



ADULT LEADER HANDBOOK



COMMON GROUND

Introduction

Hey There!

So, you want to volunteer with teenagers, huh? Some people might think you're crazy... but we know better. Middle schoolers and high schoolers are awesome. They're hilarious (sometimes on purpose). They're dramatic. They're complicated. And they're a ton of fun. But most importantly, middle schoolers and high schoolers are at a stage in their lives when they desperately need someone like you to hang out with them, love them (and like them too), and show them what it looks like to follow Jesus. Whatever your role is in our ministry this year, this Adult Leader Handbook will show you some of the ways you can begin making a lasting impact in the lives and faith of teenagers. Thanks for being willing to serve. Thanks for caring about teenagers. And thanks for letting God use you. We can't wait to see what this year has in store.



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COMMON GROUND

The Basics

Our Team



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Dave has been leading student ministries since 2002. He has a BA in religion and a MA in pastoral counseling from Liberty University. His goal is to partner with Christian parents in their important duty of discipling their children. He has a passion to see young people own their faith and become leaders for Christ in their church, schools, and towns.



Becka Klass

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Becka has been married to Dave since 2010 and they have 2 daughters (Ellie & Sera). Becka has been serving in church ministries since she was in junior high and has helped Dave lead youth ministries (and more) since 2012.



(from left to right: Hunter, Lisa, Becka, Kaitlyn, Tyler, Zac, Dave, & Adam)



COMMON GROUND

The Basics

Our Ministry

OUR WEEKLY PROGRAMS

6th-12th Grade | WEDNESDAYS AT 6:30-8:30pm

Our youth ministry meets every Wednesday for fun, worship, teaching, and small groups.

Common Ground Church | SUNDAYS AT 9am & 10:30am

We encourage our teens to attend and serve at our Sunday morning services.

OUR ENVIRONMENTS

There are three environments for teenagers in our ministry. Each one is designed to strategically invite teenagers on a journey into deeper relationships with their peers, leaders, and Jesus. Each environment is designed with every teenager in mind - the kid who's grown up in church and the first-time visitor too.

EVENTS: Throughout the year, we'll host 4 big events designed to help teenagers connect with their peers and small group leaders. Events are often the environment where teenagers will walk into our ministry for the very first time.

SMALL GROUP: Small groups are the most important part of what we do. They happen every week to end youth group gatherings, but the relationships built in small groups extend outside the walls of our church. They're designed to connect every teenager with a consistent trustworthy adult and community of their peers.



COMMON GROUND

The Basics

Our Big Win

It's hard sometimes to know when you're winning in youth ministry, you know? Like, is anything we're teaching actually sinking in? Are teenagers really growing in their faith? That's why we decided to go ahead and define the big win for our ministry. It's the one thing that we, as a ministry team, want to achieve. It's the goal we want to keep in mind at all times. And it's what motivates and guides everything we do. It goes like this...

WE WIN WHEN A TEENAGER TAKES A STEP TOWARD OWNING THEIR FAITH.

TAKING A STEP

Now, 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. Instead, spiritual growth is a journey (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 teenager take a single step closer to owning their faith.

OWNING THEIR FAITH

What, exactly, does it look like for a teenager to own their faith? Well, we believe there are four things that both lead to, and are a result of, spiritual growth. We call these four things our four spiritual habits.



The Basics

Our Big Win

1. **SPEND 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.
2. **SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS:** 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.
3. **USE THEIR GIFTS:** Teenagers need to know that God made them unique, and 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.



The Basics

Our Big Win

4. SHARE THEIR STORY: 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.

We count it as a win whenever a student takes a step toward owning their faith by practicing one, or maybe even all four, of these spiritual habits.

DISCIPLING TEENAGERS

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, we’re really just talking about discipleship. So what is discipleship? Here are three thoughts . . .

DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT LIVING, NOT JUST 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.



The Basics

DISCIPLING TEENAGERS

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.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

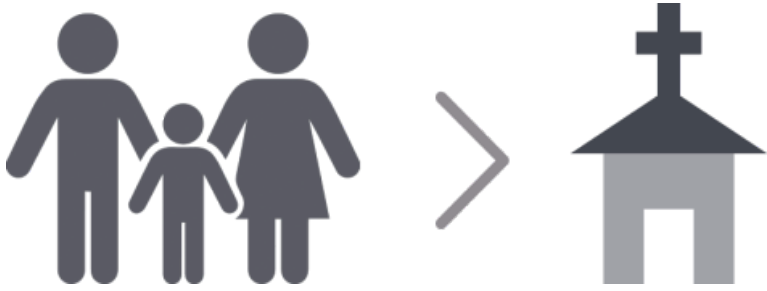
As an Adult Leader, you are making a huge impact in the lives of the teenagers in our ministry. But do you know who's making an even bigger impact in the lives of those teenagers? Their parents.

Before we explain any more about what our ministry is all about, we want to make sure one thing is super clear. (We even drew a picture to help you remember it.) We believe that, in every teenager's life, this is true: the influence of a family is always greater than the influence of a church.



The Basics

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS



Jim Burns, author of *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry*, says it this way: “Long after students stop attending youth groups, they are still connected to their families.” No matter what, a teenager’s family (not their church) will always be the biggest influence in their lives. So, doesn’t it make sense for us to partner with the most powerful, influential people in a teenager’s life in order to influence their faith? That’s why our ministry is committed to serving, supporting, partnering with, and engaging the parents of the teenagers in our ministry.

As an Adult Leader, caring for teenagers isn’t your only responsibility. Engaging with parents is part of your job, too.



Small Group Leaders

The Win

We already talked about the big win for our ministry - seeing students take a step toward owning their faith. But not every member of our team has the same role in trying to see that goal accomplished.

Small group leaders, though, have a very crucial part to play in seeing that goal accomplished. Here's what we think the win looks like for small group leaders...

SMALL GROUP LEADERS WIN WHEN THEY BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEENAGERS AND HELP THEM BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEENAGERS

Without a relationship, it's impossible to influence a teenager's faith in a significant way. That's why it's so important for small group leaders to build strong relationships with the teenagers they lead.

You can't make a teenager own their faith, but you can build a relationship with that student that allows you to love them and influence their faith.

So, a small group leader wins when they choose to love and embrace the teenagers God has entrusted to them.

They win when they leverage their relationship to lead teenagers, rather than relying on their position. They win when a teenager sees their small group leader not as an authority figure they have to obey, but as someone they trust and want to follow.



Small Group Leaders

The Win

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER

As important as a teenager's relationship with a small group leader is, it's not the only relationship that matters. Small group leaders win when they help students build relationships with each other because (remember) discipleship happens best in community. A small group leader isn't the only person a teenager needs to influence their faith. They need each other, too!

THE EXPECTATIONS

QUALIFICATIONS

- Love Jesus.
- Love teenagers.
- Stick to our Code of Conduct.
- Commit to lead a small group for at least 1 year.

THE SPECIFICS

- Show up to our Wednesday night program every week.
- Connect with teenagers regularly outside of church.
- Engage with the parents of your teenagers.
- Plan one service project for your small group each year.
- Attend most, if not all, special events for teenagers.
- Attend all events, meetings, and gatherings for Adult Leaders.



The Fine Print

SAFETY GUIDELINES

As a member of our ministry team, it is absolutely essential that you practice healthy boundaries with teenagers at all times, for their safety and yours. These guidelines exist to protect teenagers from harm and to protect you from false allegations.

NEVER BE ALONE WITH A TEENAGER

If you need to have a private conversation with a teenager, have the conversation in a public place - not behind closed doors or in a room or vehicle alone. Here are some tips to help you navigate through this particular guideline...

- Do not set up one-on-one meeting with teenagers without the knowledge and consent of their parents.
- Avoid initiating one-on-one meetings with teenagers. Allow the teenager or their parents to be the initiators.
- Never transport a teenager anywhere alone. If a teenager needs a ride, arrange to have another adult or teenager ride with you. If that's not possible, say no.

MAINTAIN PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

Be wise. Maintain healthy and safe physical boundaries with teenagers at all times. This means setting boundaries for yourself, but it may also mean setting and enforcing boundaries with any teenagers who push physical limits. If you have any questions about what is or is not appropriate, talk to our team, and always err on the side of caution.



The Fine Print

SAFETY GUIDELINES

LOG ELECTRONIC CONVERSATIONS

If you find yourself in the midst of a sensitive conversation with a teenager, keep in mind that words and intentions can be misconstrued - intentionally or unintentionally. Any time you are engaged in a serious conversation with a teenager, log your conversations (take screen shots, save text messages and emails). This may seem excessive, but if you're ever falsely accused of misconduct from a teenager or parent, you'll be glad you did it.

REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

As a member of our ministry team, you are a mandated reporter. That means you are legally required to report any dangerous or potentially dangerous situations to our team immediately. Including...

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

CODE OF CONDUCT

As a ministry team, there are a few things we'd like everyone to abide by.

ALL ADULT LEADERS

WORK HARD: You are so important to our ministry! We need you! So please, show up on time, give it your all, and be faithful with the responsibilities entrusted to you.



COMMON GROUND

The Fine Print

CODE OF CONDUCT

BE KIND: Ministry is all about people, so to be effective in ministry, you'll need to reflect God's heart for people. With teenagers, parents, other volunteers, and our team, treat people with gentleness, forgiveness, patience, kindness, and love.

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

BE LIKE JESUS: More than any other volunteer role, small group leaders have the most responsibility because they have the most influence in the lives of teenagers. While we don't expect anyone to be perfect, we do expect every small group leader to be striving to make wise decisions, to glorify God with their lives, and to strive to look more like Jesus every day - especially in key areas like their treatment of others on our team, social media presence, drug or alcohol use, and sexual behavior.

OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE STUDENTS

We expect you to always follow all Adult Leader instructions.
We expect you to always be respectful towards our Adult Leaders.
We expect you to not come here for all the wrong reasons.
We expect that you will make lifelong friendships with both your peers & the Adult Leaders.
We expect you will grow in your faith in Jesus.



The Fine Print

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS FOR LEADERS

Expect us to be more understanding than you think.

Expect us to always try our best to do what's right by you.

Expect us to never think you're a "bad kid".

Expect us to be real with you.

Expect us to always direct you towards Jesus.

Expect us to admit when we're wrong.

Expect us to be loving and caring.



Yea, we are pretty goofy...



COMMON GROUND

The Fine Print

Commitment

My name is _____

and I'm ready to serve!

I promise to follow through on my responsibilities. If I can't, for whatever reason, I promise to keep our team informed and to give them as much notice as I possibly can, knowing they'll need to find a replacement for me and that takes time.

I promise I've read this Adult Leader Handbook. I understand the mission and strategy of our ministry and will support the vision and leadership of the team.

I promise I've read the Safety Guidelines and will abide by them, for my safety and for the safety of our teenagers.

I promise I've read the Code of Conduct and will abide by it. If I mess up, I promise to be honest with our team about my actions and will accept whatever consequences they think are reasonable and necessary, knowing that, while they must always act in the best interest of teenagers, they are committed to treating me with respect, love, and grace.

I promise I understand the expectations of my role and will work hard to fulfill them. If I'm having trouble fulfilling any of my expectations, I promise to communicate with the team and ask for help, knowing they're here to support me. And finally...

I promise to do my part in making a huge difference in the lives and faith of the teenagers who walk through our doors. And I promise to have a lot of fun doing it.

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____



COMMON GROUND

The logo features the text "COMMONGROUND STUDENTS" centered within a circular frame composed of two concentric black lines. The word "COMMONGROUND" is in a clean, uppercase sans-serif font, while "STUDENTS" is in a large, bold, black, hand-drawn style font with a distressed texture. The background is split diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right, with a red upper-left section and a white lower-right section. A grey triangular shape points upwards from the bottom-left corner, partially overlapping the white section.

COMMONGROUND
STUDENTS



COMMON GROUND