

With the school year coming just around the corner, we want to share some information with everyone from our student ministry meeting this past Sunday. This will be a recap for those of you who attended the meeting and an update for the people who weren't able to make it.

A big thanks to all of our volunteers who invested in the students last year: Tanner, Trent, Emily, Chance, Skylar, and Adam! You all are a big reason good things happened in the student ministry last year. We saw our student ministry grow in number last year with new students connecting and finding a group of people with whom they can belong. Last year was the first year several of our students were a part of the student ministry, so it was great to see the connections that emerged throughout the year. Our students' hearts are becoming more open to God's movement in their lives, and many of our students are serving in the larger church body on Sundays. These are all great signs of a ministry that's moving forward in the right direction.

At the same time, as with any ministry, we want to see our student ministry take its next steps. As we've reflected on the strengths and weaknesses from last year, we're excited to cast a vision and plan for what's to come in the upcoming school year for our student ministry. We're praying for God's timing and wisdom in regards to a student ministry leader/pastor. In the meantime, we have plenty of work to do together in laying a healthy foundation and structure for our student ministry to thrive in the years to come. By valuing the three things below throughout the upcoming school year, we believe both our students individually and the ministry collectively will take their next steps of faith with Jesus...

1) Challenging our students to experience God personally

We want to better equip our students with tools and resources that will help the students better experience God on their own. Just as the church can't be relied upon to give anyone their full spiritual nourishment, we want our students to engage with God, hear from Him, and be in-tune with how He wants to move in their lives. We don't want our students to be spectators on Wednesdays; we want them to be participants, so the more they are connecting with God personally throughout their week, the more they will have to share when they gather together.

Part of experiencing God personally will mean that our older students will begin to rise up and set the example for the students coming behind them. We want the students, especially those who may be stronger in their faith than others, to see the student ministry as an opportunity for them to challenge and encourage their peers. Students can lead students as they are all growing and taking their next steps of faith together.

2) Collaborating between parents, students, and volunteers

Any successful ministry requires different people to do different things. While our volunteers will be focused on investing relationally and spiritually into the students, we need parents to help provide some organization and structure. Our volunteers will be working to plan out the student gatherings, but parents will be asked to show up on a rotation basis to provide extra hands and support to our volunteers. This will help to keep things more on task and moving forward on Wednesday nights. Parents, be looking for the text about signing up to help on Wednesday nights.

Our schedule for Wednesday nights will typically flow something like this...

- 6:30-7:00... Opening snacks, games, time to simply connect and enjoy time with each other. This opening time is a necessary part of the weekly experience for any student ministry that has a vision for reaching new kids. It gives an opportunity for walls to be broken down relationally. Parent support during this time will be greatly beneficial in helping prepare snacks and serving as a timekeeper in the transition toward the 7:00 hour.
- 7:00-8:00... Time of planned/intentional worship, whole group teaching and sharing, along with small group times that are broken down by gender and age.

Additionally, we will increase communication with parents regarding the topics and Scriptures the students are discussing on Wednesday nights. This will better equip parents to practice a "Deuteronomy 6 Family Style of Discipleship" where parents are looking for natural opportunities to invest in their teen's faith.

3) Connecting outside of planned times

Whether we are talking about our students or our leaders, we want to see relationships and communication with each other extend beyond the planned gathering times of Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings. As a church, we're further discovering that "church" is who we are and not simply something we do or attend. Therefore, we are challenging everyone, students and leaders, to be more intentional when it comes to interacting with each other.