

LEADER HANDBOOK



**GRACE
CHURCH**
STUDENT MINISTRIES

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SECTION 1: THE BASICS

OUR WHY

WE EXIST TO CONNECT ADULTS WHO WILL BE FOR STUDENTS WITH STUDENTS.

Students are in a unique and exciting time of their lives. Developmentally, adolescents are constantly asking these questions:

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

We desire to see them ask these questions, and find their answers, in the context of the faith community of the church.

We do Student Ministries because...

- We believe every student was made for a lifelong, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ, and can find their truest identity as a child of God.
- We believe that all believers, regardless of age, are a part of the family of God. As siblings together in this family, students can find their belonging as a vital and important part of this family as it is lived out in the church.
- We believe that the local church is the hope of the world. With caring adults by a student's side, we believe this time in their life can be a launching pad into their agency, as the next generation of world changers in His name!

All of this can only happen in the context of relationships with caring and supportive adults who will love and guide them through this critical time in their lives while they also develop peer relationships that allow them to love and be loved for who they are. We want to see every student who walks through the doors, for their first or fiftieth time, no matter where they are in their faith, connected to an adult leader who will care for them.

- Those students who have yet to connect need an invitation from a friend into Fuse/Merge and a small group that provides that relationship.
- Those who are connected and attending, need investment through the adult leader to modeling what it looks like to live a life of faith.
- Those who are growing in their faith need their leader to guide them as they follow Jesus.
- Those whose lives are compelled by Jesus need their leader for resourcing and empowerment as they seek to share the love of Christ and change the world in Jesus' name!

This is what discipleship looks like in student ministries; leaders who are committed to loving God and loving students.

We exist to connect adults who will be for students with students!

STUDENT MINISTRIES

PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT



OUR WIN IN STUDENT MINISTRIES

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

We say “takes a step” for a reason. It's because there's no finish line or certificate of completion when it comes to spiritual growth. Faith development is a life-long journey, and no two journeys are identical. That's why our big win doesn't have anything to do with a specific skill or achievement. Instead, we win anytime we see a student take a step closer to Jesus; no matter where they are when we meet them.

There are evidences, or practices of faith that we can point to as a part of spiritual growth. In the same way that we have identified these practices in the lives of adults through the Way of Discipleship, we have identified examples of what these looks like in a developmentally appropriate way for students.

These can serve you as a leader as you seek to set goals and expectations for your group in a way that fits where they are developmentally, remembering these evidences are fruits of growth, not from our force upon students.

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

“AT THE END OF 8TH GRADE, A MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT WILL...”

Practices	Middle School Head	Middle School Heart	Middle School Hand
Surrender and Trust	Recognize that God is ultimately good and recognize their need to trust him through Jesus.	Desire a relationship with Jesus as one of God's beloved children.	Demonstrate their surrender to Jesus by occasionally doing what Jesus wants instead of pursuing their own desires.
Communing with God	Recognize that they can get to know God personally by spending time with Him.	Occasionally experience a desire to disengage and develop a taste for communing with God.	Occasionally disengage in order to commune with God
Studying God's Word	Be able to articulate the basics of the story of God and His kingdom.	Be interested in engaging with what the Bible says and hoping they will encounter God through the Bible.	Consistently engage the Bible at church and occasionally read the Bible on their own.
Self-Denial	Recognize that they have self-centered desires and learn that those desires can hurt themselves and others.	Begin to desire what Jesus desires more than their self-centered desires.	Occasionally choose to do what they know is right instead of just what they want.
Moral Integrity	Know what moral integrity is and recognize that it is an important quality of a disciple of Jesus Christ.	Begin to desire moral integrity in order to honor God.	Occasionally make their moral choices based on the impact those choices have on them, those around them, and their relationship with God.
Spiritual Community	Recognize the importance of participation in a spiritual community found through a local, intergenerational church.	Develop a desire for relationships that point them to following Jesus.	Participate in environments that foster spiritual relationships
Justice and Mercy	Be able to distinguish injustice from unfairness and name specific examples of injustices in the world today.	Desire to engage in serving in an area of injustice.	Engage occasional service opportunities in areas of injustice.
Loving Others Well	Begin to see all people, including themselves, as unconditionally loved by God.	Desire to learn how to love others.	Begin to practice love through acts of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.
Seeking the Call of God	Understand that they are God's masterpieces created for the good works of Christ for the sake of God's kingdom.	Desire to be used by God.	Explore their God given gifts, talents, passions, and personality.
Leading Others to Jesus	Recognize that as a follower of Jesus they share the responsibility of the Church to communicate His love for the world.	Desire that everyone has a relationship with God through Jesus.	Bring a friend with them to church
Material Generosity	Recognize that God owns it all and they are drawn to materialism.	Desire to be generous.	Give regularly of their own resources, including occasionally sacrificially.

“AT THE END OF 12TH GRADE, A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WILL...”

Practices	High School Head	High School Heart	High School Hand
Surrender and Trust	Recognize that living in surrender and trust with God through Jesus is their best possible life, even in the middle of doubts, questions, and trials.	Desire to be fully devoted to Jesus as one of God's beloved children.	Demonstrate surrender and trust to Jesus by seeking to consistently live according to God's kingdom mission in every aspect of their life.
Communing with God	Recognize the value of intentional disengagement in order to commune with God.	Desire communion with God and feel the loss when there is none.	Deliberately and consistently set aside time to commune with God.
Studying God's Word	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.	Desire to engage with the Bible, longing to encounter God through His inspired, authoritative Word.	Consistently read the Bible on their own and align their lives to its teachings.
Self-Denial	Recognize how setting aside personal agendas and self-centered desires enables one to focus on God's kingdom purposes.	Consistently desires to deny themselves and take up their cross as they follow Jesus.	Consistently choose to say "No" to selfish wants in order to live according to the fruit of the Spirit.
Moral Integrity	Understand that practicing moral integrity is essential to living out the call of God on one's life.	Pursue moral integrity because they desire to honor God and become who God desires them to be.	moral choices based on the impact those choices have on them, those around them, and their relationship with God.
Spiritual Community	Recognize the necessity of participation in a spiritual community found through a local, intergenerational church.	Long for relationships that point them to Jesus and feel the spiritual impact when they don't get to be with those people regularly.	Faithfully engage in intergenerational relationships with at least 5 godly adults who are not in their family.
Justice and Mercy	Understand the idea of systems of injustice both in the seen and unseen world and be able to name their impact today locally, nationally, and internationally.	Be compelled out of a selfless hunger to serve in areas of injustice.	Participate in consistent, sacrificial service in areas of injustice.
Loving Others Well	Recognize that since God loves all people unconditionally, they are meant to love all people in the same way.	Long to lovingly move into the lives of others so that they are healed, comforted, guided, welcomed, and reconciled.	Consistently seek opportunities, even sacrificially, to practice acts of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness towards all people.
Seeking the Call of God	Understand that their gifts, talents, passions, and personality are meant to help repair the broken places of the world.	Desire God's kingdom dream instead of the American dream.	Align their post-high school plans in pursuit of God's kingdom dream.
Leading Others to Jesus	Recognize their call and responsibility to be a witness of what Jesus has done in their own lives.	Develop a longing for others to be transformed by Jesus like they have been transformed.	Be able to verbalize their faith story and have shared it with someone who needs Jesus.
Material Generosity	Recognize the enslavement of materialism, the need of the world, and the impact they can have for God's kingdom with their resources.	Desire to live a life of generosity.	Consistently giving sacrificially, occasionally risking security as an act of trust in God's provision.



FUSE & MERGE PROGRAMMING

Fuse: 6th grade through 8th grade students

Fuse meets during all weekend services.

- 146th Street Campus: Student Ministries East
- Fishers Campus: Room 131
- North Indy: Youth Room

Merge: 9th grade through 12th grade students

Merge meets from 6-8 pm at each campus.

- 146th Street Campus: Central Auditorium
- Fishers Campus: Room 131
- North Indy: Youth Room

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 the most important part of what we do. They happen during our weekly programs, but the relationships built in small groups extend outside the walls of Grace Church. They're designed to connect every student with a caring, consistent adult so they belong together in a community of their peers.

Special Events/Retreats/Mission Trips: We host several big events designed to help students connect with their peers, small group leaders, and the world! Special events are a place where students have a memorable experience that helps direct their relationship with Jesus.

Partnering with Parents

Partnering with parents is an important part of our ministry. We want students to be involved in the church because we believe this is the community God has called to change the world. While getting involved in the church is a big part of the discipleship process, the most essential part is a student's family. The influence of a family is always greater than the influence of a church. We partner with parents because they matter in a big way; we are on their team and support them in their primary roles in a student's life. It is so important for leaders and ministries to stay in communication with them.

SECTION 2: THE PEOPLE

**SERVING TEAMS &
THEIR WINS**



WELCOME TEAM

The Welcome Team wins when they make students feel known, cared for, and liked.

Our welcome team has an important role: you are the **FIRST PEOPLE** students meet when they arrive & the **LAST PEOPLE** they see before they leave. Our Welcome Team Members set the tone for the experience students are going to have when they walk through our doors. Our Welcome Team checks students in at the kiosk and greets students as they arrive at Fuse and Merge. But it's so much more than that; it's about making students feel known, cared for, and liked. 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 others, to connect with their small group leaders, and ultimately connect to Jesus.

Qualifications:

- Love students
- Love smiling
- Willing to approach students and connect them to their Small Group Leaders and peers
- Committed, regular attend of Grace Church
- Current Background Check on file

The Specifics:

- Show up at Fuse/Merge at assigned time and check-in
- Wear a Fuse/Merge Shirt
- Make sure every student is greeted with a smile
- Make sure every student checks-in
- Identify first time guests & introduce them to a small group leader for their grade
- Participate in events, meetings, & gatherings for Student Ministries Volunteers
- Be responsive to Planning Center requests



HOST TEAM

Hosts win when they make students excited to be at Fuse or Merge.

It's the host's job to serve as an emotional guide for the service. The host should be welcoming, encouraging, and excited to be a part of Fuse/Merge. Hosts should help students be known by asking their names from upfront and call upon students whom they may not know as well. Hosts need to know how to work the game, communicate announcements, and transition the program through its various elements.

Qualifications:

- Encouraging spirit
- Able to command a room with a fun and inclusive heart
- Willing to pray for leaders and students up front
- Committed, regular attender of Grace Community Church
- Member of the Covenant Community
- Current Background Check on file

The Specifics:

- Show up to Fuse/Merge at assigned time and check-in
- Make sure students are feeling known
- Have fun!
- Pray for leaders and students up front



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 students and Jesus
- Loves processing through Scripture
- Loves personalizing and delivering a message that’s meaningful, concise and relevant to students
- Has attended Student Ministry Teacher training
- Committed, regular attender of Grace Community Church
- Member of the Covenant Community
- Current Background Check on file

The Specifics:

- Take the Big Idea, Scripture, and Goal statement given to them & prepare a message that is meaningful to students.
- Adequately process through Scripture & prepare for your message
- Engage with staff in the development of message
- Receive feedback from staff & make appropriate changes when necessary
- Show up to Fuse/Merge at assigned time and check-in
- Be responsive to Planning Center requests



SERVICE DIRECTOR

The Service Director wins when they unify the program team to create a transformative experience for students.

The Service Director wins when they have unified & set up the program team, volunteer leaders, and staff during weekly programming. They lead and communicate with Production, Worship, Hosts, and Teachers to execute a transformative experience for students.

Qualifications:

- Positive attitude
- Effective communication skills
- Loves unifying a team and pointing them to our Big Win: Helping students take a step closer to Jesus
- Can provide direction & feedback over weekly program, so students can experience community and Jesus in a meaningful way
- Committed, regular attend of Grace Church
- Current Background Check on file

The Specifics:

- Show up to Fuse/Merge at assigned time and check-in
- Be responsive to Planning Center requests
- Implement program/service plan
- Facilitate Talk Through with Program Team at assigned time before service
- Provide in the moment feedback (positive & suggestions) to Program Team and Production Team
- Communicate with Program, Worship, and Student Ministries Teams



FUSE HIGH SCHOOL APPRENTICE TEAM

High School Apprentices win when they model a growing and vibrant relationship with Jesus.

Fuse High School Apprentices help middle school students see what it looks like to have a dynamic, intimate relationship with Jesus. They practice spiritual disciplines (Bible Study, prayer, fellowship) for themselves and are the closest, most relatable model for students to look to.

Qualifications:

- Love Jesus
- Love middle school students
- Be available & committed to a Fuse Small Group
- Committed, regular attend of Grace Church
- Current Background Check on file (If over 18 years old)

The Specifics:

- Arrive early to Fuse & hang out with middle school students
- Attend retreats and events
- Support & listen to adult small group leaders
- Engage in small group conversation without taking over (listen more, talk less)
- Be authentic about your walk with Jesus. Be willing to share what Jesus has been teaching you.
- Be a great encourager!



SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Small Group Leaders win when they build trust, build community, and build faith in students' lives.

Small Group Leaders are the glue 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 contribute and participate in the Kingdom.

Because our Student Ministries Small Group Leaders are the glue 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 1-6 years
- Committed, regular attendance of Grace Church
- Member of the Covenant Community
- Engage with Rooted within your first year of serving
- Current Background Check on file

The Specifics:

- Loving students requires both leadership and shepherding.
- Create space where students can come to love and be loved.
- Provide opportunities for students to build a significant relationship with an adult.
- Communication with families is extremely valuable.
- Have fun! Nothing builds closeness like laughing together.
- Small group leaders commit to one service hour on the weekend.
- Communicate in advance with your co-leader and staff when you'll need to miss a weekend.
- Follow the plan and stick to the heart of what we are trying to do.
- Learn student's names as quickly as possible and use them when you talk to them.
- Attend the retreats and special events for your small group.
- Love your students, even when they are hard to love.
- Pray for your students.
- Create outside connections (e-mail, social media, phone, small group events).
- Be as consistent as possible, and on time.
- Call and introduce yourself to the parents of your students at the beginning of the year.
- Read the Small Group guide in advance.
- Be genuine (not perfect) about your walk with Jesus.
- Send a note or call those who stop coming.
- Be a professional encourager.
- Keep your co-leader and high school assistants informed and involved



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 Covenant Community
- Completed Rooted
- 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
- Pursue Small Group Leaders
- Mentor Small Group Leaders
- Stay in communication with staff
- Attend leader gatherings & be willing to facilitate leader trainings
- Attend retreats and events
- Other tasks assigned by staff

GUIDELINES FOR A HEALTHY MINISTRY

1. Our lives. Times of growth and encouragement come from being in youth ministry, but it's not the place to find healing and wholeness from deep wounds or addictive behaviors. That healing comes from healthy community in places like your adult volunteer team, Rooted, a counselor, etc. It is important to use wisdom and discretion when sharing your story 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 life. This includes the avoidance of alcohol abuse or substance abuse, tobacco addiction, pornography (in any form), financial misdealing, inappropriate language and/or humor, sexual innuendo, etc. Simply not doing or promoting these behaviors when students are around is not enough. Please know that we are willing to do whatever we can to be of help to you in any of your struggles and trust that you will let us know when you need help.

2. Our contact with students. Being with students and communicating love 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 communicate Christ's love, while being responsible and sensitive in all we do.

- **Appropriate touch** – side hugs; a gentle, conscious touch of our hands on their shoulders, arm, or back; high fives; hand shakes; in a group holding hands to pray together, etc.
- **Inappropriate touch/behavior** – touching buttocks, genital area, chest, or upper legs; any kissing, sitting on laps, or having students sit on your lap; back rubs; full frontal hugs; piggyback rides; sexual innuendo or humor; etc.

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 the ways in which “transference” can impact our ministry and relating. It 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, etc.

Many of these behaviors are common and unconscious aspects of being a teenager. Others 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 all of their relationships. Our own personal conduct (language, actions, and demeanor) needs to be above reproach, as well as not accepting 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. This includes rides home from events. 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 inapproachable bubble between us and the students we serve, but healthy boundaries are the setting for healthy ministry.

3. Transporting students is a significant responsibility. When using your own vehicle, you must be at least 18 years of age and properly insured. For rental vehicles and church 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, while modeling maturity and good judgment as you drive. No speeding, swerving, donuts, racing, allowing students to ride on the hood or hang out of the vehicle. You may not drive a student without a parent having first signed a Driving Waiver. These waivers can be obtained from your campus staff. Remember- all our students are minors.

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 in writing.

4. Disciplining students takes a great deal of wisdom, sensitivity, maturity, and creativity. It is an ongoing process that will bring 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 the Associate Pastor and/or Pastor of Student Ministry 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!

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 immediately (beginning with the Associate Pastor of your campus, Pastor of Student Ministry, or other Grace pastoral staff member). 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 that requires the input of the Associate Pastor of your ministry area.

Never promise a student that you will keep something a secret, 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. We are bombarded with all kinds of recreational opportunities to do with our students. Many options are not appropriate, while others fall into a gray area requiring discretion and discernment. 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, and played the video game," while others wouldn't be allowed. Just because a student has done so, doesn't make it acceptable. Be intentional. Take the lead. Set the tone. 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 industries rating systems are often a poor standard, but offers some help. Yet, 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 R-rated movies to any student, or PG-13 to middle school. Careful consideration and special conditions may be an exception (check with your Associate Pastor, or Student Ministry staff).

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

7. Sleepovers are a blast and a great way to lose out on much needed rest. They also offer some good relational building time, if used intentionally. It is your responsibility to communicate with parents, maintain control, and see that there is adequate adults present. Never be alone with a student, even of the same gender. This is meant for everyone's protection and safety. There must ALWAYS be at least two adults (of the same gender) at EVERY sleepover. With larger groups, a healthy ratio is one adult for every five middle school and seven high school students.

8. 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, enjoy each other and have fun ministering together - we will be a magnet for students and new adult leaders.

9. Accidents do happen. Here's how to respond effectively: 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 Associate Pastor of your ministry, Pastor of Student Ministries, or a Grace pastor such as Executive Pastor, Pastor of Administration, Senior Pastor, Grace Care (for family follow up)
- Other appropriate personnel (i.e. camp director, local authorities) The parents/guardians (with whom we will have constant contact). Keep calm while offering comfort and assurance to the injured student(s)/adult(s). Don't move the injured person, or leave them without a member of the youth staff.
- Do not give medication of any kind, without parental approval, at any time – even in emergencies (including Tylenol, Advil, ibuprofen, etc.).
- Work together. Follow the lead of the on-site Grace staff in authority. Some will be asked to help with the emergency, most will be needed to be present

with their students. Staff will see that there is constant communication with the parents/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" - regarding who, what and when to communicate on-site - to keep from misinformation. Follow up with parent(s) and student(s) back home. Record the incident on paper, and present it to the Associate Pastor of your ministry area.

10. 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, we will tell the students to make calls in the following types of situations: Communicating a different arrival/departure time (re: pick-up or drop off), calling home, or after we've heard from a parent in an emergency. 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

11. Contact with parents: Communication with parents is necessary. It is our responsibility to see that the parents are informed as to where their children will be, with whom they will be, and when they will return. Unfortunately, students can "forget" to ask parents for permission or simply leave out significant details. We are to take the lead in seeing that the parents know and approve of any plans, remembering that each contact with a parent is an opportunity to express love and care. From phone calls to transportation to letters of encouragement, take the time to listen and communicate.

12. To reserve rooms for a Small Group event, check with the Student Ministries Staff. To insure that you have the room reserved and prepared for you, this is essential. With all that happens at Grace, you aren't automatically guaranteed a space just because you're so kind, good looking and all knowing.

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

14. Social Media: Leaders need to be conscious and intentional with our social media use. You are teaching, modeling behavior for and shepherding the next generation. That being said, any posts need to be appropriate for a student to see. Be careful with any pictures showing alcohol, lewd behavior, inappropriate jokes or memes, etc. They will model behavior they see from their leaders so please be careful with your posts. We also ask that you not communicate with students via Direct Messages/Snapchat as this is not publicly seen or recorded. This is for your safety as well as the student's. Texting your small group students is acceptable, but we ask that you don't text students of the opposite gender outside of a group text.

15. Mandatory Dates—It is very important that you create as much consistency as possible with your students. We strongly desire you to be active and present in their lives and create opportunities for bonding. We go on two retreats a year. These are amazing opportunities to grow a deeper relationship with your small group and we encourage you to participate. We realize life happens and some things may come up and that you will have to miss an occasional weekend, but please be consistent and show up for your students. Also, getting together with your students, texting, calling, or showing up at one of their events during the week is encouraged. "DO LIFE" with your small group.

16. Background checks are mandatory and we will need to have one on file

SECTION 3: THE RESOURCES



Online blogs and podcasts:

- Theparentcue.org
- Youthcartel.com
- [Orange Blogs](#)
- [Rethink Youth Ministry Podcast](#)

Games for small group time:

- [Get to know you survey](#)
- [Why/ Because Game](#)
- [Night Before Christmas Gift Exchange Game](#)

Articles/documents:

- [11 things I wish I had known when I started high school](#) – good for 8th grade leaders to send to their students
- [Questions for coaches to ask when they meet with leaders](#)
- [Get to know your students survey](#)
- [Ways to interact with scripture](#)
- [10 truths every middle schooler should know](#)
- [Bullying conversation guide](#)
- [Divorce conversation guide](#)

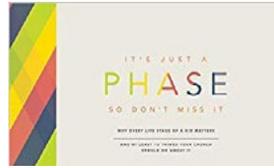
RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Books can be purchase at store.thinkorange.com or Amazon.com

[It's Just A Phase So Don't Miss It](#)

Reggie Joiner & Kristen Ivy

Every church knows that kids matter. Does your church act like every kid matters at every phase? A phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. It's Just A Phase is a challenge for churches to treat every kid who breathes like they are made in the image of God.



kid needs over time, and provides 18 practical ideas for anybody who wants to make what really matters matter more.

[Lead Small](#)

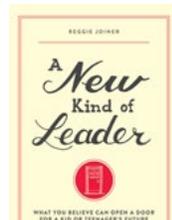
Lead Small clarifies the responsibility of the small group leader for those who work with children and teenagers. It establishes five common threads so that those who choose to lead in any size church can work off the same blueprint.



[A New Kind of Leader](#)

Reggie Joiner

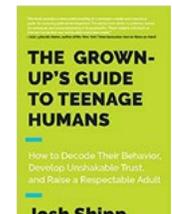
A New Kind of Leader, by Reggie Joiner, explores seven beliefs and practical applications that will cause you to reimagine how you influence the next generation. Because when you hold the door open for a kid, you hold the door open for the future.



[The Grown-Up's Guide to Teenage Humans](#)

Josh Shipp

Written in Shipp's playful but authoritative voice, The Grown-Up's Guide to Teenage Humans lays out unflinchingly practical ways to make a difference in a teen's life. As Shipp reminds us, raising a respectable adult comes down to investing in teens and giving them the boundaries, time, and support they need to thrive.



[Playing For Keeps / Losing Your Marbles](#)

Reggie Joiner, Elizabeth Hansen, & Kristen Ivy

A book for anybody who interacts with a kid or teenager every week – from a parent to a coach to Small Group Leader. Anybody. Playing for Keeps explores six things every



[Right Click: Parenting Your Teenager in a Digital Media World](#)

Kara Powell

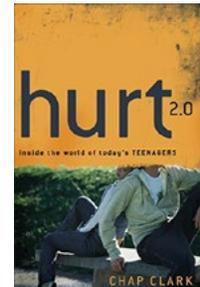
Right Click helps you think and talk differently about digital media, as you learn from inspiring and creative parents like you who navigate these ever-changing waters day after day.



[Hurt 2.0](#)

Chap Clark

Hurt 2.0 features a new chapter on youth at society's margins and new material on social networking and gaming. Each chapter has been thoroughly revised with new research, statistics, quotations, and documentation.



[Teenology](#)

Jim Burns

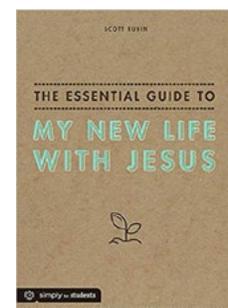
Raising a teen is not an easy job. The challenges parents face can be overwhelming--"What happened to my sweet-tempered kid?" "How do I help her make better choices?" "I'm afraid my teen is going to walk away from his faith." "How do I teach my teen to stay pure?" "Is this teen behavior normal?!" In Teenology, author Jim Burns covers all these issues and more.



[My New Life with Jesus](#)

Scott Rubin

The Essential Guide to My New Life With Jesus is an encouraging tool you can give students to assist them in their newfound faith. It will serve as a guide and also spark great conversations along the way. Throughout the book, readers are encouraged to talk with an experienced Jesus-follower about a variety of situations.



Books can be purchase at store.thinkorange.com or Amazon.com



BEST PRACTICES FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

These words of Jesus resonate throughout our ministry as we continue to create a place where students can come to love and be loved. This is lived out in our small groups and in pursuing the following items as a leader that will free you to love and be loved.

- Prepare and follow the plan and stick to the heart of what we are trying to do.
 - Follow the Holy Spirit's leading as you interpret the plan for your group.
 - The curriculum won't be perfect, but you can help make it better!
 - Prepare for the tension between what students like and what they need.
 - Ask great questions, including "What if?" "Why?" and "How?" and try to avoid asking questions that can be answered by yes or no.
 - Let the students talk.
 - Don't be afraid of silence, it gives students some time to think.
 - Be delicate when correcting.
 - Be honest if you don't know an answer.

- o Ask the students if they have questions.
- Love your students with all your heart, even when they don't want you to.
 - o It's all about the relationships!
 - o Be bold with your students, it's worth it...
- Try to have at least two significant small group events per year.
 - o We need one month's notice, or it can't be on site at Grace.
- Create as many outside connections (e-mail, gatherings, texts, phone calls, even mail) as you can with your students.
 - o Go to their school events (games, performance, etc.) when possible.
- Include and welcome new students.
 - o Because that is what we do!
 - o You may occasionally have visitors from other service hours/ campuses.
- Be as consistent as possible and always be on time or early.
 - o We start Small Groups exactly on time.
 - o Please don't end your groups early.
 - o Don't let "community time" turn into crazy distraction time.
- Let your co-leader and one of the staff know when you can't be there.
 - o We never cancel a group.
 - o Let the staff know as soon as you are able if you need them to find a substitute leader for a weekend.
- Ask for help when you need it!
 - o We will be around all weekend for you.
 - o We're also free during the week sometimes!
 - o We have to know if you are meeting somewhere other than your room.
 - o Do not take students off site during a normal small group time.
- Make attending the retreats a HUGE priority.
- Attend our leadership gatherings.
 - o We need our time together for development and encouragement!
Check the calendar for specific dates and times.
- Let your students talk more than you. Don't give long sermons; let them talk!
- Don't settle for easy answers. If you feel like a student has more to offer, encourage them to go further and deeper
- Ask students if they have questions. Great conversations can happen when you let the student ask questions. Encourage them to deal with the material on their own terms. Create a climate where people feel the freedom to ask any question.
- Don't move to a new question too quickly. Encourage multiple students to answer a single question. After one student answers a question, ask, "Would anyone like to add to that?" or "Does everyone agree/disagree with that?"

- Require and maintain confidentiality. This allows students to open up because they feel their environment is safe. However, don't keep potentially dangerous information to yourself (e.g. abuse, suicide, destructive intentions, etc.)
- Get connected to the parents of students in your group if you can.
 - Parents would LOVE a weekly update.
 - Invite them to a SG event.
- Remember, the goal of all games and activities is inclusion, encouragement and fun!
- Cell phones should be off and away during anything.
 - Even during small group events. Let's encourage live togetherness!
 - We should probably set a good example in that as leaders.
- Be imperfect, make mistakes and be honest about them with the students.
- Don't lead without knowing where you want to take the students. All conversations are organic and can have a life of their own. However, you ought to know your teaching objective(s) and keep it (them) in mind.
- Don't be discouraged when you have a bad group time. There is not a small group leader alive that has not had at least one group time where they felt they did not connect well/lead well.
- Pray.
- Pray again, we all need it!



CONVERSATION TOPICS

QUESTIONS TO ASK, EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

Below is a list of possible questions to use when talking with students. Please don't try to use them all in one conversation! Practice a few that you want to remember to ask in an upcoming dialogue with a teenager or emerging adult.

These categories are generally appropriate to bring up with almost anyone—and while you do, don't forget to share your own story. Think about how you would feel if someone asked you these questions. What would they invite you to say or share? Listen for those answers. And remember to ask follow up questions (when in doubt, "Tell me more ..." is a great option).

Home and Family:

- Where did you grow up?
- What did you like about growing up there?
- How do you think growing up there has shaped who you are?
- Do you have siblings? What was your experience with siblings growing up? What are your relationships like now?
- What's your relationship with your parents like?
- When was the last time you had a great conversation with your parents? What made it so great?
- What are some of your favorite family memories?

Daily Life:

- What are you up to this week / weekend?
- How is your day going?
- How are you spending your weekend / break / summer?"
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What do your friends like to do in their free time?
- How is it going with your job / school / current occupation? What do you like and dislike about it?
- What's challenging you most these days?

Community and Church:

- How do you like it here in this city?
- What do you like to do around town?
- What are your favorite restaurants / cafes / shops / parks / museums?
- Do you think you'll stay here for a while? Where else would you like to live?
- How long have you been attending our church? How did you find it?
- What do you like most about being part of our church?
- What's it been like to try to connect with others at our church?
- Are there particular ministries or programs at our church that are intriguing to you?
- What do you think our church could do better? How do you wish our church was different?

Journey and Spirituality:

- What are some things you hope to accomplish this year / season / month?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What are your hopes for your time here (city, school, church, or job)?
- Where or when do you feel closest to God?
- What are some of the challenges you've faced this year (in city, school, church, relationships, or job)? How have those challenges impacted you?
- How are you different than you were a year or two ago?
- Where do you see God working in your life right now?
- If you could ask God any question, what would it be?
- What are you learning right now? What do you hope to learn in the next year?



HOW TO TALK TO BOYS

AND GET THEM TO TALK BACK: 7 TIPS YOU CAN USE

As much as we are not huge proponents of overfocusing on gender differences, there is no escaping the social reality of boys. Learning about the structure of boy world (or refreshing ourselves, for those of us who were once boys) gives us a bit more of a compass for having meaningful conversations with the boys we care about.

That's where Rosalind Wiseman comes in. Wiseman not only parents two boys, but also has researched boy world on the ground through her cadre of over 200 middle school and high school advisors (plus a slate of parents). Their collective input delivers an impressive look into the ins and outs of boys' actual reality in social contexts in her recent book *Masterminds & Wingmen: Helping our Boys Cope with Schoolyard Power, Locker-Room Tests, Girlfriends, and the New Rules of Boy World*. Worth the price of the book alone is Wiseman's description of the "Act-Like-A-Man Box" that most guys eventually resign themselves to inhabit.

Below are seven insights for communicating effectively with adolescent boys:

1. Boys want to connect, they often just don't know how. Boys themselves attest to their need for parents and adults who are there for them, even though they may act like they could care less. So even when you get brushed off, don't give up on connection. Don't pull away permanently, even when he does temporarily.

2. Don't interrogate. One of Wiseman's boys shares, "The first thing my mom says to me every day after school is, 'Tell me five things that happened at school today.' Five. She exhausts me." And when he can't remember five things or isn't in the mood to unpack his day immediately, she feels like he's hiding things and he gets annoyed. So what can we do instead? First, recognize that the school day can be completely exhausting when you figure in the combination of academics with complex social dynamics. Wiseman suggests, "Your goal is to make the first few minutes stress-free. If you do this, he'll be much more likely to tell you about how his day was on his own. Try asking no questions when you see him." After some time, invite him to share one high and one low. And be willing to share your own. Then leave him alone.

3. Try the night. Most boys respond best when they're winding down later in the evening, or when they're going to bed. Even though this means staying up later for older teens, it's worth it occasionally to wait up and see if he's more receptive to sharing a conversation.

4. Boys usually say, "I'm fine, don't worry about it," when they're really feeling the complete opposite. They're trained to shrug away concern and show calm detachment. Offering a simple, "I'm here if you want to talk about it later" leaves a door open without forcing an interaction.

5. Offer them your help, but also a pathway to another adult. There are things your son won't want to tell you, but needs to tell someone. Most of the time that distinction needs to be made by him, not you. So how do you navigate all that while still making sure he's getting adult help? Here's a suggestion from Wiseman: "If ----- [whatever you're wondering about] ever happens to you, you know you can talk to me. Or if you don't want to talk to me, let's think of someone that you would like to talk to." Your son should have a few adult allies he can turn to that he knows will take him seriously and won't break his trust by telling you.

6. Do something together. Boys often talk more freely when they're sharing an activity—a sport you both like, going on a hike, playing video games together, or doing something you know he's interested in, whether or not you share the interest. Household chores can also become conversation starters when they're shared rather than done individually. Stay away from phrases like, "Let's spend time together," or "I don't see you enough anymore," and instead offer something like, "Do you want to go to lunch?" Wiseman suggests, "Lunch has a definite beginning and end. Plus, you're feeding him." Brilliant. Be careful about raising the pressure for every experience together to be about deep bonding. That's likely to push him away.

7. Don't say these two things. First, never, ever, ever call him a girl (or say he runs/hits/throws/anything else like a girl). Ever. Aside from the fact that it's degrading to girls, you will lose some of the respect he has for you, and you could drain him of any personal dignity. Second, never say "I'll take care of this," or its many counterparts, in response to a problem he's facing. Taking over his battles will only cripple his ability to learn to face hard things, and will likely make him resent your control.

One more thing: Be prepared to be changed by what you hear. This is Wiseman's definition of listening. If we're actually paying attention to what our boys tell us, we have to be willing to change in response.

For more wisdom on leading and parenting adolescent boys, visit fulleryouthinstitute.org and search "boys."

See Rosalind Wiseman, *Masterminds & Wingmen: Helping our Boys Cope with Schoolyard Power, Locker-Room Tests, Girlfriends, and the New Rules of Boy World* (New York: Harmony, 2013).



HOW TO TALK TO GIRLS

SIX TIPS FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH TEENAGE GIRLS

Adolescent girls—like boys—get wrapped up in the work of parting from childhood and moving toward adulthood. This is good, important, even necessary work. But for parents and other caring adults, it can feel painful, especially when it comes to communicating with girls. Your once open, easy conversation partner can transform overnight into a closed door of silence. The good news is that we don't need to accept these transitions as relational dead ends. Girls need us more than ever in these years; they just need us in different ways and on different terms—their terms.

Psychologist Lisa Damour works daily with adolescent girls in both private practice and school-based settings. She has compiled her years of wisdom, experience, and research into a volume titled *Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood*. This manual serves as a valuable resource for parents, leaders, teachers, and anyone else who is helping a young woman through the journey from childhood to adulthood. When it comes to our conversations with teenage girls, here are a handful of helpful tips you can use in your next few interactions.

1. Practice your timing. Girls often feel like their parents pummel them with annoying questions. What makes them so annoying? Timing, for one thing. “A girl will bristle when her parents ask questions at the wrong time—when she’s deeply engaged in her work, already halfway out the door, or closing her eyes to catch a little extra rest on the couch on a quiet afternoon,” Damour suggests. Pick your moments rather than making every discussion a battle; the

pushback may only be because the conversation is based on your timing and your turf. If you pitch a fastball question and miss, be willing to let it go and try again later. Maybe much later. Similar to adolescent boys, be prepared for girls' openness to deeper conversations to shift later and later into the evening.

2. Let her answers shape the conversation. Girls despise conversations that start with preplanned direction, right answers, and adult agendas. Instead, they want questions fueled by our genuine interest in their lives and their thoughts. Let them put a topic on the table they're open to exploring. Pick up a lead they've left you recently (even if it was in the form of a complaint—e.g., about a teacher, coach, or friend). And hold your idea or probe for later. Great tools for these kinds of conversations include phrases like, "I wonder what that's been like," "Tell me more about that," as well as other responses that mirror back something she just said ("So you're getting excited about the overnighter with your friends next weekend.")

3. Be the emotional dumping ground sometimes. One conversational tactic of adolescent girls involves unloading their own uncomfortable feelings and complaints onto their parents so they don't have to carry them alone. Damour helpfully reframes this practice: "Complaining to you allows your daughter to bring the best of herself to school." Most often the teenager who is blowing off intense steam about incredulous teachers, annoying boys, and an unfair homework load is the same teenager who carries herself with relative cool and friendliness through the school day. She's learning the adult skill of managing her emotions and responses, holding them until she's in the presence of a trusted adult who can handle a day's worth of pent up irritation and anger. Research shows we all have a finite amount of willpower, and it turns out that teenage girls' willpower tends to run out right about the time they close our car door or drop on our couch after a full day at school.

In these moments, we often need not do anything, fix anything, or even say anything helpful. Instead we serve the important function of a nonjudgmental, listening ear. If you must respond, Damour suggests offering a question like, "Do you want my help with what you're describing, or do you just need to vent?"

4. Help her distract herself from ruminating on problems. One typical difference between adolescent girls and boys is that while boys tend to look for distraction when they're dealing with emotional distress, girls turn to talk. They're more likely to talk about feelings, and while that can be generally helpful, at times over-focusing on a problem can lead down roads of anxiety and depression—whether that problem is their own or one they've internalized from a friend. As a caring adult, one skill we can teach girls is to utilize distraction to cope with intense feelings. We might offer to do something together, change up her

environment, pull her into fun or even goofy conversations, or serve together in some way that shifts the focus off the current problem.

5. Move beyond her “veil of obedience.” Damour highlights teenage girls' ability to keep nodding and smiling while utterly blocking out everything an adult is saying. Though guys can do this too, they're more likely to verbally disagree or at least look away. Girls, on the other hand, become masters at giving us what we want—compliance—while internally stuffing their own thoughts and feelings. Part of our work as parents and caring adults is to help girls put down these “veils of obedience” and engage with us when they disagree. While this is far less pleasant for us in the moment, in the long term it does girls a big favor because they will learn to advocate for themselves and their ideas. Next time a girl in your life seems to quietly agree with your assessment, instruction, or (let's be honest) lecture, pause and say, “I see you nodding, but I wonder what you really think?” or, “I've just said a lot. I'd like to hear your thoughts and feelings about this, too.” Or perhaps, “What feels right about what I've just said? What feels maybe not right?”

6. Teach her to work toward repair—by modeling it. Conflict, struggles, and relationship ruptures are bound to happen with teenage girls, in particular as they work toward gaining autonomy from their parents. We can help girls grow in emotional intelligence in the midst of these strained relational moments by helping them learn to step outside themselves and take the perspective of the other person. This is a brain-growth task of adolescence, and our part in this work comes by modeling perspective-taking.

For example, after a heated conflict cools down, we may be able to offer a window into our response (“When you said those words, I felt this way, and responded by saying some harsh things in return. Looking back, I see where you were coming from, and here's where I was coming from. I'm sorry that my response hurt you. Let's figure out a way to move on.”) Learning to repair relationships through building empathy must first happen in relationships supported by deep trust, meaning parents often bear the brunt of this work. However, the dividends of investing in emotional intelligence pay off in girls' relationships with peers and, eventually, families of their own.



HELPING STUDENTS IN CRISIS

Key points to remember.

1. We NEVER promise “not to tell.”
2. Parents are responsible for their children and what their children know.
3. We are responsible for what a child tells us and you don’t share.
4. Parents are always part of any solution.
5. We need to protect one another from gossip (“I know a kid at school who...”)
6. If you’re not sure what to do call any of the Student Ministry staff.
7. If you sure it’s bad call the Associate Pastor immediately. Especially in cases of suicide, abuse, or threats of violence.

Talking to parents options:

1. You can talk to your parents first, and then have them call me (for accountability & confirmation).
2. We can go to your parents together and you can tell them (for safety and confidence).
3. We can go to your parents together and I can tell them.
4. I will be glad to talk to your parents for you. Note: this is last, because we want to help the students develop a healthy relationship with the parents. There will be occasions when it will be wise to take this step for the sake of all concerned.

Crisis Scenarios

1. "I have a friend at school that ..."

- a. Thanks for sharing and caring for your friend. Let's help!
- b. Have you told your parents? (See Parent Options)
- c. Have you told a school counselor?
- d. The best way to help is to let appropriate adults know who can offer help.
 - 1. Tell your parents
 - 2. Tell a school counselor
 - 3. Have your parents tell their parents and/or the school counselor
 - 4. Pray for them and love them.

2. "I have a friend here at church that ..."

- a. Thanks for sharing and caring for your friend. Let's help!
- b. Who is it?
- c. We need to talk to Tim/Rob (and the student's small group leaders at some point).
- d. Do your parents know? We may need to talk to them so they can help you be a good friend through this process.
- e. We will need to talk to your friend and probably their parents. We may not be able to keep your telling us a secret.
- f. Let's pray.

3. "I am ..."

- a. I love you. I want to help you.
- b. Do your parents know?
- c. Does your small group leader know?
- d. I need to talk to Tim/Rob, do you want to be there?
- e. For you to get help your parents must be involved. I know it scares you. Let's talk about the options. (Unless the parent is the issue.)
- f. Let me pray for you.

THE 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.

Print Your Name _____

Today's Date ____/____/____

Your Signature _____

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