

WELCOME

HEY THERE!

So you're the parent of a teenager, huh? Congratulations! You have one of the most important (and sometimes the most difficult) jobs on the planet.

We know your job isn't always easy, but here's what we want you to know: we're here to help, in any way we can. Sure, we're a "youth" ministry, but teenagers aren't the only people we care about. We care about you too.

No matter how connected (or not connected) you are with our church, this Parent Handbook will show you some of the ways we're trying to care for your kid and serve you at the same time.

Thanks for letting us be another voice in the life of your teenager. Your trust and partnership means a lot to us.

We can't wait to see what this year has in store!

HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY

HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

Sunday Morning in the Student Center - 9:30am

Sunday Morning serves as the constant program during the whole year where students can come and have a conversation-based study at tables with other students. This happens during the second hour on Sunday mornings.

SUNDAY NIGHT GATHERING

Sunday Nights in the Student Center - 6:30–8:30pm

Sunday Night Gathering is a time for all of our high school students to come together and experience community, creative teaching, meaningful worship, food and games. This is perfect to bring a friend to.

SMALL GROUPS

Sunday Nights at Group Leader's House

We know that another night is a big commitment. So we are making it the main thing we do during the school year on Sunday nights. Groups are where deep things happen for community and discipleship. Small groups are grade and gender specific with highly committed leaders.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Sunday Mornings in the Worship Center - 8am & 11am

One of the biggest mistakes that can be made in Student Ministry is isolating students from the church body. Sunday Morning Worship is important. It should be a priority for students and their family. So it's part of our program as a ministry.

WHATS THE WIN?

VISION (WHAT IS THE GOAL AT THE END OF FOUR YEARS)

- A committed disciple of Jesus with a faith that is real and is part of the church community.

MISSION (WHAT ARE WE DOING)

- Connecting students to Jesus and Community

VALUES (WHAT IS GOING TO GUIDE US AND OUR CULTURE AS WE ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION)

- Connection Makes Everything Matter,
- Jesus Makes Everything Possible,
- Creative Teaching Moves Everything Forward,
- We Value People,
- We Worship,
- We Celebrate,
- We Give

John 4 - The Woman at the Well

- Jesus connects with an outsider that makes everything happen.
- Who Jesus is in the conversation makes everything else that is happening both then and in the future possible.
- The way Jesus teaches her at that moment is so radical from that of a typical rabbi that it's crazy but effective. It's different on purpose.
- He is taking the time to value someone who brings nothing to the table.
- He makes it clear that true worship is about your whole life and not just a place.
- He then rejects food from the disciples as his true source of refreshment is from doing the work of the father.
- Then you see this changed person radically give her life and ego to tell about the good news of Jesus.

**WE WIN WHEN A STUDENT
TAKES A STEP TOWARDS
JESUS AND COMMUNITY**

THE FOUR SPIRITUAL FOCUSES

We believe there are four primary Spiritual Focuses that are necessary for students to learn and practice to grow up to be healthy disciplined adults. We cover these in different ways throughout each year.

COMMUNITY

Engaging in healthy community can, and should, be a spiritual habit we help our students develop. But “healthy community” doesn’t just mean hanging out with Christians. This spiritual habit is about growing in Christlike relationships with everyone. We will teach that there is a difference between peers and healthy Christ-centered community.

IDENTITY

Teenagers need to know that God made them unique, special, and with really specific gifts, talents, passions, and resources. Then they need to use those gifts to love God, love others, and influence the world around them. Because when teenagers begin to discover who God made them to be, and then use their unique identity to love both God and others, they grow. They need to know who they are in Christ and how that impacts their lives. We also take time to cover issues such as gender and same sex attraction during this time.

SPENDING TIME WITH GOD

This is an obvious one, right? Sometimes it’s the only spiritual habit we can name. After all, isn’t “growing spiritually” synonymous with “spending time with God”? Well, not exactly, but it’s still pretty important. After all, if teenagers are ever going to make their faith their own, they’ve got to start spending time with God on their own. It means opening the Bible on their own, having conversations with God on their own, and discovering how they best connect with God through worship on their own.

SHARING THEIR FAITH

Teenagers need to learn how to talk about God. Sharing your story is the spiritual habit of making faith a regular, everyday, go-to topic of conversation in our lives. Because when we talk about God and His place in our story (or, more accurately, our place in His story), it helps us believe, helps us understand, and helps us take ownership of our own faith. This is one of the reasons we plan a mission trip each summer and spend time talking about how to share our faith with others.

DISCIPLESHIP

Do you know the last thing that Jesus said to His followers while he was on earth? Some people call it The Great Commission: “Go and make disciples.” Duplicate yourselves. Go and make more of you. Take your faith and pass it on to someone else. When we talk about helping teenagers begin to own their faith and have a faith that is real, or the goal is discipled adults, we’re really just talking about discipleship. So what is discipleship? Here are three thoughts . . .

DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT LIVING, NOT LEARNING

Rather than asking, “What can we teach a teenager about God?” we ask, “How can we help a teenager live out their faith?” It’s not just about teaching them about Jesus - it’s about modeling what faith in Jesus looks like. That’s why our small groups spend time together outside of church. Because discipleship isn’t taught in a classroom - it’s modeled in everyday life.

DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

In the Gospels, you don’t really see Jesus doing one-on-one discipleship. That’s because discipleship happens best in a community of people. That’s why we focus so much energy on getting teenagers plugged into consistent small groups, why we emphasize the role of parents and families, and why we surround teenagers with tons of Jesus followers. Because discipleship takes all of us!

DISCIPLESHIP IS A PROCESS

Discipleship is never really complete because learning to live out our faith is a life-long process. And because we know discipleship takes time, we want to put people in the lives of teenagers who are in it for the long-haul. That’s why our small group leaders don’t bail on their teenagers after a few months, but stick with them for several years - because it’s a process.

HIGH SCHOOL EVENTS

THE BIG FIVE

These are the five biggest events that are landmarks through the year. These take the most energy and are the most intentional.

FALL RETREAT - OCTOBER 13-15

Fall retreat this year will be at Camp Carl. Our Theme is "_____." This is always the big event for every student to be at to jumpstart the community needed for our group. Community and unity are the main goals during this event.

FRIENDSGIVING - NOVEMBER 19

Friendsgiving will be like it was last year, hosted at the church. This is a great outreach event for students to be challenged to bring a friend. This needs to be an onramp into our next Sunday Night Gathering on December 3rd.

WINTER EVENT - NEAR CHRISTMAS

This will be a party or an event, like Polar Blast Tubing... This is still undecided. The goal for this activity is to simply have fun in community, serve as an onramp for students to bring friends, and also onramp into a Sunday Night Gathering.

SPRING RETREAT - FEBRUARY WEEKEND

In the spring we will host a retreat at either Beulah Beach, Pleasant Valley Ranch, Stoney Glen or somewhere new. This retreat will be focused on Student Leadership. They will have the chance to lead, teach and plan the retreat.

MISSIONS TRIP - JUNE/JULY

Each summer we will take a mission trip somewhere. This is TBD but should be set by November/December. We focus on serving and sharing our faith.

OTHER EVENTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

September:

- 9/10 - Kick-off 6:30–8:30pm
- 9/17 - Small Group
- 9/24 - Small Group

October:

- 10/1 - Gathering 6:30–8:30pm
- 10/8 - Small Group
- 10/13–15 - Fall Retreat
- 10/22 - Small Group
- 10/29 - Parent Meeting 9:30am
- 10/29 - Small Group

November:

- 11/5 - Gathering 6:30–8:30pm
- 11/12 - Small Group
- 11/19 - Friendsgiving 6:30–8:30pm
- 11/26 - Small Group

December:

- 12/3 - Parent Meeting 9:30am
- 12/3 - Gathering 6:30–8:30pm
- 12/10 - Small Group
- 12/17 - Christmas Party or Small Group
- 12/22 or 23 - Winter Event (TBD)

January:

- 1/7 - Gathering 6:30–8:30pm
- 1/14 - Small Group
- 1/21 - Small Group
- 1/28 - Small Group

February:

- Spring Retreat (TBD)
- 2/4 - Gathering 6:30–8:30pm
- 2/11 - Parent Meeting 9:30am
- 2/11 - Small Group
- 2/18 - Small Group
- 2/25 - Small Group

March:

- 3/3 - Gathering 6:30–8:30pm
- 3/10 - Small Group
- 3/17 - Small Group
- 3/24 - Small Group

April:

- 4/7 - Gathering 6:30–8:30pm
(or by grade events)
- 4/14 - Parent Meeting 9:30am
- 4/14 - Small Group
- 4/24 - Small Group
- 4/28 - Small Group

May:

- 5/5 - End of Year Party 6–9pm

There are also plenty of other church-wide and family-focused events for students to be a part of that will be part of the church calendar. Other small events will still come up throughout the year, but this should give you the big things to plan around.

ENGAGING WITH SMALL GROUP LEADERS

As a parent, you are making a huge impact in your teenager's life. The impact you're making is far more significant than any impact we, their church, could ever hope to make. You are the most important voice in your kid's life, both now and for a lifetime.

But in all of our time caring for teenagers, we've learned something really important. We believe that, in every teenager's life, this is true: your best chance at influencing your teenager's faith and future is to recruit other adults to influence them with you.

Dr. Kara E. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark, authors of *Sticky Faith*, encourage parents to “develop a sticky web of relationships” for their kids. We love that idea!

Especially during the teenage years, when your kid is beginning to pull away from you in their search for independence, we want to come alongside you by creating a pool of trustworthy adults who can help you influence your teenager.

That's why our ministry is so committed to small groups. Small groups are about more than just good discussions. Small groups exist to connect your kid with an adult you can trust so you can better influence their faith and future.

So, this year, engage with your kid's small group leader. They can be a powerful ally for you and your family!

THE FINE PRINT

SAFETY GUIDELINES

The safety of your teenager is a priority for our ministry, so we wanted to get you in the loop on how we plan to care for and protect them.

WE SCREEN VOLUNTEERS

Before any volunteer is permitted to serve with us, they undergo a rigorous application and interview process, including a criminal background check.

WE SET BOUNDARIES

We have set a number of guidelines for our youth ministry staff and volunteers. As a parent, you can help us make sure your child is well cared for by helping us maintain these boundaries.

- No staff member or volunteer should initiate a one-on-one meeting with a teenager without the knowledge and consent of you, their parents.
- No staff member or volunteer should transport a teenager in a vehicle alone without your permission and knowledge. There will not be members of the opposite sex transporting each other.
- All staff members and volunteers must maintain appropriate physical boundaries with teenagers at all times.

WE REQUIRE PERMISSION SLIPS

We will ask for your consent in order for your teenager to attend events, retreats, or gatherings outside of our regular weekly program.

WE REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Every staff member and volunteer in our ministry is a mandated reporter. Which means we are legally required to report any dangerous or potentially dangerous situations immediately, including...

- If a student is being harmed, neglected, or abused.
- If a student is harming or abusing someone else.
- If a student is harming or at risk of harming themselves.

WE ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE

If you ever have a concern about your teenager's care or safety, please reach out to us. We're just a phone call or email away!

STAY CONNECTED

This year, we'd love to stay in conversation with you. Here are a few ways we're hoping we can keep the lines of communication open . . .

EMAIL

Riverwood's Student Ministry sends out a weekly email filled with helpful information for you. You can sign up for the email on our website riverwoodchapel.org under the Student Ministry section.

SOCIAL MEDIA

You can follow us on social media to stay in the loop on photos from events as well as other helpful information as a parent.

FACEBOOK: [@riverwoodstudents](https://www.facebook.com/riverwoodstudents)

INSTAGRAM: [@riverwoodstudents](https://www.instagram.com/riverwoodstudents)

REMIND

One of the best ways to get the most up to date announcements is Remind. We encourage every parent and student to be part of Remind. Please join the following:

- **RiverwoodStudents** Text [@rccstudent](https://www.remind.com/join/@rccstudent) to **81010**
- **Riverwood HS Students/Parents** Text [@rwahsm23](https://www.remind.com/join/@rwahsm23) to **81010**

PARENT MEETINGS

Throughout the year we will host Parent Meetings. These will be held at 9:30am on specific Sundays in Room 115. Here you will get an overview on what is coming up as well as some useful information to help you disciple your student.

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