

**EPHESUS STUDENT MINISTRIES
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**PHILOSOPHY AND FUNCTION
OF
STUDENT MINISTRY**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is Different about Ephesus Student Ministry?.....	2
Theology of Student Ministry.....	2
<i>Becoming Mature and Discerning</i>	3
The Role of Parents.....	6
<i>Primary Instructors</i>	6
<i>Discipliners</i>	7
<i>What does this mean for Parents?</i>	8
<i>What does this mean for the Church?</i>	8
<i>Parents and Church together</i>	9
<i>Ministry to Parents</i>	10
Gospel-Driven and God-Centered.....	10
<i>Teaching and Preaching</i>	10
<i>Discipleship and Evangelism</i>	12
<i>Service</i>	14
<i>Fellowship</i>	16
Pastor to Students.....	17
<i>Teaching/Preaching</i>	17
<i>Counseling</i>	18
Student Ministry Team.....	19
<i>Roles and Responsibilities</i>	19
<i>Requirements</i>	20
Student Ministry Intern.....	21
<i>Objectives</i>	21
<i>Responsibilities</i>	21
<i>Qualifications</i>	22
<i>Terms of Service</i>	23
Recommended Resources.....	24

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT EPHEBUS STUDENT MINISTRY?

Ephesus Student Ministries stand out from most others within the American evangelical church for several reasons. Entertainment, easy-believeism, anti-intellectualism, and low expectations have all combined to hinder student ministries. The result has been an over-emphasis on moralism and self-esteem, and an under-emphasis on the Christ-Centered focus of the Glory of God. In an attempt to keep the attention of teenagers who have, by and large, been reared by television and video games, the methods a lot of student ministries have employed attempt to address the areas of life in many of the wrong areas. At Ephesus Church, our goal in student ministry is to properly align our priorities in a God-centered manner without all the hype of constantly changing methods and models.

Ephesus Student Ministries push families to fight against the low-expectations of adolescence, encouraging our students to accomplish great things for the glory of God. Certainly, we know that there are many young Christian people doing just this – fighting against the false normalcy of teenage expectations to achieve great things for the Kingdom – but unfortunately this is the exception, not the rule. We want to defeat the status quo.

Ephesus Church strives to be influential in the lives of students, and helpful in the equipping of parents to fulfill their task to teach, discipline, and encourage their children. It is our hope that in partnership with parents, our students will acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, that they would develop an insatiable desire for worship, that they would grow in truth and knowledge through the Scriptures, and that they would become the future great messengers of God's glory to all the nations.

THEOLOGY OF STUDENT MINISTRY

Ephesus student ministries value young people because they are a blessing and a heritage from God. Therefore, our hope and prayer is that God would be gracious in continuously granting Ephesus Church the opportunity to minister to many students in the years to come, pointing them to the cross of Christ for the glory of God.

All humans are, by nature, born as children of wrath, worthy of death and condemnation as the enemies of Almighty God (Ephesians 2:3). To escape eternal separation from God, mankind must be given new birth, repentance and faith to unite with Jesus Christ, whose death was and is the atoning sacrifice for all who believe, to the glory of God (Ephesians 5:25-26; Hebrews 10:14). While man enters the world in corruption because of the sinful nature inherited from Adam (Romans 5:12-19), the fact that one is created in the image of God is not forfeited and, until death, there remains the potential of

regeneration and re-creation in the moral likeness of Christ (Ephesians 2:5-10; 4:24; John 3:3-8).

Therefore, for these reasons we are compelled to preach the gospel to teenagers, both believers and non-believers alike. They possess great potential in Christ to become men and women whose lives are not wasted, but are instead lived for the glory of God and the good of mankind. God uses His people to influence the lives of teenagers, helping them to use discernment to avoid making harmful and destructive decisions in their adult lives. Quite simply, if left to navigate life by the influence of their own heart and the influences of the world, they will not become vessels for God's use, but will remain spiritually dead. This leaves them without saving faith, and without the ability or desire to submit to, or please God (Romans 8:7-8; Hebrews 11:6). The apostle Paul tells us that whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Teenagers, like all of mankind, must be born again (Ephesians 2:3; John 3:6). Becoming faithful, Christ treasuring individuals is the most important aspect of any person's life, and will provide direction and hope for a life lived in true and lasting significance.

Becoming Mature and Discerning

Many of today's young people have a desire to become older and more independent at a younger age than the generations before them, but for most of them, the exact opposite is taking place. Many young adults are operating at the level of a pre-pubescent teen in a world of accepted low-expectations. This is not a criticism of teenagers, but rather an analysis of where we are today as a culture, and a biblical response to tell us where teenagers are in life, and where they should be.

To properly guide students toward becoming mature and discerning, everything that is attempted must be set in a framework that understands that in addition to being sinful, fallen humans, teenagers are also less developed physically, intellectually, and emotionally than are adults. They have a lot of growing up to do. But, that doesn't mean we should require nothing from them! Some of the greatest achievements in world history have come from the teenage minds and works of a people's lives. Nevertheless, Scripture is clear that our students have a long way to go (Ephesians 4:14; 1 Corinthians 13:11, 14:20; Hebrews 5:12-13). Teenagers are still learning "how the world works" and learning how to think, reason, make sound decisions, use discernment, operate under a specific worldview without being hypocritical or indecisive. Satan and his minions are at work to deceive and destroy these young minds because of their lack of experience in righteousness and understanding of sound doctrine.

We should not expect teenagers to think and reason and understand at the level of an older, more mature person. Likewise, we should not set the expectation level so low that students get the impression that it is satisfactory to *be* satisfactory. They must be patiently and lovingly encouraged and nurtured toward maturity in adulthood, with high expectations and disdain for the complacency of worldly life. They should not be despised for their age, but should be examples for the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

Understand that teenagers are gradually becoming more accountable for doing and believing what is true and what is right is a necessity in parenting and ministry. In early human life, there are times when children are not held accountable for their failure to know and understand concepts such as: God as he is revealed in nature. The Apostle Paul states in Romans 1:18ff that all of mankind is without excuse because God Himself has been made known through “what he has made” (v. 20). Paul’s statement carries with it the assumption that having no “excuse” means that they are able to see, comprehend, and have rational, cognitive thoughts. But, there comes a time when this is possible – not in infancy, but certainly at a young age. Therefore, teenagers are fully capable of understanding God’s revelation of Himself generally (in nature) and specifically (in Scripture). They are fully accountable to God and should, therefore, remain fully accountable to the Church of Jesus Christ and His people. This does not assume that teenagers have the moral ability to submit to obedience to God. We have loved our sins too much to enter into the light (John 3:19-20). Our wills were enslaved to sin (Romans 6:20) before we were given new life (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we were morally unable to submit to God (Romans 8:7). Yet we were still held accountable because of our natural ability. As understanding, reasoning, thinking, physical creatures, we are naturally accountable, even though in and of ourselves we do not possess a moral ability. Therefore, by the grace of God alone a young person is made able to repent and believe for the remission of sins and the guarantee of eternal life in heaven.

With these foundational understandings, the desire of Ephesus Church is to come alongside parents to feed the young sheep of Jesus (John 21:15-17). To receive instruction, encouragement, and advice from several sources that are working together toward the same end is often helpful. Therefore, the pastors of Ephesus Church see a biblical responsibility to provide specific ministries to children, teenagers, and adults alike. We understand the value of specificity in environment and teaching styles and attempt to assist the family in spiritual health and growth. We do this in several ways:

Parents, Pastors, and Church members are encouraged to pray earnestly for the students of the Church.

Our post-modern culture presents a milieu of challenges in teenage life. Through the faithful prayers of a committed church the future generation will be cared for in a way that will secure their faith, keep them walking toward righteousness, and protect them from the temptations of the world and the schemes of Satan.

Parents are encouraged to seek first the Kingdom of God while trusting Him for the outcome of their children's faith.

Every ministry faces the risk of prioritizing the work of God over God Himself. While the two are rarely at odds with each other, faithful ministry and cherishing Christ should always be evaluated to determine whether or not they are functioning as complementary passions. Parents must trust God in working all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to His purposes, in home and church life (Romans 8:28).

Parents are equipped, not replaced, as the primary teachers and discipliners of the family.

Scripture's clear instruction is that parents are providing *regular* instruction and discipline for their family. Therefore, the work of Ephesus Church is to equip and not replace the parental unit. When a young person is the member of a believing family, the church's responsibility is to strengthen that family and to encourage their growth together. Over-burdened families with too many commitments and an abundance of stress will be encouraged and, if necessary, admonished to take a break from certain extra-curricular activities, even those within the church, so as to ensure that the family can carry out the full breadth of its responsibilities. Therefore, parental involvement and input is crucial to Ephesus Student ministry so that the church can work with and not against the family.

Ephesus Church student ministries will seek wisdom and guidance from God in trusting Him to provide and empower gifted teachers for student ministry.

Desire and ability are not always equivalent. We undergo painstaking efforts to ensure that our teachers are teaching sound, biblically reformed doctrine that does not compete with the confession of the church or the desires of our parents. Therefore, just because a person has a desire to teach, does not mean that they currently possess the ability, knowledge, or spiritual life to teach. This is a primary consideration whenever teachers

are appointed. Teachers will be given opportunities to develop their gifts and will be trained to handle the Scriptures effectively in a student environment.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

One of the great tragedies of most student ministry trends and models is that they are often developed with the assumption that student ministry should happen apart from parents. Not only is this unbiblical, it also lends itself to doing exactly the opposite of what it is intended to do. Any student ministry should be focused on helping young people grow in faith and knowledge of the truth, but to assume that this can be done by meeting together once or twice per week is folly. It takes the persistent and trusted influence of a teenager's parents, emphasizing and reinforcing continually the teaching that takes place within the church, as well as conducting daily family worship that brings them before Christ together. So, how do the two work together? How can an effective student ministry work in partnership with committed parents to lead young people to a faithful treasuring of Christ?

Primary Instructors

As our sole source of authority, the Bible clearly explains that parents are to be doing the primary teaching and modeling of God's truth for their children, not the church. Parents are commanded in Deuteronomy to pursue the great command of the Bible to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:5; see also Matthew 22:37). Moses says that these words "shall be on your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:6) and that "you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7; Deuteronomy 11:18-21).

As a command to parents, these commands make clear that God desires to see parents fulfilling their daily role in teaching and discipling their children. The Scriptures are literally saying that parents are to put forth a painstaking effort to teach their children and to guide them in the words of the Lord. This type of teaching is to take place at every opportunity, and shall become that which a God-centered family is known. Notice in this passage that Moses is teaching the adults the Word of God, and then the adults are, in turn, expected to pass it on to their children. Notice also the point that is of utmost importance in these Scriptures. Moses says that the Word of God "shall be on your heart" meaning, by inference, that if it is not, something else is and will, therefore, cause instructors (parents) to teach something else. What we are in our hearts is what we will teach. So, as it pertains to students, the first and *most* important role for the church to fulfill is teaching adults (parents) the Word of God.

Other passages give parents guidance in how they are to fulfill their primary responsibility. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way that he should go.” Ephesians 6:4 tells Fathers, “do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Therefore, parents must be united in their growth as Christians, and fathers must take their responsibility to be the leaders of their household seriously. What does this mean? According to Ephesians 6:4, fathers have the main responsibility for providing instruction and discipline. Certainly, mothers are to help in this and can often offer things that fathers are not gifted in, but the father is the overall responsible party (Proverbs 1:8,10,15; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1,10; 5:1,7; 6:1,20; 7:1,24; 8:32).

The results of parenting are eternal. Moses brings to the surface the ultimate biblical calling in parenting: “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life” (Deuteronomy 32:46-47a).

Family Worship

This responsibility of parents carries with it an expectation that daily family worship is being conducted in an orderly fashion. There are many resources that provide great ideas on how to best conduct family worship (see section entitled “Resources”), but most important is that it is happening. Through many years of experience, we have seen that students who come from families that conduct regular family worship are not only closer to their family, but more importantly, they are often walking faithfully with God, seeking to glorify Him in all they do. God blesses the efforts of a faithful, worshipping family by granting faith to those who are taught to love and cherish Him above all others. Family worship is essential, and should become the central focus of every family’s morning or evening time at home, together.

Discipliners

Proverbs 22:15 says, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.” The Bible teaches us that like all men, because of the fall of mankind through Adam, children are born with evil desires and sinful natures with hearts that are being molded and formed, daily. Therefore, the parental responsibility goes beyond providing instruction, to include corrective, loving discipline. “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15); “discipline your son and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart” (Proverbs 29:17).

God’s discipline provides a guide by which parents are to discipline their children. “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by

him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:5-6). First and foremost, the discipline of God is ultimately a loving act. A parent is to discipline a child in love, wanting what is best for them, in light of what the Scriptures teach. Parents who do not discipline their children do not show godly love: “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him” (Proverbs 13:24).

Disciplining children is a dual partnership with instructing children, because both are acts of love that come from a desire to see sons and daughters escape death. Nevertheless, parents must also be careful to remember that proper instruction and discipline do not ensure the salvation of their children. Like all humans, children must be encouraged to know God, to love God, and to submit to God in repentance and sorrow for their sins as His enemies. Everyone must consider the claims of Christ and to what extent those claims will bear on their lives. Parents must remember also that Jesus reminded us that sometimes children rebel (Matthew 10:21), and while it is saddening and difficult to endure, God is in control and He must be trusted, as well as the discipline and instruction that has been provided.

In addition to instruction and discipline, the Bible also calls parents to encourage their sons and daughters (Colossians 3:21). God gives us inexhaustible reasons to provide them with hope and courage that by His mighty work, they can live joyful, productive lives for His glory.

What does this mean for parents?

While student ministry is helpful for strengthening, confirming, and reinforcing the great truths of Scripture, the Bible clearly states that parents are the primary vehicle by which these things are to be taught. Therefore, given what is true about the parental role of disciplining, students should be taught to be involved in the student ministries of the church, to pay attention and be active participants in corporate worship, Sunday school classes, and other church functions. This, by deduction, means that students will also be taught to respect all other authorities in their lives and will see the Church and her pastors as one source of that authority.

What does this mean for the church?

When students are entrusted to the care of the church, they are to be provided with faith nurturing teaching and relationships that support and encourage their daily home-based training.

Additionally, and very importantly, it must be made clear that many students who come to and through the church are from non-believing families. In this case, the church is

called to fulfill much of the parental responsibility that is happening in the homes of believing families. They must be instructed, encouraged, supported, and often times disciplined with biblical truth and Godly wisdom.

Parents and Church Together

Parents should be involved in student ministry, and student ministry should be involved with families. This is a crucial element for every successful student ministry because both elements need support. This plays out in three main areas:

1. *Parents stay aware of and participate in what is being taught, and continue to emphasize those teachings at home throughout the week.*

Ephesus Church Student Ministry is heavy on teaching and preaching. Our hope is that students are consistently reviewing the things that we cover. Repetition is imperative if we are to impart the deeper truths of God. This is most likely going to happen when parents are directly involved in the ministry, and are the initiators of further conversation.

2. *Parents work together with their Pastor to Students in the counseling of their children.*

Counseling¹ approaches the areas of life in which one struggles or conflicts with the Word of God in a way that encourages accountability, crushes sin, and rebuilds brokenness in Christ alone. Sometimes counseling occurs with parents apart from their children. Other times students and parents are counseled together. Whatever the case may be, counseling should be a joint effort. Since parents are the primary disciplinarians in the lives of their children, parents must be involved in any process that calls their children to make a change.

3. *Parents are involved in the various student ministry events to include mission trips, Bible studies, worship gatherings, and fellowship gatherings.*

The fulfillment of this aspect of effective student ministry is crucial for success. Calling young people to deeper faith, accountability, and joy in Christ incorporates parents who have the best interests of their children in mind, therefore giving them a great reason to be intimately involved. Parents provide chaperon support, function as small group leaders, and serve other students whose parents are not able, or fail to be involved. At the same time, parents take in a birds-eye view of everything that is being taught, experienced, and implanted into their student's mind.

¹ See the section entitled *Counseling* under *Pastor to Students* for a more comprehensive explanation of this important ministry.

Ministry to Parents

If most parents are honest, they will admit that while they often have a great understanding of what they would like to see their children become, they don't always know exactly how to get there. Of course, that wisdom comes from Scripture, and we must all work diligently to obtain it. God also provides many tools for parents in this regard, especially the Pastor to Students. God's people all come from different backgrounds with different life experiences - what some parents struggle with is very different from others. Often, the counsel of a pastor dedicated to the service of students can be very helpful and, as a ministry provided by Ephesus Church, parents are encouraged to utilize their resources.

Ephesus Student Ministries will work with parents in many ways, giving parents the assurance that the ministry leadership can be trusted to provide parents with biblical insight that will assist in the care and upbringing of their teenagers. It is one thing to tell parents that it is wise to do things like conduct family worship, discipline their children, or establish boundaries in the home, but it is very different to show and/or teach them how it is done. Therefore, we strive to create an environment where parents of various levels of experience can come together and be led to discuss different aspects of parenthood that they struggle with, or that they've become good at through trial and error. These times of teaching and sharing will be led by the Pastor to Students who knows the students well, and is able to teach the Word of God effectively and recognize whether or not a certain aspect of what parents are doing is biblical or not. We do not exist in community to function as individuals - we need each other, and getting parents in an environment where they can all grow together is helpful and healthy for their families and for the church and her ministries as well.

GOSPEL-DRIVEN AND GOD-CENTERED

We strive to ensure that everything we do in student ministry has a gospel-driven, God-centered purpose. Whether we're studying God's word, serving the homeless, navigating a challenge course, or snowboarding down a mountain, we seek to draw out the spiritual implications in every area of life. Everything we do has God as its focus. This is accomplished on several different levels:

Teaching and Preaching

As students seek to find answers to questions like, "Who should I date? Is dating ok? What is courtship?" or, "How do I get along better with my parents?" or, "What does it matter if I'm a Christian and my friend is a Muslim? Is it all the same?" or, "Why don't most churches do anything to help the poor?" we seek to help our students be discerning and provide an open and honest forum for discussion. Where we differ from most student ministries is that these questions are not answered directly -- why?

Because a simple answer usually does not provide lasting significance. These are small questions that are asked when one lacks the discipline of spiritual discernment. Day-to-day living as a Christian is important, and that's why we focus on teaching our students to think biblically, instead of simply providing them with a quick "yes" or "no."

To answer the most important questions in life, we will challenge students to expand their view of God and see Him as all-glorious, all-powerful, all-sufficient, and all-satisfying. In exploring these realities, the answers to questions will be found in Christ Jesus. Therefore, when it comes to the day-to-day issues that inevitably show up in Christian life, or when confronting wrong behavior, we will not attempt to put band-aids on big, deep wounds. The bleeding might stop for a while, but it doesn't fix the problem. Quite simply, the problem is sin, and if sin is not addressed properly, it will fester and infect. Giving quick answers and doing things on a by-issue basis is detrimental to the overall spiritual health of a young person -- they, like all of us, must be reminded frequently of our sinful condition and our need for Christ. In pointing one back to the Bible one will grow to see himself as less and less, and God as more and more. In doing so, the lens through which one views the world becomes more gospel oriented, and less worldly.

The gospel-driven, God-centered focus comes through in our preaching and teaching in several ways:

1. Most importantly, the gospel is preached on a regular basis. The truth that Jesus was sent by the Father into this world to save His people from the wrath of God through His work on the cross is a reminder of what Christians are in need of on a daily basis. We work to ensure that we never miss an opportunity to proclaim the substitutionary atonement of Christ and its implications for believers and non-believers alike.
2. Substantive theology and doctrine are always taught and emphasized. In our experience, the more we teach deep doctrine, the more excited our students get about their faith, and the more they want to learn! Often, pragmatic approaches such as programs and gimmicks infiltrate student ministries and water down the gospel. While we make every effort to ensure that our teaching is interesting and understandable at a level consistent with the intellectual abilities of our students, we never insist that something is too difficult or unimportant. No matter the perceived significance of particular doctrines in day-to-day Christian life, we will still make every effort to teach the whole counsel of God. After all, what may seem unimportant in our understanding of God today may be vital to one's depth and faith in Christ in the future. There simply are no doctrinal truths that we will not teach.

3. Our teaching and preaching is systematic and distinctly reformed. We believe that reformed theology, or classical baptistic Calvinism, is most consistent with the Scriptures (as per our confession of faith, the 1689 London Baptist Confession). We teach that the Bible alone is our source of infallible, fully sufficient authority from which we can better know and understand the one true God of the universe. We teach that a person is saved by grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, apart from works of the law. We emphasize the Sovereignty of God in all things, to include salvation. Students must be helped to understand and experience the reality that God relates to everything in life. Our hope is that our students will become radically God-centered and see all things in light of God's ultimate purpose, namely to glorify Himself.

4. Preaching and teaching are more than just words. Therefore, we work hard to ensure that we have a student ministry team that is filled with Christ-honoring, God-glorifying people that are passionate about living out the gospel in their daily Christian lives. So while it is important to have enough workers to carry out our ministry, it is even more important that they be workers who are living lives consistent with the truths and principles that we are trying to impart on our students. With this in mind, an application and screening process is in place to evaluate every student ministry team worker to ensure that we have done our best to present healthy examples, gifted teachers, and mature Christians to our students.

5. Our goal in student ministry is not to make our students the primary focus, but rather that we would all see God as the primary focus. Our prayer is that they would consistently ask themselves how they might most effectively glorify God. We desire to displace an emphasis on self-worth and exaltation and replace it with high views of God that are a catalyst for global thinking, risky endeavors, and creative spreading for God's glory and our enjoyment of Him forever. Our students are constantly hearing a call to biblical faithfulness in their education, career pursuits, relationships, finances, etc. There simply is no area of life that we can consider separate from God and our responsibility to Him and His purposes.

Discipleship and Evangelism

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." While most Christians would agree with Bonhoeffer in this statement, there are varied ideas as to what discipleship actually is.

First and foremost, evangelism and discipleship must always be elements that are married and seen as codependent upon one another. When the Lord is pleased to grant repentance in the life of a sinner through the evangelism of a believer, the new believer

will be ushered into a time of spiritual growth. Correctly understood, a disciple is not only one who follows Christ, but one who is investing in the lives of others: non-believers for the sake of evangelism, and less mature believers for the sake of discipleship. In other words, Christians ought to be always investing in the lives of non-believers *and* believers alike, on a personal, one-on-one basis. Likewise, every Christian ought to have at least one Paul (who invests in us) and one Timothy (in whom we invest) in our lives. Unfortunately, *most* Christians have never been discipled and therefore never learn to disciple others. Nevertheless, this is not an optional endeavor. Discipling is the process by which we build relationships, community and unity, and understand the true implications of “iron sharpening iron” (Proverbs 27:17). While American culture pushes for everyone to be highly individualized, discipleship has become a seemingly optional activity in the Christian life.

Discipleship is not simply an activity or a program; it’s a way in which Christians show whom they trust, and what they believe about His power and ability in the lives of His people. The sign of a true, growing disciple is shown in the fruits of their labor; typically, when someone they have discipled has moved on to disciple others as well. The discipleship process is personal in nature, not made complete in programmatic systems. To place that which exists within the confines of a relationship in a programmed environment has the potential of emptying the process of its power. Effective discipleship is one-on-one, personalized dedication through which a Christian gives of themselves for the growth and edification of another.

Ephesus student ministries encourage parents, first and foremost, to be good disciplers of their family. As has been addressed previously, this is the primary responsibility of parents, not the church. Therefore, we hope to see parents taking on their scripturally commanded role to make disciples. In addition to this, we hope to come alongside parents and develop encouraging relationships with their teenagers. The student ministry team, under the direction of the Pastor to Students, will always attempt to designate one team member to build a relationship of encouragement with each student. This relationship includes frequent contact and regular prayer for and with one another.

Our success in student ministry is defined by the transformation that takes place in the lives of those to whom we minister. Therefore, parental discipleship is an imperative, yet is often very unpopular. Much of the Church has gone to great lengths to pervert the gospel and the purity of the Bride, thus making the biblical model of ministry look strange, unfair, or overly daunting. As loud proponents of corporate worship and expository preaching, we also see the need for personal encounters that grow us deeper and wider in our faith. If every parent is discipling their child, and every worker on the student ministry team is intentionally committed to engaging in the focused

encouragement of 2 or 3 teenagers, we will have strong relationships being built, life change occurring, and deeply committed disciples being made. Eventually, the students can turn and disciple others, and the growth will be exponential. Focused parental discipleship creates a culture that says being deeply committed to other people in community is a priority. It provides an outlet to suffer alongside one another, encourage growth, and build systems of accountability.

Evangelistically, we realize that the harvest is plentiful, and our task is daunting. We are burdened with a desire to see young people converted by God to cherish Christ, and to value Him over the things of this world. While we strongly emphasize parental discipleship, teaching, and discipline, we also realize that many students whom God has called as His sheep are the sons and daughters of unbelieving parents. This creates a twofold task:

Discipleship to the Student

Above and beyond the encouragement ministry that takes place between our students and ministry team, those who do *not* come from a believing home must receive more attention than those who do. Simply stated, in these instances the efforts that are typically put forth by a believing parent must then be shifted to the church if a student is to know and submit to the full counsel of God, primarily through a one-on-one discipling relationship. As committed students begin to share their faith with their friends, neighbors, and classmates, we expect that much of the student ministry will be comprised of students who do not come from believing homes, and for that we praise God. Nevertheless, the burden becomes heavier and we must intensify our discipling efforts.

Evangelism to the Parents

When a student comes to us from a non-believing home, we are given an evangelistic opportunity that we must be diligent to take advantage of. As we get to know these students, we must also get to know their families. Through visits, phone calls, and other means of encouragement, we will be careful to share the gospel of Christ with the non-believing parents of our students who have joined us at Ephesus Church. We pray that through faithfully ministering to their teenagers, God would be pleased to open their eyes to see Him clearly and to believe in Christ as their ultimate treasure.

Service

Mark 10:45 says, “Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Ephesus Student Ministry strives to encourage students to submit humbly to God in the pursuit of a servant heart that longs to do good unto others in meaningful, Christ-honoring ways. Giving to meet the needs of others is

central to gospel living. There are over 2000 verses in the Bible that indicate God's will as it pertains to the poor and oppressed. Specifically, it is God's desire that His people have a responsibility toward those who are suffering in a life of hardship and pain. "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (mercy), and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). God promises His power and direction (Acts 1:8; cf. Matthew 28:20), using His people to accomplish His will for the world and for His glory. Teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) means that we do not avoid talking about self-denial, service, sacrifice, suffering, and sharing in other people's misery — and then, doing it.

There are two predominate extremes as it pertains to service; with biblical wisdom, we hope to avoid them both. Some have turned the gospel into a sort of manifesto for social activism, seeking to do philanthropic works throughout the world without truly understanding what Paul was saying when he proclaimed, "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). To serve without love means, at the most basic level, to serve without doing so in the name of Christ for the sake of advancing the gospel. To be clear, to serve without the desired outcome of gospel proclamation (evangelism) is the most unloving act that can take place — and in doing so, we have, according to Paul, gained nothing. The other extreme is those who gather together, and shut the doors behind them. There is a certain antagonism toward culture in many circles, yet many fail to realize that culture is an amoral thing — culture is where we live. Worldliness, not culture, is what we are to reject.

Opportunities to serve the poor and oppressed will always be present – it was Jesus Himself who told us that the poor will always be among us, but too often we do not have the eyes to see them. Rightfully, we have feared swapping the gospel for simply providing social services to meet the human needs around us, but the Church must still have a corporate witness and service to her neighbors. Our deeds of love show forth the glory of the God who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Matthew 5:16 says that we are to let our "light shine before others, so that they may see [our] good works and give glory to [our] Father who is in heaven." The Church is called to band together and do good works of love and charity to its neighborhoods and neighbors for the sake of God's glory and the advancement of the gospel.

Of the two extremes, the latest draw for the current generation of young Christians is a social gospel, not a gospel of exclusion and seclusion. Both, of course, are inconsistent with the biblical gospel. The Apostle Paul wrote, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be

accursed” (Galatians 1:8). Nevertheless, many students appear to see more biblical consistency with philanthropic endeavors than they do with self-service Christianity.

Therefore, it is a very important part of what we do in student ministry to preach, teach, and lead true and consistent mercy ministries that are biblically faithful and Christ-honoring. Timothy Keller writes in his book *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*, “As a priority, we should give to needy Christians both intensively and extensively, until their need is gone. But we must also give generously to nonbelievers as part of our witness to the world.”² Students are more and more interested in this very thing, but must be taught a very clear and comprehensive theology of mercy ministry lest they allow it to become the main thing.

Ephesus Student Ministries attempt to provide various avenues by which we can serve our community and love our neighbors by alleviating poverty, confronting injustice, and meeting other needs as they arise, often though partnering with other ministries. We always want to be clear as to why we do mercy ministry and emphasize that there is a right and wrong way to go about such things. So, as with everything in the Church, we must find the high ground and work to keep from either extreme: social activism over gospel proclamation or complete rejection of culture for the sake of inward focus. The age old difficulty is *living in*, but *not of* the world. As today’s students attempt to find more authenticity in their Christian faith, we must be diligent to give them opportunities and reason to serve, while keeping the gospel the main and most compelling thing that drives every effort we put forth. When we get it right we will truly understand what Jesus meant when he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Fellowship

Ephesus student ministries shall provide opportunities for fellowship among the students of the church and their friends outside the church. Hebrews 10:24–25 says, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Fellowship is an integral part of the Christian life; therefore it should not be neglected.

Fellowship literally means *having in common* or *sharing*. When we typically speak of fellowship, most people think we are talking about simply “hanging out.” In Acts 2:42–47, Luke has a much more radical meaning for the word fellowship. Believers were so

² Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1997), 80.

tied together that if someone was in need, everyone else did whatever it took to meet their needs. The believers didn't feel like what they had was their own personal stuff – it was for everyone's needs. They would sell their stuff and use the money to meet the needs of others in the church. That is what they *loved* to do! This was sacrifice. This was love. This was the Church working together for the good of everyone. This is the type of fellowship we hope to encourage and model.

Our fellowship times will be intentional, and the student ministry team will take advantage of every opportunity to connect with individual students on a personal level. While many people make the assumption that student ministry exists to give teenagers an alternative to hanging out in unwholesome environments, Ephesus student ministries does not exist simply to provide a safe social environment. We hope to utilize opportunities to bring church and family together, as well as foster healthy friendships among young brothers and sisters in Christ. These are ideal opportunities for parents to be involved in the church's ministry to their children, and to be an encouragement to other students. Most of these outings will be accompanied by study of the Scriptures and/or service to a community or other ministry. We strive to do things purposefully and will closely evaluate the worth of anything that would be considered a fellowship opportunity. We want to have fun together, but we also want to ensure that we are doing all things to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

PASTOR TO STUDENTS

If we are to take student ministry seriously and see it used mightily by God, we must begin by making sure we realize that students benefit greatly from having a pastor dedicated to their teaching and spiritual growth. Ephesus Church is blessed to have the resources available to provide for full-time pastors that serve in specific areas of ministry.

Teaching/Preaching

The Pastor to Students is the primary teacher, and will make all final decisions regarding the curriculum, focus, and direction of the student ministry gatherings and Sunday school. He is one who is considered “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2), and will spend a significant portion of his weekly time in the study of Scripture and the preparation of sermons and lessons. Additionally, the pastor to students will provide parents with resources (articles, books, booklets, etc.) to challenge and encourage them in their roles as parents, as well as provide classes and directed discussions (alongside the Pastor of Family Ministries).³

³See the section entitled *Teaching and Preaching* under *Gospel-Driven and God-Centered* for a more comprehensive explanation of the teaching and preaching focus of the ministry.

Counseling

Ephesus Church believes that nouthetic counseling is the means by which we are to direct our counseling efforts. The word *nouthetic* comes from the Greek noun *nouthesia* (verb: *noutheteo*). This term is used often in the epistles of the apostle Paul, which is frequently translated as *admonish*, *correct* or *instruct*. Nouthetic counseling is, simply stated, biblical counseling. Paul reminds the brethren in Romans 15:14: "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another." Paul is encouraging the Church to do informal, mutual, lay counseling (which should be practiced often in the church today as well). Nevertheless, in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 Paul writes, "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish (counsel) you." This is to say that there are special gifts and wisdom given to the pastors of the Church that are profitable for formal counseling.

In any counseling that is done with students, the parents will be equally involved either through sitting in on the counseling, or being informed of the outcome after counseling is completed. The Pastor to Students will discuss the situation with the parents and together they shall determine the course of action which seems most beneficial for the student. As with teaching and disciplining, the primary counseling responsibility as it relates to teenagers is with their parents. Nevertheless, counseling can sometimes be very difficult, and may even involve a conflict between the parent and the student, thus needing the counsel of a pastor. Utmost care will be taken to ensure that sound biblical wisdom is being utilized in all counseling that is conducted, and frequent follow up will be made to track progress. In most situations, students will be assigned specific tasks to complete and/or goals to meet, and parents will be expected to see that they are fulfilled in a timely manner.

Should a student approach the pastor to students in need of counsel and/or advice related to a situation that is sinful or rebellious in nature, they will be encouraged to repent and be honest in admitting to their parents what has taken place. Should the student refuse to comply, the parents will be notified of the situation along with simple suggestions to consider as to how they might want to proceed. While rare, these situations are delicate, and will be handled with care and respect as it relates to the parent/child relationship on a case-by-case basis.

STUDENT MINISTRY TEAM

Ephesus Church is committed to team ministry that exists under the care of her pastors. One of the most active teams at Ephesus Church is the student ministry team. Team based ministry benefits those who serve, as well as those who are being served.

Benefits for those who serve include...

...Allowing them to serve in focused areas that make the best use of their spiritual gifts.

...Giving them the support of others.

...Allowing them to have a more flexible schedule, while still allowing them to be actively serving in the church.

...Allowing them to keep from burning out, thus giving them longer lasting, more joy-filled ministry tenures.

Benefits for the students include...

...Having several mature, Christian adults available for encouragement, support, and supervision.

...Receiving more specific attention and care as an individual, as opposed to just being a number in a group.

...Establishing a safe and secure environment for them in which to worship, serve, and fellowship.

Roles and Responsibilities

Supervision

One of the primary responsibilities of the student ministry team is supervision. We will work to maintain a 1-to-7 team member to student ratio at all times. While certain circumstances may not lend themselves to this ratio, our desired goal is to ensure a safe, God-honoring environment at all times.

Encouragement

The student ministry team is encouraged to follow up consistently with 2-3 specific students, making sure they are being ministered to appropriately, and alerting the Pastor to Students of any special situations that may arise. The team will always be comprised of mature, trusted Christian adults who are capable of offering sound biblical wisdom as well as challenging and encouraging students to stay active in pursuing the glory of God in all things.

Planning, preparation, and execution

The student ministry team is expected to assist the pastor to students in the planning, preparation, and execution of weekly worship gatherings, as well as all other events that take place throughout the year. Their assigned tasks will typically be administrative in nature, but will also include brainstorming and frequent teaching/leading in small group settings. As with all things, the input of several individuals will create a more meaningful and useful ministry experience for everyone involved. Therefore, the team is invaluable for the success of Ephesus student ministries.

Requirements

Members of the student ministry team must meet several requirements:

1. They are mature, born-again Christian adults who have been members of Ephesus Church for at least 1 year.
2. They have submitted a Student ministry team application and have met with the pastor to students to discuss their Christian life, their duties and responsibilities, and the expectations of both parties.
3. They have committed to serve in Ephesus student ministries for no less than 2 years and will fulfill their duties in a way that honors Christ and sets a biblical example that others can follow.
4. They have committed to make every effort to be involved in weekly worship gatherings, as well as extended outings of the student ministry, unless providentially hindered or bound by employment obligations.
5. They have agreed to study the Scriptures daily, and to pray regularly for the students, parents, and pastor to students. Private and corporate worship for team members is not an optional activity.
6. They have agreed to develop 2-3 encouragement relationships with students, and will follow-up with them at least weekly via telephone or face-to-face interaction, informing the pastor to students of any specific situations that he should know about or be involved in directly.
7. They will seek to develop, maintain, and grow in the applicable character qualities of a deacon as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
8. They will support the pastor to students, Ephesus Church, and their fellow teammates and will discuss any disagreements outside the presence of students in a Christ-honoring, mutually edifying way.

9. They will communicate frequently with the pastor to students as well as the parents of students to ensure that there are no breaks in communication or misunderstandings because of poor information dissemination.

STUDENT MINISTRY INTERN

Ephesus Church desires to raise-up young men into pastoral ministry as the Lord provides within the congregation. Ephesus Student Ministry offers an environment that is effective for the training of these men and in helping them to discern their calling. Ephesus Church would like to consistently maintain a position for a student ministry intern.

Objectives

1. To support the ongoing student ministry at Ephesus church by building relationships with students and their parents, modeling a Christ-like lifestyle and attitude, and assisting the pastor to students and the student ministry team in various ministry events. This position exists for the mutual benefit of Ephesus Student Ministries and the intern.
2. To provide a time of short-term training and assessment for an individual who senses God's call into ministry by assigning various leading, planning, and teaching responsibilities.
3. To allow the pastors and congregation of Ephesus Church the opportunity to affirm or deny God's call into vocational ministry in an individual's life.
4. To build a culture of raising and developing Kingdom laborers from within the congregation of Ephesus Church to serve the body of Christ, according to His sovereign will in their lives.

Responsibilities

1. The student ministry intern will assist the pastor to students in the weekly tasks of planning, set-up, and execution of student ministry gatherings and service projects.
2. The student ministry intern will read at least 1 assigned book per month pertaining to ministry in the local church, and write a response to the book for the pastors of Ephesus Church to review and discuss with the intern.
3. The student ministry intern will meet with the pastor to students for weekly discipleship, prayer, accountability, and Bible study.
4. The student ministry intern will maintain a daily, vibrant spiritual life consisting of, but not limited to, private worship through Scripture reading, prayer, giving, serving, and Scripture memorization.

5. The student ministry intern will prepare, have approved, and lead at least 1 Bible study per month during a monthly in-home Bible study or weekly student ministry gathering.
6. The student ministry intern will develop and maintain at least 2 discipling relationships with whom he is meeting regularly for prayer, accountability, and Bible study.
7. Whenever appropriate, the student ministry intern will observe counseling sessions conducted by a pastor of Ephesus Church.
8. The student ministry intern will complete a self-evaluation every 6 months of service, accompanied by a written paper discussing the intern's progress in discerning his call in ministry, his grasp on the daily functions of the local church, and his growth and/or decline in private worship and holiness.

Qualifications

1. A born-again Christian committed to the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ.
2. A respect, appreciation, understanding, and agreement of the Reformed Baptist distinctives of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of faith.
3. A respect, appreciation, understanding, and agreement of the Ephesus Church "Philosophy and Function of Student Ministry".
4. A lifestyle consistent with the character traits outlined in 1 Timothy 3 regarding the qualifications of overseers and deacons.
5. A desire to work with and learn from the students at Ephesus Church.
6. A humble and submissive attitude with a desire to support and learn from the pastors of Ephesus Church.
7. Ability to manage time, complete assignments, and initiate new tasks and ideas.
8. Must sense a call by God into ministry, desiring an opportunity to process, develop, and follow that calling.

Terms of Service

1. The intern shall serve a term of no less than one year (12 months) at which time the pastors and intern will decide whether or not to pursue one additional year of service, not to extend beyond 24 months.
2. The intern shall be actively involved in the work of Ephesus Student ministry at least 20 hours per week, not including Sunday.
3. The intern shall be included in various meetings of the pastors to engage in future planning and to observe the decision making process in an elder-led congregation.
4. The intern shall be compensated \$200/week (\$10/hour based on a 20-hour work week) from the Ephesus Church vision fund, as well as raising their own support to equal or exceed the church's financial commitment.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Books:

Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Crossway, 1997).

Terry Johnson, *The Family Worship Book: A Resource Book for Family Devotions* (Christian Focus, 2000).

Timothy Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (P&R Publishing, 1997).

Steve Wright, *reThink: Is Student Ministry Working?* (InQuest, 2007).

Alex and Brett Harris, *Do Hard Things* (Multnomah, 2008).

Articles:

“A Church Based Hope for ‘Adultolescents’”

www.desiringgod.org/resourcelibrary/tasteandsee/bydate/2007/2487_A_Churchbased_Hope_for_Adultolescents

“Let Them Come Home”

12 suggestions for reaching out to a wayward child

www.billygraham.org/DMag_SpiritualHelp_Article.asp?ArticleID=872

Websites

Ephesus Church

www.ephesuschurch.com

Ephesus Student Ministries

www.ephesusstudents.com

Inquest Ministries

www.inquest.org

Reforming Students (personal blog of Pastor Nick Kennicott)

www.reformingstudents.com

The Rebelution

www.therebelution.com

God's Plan for the Family

biblicalcounselingonline.org/series/family/

Jim Heiser - 16 part series in both audio (mp3) and written (pdf) format addressing various topics families face, including emotional and sexual relations, parenting, pornography, family worship, education and more.

Directory of Family Worship (1647)

www.apuritansmind.com/WCF/PDF/DirectoryFamilyWorship.pdf

Act for observing the Directions of the General Assembly for secret and private Worship, and mutual Edification; and censuring such as neglect Family-worship.

Directory of Family Worship

www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_standards/index.html?mainframe=/documents/wcf_standards/p417-direct_fam_worship.html

Family Worship

www.mountzion.org/fgb/Fall99/FgbF1-99.html

A Brief History of Biblical Family Worship

members.aol.com/kptacek/bhbfw.html

The Daily Exercise of God's Most Holy and Sacred Word

members.aol.com/kptacek/jkde.html

Family and Government in Puritan New England

members.aol.com/kptacek/fwpne.html

Getting Started: The Biblical Elements of Family Worship

members.aol.com/kptacek/gs.html

Implementing Family Worship

www.mountzion.org/fgb/Summer04/FgbS11-04.html

Leading Your Family in Worship

www.valleypresbyterian.org/curriculum/discipleship/family_devotions.html

Fathers Leading Family Worship

www.apuritansmind.com/TheChristianFamily/AlexanderJWFathersFamilyWorship.htm

The History, Nature and Warrant for Family Worship

www.apuritansmind.com/TheChristianFamily/AlexanderJWHistoryFamilyWorship.htm

Family Worship: An Extract from a Letter

www.covenanter.org/Family/doddfamworsh.htm

Motives for Family Worship - As For Me and My House

www.mountzion.org/fgb/Summer04/FgbS5-04.html

Family Worship

www.mountzion.org/fgb/Fall99/FgbF1-99.html

Family Worship

www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/famworship.htm

Thomas Manton - Mr. Thomas Manton's Epistle to the Reader of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms

Family Worship: Calling the Next Generation to Hope in God

www.cbmw.org/resources/articles/family_worship.php

Family Worship

www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/famworship.htm

Family Worship

www.hnrc.org/misc/FamilyWorship.pdf

The life of Christ, for family devotions (365 days)

www.gracegems.org/17/Mortimer.htm

Simplify Family Worship

reformation21.org/Counterpoints_/Counterpoints_/334/vobId__6036/

Audio

“Imparting a Passion: A Challenge to Youth Workers” available at www.desiringgod.org