



grace STUDENTS

Leader

HANDBOOK



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Our Why

We exist to connect students to Jesus, to one another, and to caring, committed adults.

Students are seeking answers to these existential questions:

- Who am I? (Identity)
- Where do I fit in? (Belonging)
- Do I matter? (Purpose)

We desire to see them ask these questions and find their answers in the faith community of Grace Church.

We Do Student Ministries Because

We believe every student was made for a lifelong, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

We believe that all Christians are part of the family of God and find their truest identity in Christ.

We believe that the local church is the hope of the world and to this end, we aim to empower students to be agents of hope to those around them.



Our Win in Student Ministries

We win when a student takes a step closer to Jesus!

We say “takes a step” for a reason: there’s no finish line in spiritual growth. Faith development is a life-long journey, and no two paths are identical. That’s why our big win doesn’t have anything to do with a specific skill or achievement. Instead, we win anytime a student takes a step closer to Jesus.

There are evidences, or practices of faith, that we can plan for as a part of spiritual growth. We have incorporated *Way of Discipleship* in a developmentally appropriate way for students.

These evidences and practices will be fruits of growth, and not a result of our force upon students.

We win when a student takes a step closer to Jesus.

At the end of 8th grade, a student will...”

Surrender & Trust

Knowledge: Recognize that God is good and recognize our need to trust him through Jesus.

Practice: Identifies as a Christ-follower; child of God.

Communing with God

Knowledge: Recognize that we get to know God personally by spending time with Him.

Practice: Occasionally disengage in order commune with God.

Studying God's Word

Knowledge: Can articulate the basics of the story of God

Practice: Reads the Bible on their own at home in conjunction with Fuse Spiritual Growth challenges.

Justice & Mercy

Knowledge: Be able to distinguish injustice from unfairness

Practice: Engage in annual weekend of service and Christmas Compassion packing party.

Loving Other Well

Knowledge: Can articulate the 1st and 2nd Greatest Commandments.

Practice: Begin to practice love through acts of kindness at home and at church

Leading Others to Jesus

Knowledge: Can articulate the Great Commission.

Practice: Bring a friend with them to Fuse, Late Nights.

Material Generosity

Knowledge: Recognize that God owns it all and we are stewards.

Practice: Participates in monthly Fuse offering.



At the end of 12th grade, a student will...

Surrender and Trust

Knowledge: Recognizes that living in surrender and trust with God through Jesus is their best possible life, even in the middle of doubts, questions, and trials.

Practice: Demonstrate surrender of selfish desires and plans and demonstrates trust in Jesus in choosing to do what is right even when it's hard.

Communing with God

Knowledge: Recognizes the value of intentional disengagement in order to commune with God.

Practice: Spends time alone with God at each retreat and is starting to practice this independently at home.

Studying God's Word

Knowledge: Be able to articulate the story of God and His kingdom, be able to explain key overarching theological themes from the story and will know how it applies to their life.

Practice: Consistently reads the Bible on their own and aligns their lives to its teachings.

Self-Denial

Knowledge: Recognizes how setting aside personal desires frees us to focus on God's kingdom purposes, which bring true satisfaction.

Practice Has experienced conviction of the Spirit to say "No" to selfish wants in order to live according to the Spirit; can point to "fruit" in this area.

Moral Integrity

Knowledge: Understands that practicing moral integrity is part of being an image bearer of Christ.

Practice Moral choices based on the impact those choices have on them, those around them, and their relationship with God.

Spiritual Community

Knowledge: Can articulate the need to participate in a spiritual community found through a local, intergenerational church.

Practice: Committed to regularly engage with 3 godly adults at Grace Church, and connects with 2 godly adults outside of Grace (parents not included).

Justice and Mercy

Knowledge: Understands the reality of systems of injustice and can explain how God demonstrates both in Scripture.

Practice: Participates in Weekend of Service annually and 2 short term trips with Grace Church

Loving Others Well

Knowledge: Can articulate the 1st and 2nd Greatest Commandments

Practice: Displays evidence of kindness, forgiveness toward family and friends in small group

Seeking the Call of God

Knowledge: Identifies 2 – 3 spiritual gifts from God and understands how to employ them toward healing the broken places of the world

Practice: Aligns their post-high school plans by seeking God's will in conjunction with their gifts and current circumstances.

Leading Others to Jesus

Knowledge: Can articulate the Great Commission and why God invites us to build his kingdom here as it is in heaven.

Practice: Can articulate their faith story and has told it to small group.

Material Generosity

Knowledge: Can recite "for the love of money is the root of all evil" and articulate how this plays out personally and corporately

Practice: Consistently tithing and is intentional to understand own proclivities toward saving vs spending vs giving



Fuse & Merge Programming

Our Environments

We focus on three kinds of environments for students. Each one is designed to invite students into deeper relationships with their peers, leaders, and Jesus. All are welcome & wanted!

Large Group

Our large group programs are designed to help students connect with Jesus through worship, teaching, activity, and community.

Small Group

Small Groups are designed to connect every student with two caring, committed adults and a community of peers as they seek to understand and grow in Christ through Scripture.

Special Events/Retreats/Short Term Trips:

These events are designed to help students connect to the world around them with a spiritual focus for a memorable experience that propels their relationship with Christ in a faith community.

Partnering with Parents

Partnering with parents is an important part of our ministry. We partner with parents because we are on their team and support them in their primary role as disciplers in a student's life.

What do we mean when we say this is a partnership? First, it's connecting parents with small group leaders. Second, it's establishing regular communication. Third, it's gaining parent permission for unique events or circumstances. It is so important for student ministries to honor parents in their role as we come alongside their sons and daughters.



Serving Teams

Welcome Team

The Welcome Team wins when they make students feel known and help engage them from the first moment of arrival.

Our welcome team has an important role: you are the FIRST PEOPLE students meet when they arrive this sets the tone for their whole experience. Our Welcome Team greets and checks students in with big smiles and seeks to know each students' name. Welcome team members have the opportunity to begin breaking down walls so that, for the rest of our program, students are more open to connect with peers, leaders, and ultimately Jesus.

Qualifications:

- Be assertive and friendly
- Committed, regular attend of Grace Church
- Current Background Check on file

Host Team

Hosts win when they lead through the service with vision and excitement, effectively engaging students.

Qualifications:

- Able to command a room with a fun, humble, inclusive heart
- Committed, regular attender of Grace Church
- Member of the Core Team
- Current Background Check on file



Servant Leadership Team

High school students on this team are invited by the Associate Pastor and Student Directors. SLT wins when they model a dynamic and growing relationship with Jesus as they serve Grace Students. They practically serve Grace Students by arriving early to set up, staying late to clean up, and by providing new ideas to staff and helpful feedback during regular meetings.

Qualifications:

- Love Jesus
- Love Grace Student Ministries
- Displays flexibility and teachability
- Committed, regular attender of Grace Church
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Teaching Team

Teachers win when they have shared the message in a clear, concise, and compelling way.

Teachers “set the table” for Small Group Leaders to facilitate discussion with their small groups. They receive a Big Idea, Scripture, and Goal statement from staff to develop a clear, concise, and compelling message that points to Jesus. The message should spark meaningful conversations among students and leaders. Teachers also receive feedback from staff and Small Group Leaders.

Qualifications:

- Loves processing through Scripture
- Loves teaching a message that’s biblical, concise and relevant to students
- Committed, regular attender of Grace Church
- Member of the Core Team
- Current Background Check on file

Service Director

The service director wins when they have communicated with the worship, production teams, hosts, speaker and staff during Talk-Through and rehearsal.

The Service Director wins when they have unified & communicated with the program team, volunteer leaders, and staff during Sunday talk-through and rehearsal. The Service Director will seek excellence with Large Group while making room for the skill development and maturity of student musicians, vocalists, and host teams. Grace Students is not seeking large group perfection, but rather vibrant and committed participation.

Qualifications:

- Maintains a positive attitude
- Plans an intentional worship set following the theme of the service/series and in keeping with the Student Ministry Worship template and guidelines for song selection
- Facilitates Talk Through following rehearsal
- Provides kind, clear and specific feedback as it’s needed
- Committed, regular attend of Grace Church
- Current Background Check on file

Coaching Team

Coaches win when they engage, encourage, and equip Small Group Leaders to disciple students. Coaches provide care for Small Group Leaders as well as feedback, so they can disciple students.

Qualifications:

- Committed, regular attend of Grace Church
- 2+ years of experience as a Small Group Leader
- Loves leaders and students
- Member of the Core Team
- Current Background Check on file

The Specifics:

- Be present at Fuse/Merge consistently & for the entire program/small group time
- Greet & welcome new students & help them get connected by introducing them to their Small Group Leader
- Connects with Small Group Leader regularly
- Meets with Small Group Leader once per quarter in grade level groups
- Stay in communication with staff
- Attend leader gatherings & be willing to facilitate leader trainings
- Attend retreats and events



Small Group Leaders

Small Group Leaders win when they build trust and community with their students, stay in contact with parents, and model a dynamic and growing faith in Christ for their students.

Small Group Leaders are a catalyst between a student and their relationship with Jesus. They consistently show up in the lives of students and point them to their next step with Jesus. In the lives of students, this happens when they trust a safe, encouraging adult, are connected to their peers, and are empowered to participate in the Kingdom.

Because our Student Ministries Small Group Leaders are a catalys between a student and their relationship with Jesus, our hope is to give you a vision to engaging these life-changing relationships and helping students take one step closer to Jesus. Faith is a process as much as it is an event; our hope is to be intentional and relational in this process with students as much as we are in the event side of things.

Qualifications:

- Love Jesus and students
- Adhere to the Guidelines for Healthy Ministry (at the end of this document)
- Commit to leading the same small group for 3-4 years
- Committed, regular attender of Grace Church
- Member of the Core Team

- Required Annual Training
- Current Background Check on file
- Signed agreement to adhere to policies and procedures

The Specifics:

- Leadership and shepherding.
- Communicate with Parents/guardians at beginning of each ministry semester and as needed to effectively partner together.
- Have fun!
- Small group leaders commit to one service hour on the weekend.
- Communicate in advance with your Co-leader and Coach when you'll be absent.
- Follow the plan and stick to the heart of what we are trying to do.
- Attend the retreats and special events for your small group.
- Pray for and encourage your student regularly.
- Create outside connections (group texts, group hang outs).
- Be at Leader Meetings
- Read the Small Group guide in advance.
- Be genuine (not perfect) about your walk with Jesus.
- Send a note or text students whose attendance is diminishing.
- Keep your Co-leader and Coach informed and involved.



Guidelines for healthy ministry

1. Our lives.

Times of growth and encouragement come from serving in student ministry, but it's not the place to find healing and wholeness from deep wounds or addictive behaviors. That healing comes from healthy community that is already in your life, like a Rooted group, working with a counselor, etc. It is important to use much discretion when sharing your story of brokenness with students. While we place a high value on authentic community, we also value appropriate transparency. Student Ministry volunteers are expected to glorify God in their personal lives. This includes the avoidance of alcohol or substance abuse, tobacco addiction, pornography (in any form), financial misdealing, inappropriate language and/or humor, sexual innuendo, etc.

Simply avoiding or promoting these behaviors when students are around is not enough. We trust that you will let us know when you are struggling with any of the above and need help.

2. Contact with students.

Being with students and communicating God's love and truth is what we are all about. Jesus Himself came and lived among us, touching lepers, hugging and welcoming the children, being with people in their world and on their turf. He modeled a lifestyle of love and appropriate affection. We desire to represent Christ, while being responsible and sensitive in all we do. To do this end, the following boundaries involving physical contact should be observed:

- Appropriate touch – brief hug/side hugs; a gentle, conscious touch of hands on the shoulders, arm, or back; high fives; handshakes; in a group holding hands to pray together, etc. (It is a good practice to clarify what forms of affection each student is comfortable with.)
- Inappropriate touch – touching buttocks, genital area, chest, or upper legs; any kissing, sitting on laps, or having students sit on your lap; back rubs; lingering hugs; piggyback rides, etc. And any articulated unwanted form of affection.

It is forbidden and illegal to buy alcohol, drugs, any addictive substances (i.e., cigarettes, vape pens, hookah, etc.), or any other illegal substance for a student in your care.

As we spend time with students, it is wise to be alert to "transference." This is how people "transfer" their need for approval, encouragement, and love on to others. How can you tell when that is happening to you? When you find yourself following their lead instead of guiding and leading them. You can also tell when you find yourself trying to be cool, accepted, flirting, or responding to flirting instead of being wise and intentional. How can you tell when that is happening in a student towards you? When they flirt with you, manipulate you with mood swings, come to you with constant crises, demand time, hang onto you.

Some of these behaviors are common, unconscious aspects of being a teenager. Others, though, are a significant sign of deeper needs. Either way, we need to use wisdom and discretion as we help them move towards Christ and maturity in Him and in their relationships. Our own personal conduct (language, actions, and demeanor) needs to be above reproach; nor can we accept inappropriate behavior from students.

Any personal interactions between a leader and students of the opposite gender are only to take place in the presence of a leader of the same gender. It is expected that under no circumstances should a leader be alone, in private, with a student of the opposite gender. If a student of the opposite gender needs to talk, it needs to happen in a public place or room with an open door and other adults in the area. We have volunteers of both

genders, so focus your relational time with students of the same gender. Don't rationalize this or underestimate the potential dangers.

It is forbidden to date a Middle or High School student, as is joking about it, flirting with students, or any inappropriate physical contact - regardless of gender. Under the umbrella of Student Ministry, we have a variety of ages, leaders, and relationships crossing ministry lines. We recognize some relationships may be appropriate, but for your protection we need to be aware of this beforehand so we can navigate this together.

None of this is meant to create an unapproachable bubble between us and the students we serve: healthy boundaries are the setting for healthy ministry.

3. Transporting students.

When using your own vehicle, you must be at least 18 years of age and properly insured. For rental vehicles you must be 25 and on the insurance (fill out a simple form). It is your responsibility to see that each student is wearing a seat belt; please model maturity and good judgment as you drive. You may not drive a student without a parent having first signed a Driving Waiver. These waivers can be obtained from your Student Ministry staff. Remember- all our students are minors.

You may travel in small groups with prior parent consent (i.e. Driving Waiver), but you may not travel alone in a vehicle with a student. In the event of a medical or other emergency, you may transport a student, but both a Student Ministries staff member and the parent(s) or guardian(s) must be notified prior to transporting.

It is inappropriate to leave with a student or students from Fuse/Merge once checked in for any reason. This is to protect you and the student. If you must leave for any reason, a Student Ministries staff member should be notified, and the parent must give consent (by text or phone call).

4. Disciplining students.

Discipline is never easy to give or receive, but it does provide numerous opportunities to communicate Christ's heartbeat for healthy relationships. We honor all the individuals involved by:

- pursuing the matter in private
- hearing each side of the story
- consulting with the designated leader
- communicating the values and presenting the options (enabling those involved to choose wisely)

At times this means involving parents. Be sure to involve a Student Ministries staff member at this point in the process.

Be consistent, fair, and use discernment, realizing that there is a time for mercy, but also for a time judgment. Never use any type of physical punishment! The only exception would be if the student's safety or somebody else's safety is compromised. Avoid sarcasm, compliment good behavior, communicate love, and offer a path to restoration.

5. Caring for hurting students.

Report any concerns or suspicions of abuse, suicide, or threats to the Student Ministries staff as well as the Pastor of Community Life and the Pastor of Operations immediately. We are required by law to report these, for the safety of all concerned. We will work together with school officials and counselors as appropriate. Our typical response in any of these situations is to involve the parents as soon as possible. This is a sensitive matter, requiring wisdom and discernment along with the input of the Associate Pastor of your ministry area.

Never promise a student that you will keep something a secret or totally confidential. When a student asks you to “promise not to tell,” your responsibility is to respond with something like “I’m sorry, but I can’t do that. I can promise to tell you who I would need to tell and when I’ll need to tell them.” Doing the difficult thing is often the only way to move students and their families to health. As always, communicate love, care, and hope.

6. Movies/music/video games etc.

Spending time as a small group is a great way to connect. Please use wisdom and discernment when deciding what to do together. Don’t default to a movie or video game that “everyone’s seen.” Carefully consider what is wise and best. You will always have students representing a wide variety of families and backgrounds. Some will have “seen the movie, downloaded that song, played the video game, read that book,” while others wouldn’t be allowed. Just because a student is suggesting it doesn’t make it acceptable. Be intentional. Take the lead. There are plenty of appropriate movies, great music, creative games, and other ways to build community. If you need any suggestions, please talk with the Student Ministry staff.

The entertainment industry’s rating systems are often a poor standard, but offer some help. Use discretion showing any movie, movie clip, or video game whether it’s in your home, a student’s home, at the movies, etc. Our general policy is not to show mature content to any student and to consult with Student Ministries staff and parents when making entertainment choices.

Utilize your time with students to champion healthy entertainment habits by modeling them through your own choices, especially as you are with students.

7. Contact with fellow leaders.

A strong youth ministry team will have an incredible impact in the lives of the students. They watch everything that we do from how we handle conflict to how we handle dating and romance. As we model what it means to love one another well and have fun ministering together, we will be a magnet for students and new adult leaders.

8. Accidents happen.

Our first priority is the well being of any injured. Stabilize the situation and contact the following people immediately:

- The proper authorities for immediate care/help (911, police, fire, on-site nurse/doctor, etc.)
- The Student Ministries staff, Pastor of Community Life, and Pastor of Operations.
- Other appropriate personnel (i.e. camp director, local authorities)
- The parents/guardians/spouse (with whom we will have constant contact).

Keep calm while offering support to the injured person. Don’t move him or her or leave without a member of the Student Ministries staff. Work together. Follow the lead of the on-site Grace staff member in authority. Some will be asked to help with the emergency; most will be needed to be present with their students. Remember that medication of any kind should only be given by a designated staff member or volunteer.

Staff will see that there is constant communication with the parents/guardians/spouse regarding care. If a student is to be transported to a medical facility and the parents are not yet available, see that one of the youth staff accompanies the student until a parent arrives, along with any other family members attending the trip (i.e. a sibling). Assist in healthy communication and follow-through. Wait for updates and direction from on-site staff (leaders and students) - regarding contacting people “back home” and regarding who, what and when to communicate on-site - to keep from misinformation. Follow up with parent(s)/guardian(s), and student(s) back home. Record the incident on paper and present it to the appropriate staff member.

9. Cell phones.

We are glad students have phones (and other technical equipment) but desire they be turned off on trips/ retreats and muted during programs. We encourage parents to call us in an emergency, so that we can minister to their child and make adequate provisions. On trips or retreats, students will be given directions for appropriate phone usage. We are concerned when/if people:

- misuse phones by creating distractions (i.e. texting and calling at inappropriate times)
- take and/or forward inappropriate photos
- make calls in the midst of an emergency without knowing enough information, which ends up creating a more difficult situation for those directly responding to the crisis

10. Contact with parents.

Communication with parents is necessary. We will do our best to make sure that parents have timely and accurate information.

11. Reimbursement

Before you spend any funds for the ministry for which you are expecting reimbursement, get authorization.

12. Communication.

Our policies regarding communication are designed to promote authentic, encouraging, and safe environments while protecting Grace Church employees and volunteers and the students they are working with.

Verbal Interactions

Our words matter, and in student ministry, we use a lot of words! Here are a few guidelines. Inappropriate verbal interactions with students include the following: name-calling, belittling, shaming, threatening, intimidating, harassing, demeaning, or humiliating. Verbal interactions should not involve cursing, off-color jokes or sexual innuendo, or initializing sexually-oriented conversations. Staff and leaders must avoid discussing problems or conflicts involving other staff, leaders, or the institution itself. You should use Spirit-led discernment and extreme discretion when sharing details of personal lives and experiences.

One-on-one Communication

One-on-one interactions with a student should be primarily limited to spiritual counseling or mentoring scenarios and should take place where the interaction is visible to others. Any planned one-on-one meetings between yourself and a student must be approved by a Student Ministries staff member and be endorsed by the parent(s) or guardian(s) with permission in advance.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a student discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws.

Digital Communication/Social Media

You should direct all communication to FUSE students through their parent(s) or guardian(s). If contacting a MERGE student through electronic communication or social media when possible send communication to

1. entire groups or
2. in public arenas rather than in private messages (including photos, images, and videos).

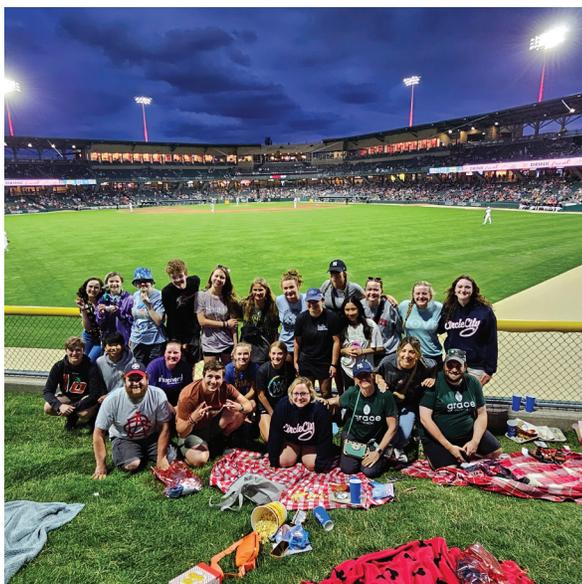
You may only contact MERGR students via phone/text if you have first obtained written permission in advance from their parent(s) or guardian(s) or if you include at least one other adult or student in the conversation. Communication between yourself and students via SnapChat or Be Real is prohibited. In

the case of ongoing pastoral/counseling-type communication with a MERGE student when a professional provider or resource may be required, you should disclose the conversation to both parent(s) or guardian(s) and the area pastor or associate pastor.

Prudent judgement should be used in the time of day a student is contacted through phone or social media. You should refrain from contact or exchanging texts, chats, or emails before 8 AM or after 10 PM, unless it is an emergency.

13. Leader Standards

- Background Check
- Annual Mandatory Leader Training
- Regular attender of Grace
- Member of our Core Team



Leader Commitment

Annual Commitment - Student Ministry Guidelines

We've developed the Student Ministry Guidelines for your protection. Thanks for taking the time to process them and enter this ministry year affirming your commitment to follow them. We are overwhelmed with thanks for the part you play in loving students to Jesus. You truly are a gift from the Lord!

I am excited about this ministry year, have read the Student Ministry Guidelines, and will gladly follow them.



Please Sign Below:

Print Name

Date

Signature