



Discipleship Group Staff Handbook

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Thank you for your hard work.
If you need to contact our Pastor/Director,
or the Administrative Assistant, please call 925.627.4403.
Let us know if you need anything!

STAFF CONDUCT RULES AND GUIDELINES

As discipleship group leaders, we are in a position of authority and influence; because of this, we all need to be above reproach. We are to live out our faith by modeling Christ in whatever we say and do, acting out of *love* and not *selfish ambition*. It is our job to set the example for these younger ones, being ever mindful of what and how we say/do things. If you are not willing to do these things, please do not come on staff.

These rules and guidelines have been established to protect both students and staff.

Volunteer staff should **never be alone with just one student anywhere at any time**, unless you have parental permission or if it's an emergency situation and there are no better options.

Do not be alone with any student when driving, unless you have been given permission by the student's parents. Even then, be extremely cautious. Men should **never** drive girls home alone.

Following an event, a student should not be left alone with only one staff person while waiting for parents to arrive. Have someone else on staff stay with you until that student is picked up, so there is not *one student* and *one staff* alone together.

Our staff needs to be diligent in terms of keeping things safe.

Counseling, Discipling, and Accountability

Never counsel a student behind closed doors. It's okay to have a brief conversation privately, but doors must be open and you both need to be visible to others.

Never degrade or dishonor parents to the students, or to anyone else.

Immediately report to parents and to the Pastor/Director any of the following:

- Abuse (physical and/or emotional)
- Thoughts of suicide
- Drug use
- Dangerous activities
- Criminal activities
- Safety issues
- Pornography

If a student is being held accountable for a sin issue, please adhere to Matthew 18:15-17. Please do not hesitate to bring another staff person to witness the dialogue if you sense a bad attitude or an unchanged/rebellious heart. It does absolutely no good to ignore the problem.

Respect

Students should come with the right attitude; one that is positive and loving. Students should exhibit total respect for each other.

It is expected that they will be honest and truthful.

- No interrupting when another is talking
- No rude or lewd behavior or comments
- No one is to be a distraction to others
- Pay attention when someone else is talking

There will be no cutting remarks. If a student doesn't have something nice or encouraging to say, then they are to keep their mouth closed and perhaps they should reflect or examine why they're not expressing love.

If it becomes obvious that a student is not in the group to learn or is too immature to not be a distraction, they need to be removed from the group and parents notified (the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 need to be implemented first).

Confidentiality

Whatever is said in the group is not to be shared with anyone else outside the group (unless approved by the group).

Exceptions:

- The DG leader will communicate to the parents and the Pastor/Director anything that is life threatening, immoral, or criminal.
- The DG leader may share with the parents or Pastor/Director anything that he/she believes may be of concern; it is not a breach of the student's confidence to do so.

Very Important:

Students should realize that their leaders have the right to share concerns with their parents or the Pastor/Director. Students should not be caught by surprise, or think that they have been betrayed, if they become aware that an issue has been brought to the attention of their parents or the Pastor/Director. **Be sure to make your students aware of this.**

Commitment

If a student can't make a meeting, they should let you know as soon as possible, and they need to tell you why.

If they need a ride, they should tell you. Please be willing to help them find one if you can. Not showing up (and not calling, either) and telling you later that they didn't have a ride, is not a good excuse for missing their DG. Hold them to this.

Boy/Girl Relationships

Friendships are fine, but nothing more. Please hold our students accountable on this. The Oneighty is not a place for our students to pursue relationships beyond friendships.

If you see any public displays of affection (PDA) going on between a boy and a girl that appears to be more than just friends, please stop them and remind them that it's inappropriate for them to be doing whatever they're doing. If it continues, please let the Junior High Director know about it.

Participation

We all need to participate, so be open and willing to do so. However, there are some pitfalls to avoid:

- Don't let one or two students dominate the conversation. One of your goals should be to engage everyone.
- Don't let students sit together who have a hard time paying attention. Sit between them.
- Don't allow any students to distract or disrupt your group. Lovingly yet sternly hold them accountable to this.
- Don't go down rabbit trails that may take the group off the lesson (unless it is truly necessary).

SPECIFIC DG RULES AND GUIDELINES

Designated DG Area

No student is to leave the drop off, pick up, or designated DG meeting place without parental permission.

Off-campus DGs

Volunteer staff is not to take students anywhere off-campus or away from the designated DG meeting place without written parental permission.

If you desire to take your DG off-campus for an event (pizza party, movie night, DG at the leader's home, etc.) please follow these steps in order:

1. **Come up with a plan** for your off-campus DG. Decide where the DG will take place (pizza place, leader's home, etc.). Check the Oneighty online calendar for any conflicts. Communicate well with any DG co-leaders.
2. **Contact the Director.** Inform and get his ok at least one week prior to the off-campus event is scheduled to take place. There may be another (church related) conflict that you might not be aware of.
3. **You must have permission from every parent who has a student participating.** All parents must be fully informed where their son or daughter will be. Shoot them an email explaining your plans and get them to confirm back. Follow up with them if you don't get a response. If you only have verbal permission, you are exposing yourself legally if something bad happens. DO NOT take a student off campus without their parent's knowledge or permission.

Because we live in such a litigious society, please understand that your off-campus DG event is not a NorthCreek Church sponsored event, since it is not a planned event by a paid employee, nor is a paid employee overseeing it. This means that NorthCreek Church will not be held legally responsible in the event that a lawsuit comes into play. This is why it is so important that you get parental permission documented.

LGF3 Rules

- Students are to stay near the Chapel when the large group is meeting.
- Students are not to go off by themselves anywhere, including out in the dark, or anywhere away from the main group (including bathrooms).
- It is expected that students come to participate in the large group activities. It's okay if they don't want to play, as long as they stay close by. Keep your eye on them. It's okay if they socialize, but they are not to pursue boyfriend-girlfriend relationships.
- Students are not to be in the Café/Bookstore once the Oneighty starts.

Classroom Rules

The classrooms should be unlocked for you by 6:30 p.m.

- Leave the classroom as clean as, or cleaner than, when you arrived.

- Students must not be in a room without an adult present.
- Don't touch or disturb any projects.
- Don't leave anything on the dry-eraser boards.
- Return tables and chairs to where you found them.
- The leader should be the last to leave.
- Turn off the lights.

Student Dress Code

We usually don't have too many problems with dress and appearance, but once in a while a student will see what they can get away with.

Students should not be wearing clothes that are:

- Super tight (that is sexually provocative)
- Too revealing
- Have inappropriate symbols or words on them
- Sagging too low
- Showing underwear

Please hold our students accountable on this.

Girls' Restrooms

Some girls like to hang out in the bathroom away from the group and talk. Ladies, please don't let this happen. They are not to stay in there and chat.

Schedule

Usually, DGs will meet for the first three Wednesdays of the month. On the fourth Wednesday of each month, we'll meet in large group format in the Chapel. There are exceptions to this schedule, so be sure to check the Oneighty Online Calendar often or if you're not sure.

A typical Wednesday DG night schedule:

- 7:00 – 7:25 p.m. Worship time or a large group game
- 7:30 – 8:25 p.m. DGs meet in their assigned rooms
- 8:30 p.m. Parents are to pick up their son or daughter

Encourage students to establish a meeting place with their parents or with whomever is picking them up.

For those leaders who can, it would be appreciated if you could hang around in the courtyard or Chapel area when students are waiting for their rides. This will help keep things safe.

Please stop any students from throwing or kicking balls out on the courtyard where someone might get hurt if struck.

Lesson Fill-in Sheets, Handouts, and Homework

Each lesson may have one or more fill-in sheets, handouts, or homework sheets. Your binders don't have these items printed in them, but they are on the CD that was included in your curriculum binder.

Lesson fill-in sheets, handouts, and homework sheets will be available for each lesson on the Wednesday that the lesson is scheduled. They will be easily identified on the far right counter of the Chapel lobby. These are tools for you to use, but if you don't plan to use them, let the Director know a week in advance so time, paper, and money aren't wasted.

Whoever is leading the group should be the one to grab enough copies for their group. Only take what you need. There will not be many extra copies available, so if you take too many, another DG will be short. Encourage your students to bring a binder to hold all these items (they will be three-hole punched), as well as paper to take notes.

Each week, students should bring their Bible and their notebook. Hold them accountable to this. They should be coming to your DG to learn and not to fool around. Incent them with a treat or an outing if everyone does this for a certain period of time.

Only hard-copy Bibles are allowed. There are way too many distractions and temptations with smart phones, iPads, etc.

Once we get started for the evening, all cell phones are to be turned off. If you see a student using a cell phone during DGs, confiscate it and give it to the Director. Only their parents will be able to get it back from him.

The Director will let all students and parents know upfront about cell phone usage, and a reminder message will be in the announcement slides as students walk in on a given Wednesday. Please help reinforce this rule and hold them accountable.

Any homework or reading assignments given out are to be finished and ready to be discussed (we are all busy, but spending time with God should be a priority. If God is not a priority, there is a real question of true belief). Hold them accountable or don't give it to them.

New Students

Any student who shows up to your DG who hasn't previously been assigned to a DG needs to fill out a Student Info Sheet. Please give this sheet back to the Director once it's filled out so that parents can be contacted and the student can be registered. You should have a couple of Student Info Sheets in your DG Curriculum binder. If not, ask the Director for some.

A student's friend can come to check out the DG only if they are interested in joining. Discourage student friends from coming sporadically. It will hurt the unity that you are trying to foster. Don't let your group get so large that you can't handle it.

Things to Bring

Each time we meet, students AND leaders should have their Bible, their notebook, a pen or pencil, and a smile. ☺

Curriculum Binders

The lesson binder you received will be reused, so **please** don't do a lot of writing in it. If you'd like to highlight, underline, or tweak things, use the CD that you were given along with your binder to print out the lesson so that you can write on it or do what you want.

Write your name on the front cover insert sheet of your binder. Do not stick your nametag on your binder, as they are extremely hard to remove without destroying the plastic.

The lessons are there to inspire and give you something to work from, in order to lead the discussions. Make the lessons your own though. If you simply just read it, it will probably be very boring to your students. If you're not excited and convicted about what you're presenting, why should they be?

Staying Up-to-Date

View the Oneighty Online Calendar often as your first resource for staying up-to-date on events and information. Encourage your students to view the calendar often as well. Encourage your DG to participate as a group in all the Oneighty events. These events are designed for students and staff to have some fun with each other away from the classroom environment. Take advantage of these opportunities. The more time you spend with them, the more influence you'll have. All Oneighty events are free to DG staff.

WHO ARE WE? WE ARE SHEPHERDS

As older and more mature Christians, we are to model Christ-centered thoughts, words, and actions to everyone. As members of the staff, we are also in a position of leadership and authority, and we are to lead by example. Whether we realize it or not, we are shepherds; as shepherds, it is our job to feed, take care of, guide, correct, and protect.

To Feed

It is our job to teach God's truth, just like Christ did with His disciples.

To Take Care Of

It is our job to give attention to, and to provide for, the needs of those whom God has entrusted into our care, just like Christ did with His disciples.

To Guide

It is our job to give direction to and model God's amazing love, just like Christ did with His disciples.

To Correct

It is our job at times to control the unruly, discipline the rebellious, and admonish the unloving, just like Christ did with those He came in contact with.

When you are aware of a student who is being unloving, selfish, rebellious, unruly, etc., you have a responsibility to them and to others to make them aware of the sin that needs to stop. This should be done out of love and not out of anger.

The primary purpose of discipline is threefold: 1) to restore and to reconcile, 2) to keep sin from spreading and affecting others, and 3) to protect the purity of the church and the honor of Christ.

Please adhere to the principles laid out in Matthew 18:15-17 when holding students accountable.

To Protect

It is our job to watch over the students, to keep them safe, and when necessary, remove those who come for the wrong reasons (to hurt or tear down, to break apart or corrupt), just as Christ did with His disciples.

Discipleship Directives

This section contains some practical information about discipleship.

Three Main Parts in Discipleship

I. Information

- A. Know where your students are in life. What are their issues spiritually, mentally, and physically?
- B. Understand where you fit into their spiritual development. Are their parents involved? What is the input of older siblings or other spiritual mentors?

- C. Ask numerous questions. Talk with their parents and friends; spend time in “their world”; watch their actions; listen to their speech; observe their dress. What music do they listen to? What is their appetite for Scripture, prayer, spiritual things?
- D. Don’t make assumptions about anything. Start at the basics and work up from there. It is important not to assume that they are saved just because they seem like good kids.

II. Imitation

- A. Our lives need to be worth following, as we follow Christ. This is true discipleship.

III. Implementation

- A. What we should desire for our students is growth, honesty, commitment, and a teachable heart. Conforming to the image of Christ requires conversion and conviction.
- B. Set goals together, put them on a timeline, and meet with them at their point of need. We need to demonstrate patience and wisdom (Heb 4:16), always remembering that we are not the Holy Spirit. We are responsible to teach them the Word; the Holy Spirit will be the One who changes their heart.

Some Goals for Discipleship

- I. Equip students to perform the ministry God has called them to.
 - A. Help them identify an area where they can serve.
 - B. Guide them to use their gifts and skills to serve others.
 - C. Teach them how to encourage and counsel others.
- II. Continually remind them of their personal accountability before God and others.
 - A. They should be accountable for their actions (Rom 14:12: “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”)
 - B. They should be accountable for their attitudes (Prov 18:1: “Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.”)
 - C. They should be accountable for their words (Matt 12:36: “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.”)
 - D. They should be accountable for their thoughts (2 Cor 10:5: “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”)

Discipleship Directed Toward Teenagers

It is important that you know the spiritual state of your students. There is a difference between evangelism and discipleship. Do not push for a profession of faith. Lead them to identify to you where they are spiritually. Do not just “hang out.” Lead and feed. Be an influence in their lives. See how they operate at home and act on that knowledge.

I. Have A Plan

- A. Keep frequent contact with a specific aim in mind.
- B. Show godliness in every situation, linking your responses to Scripture.

- C. Relate to what your student is involved in: What are you reading? Who are your friends?
- D. Have a plan to evaluate your success with the student.

II. Stumbling Blocks You May Encounter

- A. Lack of personal training – you might need guidance yourself on how to go about this.
- B. Time restraints – students have school and family obligations.
- C. Cost – to go out often involves expenses.
- D. Distance – some live further away from the church.
- E. Parent dynamic – some parents are not saved and/or supportive.
- F. Student disinterest – some students will only seek discipleship based on a parent's instruction. Have a specific program to follow. This way you will have material to prove his indifference to his parents.
- G. Lack of communications skills – many students struggle with talking about significant subjects.

Specific Considerations

I. Positives About the Teenage Years

- A. Impressionable
- B. Optimistic
- C. Energetic
- D. Idealistic
- E. Potential
- F. Undamaged
- G. Hungry for relationships
- H. Inquisitive
- I. Eager
- J. Moldable

II. Challenges of Teenage Discipleship

- A. Immaturity/Sheltered
- B. Wild hormones
- C. Strict schedules
- D. Lack of ability/freedom
- E. Lack of authority/parents
- F. Parental hypocrisy
- G. Confused priorities
- H. Social ineptitude
- I. Christian ritual
- J. Lack of experience
- K. Peer pressure
- L. Cultural curiosity
- M. Shortsighted/lack of eternal perspective
- N. Distrust of authority
- O. Self-proclaimed authority

III. Areas to Address with Teenage Girls

- A. Gospel – teach them to know and articulate the gospel
- B. Humility
- C. Modesty – what it means to be discreet
- D. Role at home
- E. Hospitality at home
- F. Love for husband
- G. Submission to husband’s leadership
- H. Training up children
- I. Selflessness with time and talents
- J. Idleness and gossiping
- K. Being a good listener
- L. Attitude toward the role of women: quiet and gentle spirit
- M. Learning to communicate and interact with men
- N. Joy founded in the Lord and not life circumstances

IV. Areas to Address with Teenage Guys

- A. Gospel – teach them to know and articulate the gospel
- B. Relationship with parents
- C. Communication skills – eye contact, vocabulary, annunciation, volume
- D. Soften the rough edges – kindness toward friends, siblings, girls
- E. Social interaction – encouragement to others, gentleness in action, not the focus of attention
- F. Service – identify opportunities, take initiative
- G. Leadership development
- H. Goal-setting
- I. Identify areas of sinful behavior
- J. A Biblical view of those of the opposite sex
- K. Pornography
- L. Practice personal discipline
- M. Peer example – initiate spiritual conversations, demonstrate Christian action
- N. Teach and discuss sound doctrine
- O. Training on discernment
- P. Training on Bible study and leading discussion

DG EXPECTATIONS

As DG leaders, it is our job to run a Christ-centered group that encourages students to deny themselves and put God first, then others. Strive to maintain a high standard of expectations in your DG. Don't stoop to the students' level of maturity, but bring them up to yours!

First, let them know what they can expect from you

You will come prepared, and be on time. You will be respectful of their thoughts and feelings, be someone whom they can trust to help them grow in godliness, and be someone who cares about them.

Then, let them know what you expect from them

It is expected that students are coming to discipleship group for the right reasons.

The right reasons are:

- 1) That they desire to grow closer to God; meaning they want to mature in their faith in Him by being disciplined.
- 2) They desire to participate in and enjoy the fellowship of other believers like themselves.

If they are coming for any other reason, then they should reconsider being in a discipleship group.

The name *Discipleship Group* implies that the students are willing to be disciplined. If they aren't willing to be disciplined, then they shouldn't be in the group (not all students are mature enough for this). Being disciplined means that they have a willingness to let someone help them learn and grow in their faith.

Besides digging into God's Word with the purpose of learning more about Him and our relationship to Him, another primary reason why we come together as a group is to enjoy the fellowship of other believers. **Note:** Unbelievers are welcomed, so long as they don't hurt or damage the unity and fellowship that is being promoted.

Fellowship is a common bond that is shared among believers. That common bond is in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we meet together we are to encourage one another to love Him.

One way that each of us can express our love for Christ is by obeying His command to love each other as He loves us. That means we do not put ourselves first, which goes completely against our natural selves; we are to deny ourselves.

So it's expected that when we meet, we are all willing to give and not just take. It's expected that we will be a help and an encouragement to all.

In other words, it's expected that we actually **live out our faith** and be examples for others; if we claim to have a faith at all, it will show by the way we live our lives.

BE THE PRIMARY ENCOURAGER OF THE STUDENTS IN YOUR DG

After establishing relationships with your assigned students in your DG, be watching over them as they participate in our large group activities. Be the primary encourager for them to live out their faith and to set the example for others. When necessary, hold them accountable when they stray (Matthew 18:15-17). Spend time with them; take advantage of opportunities to disciple them and to build and strengthen relationships. We really don't have that much time with them.

For example: If you see a student or two who just never want to worship God through song and music, take them aside and ask them, "What's up? Why don't you want to worship God in this way?" This could lead to a great conversation on why and how we worship. It also might provide insight into their spiritual/emotional maturity or lack thereof. Perhaps it could bring attention to what their focus is on (usually it's on themselves or others) and may help them develop a better understanding of how we should worship God in every way; that we should want and desire to worship Him together with our voices.

We want to bring their attention to any independent or rebellious behavior or attitudes. One of our primary goals for getting together is to enjoy the fellowship of others, but that won't happen if students don't separate themselves from cliques that exclude others.

It's so important early on to set a high standard for them to reach. It is our hope and goal to mature these younger ones in their faith and their love for each other. The old "divide and conquer" adage really does work.

We, too, must set a good example for them. When it is time for worship, we also need to be worshipping and not talking amongst ourselves. When someone is up front speaking, we all need to be listening and encouraging our students to pay attention. When it is time for a large group activity, participate! Don't just sit back and watch others; your young disciples may do the same.

Look for ways to make things better, and then do them.

Let's lead by example... and please, lovingly hold each other accountable on this.

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS IS KEY

One of your objectives is to get your students to talk; to openly express their thoughts, opinions, and values, and to have some kind of meaningful dialogue.

A well-posed question or two can ignite great discussion. So spend some time crafting good questions that will draw your students out and get them talking.

Asking meaningful questions indicates to others that you want to move beyond the surface chatter and dig deeper; that you care enough to want to know them on a deeper level, moving beyond one word sentences.

Make Them Think

Avoid questions that can easily be answered by a "yes" or "no."

Begin your questions with *how*, *what*, and *why*.

Here are some examples:

Not so good: "Can you have too much money?"

Better: "**How** much money is enough?" (Then follow with "**Why?**" or "**How** did you come up with that amount?")

Not so good: "Has knowing Christ changed you?"

Better: "**What** are some specific ways that knowing Christ has changed you?"

Not so good: "Do you know what you want to accomplish with your life?"

Better: "So **what** would you like to accomplish with your life?"

Not so good: "Do your friends influence you?"

Better: "**How** do you think your friends influence you?"

Not so good: "In the Bible, is 'thinking' a sin the same as 'doing' a sin?"

Better: "**Why** does God say that 'thinking' a sin is as bad as acting on it?"

Not so good: "Do you get frustrated during the day?"

Better: "**How** do you cope with daily frustrations?"

PREPARE YOURSELVES!

I would like to remind and encourage you **not** to let your lesson preparation go until the last moment. We are all running fast, trying to keep up with life, and often times our natural tendency is to let things go until the last minute. **Please** do not do this when working for our Lord.

Lesson Prep

Read through the material early (days in advance) and let it percolate. Spend some time thinking about it. Also, please be praying about it. Ask our Heavenly Father to lead, guide, direct, and inspire you. Trust and depend on Him. Do not rely on your own power to pull it off.

Helpful Hints

- A. Give your brain plenty of time to think about the material!
- B. Make it your own.
- C. Use your own personal stories.
- D. Try not to just read the lesson to them.
- E. Ask good questions to get them thinking.

Remember who you are working for... ultimately it's not the Junior High Director, Pastor Jon, or NorthCreek Church, it's the Lord, so serve Him well. Put your best effort into it and watch how He will work through you.

Typically, co-leaders take turns leading the lesson. However, all leaders should come prepared to support and contribute. Always be ready to lead the lesson, because sometimes things come up at the last moment. Also, veterans should lead first!

Pray Before Each Meeting

- For wisdom and discernment of what to say and when to say it
- That your words would be His words
- That you would represent Him well

Please also be praying for each of your students

- That distractions would be minimized
- That they would come, and be open and receptive to His truth
- That they would draw closer to Him as a result of your time spent together

Lead them, guide them, challenge them, and love them.

Please reflect and inspire excitement in knowing His Word. These younger ones are watching and learning from you. If you're not excited about it, why should they be?

What you are doing is **extremely** important. It can be life-saving and life-changing to these young adults. You are representing our Lord and King. So please consider the One whom has given you this task. It is He whom you are serving.

***“Whatever you do, work heartily,
as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord
you will receive the inheritance as your reward.***

You are serving the Lord Christ.”

Colossians 3:23-24

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

With Parents

Why? It's a simple and tangible way to show that you care (*if you don't really and truly care, then please reconsider your leadership role in this ministry*).

Think about it... if *you* were the parent of one of the students in your discipleship group, wouldn't you want to know who is discipling your son or daughter? What would you want them doing for your son or daughter? For you? You know the golden rule: "Do for others, as you would have them do for you."

There are many excuses and reasons why *parents* do not call *you* first; many are just too busy (poor excuse), and/or they assume things are fine (they figure their student will not want to go to DGs if things aren't good), or they simply trust the folks here at NorthCreek.

But for whatever reason, if the parents of your DG students haven't called you (sometimes, the longer one waits the harder it is to call), I encourage you to **make the first effort** and start the process (if you haven't already). **Teaming up with parents is important** and can really help you minister to their kids.

Another perspective is that not all of our students have parents who are believers. Some students may have been invited to come by their friends and don't attend a church with their families. Some of their parents may even come to our church, but that doesn't mean they have submitted themselves to the Lord. By calling them, an opportunity may be made available to minister not only to their child, but to them as well (you just never know). **In all things, trust the Lord and serve Him well.**

When you are about to call, remember to **pray** first, that the Lord would lead, guide and direct the conversation, and then trust Him.

Faith is not about being comfortable; it's about being lovingly obedient and doing things that are pleasing to Him and not just for ourselves.

When you call parents:

- Start out by introducing yourself. Let them know a little bit about you.
- Let them know what you are working on in your discipleship group. (Do you assign homework? Let them know.)
- Tell them your expectations in regards to the following:
 - Attitude: Students should come to grow closer to our Lord, to live out their faith, and to participate in the fellowship of other believers. Any other reason is wrong.
 - Behavior: Students should be mature enough to control themselves and be respectful to others.
 - Commitment: Students should let you know if they are going to miss a meeting and why, as soon as they know.
 - Essentials: Let them know what their son or daughter should bring every time (their Bible, a notebook, and a pen).

- Ask them if there is anything you should know about their son or daughter that would help you as you interact with their child.
- Give them feedback as to how their son or daughter is participating.
- Exchange e-mails and phone numbers so that you can more easily communicate with each other.

Try calling just one parent a night, or do three a week, until you have talked with each one. I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how appreciative parents are of what you are doing and that you are making contact with them. Again, there is potential to minister not just to the students, but to their families as well. **In all things, trust the Lord and serve Him well.**

You do not have to communicate with them on a regular basis, but rather just make sure that the lines of communication have been established (if you haven't already) and make them feel comfortable talking with you, and you with them.

With Co-leaders

Work together as a team. Support one another. Don't work independently. Exude unity!

A leader not running the lesson should be prepared to add and assist the one who is. Help keep the students focused and on task.

If for some reason you can't make it to a meeting, contact your co-leader(s) right away, so that they can better prepare. Let the Director know as well.

With Students

Everyone is busy, but have you carved out any time to follow up or regularly communicate with your assigned students outside of DGs? It's an easy way to show that you care about them. The hardest thing about it is starting, and making it a habit. The time you spend now will pay off later.

Make sure your students know that they should tell you if they are not going to be there on a given DG night, *and why*. The reasons need to be good ones though. Don't just let them get away with trivial stuff. They know when DGs meet and they should be working hard at getting their homework done beforehand. If they don't let you know, follow-up with them right away. Also, follow up with those who you know will miss a meeting and bring them up to date.

If your students have e-mail addresses, get them, set up a DG distribution list, and send stuff out to them as a group (the Director will provide you with as much of their contact information as we have). Be encouraging and hold your students lovingly accountable. They will love that you care about them. It just might make all the difference in terms of their faith or maturity.

And again, if you don't really care, then seriously reconsider your leadership role... perhaps this is not where you should be. Think about it.

By serving (leading and guiding our students), you serve Christ, and if you're going to serve Him, then do it well, with all your strength, and with all your heart. Why? Because of whom He is and what He has done for each one of us on the cross. He is worthy of our very best.

ON DISCIPLINE

Living Out Matthew 18:15-17

Obviously, there will be maturity issues involved with some students. In addition, there are family situations that are not God-centered, which manifest into sinful thoughts and behavior by some students. Of course, we need to be sensitive to these issues as we interact with them, but that doesn't mean we should turn a blind eye either. With this in mind, anytime you are aware of a student or staff member who is being unloving (unruly, rebellious, selfish, disrespectful, unreasonable, etc.), you have an obligation to them and to others, to quickly bring it to their attention in as loving and respectful a manner as possible.

The primary goal of discipline or correction is to restore the "believer" who has fallen into sin. If they are a believer, they should repent and change once a true issue has been respectfully brought to their attention. This should first be done in a private conversation and not in front of others, as that could be embarrassing or hurtful. If the offending behavior or attitude continues, then more steps are to be taken.

The next step would be to bring another staff member into the dialog, to observe and listen to the exchange of words again, and to observe and watch the response.

If after that, the sinful behavior or attitude still continues, then the Pastor/Director should be informed **and** parents should be made aware of the problem. Parents need to be made aware of how their son or daughter is acting in the presence of others, away from their care. They should also be made aware of what we (as staff) have done to try to remedy the problem. Out of love, parents are to be given an opportunity to correct the situation. If no change occurs by the next meeting, or the student remains inconsistent, then the student is to be removed from the group until their sinful attitude or behavior is resolved. The student with a changed heart is to be warmly welcomed back into the group and restored.

Students as well as staff should hold each other accountable.

Keep in mind that at times, we all mess up, we all sin, and we forget who we are in Christ. A true friend will want what is best for another; to bring them back to a life that is Christ-like and unselfish.

True love is unconditional, but it doesn't mean unconditionally accepting behavior or attitudes that are sinful.

Love is kind and patient and is everything that 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a says it is, but nowhere does it say that we are to ignore, accept, or tolerate sin.

Love seeks what is best for the individual, but if the individual is unrepentant and continues in his/her sin, then the Bible prescribes rejection as the final recourse that hopefully will wake them up and make them realize the seriousness of their offense. It is hoped that they will then come to their senses.

Rejection, even though it is hard, is really for the benefit of the offender as well as for the protection of others in the group who are being exposed to the sinful behavior or attitude. Allowing the sin to continue hurts those in the group who are trying to live out their faith. It can break fellowship and unity.

Love also must take into account what is best for the group as a whole. No one should be allowed to hurt or divide the group. Each member of the group has a responsibility to hold each other lovingly and respectfully accountable. If everyone does this, the group is unified and works together to keep peace, respect, and love for each other. The group is weakened if only a few are holding each other accountable; it is weakened if others just ignore or tolerate sin.

Some Specific Verses

Here are some appropriate verses from God's Word on this subject of discipline:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-17

"And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all." 1 Thessalonians 5:14

"Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you." 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7

"If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

WHEN A STUDENT BECOMES SICK OR INJURED

It's important that everyone on staff know what to do when a student becomes injured or sick during an event or meeting.

Obviously, small cuts and scrapes can usually be taken care of without notifying a student's parents.

If it goes beyond this, though, we need to inform parents and ask for their involvement in making care decisions for students that we are looking after. We want to err on the conservative side and find out that we overreacted and were too quick to get a parent involved, than not react enough and have things move from bad to worse.

Most of us are not doctors or nurses. Some of us might have some basic first-aid training, which is good, but most of us are not trained professionals in administering first aid. Let's not take chances needlessly. It's hard sometimes to determine whether something is serious or not, because students can react in many ways. Many times, we don't know the student's medications, medical history, allergic reactions, or their pain threshold.

Because of this, if a student is complaining about a headache or any pain on their body, or if they just don't look or feel well, let's make sure we notify a parent ASAP. Again, it doesn't hurt to get a parent involved early on, even if it wasn't really necessary.

We are not helping anyone by withholding information from the very people who are the most responsible for the child and know him or her the best (the parents), especially if it turns out to be critical in the early diagnoses and treatment of a student.

Please do not dispense ANY pain medications (even if it's just for a headache) without first getting the "okay" from a student's parents. Do not take the word of a student; do not assume anything.

Make sure that the Director is informed about any injury or potential injury (above a simple cut or scrape), or any sickness, **whether or not you think it is serious**.

If you see a student becoming sick or perhaps take a potentially bad fall, or anything else that is questionable, no matter how a student is reacting, please let the Director know and let's get the parents on board ASAP.

All of us need to get in the habit of notifying parents immediately and letting them make the decisions for their own kids. We can avoid all kinds of problems this way.