

**PARENT**

# **HAND BOOK**



## ***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!



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# THE BASICS

## OUR MINISTRY

### OUR WEEKLY PROGRAMS

**Youth Group | Wednesday AT 7:15PM to 8:30pm**

Our middle school and high schoolers (grades 6-12) meet every Wednesday for games, worship, teaching, and small groups.

### 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 several 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.

**WEEKLY PROGRAMS:** Our weekly programs happen every single week. They're designed to help teenagers grow in four key areas. (We'll get to those in a minute.)

**CONNECTION TIMES:** We build in times during all of our weekly programs and events to connect every teenager with a consistent trustworthy adult and community of their peers. The goal is to create authentic relationships that help grow each other towards Christ.



## OUR BIG WIN

It's hard sometimes to know when you're winning with teenagers. We often ask question like, is anything we're teaching actually sinking in? and 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, 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.**

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#### **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.



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.
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 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 is not just about teaching them about Jesus - it’s about modeling what faith in Jesus looks like. That’s why we encourage our leaders to spend time with their small groups 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 we encourage our leaders to build real lasting relationship with our students – because discipleship is a process.



# THE GAME PLAN

## ABOUT

### WHAT IS THE GAME PLAN?

Each year before the kickoff of MCC's student ministry we come up with a game plan for the year. This game plan consists of focuses, teaching topics, weekly meetings, events, parent events, and more. As always, and even more so with Covid-19, this plan is just a tentative outline of what we would like our ministry year to look like. Below is an outline of the 2021 game plan for MCC Students Ministry.

### FALL

#### **FOCUS | Spend Time with Others**

In the fall, we focus on developing the spiritual habit of Christlike community when teenagers are beginning a new school year, making new friends, and getting plugged into new small groups.

#### **DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY | Party Kits For Small Groups**

These Small Group Party Kits will help you or your small group leaders create a fun and inviting environment for students to spend time together

#### **TEACHING TOPICS**

**Distinct | Identity:** In this series, the stories of Jesus and John the Baptist, and the words of Paul, will help us see why discovering who Jesus is helps us discover who we're meant to be. Not only is Jesus is distinct from anyone who has ever lived, but God made us distinct too, with distinct gifts we can use to serve God and others, and unique distinctions that are worth celebrating.



**With You | Friendship:** Through the stories of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, we'll see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're grieving, lonely, in need, or feeling hopeless, and how God is already with them.

**Rad| Loving Others:** In this 4-week series from the book of James, we'll look at four ways Jesus invites us to love according to his revolutionary example. These ideas might seem simple, but when we choose to listen more than we speak, refuse to play favorites, watch our words, and fight for peace, we'll see just how radical Jesus' teachings really are.

## EVENTS

**Pizzapalooza | October:** . The perfect event to go from deep dish to deep relationships. What happens at Pizzapalooza? Well, pizza parties (that's what we call your teams) will compete for pizza prizes to create pizzas, talk about pizzas, and play games related to pizza all in order to be deemed the World Pizza Champion! The point? Pizza.

**Parent Discussion (For parents) | November:** Parenting is difficult! And it is even more difficult alone. So, this year we are going to have two or three nights where parents can come together and share their wins, struggles, and lessons learned. We firmly believe that parents have a lot of wisdom to share with each other and we want to create an environment to share that wisdom.



# WINTER

## FOCUS | Using Your Gifts

In the Winter, we focus on helping students develop the spiritual habit of knowing and using their gifts to serve God and others.

## DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY | The Distinct Challenge

A workbook for students or small groups to help teenagers figure out more of what makes them unique and how they can take the next step on their journey toward discovering who God made them to be.

## TEACHING TOPICS

**Good Things | Christmas:** In this 4-week series, we'll hear the Christmas story from the perspective of the prophets in the Old Testament, who foretold and then waited for the good things God had in store. Christmas is a reminder of what the prophets proclaimed: that God has always had a plan, that Jesus completes God's plan, that God's plans bring joy, and that God's plans require sacrifice.

**Atomic | Spiritual Habits:** In this 4-week series, we'll discover some principles from Scripture that have the power to help you develop tiny habits that can make a big impact – habits like spending time with God, investing in your relationships, sharing your faith story, and worshiping with your life.

**Guiding Light | Wisdom:** In this 4-week series about wisdom, we'll get better acquainted with how God's Spirit guides us as we discover how the Holy Spirit is God's gift to us who shows us truth, gives us wisdom, and helps us love.



## EVENTS

**Christmas Party | December:** A great time for current and past MCC youth ministry students to gather together during school break. There will be fun games, snacks, and a gift exchange.

**Family Game Night | January:** In January we will be hosting a whole family game night at MCC. This will be a time for families to fellowship together while playing games.

**Weekend Retreat | February:** Our trip to Camp Orchard Hill each winter is one of the highlights for many of our students. While we aren't sure exactly what this trip would look like this year or if it is possible, we are still planning on having a weekend retreat in February. This retreat maybe at COH, may be at MCC or a joined event with some other churches around us.



# SPRING

## **FOCUS | Spend Time With God**

In the Spring, we go deep into the spiritual habit of spending time with God individually through personal spiritual disciplines.

## **DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY | The Break Trail Experience**

In The Break Trail Experience, you'll create a space that invites teenagers into a prayer journey through the meaning and message of Lent — a practice often called the Stations of the Cross.

## **TEACHING TOPICS**

**Break Trail | Jesus & Easter:** In this 6-week Easter series, we'll read the stories of Jesus breaking new trails as we discover that Jesus never gives up on us, understands our pain, shows us love, is alive, can be trusted, and gives us a mission.

**I Have Questions | Doubt & Questions:** In this 4-week series, we'll hear about a few people from Scripture who know exactly what it's like. With Esther, David, Peter, Amos, and John, we'll explore hard questions you thought you weren't allowed to ask, like "When people are hurting, where is God? When I'm hurting, does God leave me? If God is good, why do bad things happen? And when life hurts, is God listening?"

**Justice For All | Justice:** In this 4-week series, the story of Joseph will help us see that justice is love in action and that, when we're wronged by others, we can hold on to hope, trust that integrity can withstand injustice, and learn to practice justice that restores what's broken.



## EVENTS

**Fundraising Event #1 | March:** A student led fundraiser to raise money for their summer missions' trip.

**Parent Discussion (For Parents) | March:** Parenting is difficult! And it is even more difficult alone. So, this year we are going to have two or three nights where parents can come together and share their wins, struggles, and lessons learned. We firmly believe that parents have a lot of wisdom to share with each other and we want to create an environment to share that wisdom.

**Fundraising Event #2 | April:** A student led fundraiser to raise money for their summer missions' trip.

**Fundraising Event #3 | May:** A student led fundraiser to raise money for their summer missions' trip.



# SUMMER

## **FOCUS | Share Your Story**

In the Summer, we focus on helping students develop the spiritual habit of sharing their stories while they prepare for VBS and a new school year.

## **DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY | The Pass It On Challenge**

In this activity we will engage students in a series of challenges on social media or in-person over the course of days or weeks to help them learn about sharing their stories, listen to the stories of others, and then share their stories with someone else.

## **TEACHING TOPICS**

**Pass It On | Evangelism:** In this 4-week series, we'll hear their stories, discover that our lives can pass on the good news, and learn how to pass on the good news to unexpected people, to our families, and with humility.

## **EVENTS**

**VBS | July/August:** During this year's VBS we are encouraging all youth students to volunteer. During VBS we are going to make time for our students to practice sharing their story with our VBS kids.

**Missions Week | June/July:** This summer we want to take our students on a week-long foundational mission's experience designed for youth leaders and their students. This combines the fun of traditional camp with missions opportunities.



# ***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 leader should initiate a one-on-one meeting with a teenager without the knowledge and consent of you, their parents.
- No leader should transport a teenager in a vehicle alone. If a teenager needs a ride, we must arrange to have another adult or teenager ride accompany them.
- 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 any event, retreat, or gathering 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!



# CONTACT US

## LET'S STAY IN TOUCH

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

We send an email just for parents every month. It's packed with information on our ministry and on how to be a more awesome parent of a teenager. Subscribe at [www.montclairchurch.net/youth](http://www.montclairchurch.net/youth)

### SOCIAL MEDIA

We post photos, videos, and updates from our ministry each week. Follow along at . . .

**INSTAGRAM:** [instagram.com/mcc.youthministry](https://www.instagram.com/mcc.youthministry)

### PASTOR ERIC'S INFORMATION

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