure is Leaving us Numb* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

### **Why Care? Engaging Justice**

- The prophets cry out to us—“Look around! Here are reasons to care.”
- Defining “justice”—at its core, justice is simply righting wrongs. It is connected with the reality that God cares deeply for the wholeness and dignity of each person, and cares about how we lift up God’s image in each person to restore dignity that has been lost or taken away.
- Justice confronts sinful and destructive systems that oppress individuals, communities, and whole people groups.
- Jesus came engaging justice and seeking the shalom-wholeness of all.

### **Why Care? Engaging Righteousness**

- The New Testament word *dikaiosune* is usually translated “righteousness”, but it also means “justice.” What if we translated Matthew 6:33 “Seek first his kingdom and his justice...”? or Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.”

- This is much more than our usual to-do list of “righteousness” or individual holy living for our own sake. This is a call to change unjust systems and structures that prevent the wholeness and righteousness of others. Seeking righteousness for the poor and oppressed is synonymous with seeking the Kingdom—in hands-on concrete ways.

### Why Care? Engaging Love

- The root of justice is love—God’s passionate love for each person and desire for their wholeness. When we fully engage God’s love for us and for others, we begin to see the barriers preventing the wholeness of others in our world. Christ compels us to seek their healing, freedom, and peace (shalom, which in the Hebrew understanding means “wholeness” or “flourishing”).
- Loving in this way also frees us from the bonds of apathy. We become fully engaged and can no longer remain numb. Love is a cure for the thrill-seeking adrenalin addiction of our day. When we begin to truly love the poor, we begin to feel again. We may feel more pain, but we will also feel deeper joy and hope than self-focused faith can deliver.



### Title: Risky Caring

When does our faithfulness to Kingdom living call us to risk...and just how far are we willing to go in obedience?

**Scripture:** Luke 4:16-21

**Opening:** Jesus came announcing that his work will be to proclaim a year of Jubilee (freedom from debt). But not just one year; a whole new creation of Jubilee—of canceling debts, of freeing prisoners, of healing the wounded, of caring for the poor and the outcast. If we read on in this passage, we see that at first the people spoke well of him, but a few minutes later they wanted to stone him. His picture of Jubilee was a lot bigger than they could imagine, as it included Gentiles and those of the lowest social status. It turns out that speaking of and living out justice is risky.

**Narratives of Risk:** Choose one of these stories to illustrate this risky proposition further:

- Esther (Esther 2-8)—Risky bravery—An orphan exile girl becomes queen, then is asked whether she cares enough to risk everything for the sake of her people.
- Moses (Exodus 3-4)—Risky calling—Moses responds to the “I AM” by leaving the safety of shepherd-ing in the wilderness and going back to Egypt to face Pharaoh, along with facing his own past.

### How can we begin to live risky obedient lives?

- Jesus offers strange wisdom in John 12:24-26—“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.” It requires risk to give up our version of “our life” in this world. Unless we’re willing to risk the death of the reality we’ve created, we can’t begin to experience the depth of the Kingdom reality God wants us to live out.
- Similarly, in Luke 9:23-25 Jesus suggests that we pick up a cross each day, an instrument of torture, and carry it with us. Why would he urge us toward daily death? To experience daily life that’s much deeper as we truly care for things Jesus cares about—like good news for the poor.

### What happens as a result of risky caring?

- Jesus invites us into a wild ride of living above apathy—of believing every day counts as we live into his manifesto in Luke 4 to “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” around us.
- The kind of caring Jesus said was core to his mission in Luke 4 was directly related to risk on behalf of those most marginalized by society—the poor, imprisoned, blind (representing all physical impairments), and oppressed. He went on to specifically name outsiders who were cared for by the prophets—non-Jews who received God’s healing and provision. When we begin to join God in caring for those who are “least” among our society, we open ourselves to ridicule, loss of status, frustration, and pain. We also open ourselves to incredible blessing and joy that come from giving ourselves away. We risk experiencing Jubilee!