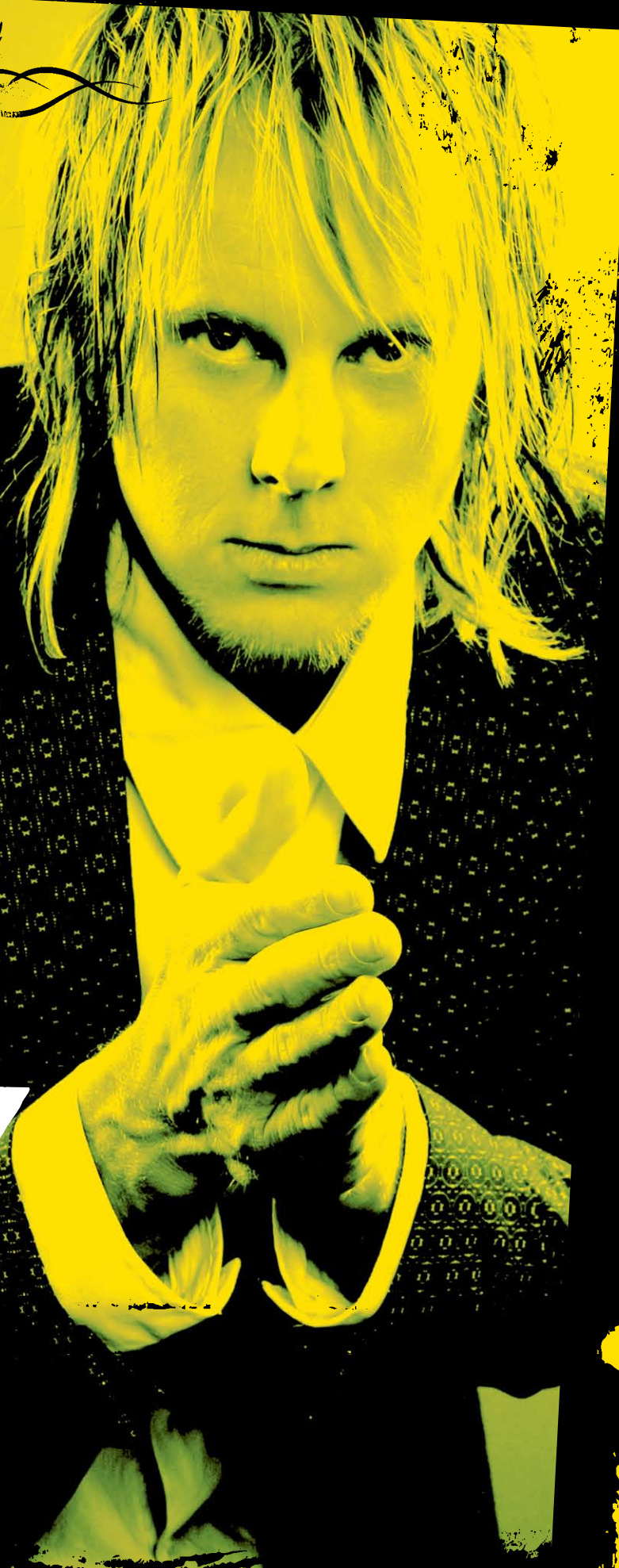


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Conversation with Brock Gill

# THE *illusionist*

**B**rock Gill leads a new generation of edgy, daring illusionists, amazing audiences with his unique stage show, dry wit, and mind-blowing escapes.

While working at a sawmill in 1997, Gill felt that God wanted him to use illusions, escapes and stunts to bring a message of hope to people.

With a passion for reaching people as the catalyst, Gill went back to college and began performing at church outreach events. News of his creative method of evangelism spread quickly, and he began to receive invitations almost immediately. He has ministered across the United States and in Mexico and Australia and seen thousands of lives touched by God.

Gill spoke with Scott Harrup, senior associate editor, about his desire to see young people empowered for ministry.

**tpe:** You've told your audiences, "If you're bored with church, you're doing church wrong." What do you mean?

**GILL:** I see people who sit in church week after week and don't really act out their faith, or they stay really weak in their faith. They've figured out the game. They can come in and sing a few songs and tune out the message until it's over, and they think they're spiritual because they sat through it all.

Going to church week after week doesn't make you spiritual. You need to be the church. We, all of us, are the ministers. We should be doing

church, not just going to a building. You've got to be involved, plugged in, and using your spiritual gifts.

**tpe:** A lot of young people who are dissatisfied with church aren't hanging around.

**GILL:** We used to cite statistics that upon graduation 80 percent of our church-ed teenagers dropped out of church never to return. I don't think that's true anymore — they're not waiting to graduate. If you go into a church now, you rarely see a lot of senior high school students, particularly guys. They're leaving now by about the 11th grade.

**tpe:** What can be done to keep them in church?

**GILL:** It all comes back to ministry, to trusting young people with ministry. We send an 18-year-old across the world and let him or her operate millions of dollars worth of equipment that protects our lives but don't trust that person or train them to lead a Bible study. We just don't trust.

I can't put my finger on why, but we don't pour enough and spend enough energy in training teenagers at a young age how to be leaders. Truth is, they're already leading whether they realize it or not. They're leaders in their youth group and in their schools, and a lot of times we don't get them to lead in the right direction. I think we need to pour more energy into what it takes to get them to lead and to lead correctly.

**tpe:** How does that work in practical terms?

**GILL:** I tell teenagers, "You should be, if you're 15, leading a Bible study by now." And I always get that response of, "Wait. What are you talking about? I'm only 15." I know they won't be experts, but they should at least be starting to mature and doing ministry.

It doesn't have to be a program from a church. Ministry is something young people can choose within their personal lives. Take that 17-year-old guy who's about to graduate high school. He's earned it. He's the big dog on campus. He and his boys are going to run the school. For a 17- or 18-year-old guy, ninth-graders are watching the decisions he makes. They're watching at youth group and at school. So here's the tremendous opportunity.

Instead of just being the macho guy who's initiating the freshmen and picking on whoever, why not take the opportunity to find that one guy who's in ninth grade and can't figure out how to get his locker open or how to get to class. The guy who you don't realize his parents just divorced and his life is falling apart. Why don't you go find that guy and take care of him like a brother? It may not be the coolest thing. But why not meet with that guy once or twice a week and see what kind of difference you make in his life?

You start a cycle. That 12th-grader pours into that ninth-grader. That ninth-grader finds a seventh-grader he can pour into. The seventh-grader isn't off the hook. He can find someone in fifth grade and help that person along. The fifth-grader can say, "I may not know a whole lot about life, but I can go and help my Bible study leader or someone at church do a ministry job even if it's as small as setting up chairs."

You start cycles. Then you start to see long-term change. But right now, there aren't enough cycles in place.

**tpe:** Who are the mentors in your life?

**GILL:** I have a guy in my life right now I meet with every Tuesday

morning when I'm not traveling. We actually meet in two different roles. On Tuesday morning we meet with a small group of three or four. Randy kind of leads that. He also meets with me once a month or so one on one.

A lot of it is just me watching how he does life. He's 50 years old, and I just watch the decisions he makes now and how he deals with decisions he made when he was my age.

**tpe:** You and your wife are applying that mentoring commitment personally.

**GILL:** Andrea and I don't have children, but what we're doing is something a little different. It's not adoption, but almost. We've found there are a lot of people now who are growing up with very little parental guidance — because of divorce, abuse, whatever. There are a lot of people without good parents to go to.

The chances of a 17- or 18-year-old person being adopted are pretty slim. It's just not going to happen. We're actually pouring into those people. People in their early 20s trying to figure out how to start their life, who don't really have parents they can pick up the phone and call. We've surrounded ourselves with about half a dozen young adults. We have them live at our home from time to time. We have one guy living here who's been here about six months. We pour into them as if they were our kids. Point them in the direction they need to go.

**tpe:** People are really hammered in our culture to misuse their bodies at younger and younger ages. What does it mean for our bodies to be part of the body of Christ?

**GILL:** What I talk about mainly is that our body is God's temple. Jesus lives by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Church is not about the building, but about us. I tell people God wants us to live lives of holiness, which top to bottom, left to right, is making the right decisions, staying away from the junk, sin. Living a life without sin. If you don't get that part right, nothing else will matter. God wants us to live set apart, living like Jesus. If we can't get that right, nothing else is going to match up. Of course, we only accomplish that through Christ in us.

**tpe:** How are you continuing to develop your ministry?

**GILL:** We do a large outreach, a citywide thing that takes three nights to do — Freedom Experience. Then there is a one-night thing we do. But what I'm trying to tell people about now is a new thing we're developing that is starting this year. I'm taking the theme of the miracles of Jesus, which I dealt with for a three-hour documentary for the Discovery Channel, and we're doing a live stage show. We're starting to tour with that.

On stage I'll bring the miracles of Jesus to life. We're going to use all five senses of the audience. They won't just sit and watch. It's a show that can open people's eyes to the life of Jesus. It's relevant, and gives people so much meat to chew on and tools to build their faith. For those who are lost, they'll have some hard questions they'll have to deal with. **tpe**

E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).



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