

STUDENT MINISTRIES POLICY MANUAL



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WELCOME

Middle School & High School years are crucial in young people's spiritual formation. As we seek to partner with parents in building students to be followers of Jesus, we recognize the need for clear structures, policies, and expectations for a youth ministry. If you're reading this, you're invested at some level in discipling students. THANK YOU! You'll probably never know the full impact of your presence in a student's life, but trust me, you're making a HUGE difference! We believe that spiritual growth happens when a student connects to a Christian adult who loves God and points them to Jesus. The policies and procedures outlined in this packet are designed to help us mentor and disciple students effectively, safely, and with the care and compassion Jesus calls us to. May your influence and time spent with students point them toward a God who loves and cares for each of them even more than you do!

NEW HOPE PURPOSE STATEMENT

"To know God and glorify him by making disciples of Jesus Christ."

STUDENT MINISTRY PRIORITIES & DEFINITIONS

Our priorities aren't just cute sayings we mention once a year - We talk about these words ALL THE TIME! These are also not just the priorities of New Hope Youth but of the entire New Hope Family. They're at the center of what we believe it means to follow Jesus. Know them, memorize them, and, more importantly - live them out in front of students.

Identity: Understanding who we are in Christ

Formation: Being shaped into the likeness of Jesus

Community: A place you belong. People who point you to Jesus.

Mission: Reaching out. Inviting In. Making disciples.

The Gospel: The Good News story that, through Jesus, God has rescued the world.

STUDENT MINISTRIES STAFF ROLES AND VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTIONS

Staff Roles: Youth Ministry Staff serve in one of the areas described below. These are committed individuals who are regularly committed to being present in the lives of our youth and are investing in their growth. As you continue to read through the policy manual, “staff” refers to anyone in these roles.

1. **Pastor of Student Ministries**- Responsible for the overall vision, directions, and teaching of youth ministries.
2. **Small Group Leader Coach** - Is a support, encouragement, and advocate for small group leaders. Meeting with leaders occasionally, communicating regularly and communicating any concerns and trends to the Pastor of Student Ministries.
3. **Small Group Leader** - Is responsible to equip, encourage, and direct the small group time so that students grow in their relationship with God and each other.
4. **Regular Youth Ministry Team** - Is dedicated to supporting youth ministry by filling various roles and is a consistent presence at weekly youth gatherings. This role may be filled by other members of the New Hope Family or other high school-level youth ministry students leading middle school students.

****Detailed Role descriptions can be found in the appendix****

Volunteering: We define those serving in youth ministry as any volunteer who consistently is present at youth ministry programs and is developing relationships with students. Volunteers are parents, family, and other New Hope Church members who occasionally support events and activities but not weekly. Adults will never be left alone with youth without having passed a background check. Each need will be communicated as needed per event, and the required qualifications are needed for each opportunity.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVING IN STUDENT MINISTRIES

1. Love Jesus and love students!
2. Be a member of New Hope Community Church.
3. Have regularly attended New Hope Community Church for at least four months.
4. Complete the screening form and a background check every three years.
5. Commit to living out the policies and procedures outlined in this manual.
6. View the child abuse prevention video @ https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ABUSE/Pages/mandatory_report.aspx
7. Complete an interview with the Pastor of Student Ministries or a Small Group Leader Coach to review qualifications, share your heart for students, and commit to serve.

EXPECTATIONS

Personal: All Youth Staff are expected to...

1. Conduct themselves with integrity, discipline, and compassion in their personal lives and their work with student ministries.
2. Maintain and nurture a personal relationship with Jesus. Our leadership of students will be most effective when it flows out of authentic personal faith.
3. Display self-control in all situations, including discussions, debates, disagreements, games, and any other type of activity.
4. Show up for student ministry events at least 15 minutes before their start.
5. Communicate in advance if unable to attend a student ministry event.
6. Abstain from all alcohol consumption, smoking, recreational drug use, and vaping when a student (other than their own child) is present. (Drinking alcohol in moderation is a personal choice for those over 21).

Teamwork: As a youth staff, it is vital that we think and act as a team with the intention of discipling students toward authentic faith in Jesus. Our relationships with each other have a direct impact on our ability to minister to students. We exhibit a strong team mentality when we...

1. **RESPECT EACH OTHER.** In our personal interactions, we will never put down other youth staff members in front of students but will encourage and support each other. Youth staff will show respect toward whoever is teaching or leading a game by listening, staying engaged, and participating appropriately. As leaders, we will model the behavior we expect from students.
2. **HELP EACH OTHER.** Whether it is helping set up an activity, keeping students engaged, or standing up for a youth staff member students are disrespecting, we will be a more effective team when we actively look to help each other.
3. **RESOLVE CONFLICTS.** If we have an issue with another youth staff member, we pursue a conversation outside of the youth program time. We approach disagreements with respect, truth, and a heart to listen and follow the Youth Ministry Conflict Pathway. If a conflict cannot be resolved, or if you need advice, please seek out a Small Group Leader Coach or the Pastor of Student Ministries.

STUDENT INTERACTION

MENTOR MINDSET

The youth staff's goal is to approach students with a mentor mindset. You are not a student's parent - you're not their savior - you are a consistent adult presence who listens to them, encourages them, and points them to Jesus, the relationship they need more than any other.

ENGAGEMENT

Youth staff set the example for students by their own level of engagement. We want to be present, inclusive, enthusiastic, and take social & spiritual initiative with students. We do this by...

1. GREETING STUDENTS as they arrive.
2. PARTICIPATING IN GAMES with fun, humility, and a positive attitude.
3. SOCIALIZING with students before, during, and after the events.
4. LEADING SMALL GROUPS with a focus on drawing out meaningful conversation from students, not reteaching the lesson.
5. MAKING AN EFFORT to connect with students when possible

TEACHING

The Pastor of Student Ministries will coordinate all teaching and should be in line with the doctrinal statement of New Hope Community Church. Although we hope that the scriptures and topics we teach during our large group time point students to the truth, we believe students grow best when interacting with topics in a small group setting. As small group leaders, our job during these discussions is to ask questions that cause students to think deeply. If we want students to own their faith, we'll need to lead them down a path of discovering Jesus for themselves. To do that, we must learn to ask good questions and be ok with tension while allowing students to wrestle with truth (even if they disagree with us). In the end, we always try to point them back to Jesus.

DISCIPLINE

There will be moments that require youth staff to step into disciplinary roles in student ministries. It is irresponsible for us to ignore inappropriate, disrespectful, or unsafe behavior. The goal of discipline is always restoration. We motivate students toward restoration by enforcing loving discipline in teachable moments rather than punishing students out of anger or retribution. It is never acceptable for a youth staff member to shame or physically strike a student in anger or as punishment. Self-control should be maintained at all times. Please let the Pastor of Student Ministries know if you've had to discipline a student or if recurring issues need to be addressed.

COMMUNICATION

As you build relationships with students, it will be natural to communicate with them throughout the week. Although there are many ways to communicate digitally, we should remember that some conversations are better had in person. To have integrity and transparency in all of our communications, the following guidelines should always be followed.

1. Texting. Text message (or direct msg) conversations with students of the same gender can be a great way to stay connected. Group messages with a small group are even better. Be cautious about pictures, memes, or other comments or content that might be open to interpretation or could be offensive.
2. Social Media. Appropriate public comments on students' social media are acceptable. Apps and platforms sharing individual video messages, especially ones that auto-deleted after viewing, should be avoided.

At no time should an adult volunteer be carrying on private conversations with a student of the opposite gender; this includes voice, video, and digital communication through social media, text messaging, or any other app or platform. This is to protect the ministry's and our adults' integrity from any accusations. If a student of the opposite gender sends you a direct message of any kind, there are a number of ways you can respond. You can...

- Give them information about a youth event if they are asking about details.
- Tell them you will pray for them if they are asking for prayer.
- Redirect them to a volunteer of the same gender or the Pastor of Student Ministries.

If a student needs to talk about something personal, they should do that with an adult of the same gender or schedule a meeting with the Pastor of Student Ministries.

SMALL GROUP CULTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

SMALL GROUP CULTURE

Small group time is where you, as the leader have the opportunity to guide and dig deep into our lesson, life, and student needs. The goal of this time is that leaders equip students to have a conversation. Leaders are there to help guide, encourage, redirect, and help navigate questions.

Priorities for a small group leader:

- Create a safe environment
- Be Present and Prepared
- Make it real and personal
- Expect and make room for growth
- Partner with parents

SIZE MATTERS

Small groups thrive when there is room to grow and space to invite friends. As small groups reach eight students, we will look to multiply small groups and leaders turning one group into two.

- Everyone should be invited to answer the question and participate in the conversation.
- No one should have their thoughts cut off, although sometimes we need to find the right time for a student to share appropriately.
- Students need to know there is space to invite a friend.

SMALL GROUP EXPECTATIONS

Each small group will thrive when healthy expectations are set and communicated to the group. As a group, take time to set, communicate, remind, and enforce expected behaviors. It can be successful in assigning a student each week to help encourage and remind other students to follow the expectations.

- Confidentiality- What is said in our small group stays between us unless one of the three hurts is a factor.
- Phones will stay in a designated space during small group time.
- When another person speaks, we will respectfully listen.
- We will not gossip about our peers or anyone else.

- Groups will split at a designated number if leader capacity allows.
- Respect time.

Each small group leader will find the need to add their own expectations that meet the current needs of the group.

RETREATS AND TRIPS

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Retreats and trips are prime opportunities for relationship building between youth staff and students. The following guidelines attempt to create an environment where spiritual growth can happen best.

1. All participants will have a travel and medical release and any additional releases required for the planned events, signed digitally or physically before departure.
2. We will leave every place cleaner than we found it.
3. Electronics are typically not allowed (or allowed w/ limited use) on youth trips. We want students to engage with those around them without being distracted by phones, video games, or social media.
4. No guys in girls' rooms and no girls in guys' rooms. Likewise, no youth staff member is to be in the room of the opposite sex at any time or alone with a student of the opposite sex.
5. Drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and weapons (firearms, knives, or anything designed or used for inflicting bodily harm) are not allowed on retreats. Students are given an opportunity to turn in any of these items by the end of the first day to avoid consequences up to being sent home at the parent's expense.
6. Students are expected to follow the rules and guidelines of their retreat or trip, which will be outlined in each trip/retreat plan and reviewed with parents and students before departing. It is our expectation that all participants will and can comply with all guidelines and rules and sometimes need a reminder.
 - a. Standard protocol for discipline after reminding will be; Step one, re-communication of expectations and student recommitment to adjust behavior. Step two is communication with parent/guardian and student, communicating expectations, aligning on the needed behavioral change, and communicating potential next steps. Step two, conversations will be documented and communicated to the executive pastor and one other elder for transparency and prayer. In step three, a preliminary plan for student transportation will be drafted and shared with the executive pastor/elder team, with travel options, costs, and scheduling.
 - b. Ultimate failure to comply with the standard protocol for discipline can lead to

the disciplinary step of the student being sent home. Parents/guardians are financially responsible for all needed travel arrangements and final decisions on transporting their student home. It is recommended that all students being sent home be accompanied by an adult arranged by the parent/guardian, youth ministry team members may be available to assist depending on the situation. The protocol is immediate verbal communication with the student and parent/guardian, sharing the preliminary transportation plan details gathered. Followed by a verbal conversation with the executive pastor/elder team. Follow-up communication will continue with parents/guardians and the executive pastor/elder team as final decisions are made. A final situation review will be completed following the initially planned trip/retreat, inviting participation from the student and parent/guardians.

7. The youth budget generally covers all expenses for youth staff on weekend retreats. Adults may choose to cover their costs voluntarily.
8. Each retreat and trip will communicate the plan for lodging and sleeping arrangements. We will work to provide adjustments to accommodations before leaving based on availability and group dynamics.
9. To protect students and leaders, all must change in separate locations and will not share the shower times/locations. We ask that all changing be done privately to respect privacy and exposure. Based on each location, times, locations, and expectations will be shared before leaving and reinforced upon arrival. Any adjustments made on-site will be communicated with the group and to parents.

TRANSPORTATION

We want to safely and legally transport students to youth events, earning parents' trust. We abide by the following transportation policies;

1. Ensuring all drivers are at least 21 years old and have a current driver's license and updated insurance.
2. Determining the number of passengers in a vehicle by the number of seatbelts available. No doubling up or sitting on the floor.
3. Ensuring that any bus or vehicle that seats over 15 people is driven by an individual with a valid CDL with passenger endorsement.
4. We typically do not allow students to drive themselves or other students to & from church-sponsored events.

MEDICAL NEEDS

We want to be prepared to handle an injury or medical emergency as quickly and safely as possible. For any offsite activities, all students must have a current, signed medical release form on file, including contact information in emergencies. These forms are required for a hospital to treat a minor and can be found in a white 3-ring binder (labeled "Medical

Release Forms”) near or inside the red first aid kit at all youth events and trips. We also keep a scanned electronic copy of each student’s form. Students should report all injuries and illnesses to the onsite nurse or a youth staff person, even minor ones. All medications (including over-the-counter and prescribed medications, vitamins, CBD ointments, and other supplements) during a youth event should be given to a camp nurse or youth staff member in their original container with directions on how they will be administered. A student who needs to take an over-the-counter drug, such as Aspirin or Tylenol, must receive it from the camp nurse, who will record the time and dose administered. Any allergies should be recorded on the medical release form.

At no time will students share or distribute medications. Students who do not check in medications or distribute medications among themselves may be subject to being sent home. If a student gets sick on a youth trip, their parents will be notified, and a parent or guardian should approve any medications before being administered.

STUDENT PROTECTION POLICIES

New Hope Community Church seeks to provide all students with a caring, safe, and secure environment.

PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

Youth staff are expected to act with the utmost integrity regarding our interactions with students. As a general rule, men minister to guys, and women minister to girls. We should never be alone with a student of the opposite gender (this includes giving rides home).

Physical contact with students, like a handshake, hug, high five, or a pat on the back, can be a loving reminder that they are valued and cared for. But we must ensure that our actions do not make students feel uncomfortable. Take caution that you do not touch a student in a way that makes them uncomfortable or could be interpreted as a sexual advance. We avoid things like tickling, wrestling, or other activities that may put us in a compromising situation or have the potential for an accidental but inappropriate touch.

Married and engaged youth staff can and should feel free to model mature and appropriate public affection with their spouse in front of students. Youth staff, under no circumstances, will ever date or have a relationship with a current student.

Although we cannot force our guidelines for public displays of affection (PDA) upon students, we will do our best to create an environment where it is not a distraction. We ask students to refrain from PDAs, including hand-holding, intimate hugging, cuddling, kissing, etc. While we do not pass judgment on individuals displaying affection, we ask that they refrain from these behaviors during youth events.

In addition, modesty in behavior, dress, and language is expected from all students and staff.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

There are to be no forms of drugs, alcohol, smoking, or vaping at any youth event. Parents may be notified if students do not adhere to this expectation, and further disciplinary action may occur.

COUNSELING

As youth staff members build close relationships with students, they inevitably ask us for counsel and advice. Never promise a student that you will keep specific information secret. Your standard reply should be something like... "Everything we talk about is confidential unless I believe you have or are currently being hurt, someone else is being hurt, or you are hurting yourself."

Counseling situations should generally happen between students and staff of the same gender. Make it your practice to never be alone with a student of the opposite gender. If you find yourself in a situation where you're giving regular or recurring counseling to a student, please make the Pastor of Student Ministries aware of the nature of the conversations. This does not mean you need to share the content of the conversations, but simply the general topics and any concerns you have.

MANDATORY REPORTING

By nature, all paid staff and youth volunteers are Mandatory Reporters in Oregon. This means that we are legally required to file a report any time we suspect or discover that abuse has, is, or is about to occur. You can view more details about the requirements for mandatory reporting here..www.oregon.gov/DHS/ABUSE/Pages/mandatory_report.aspx. You can read more about how to recognize abuse and the different kinds of abuse a child may have experienced by reading New Hope's "Child Safety & Supervision Procedures," which can be downloaded at the following link (see pages 8-16), or obtained from the church office. ([NH Child Safety and Supervision Procedures.pdf](#)).

If a student tells you about any kind of abuse, you have the obligation to report it. We ask that after reporting, you share the need to report with the Pastor of Student Ministries. If you are unsure or have questions, ask the Pastor of Student Ministries to determine if it needs to be reported. If it does, the Pastor of Student Ministries &/or the person to who the student disclosed abuse will make a phone call to the Child Abuse Hotline (971-673-7112) or the local police (non-emergency #: 541-966-3651).

SUICIDE

We treat threats of suicide very seriously. If a student tells you that they or someone they know is considering ending their life, engage them in a discussion. Ask detailed questions about how long they have been contemplating suicide, how they plan to do it, and whether they have set a date. Contact 911 immediately if you think a student is in danger and follow up with the Pastor of Student Ministries. You can also give students the phone # for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988; they can call or text.

Safe Oregon (safeoregon.com) also has several ways for students & adults to report threats & concerns of suicide or violence.

Call: 877-472-3367

Text: 844-472-3367

Email: tip@safeoregon.com

YOUTH STAFF COMMITMENT

As a Christian leader who is responsible for students at New Hope Community Church, I commit to maintaining a standard of personal faith and to living a life that is above reproach as I serve.

Please read and initial the following statements if you agree to pursue them while ministering to our students.

- _____ I commit to pursuing the values and vision of New Hope Community Church's student ministries as a consistent youth staff member.
- _____ I commit to maintaining my own personal relationship with Jesus and attending church regularly while I serve on youth staff.
- _____ I commit to being a team player who is respectful, present, and engaged.
- _____ I commit to a mentorship mentality that makes the most of opportunities to invest in students and invites students to come alongside me in my own faith.
- _____ I commit to valuing parents as the ultimate disciple makers of their children and will make an effort to get to know parents and equip them for discipleship.
- _____ I commit to do my part in carrying out the discipline expectations of New Hope student ministries, as well as take advantage of teachable moments.
- _____ I commit to maintaining student safety during trips and youth events by following all procedures with diligence.
- _____ I commit to maintaining healthy boundaries with students for the purpose of both student and adult safety.
- _____ I commit to taking student abuse seriously and going through appropriate channels when necessary.
- _____ I commit to maintain or pursue membership with New Hope Community Church and support it's statement of faith and doctrinal direction.

(Signature)

(Date)

Link to submit Commitment Digitally

<https://forms.gle/JTuC3LsjHZJTs6nn9>

APPENDIX: New Hope Youth SGL Coach

WHAT IS A SMALL GROUP LEADER COACH?

A person who is pursuing a growing relationship with Jesus and chooses to invest in the lives of small group leaders to encourage authentic faith, empowering leaders to lead, and celebrate their growth.

WHAT DOES A SGL COACH DO/WHAT ARE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?

Your priority is to connect with SGLs regularly, meeting one on one at least once every 6 months. Be available to support SGLs with small group needs, share wisdom and experience, and encourage them to see the bigger picture of what God is doing in students' lives. Be aware of major events and needs in their personal lives, praying for them regularly.

QUALIFICATIONS

- You have served as an SGL at New Hope for a minimum of two years, and currently serve in some capacity in youth ministry.
- You meet all the qualifications outlined in the Youth Ministry Policy Manual.
- You are able to commit to a year of coaching SGLs.
- Receive a recommendation for coaching from the Pastor of Student Ministries.

RESPONSIBILITIES

BE AVAILABLE * BE VULNERABLE * BE ACCOUNTABLE * BE HUMBLE

COACHING A SGL

- Ensure SGLs have their weekly small group materials.
- Do something every month to cue, train, and equip them.
- Communicate and encourage them to attend small group leader training events and other important ministry events.
- Attend the appropriate training events and meetings whenever possible so that you are ready to train and meet with the leaders you lead.
- Cue them monthly to share their wins with you, and relay their stories to staff.
- Encourage them through regular and random notes, emails, and compliments to let them know you notice the great things they do.

LEADING UP

- Advocate for SGLs by sharing needed concerns and needs with the Pastor of Student Ministries.
- Pray for the entirety of youth ministries and New Hope Community Church.
- Recruit and seek out new SGLs and Youth Ministries volunteers.
- Meet with Rich at least quarterly, and as needed.
- Participate in setting the vision and direction of the New Hope Youth Ministry.

GIVE YOUR ALL

- Be in prayer and the word.
- Be vulnerable- share your experiences, the successes and the failures.
- Be available.
- Be encouraging.

New Hope Youth Small Group Leaders

WHAT IS A SMALL GROUP LEADER?

A person who is pursuing a growing relationship with Jesus and chooses to invest in the lives of students to encourage authentic faith.

WHAT DOES A SMALL GROUP LEADER DO/WHAT ARE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?

Your priority is to facilitate conversations and provide an environment where students feel safe to participate in a discussion. Small group leaders *win* when students feel safe to share their thoughts/feelings and see the truth Jesus has to offer. Be available to meet with students for individual mentoring and for group activities.

QUALIFICATIONS

- You love God., You care about students. You are growing in your relationship with Jesus.
- You're committed to consistently investing in and caring for your few over a period of time.
- You are an active member at New Hope Community Church.
- You have signed the Youth Staff Commitment, passed the background check, and completed an interview with the pastor of student ministries..

RESPONSIBILITIES

BE PRESENT * CREATE A SAFE PLACE * PARTNER WITH PARENTS * MAKE IT PERSONAL * MOVE THEM OUT

ADDITIONAL AWESOME STUFF TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR FEW

- WHAT IS MY NAME? Identify someone in a way that communicates value.
- WHAT MATTERS TO ME? Show interest in something that matters to a student.
- WHERE DO I LIVE? Never assume until you see it. Take the time to understand their everyday context.
- WHAT HAVE I DONE? Demonstrate love in the face of deepest vulnerability. Respond in a way that replaces shame with hope.
- WHAT CAN I DO? Believe in their potential.

LEADING SMALL GROUPS

- Pray for your students & have them pray for each other. If they don't know how- teach them!
- Fun leads to trust- so have fun and let them be a little goofy.
- Trust leads to deeper conversations- let (safe) conversations happen.
- Conversations build community. In small group time conversations should regularly focus on the given topic.
- Your goal is conversation, your goal is not to get every person to answer all the questions.
- Remember the 80/20 rule. Leaders let's listen (80%) more than we talk (20%)
- As a group, create and enforce boundaries.
- Help students learn to disagree respectfully *when* it happens. Encourage them to learn "the why" behind reasons people think or believe differently.

GIVE YOUR ALL

- Read weekly emails for the most updated info.
- Show up on time at 6:30pm for coffee/snacks and we will fill you in on any last minute details.
- Come prepared- anticipate how your group will respond to the questions and adjust them as needed.
- Be willing to learn, grow, and be teachable, attend the annual pre-school year training and meetings whenever possible.
- Lead Small- If you haven't already, please read it. If you'd like more book suggestions just ask!

COMMUNITY

- Make time to connect with SGL Coaches and/or Pastor Rich when students share difficult struggles, concerning situations arise, or additional support is needed.
- It takes a village to minister in our village.

NEW HOPE YOUTH CONFLICT PATHWAYS FOR RECONCILIATION

The Conflict Pathway is designed to assist us as we navigate the 4G's of Peacemaking. The material has been modeled and mirrored from Ken Sande's book "The Peacemaker."

G1- Glorify God

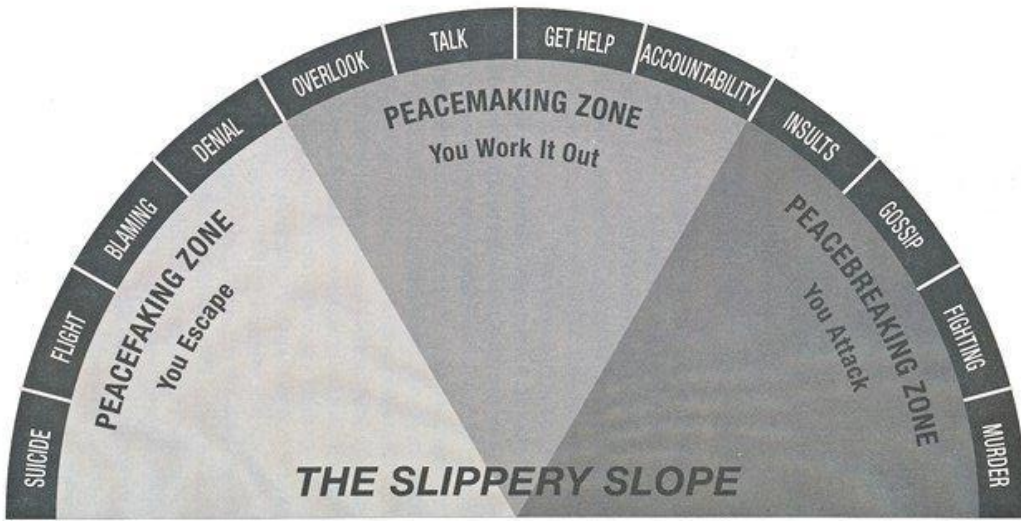
Unmet desires usually trigger relational conflict. "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it" (James 4:1-2). Even good desires can evolve into controlling demands or idols that lead us to judge others and then avoid or punish them until we get what we want (see Luke 10:38-42). This progression often starts with minor differences, but before we know it we are sliding down a slippery slope of conflict that can drop off in two directions.

Action: Write out the situation and answer the following questions

- 1) What results do I desire?
- 2) What results do I demand? Remember, unmet desires can naturally become demands.
- 3) Have I already judged who is right and wrong?
- 4) Am I punishing the offender? How have you been responding to the situation? Refer to "The Slippery Slope".
- 5) How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?

Prayer: God, guide us through the next phase of reconciliation, may all our hearts be opened to your love and wisdom. Bring us peace in the process.

Follow up: Plan to meet up with your mentor to review your action steps, and if you are both ready, move to the next phase, G2.



G2- Get the log out

One of the most challenging peacemaking principles is outlined in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus says, “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

There are generally two kinds of “logs” you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. We also struggle with personal insecurities, preferences, or experiences that can change how we interpret what has happened. One of the best ways to do this is to meditate on [Philippians 4:2-9](#), which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or adviser who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict.

Action 1: Pray reflecting on [Philippians 4:2-9](#) and answer the following questions:

- 1) List all the things in your life and family that are causing stress, anxiety, fear, worry, or creating insecurity.
- 2) How might the things happening in my life impact how I see this situation?

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes and my heart to see what you see. Allow me to understand what stands in my way of understanding and what impacts my perceptions of the world around me.

Follow-up 1: Plan a follow-up meeting with your mentor, and bring the results from this action step. Share the previous action item's answers with your mentor, speak your words out, and often as we hear ourselves speak, we listen.

- 1) Are there areas of sin that you are already seeing?
- 2) Ask your mentor to speak the truth into this situation. What logs do they see in your eye?

Pray, ponder, and pause, reflecting on what you have seen in your eye. Together with your mentor, decide if you are ready to proceed to the next action step.

Prayer: Lord, may we rest in your goodness and grace. By faith, you have restored us and reconciled us to yourself, forgiving us for all our sins; past, present, and future. Help us find peace knowing that our sins create conflict and can even hurt, but we can also find forgiveness through others.

Action 2: Journal through the Seven A's of Confession and review with your mentor. When your mentor discerns you are ready to proceed to the next step, they will move you forward to develop a plan to confess. Remember, the goal of this step is not to confront others' sins but to own our own sins. Be ready confession is contagious and healing.

Confession Brings Freedom

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. One way to do this is to use the Seven A's of Confession.

Many people have never experienced the freedom of repentance and forgiveness. Why? It's often because they never learned how to make a sincere, believable, and biblical confession. Instead, they say things like: "I'm sorry if I hurt you." "Maybe I was wrong." "Let's just forget the past." "I know I shouldn't have yelled at you, but you made me so mad." These worthless statements seldom trigger genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. If you really want to make peace, ask God to help you breathe grace by humbly and thoroughly admitting your wrongs (see [Matthew 7:3-5](#); [1 John 1:8-9](#); [Proverbs 28:13](#)). One way to do this is to use the **Seven A's of Biblical Confession**.

1. Address everyone involved (All those whom you affected)
2. Avoid if, but, and maybe (Do not try to excuse your wrongs)
3. Admit specifically (Both attitudes and actions)
4. Acknowledge the hurt (Express sorrow for hurting someone)
5. Accept the consequences (Such as making restitution)
6. Alter your behavior (Change your attitudes and actions)
7. Ask for forgiveness

An eighth A could be added to this list: Allow time. When you've deeply disappointed, hurt, or wronged someone else, they may need some time to process their emotions and come to the point of forgiveness.

Follow-up 2: Review your journal process with your mentor on confession. Develop a plan to confess (vertically and horizontally)

1. Have you been able to address the 7 A's?
2. Do you need to, or have you asked God to forgive you for what you see in your eye?

Prayer: Lord, continue to guide us on this journey of reconciliation and forgiveness. I pray that you move hearts and you move the mountains that stand in the way of allowing this to happen. Lord, encourage us all on this journey.

Continue to pray that the offender's response will be restorative, but it also may require coming back with another step. Follow up with your mentor to decide the next steps and to discern how to proceed.

G3- Gentle Restore

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. When Christians think about talking to someone else about a conflict, one of the first verses that come to mind is [Matthew 18:15](#): “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.” If this verse is read in isolation, it seems to teach that we must always use direct confrontation to force others to admit they have sinned. If the verse is read in context, however, we see that Jesus had something much more flexible and beneficial in mind than simply standing toe to toe with others and describing their sins.

Just before this passage, we find Jesus’ wonderful metaphor of a loving shepherd who looks for a wandering sheep and then rejoices when it is found ([Matt. 18:12-14](#)). Thus, [Matthew 18:15](#) is introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation. Jesus repeats this theme just after telling us to “go and show him his fault” by adding, “If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” And then he hits the restoration theme a third time in verses 21-35, where he uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to remind us to be as merciful and forgiving to others as God is to us ([Matt. 18:21-35](#)).

Jesus is clearly calling for something much more loving and redemptive than simply confronting others with a list of their wrongs. Similarly, [Galatians 6:1](#) gives us solid counsel on our attitude and purpose when we go to our brother. “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.” Our attitude should be one of gentleness rather than anger, and our purpose should be to restore rather than condemn.

Yet even before you go to talk with someone, remember that it is appropriate to overlook minor offenses (see [Prov. 19:11](#)). As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer “no” to all of the following questions:

- Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged a relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting other people? and
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, an offense is too serious to overlook, in which case God commands you to go and talk with the offender privately and lovingly about the situation. As you do so, remember to:

- Pray for humility and wisdom
- Plan your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted)
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses (rehearsals can be very helpful)
- Choose the right time and place (talk in person whenever possible)
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise ([Prov. 11:27](#))
- Listen carefully ([Prov. 18:13](#))
- Speak only to build others up ([Eph. 4:29](#))
- Ask for feedback from the other person
- Recognize your limits (only God can change people; see [Rom. 12:18](#); [2 Tim. 2:24-26](#))

Do not give up if an initial conversation does not resolve a conflict. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to make a better approach during a follow-up conversation. It may also be wise to ask a spiritually mature friend for advice on approaching the other person more effectively. Then try again with even stronger prayer support.

If repeated, careful attempts at a private discussion are not fruitful, and if the matter is still too serious to overlook, you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and your opponent and help you to resolve your differences through mediation, arbitration, or accountability.

Through forgiveness, God tears down the walls that our sins have built and opens the way for a renewed relationship with him. This is precisely what we can do when we forgive as the Lord forgives us: We release the person who has wronged us from the penalty of being separated from us. We do not hold wrongs against others, do not think about the wrongs, and do not punish others for them. Therefore, biblical forgiveness may be described as a decision to make four promises:

1. "I will not dwell on this incident."
2. "I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you."
3. "I will not talk to others about this incident."
4. "I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship." **

By making and keeping these promises of biblical forgiveness, you can tear down the walls that stand between you and your offender. You promise not to dwell on or brood over the problem or to punish by holding the person at a distance. You clear the way for your relationship to develop unhindered by memories of past wrongs. This is exactly what God does for us and what he calls us to do for others.

Action: Write out the situation again and compare it with your original one. Has anything changed? Answer the following questions and decide how to proceed with your mentor. This could be moving to the next phase or seeking wisdom on what needs to happen next. Here is the test.

- 1) Can I overlook this offense and move forward, reconciled and at peace? Can I commit to the four promises of forgiveness?
- 2) Is there a need to help the offender understand how they have contributed to the conflict? Develop a plan of what to do and be ready to discuss it with your mentor.

Prayer: Lord, we pray that we can forgive the same way you have forgiven us. Provide us the opportunity to forgive and the space and time to come together to allow the reconciling process to continue.

Follow up: Meet with your mentor to walk through what happened and decide to move forward or develop a new plan to navigate reconciliation.

Leaders Note:

Developing a plan is unique and individual. Multiple parties are often involved, and sometimes that means each one needs to be dealt with individually. If needed, take time to tackle it one at a time.

Conflict provides us with opportunities to evaluate and adjust relationships. Quite often, conflict comes because we have put people in improper roles, set the wrong boundaries, and expect people to fill us instead of God. As we go forward, think holistically. In developing the plan to move forward, we can and should make our plan understand the right health place people should be, not necessarily where we have put them to start.

All plans are not the same. We respond to each party based on who they are, our history, or connections, even with how the conflict arose. I often recommend starting the process of reconciling the same way it started. Meaning if it starts with text, then start with a text. If it was face-to-face, plan to meet face to face. Communication through reconciliation works best when the hard work is done face to face, and we can see the non-verbal cues and ask questions to aid in understanding.

G4 – Go and Be Reconciled

One of the unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the most extraordinary forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others.

To cover up our disobedience, we often use the shallow statement, “I forgive her—I just don’t want to have anything to do with her again.” However, think how you would feel if God said to you, “I forgive you; I just don’t want to have anything to do with you again”?

Praise God that he never says this! Instead, he forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in precisely the same way: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isa. 43:25). One way to imitate God’s forgiveness is to make the [Four Promises of Forgiveness](#) when you forgive someone.

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process you cannot fully accomplish alone. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate his incredible forgiveness toward you.

Action: Make a plan to build your relationship moving forward from conflict. Sometimes this means redefining roles, expectations, and boundaries. Discuss with your mentor the next steps. Remember, you must feed a relationship for it to be healthy. If you desire to grow together, we must be together.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for being the God who reconciles and restores, the one who has loved us from the beginning and given us the gift of forgiveness. Let us move forward, celebrating your work and reconciling us together. Following your model, we pray that we can continue to grow the right relationship going forward. As we struggle in times to come, may we remember the forgiveness you have given us and we have given as well.

Follow up: Celebrate and be ready. Reconciliation is a battle against the enemy, not each other. Sometimes we need to be reminded that we are forgiven, and we have been reconciled. Trust that the process of reconciling is complete. If in doubt, follow up with your mentor.

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