

**JOURNEY
STUDENTS**

**LEADERSHIP
MANUAL**

2024-2025

DEAR JOURNEY STUDENTS LEADER,

Thank you for investing your time, attention, and passion into the lives of students through Journey Students. We fully expect and believe that we will see the returns and rewards of the time we invest in serving God and engaging students in the process of knowing and loving Jesus Christ.

Since you are an investor, we expect you to have ownership of this ministry. Take ownership of your small group and every opportunity you have to serve in different capacities. Lead, teach, and worship with conviction and passion. Love your students, care about their lives, and teach them to walk wisely in every way that you can.

You are a disciple-maker, not a role filler or just another warm body. We believe that God has uniquely gifted you to lead and teach students in a way that only you can. We cannot effectively engage students in the process of knowing Jesus Christ personally and grow students into mature disciples without you. Honestly, we do not want to do this without you! Welcome to the team.

Building the Kingdom together,

The Journey Students Staff

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WEEKLY EXPERIENCE

During the school year (August-May) Journey Students meet on Wednesday nights from 7:00pm-8:30pm. Each week includes a large group experience & small group experience. Small groups are broken down by gender & grade, but depending on the week the large group experience (games/worship/message) may be separate for middle school & high school students or they may be combined.

Split Schedule:

Most Wednesday nights start with middle school students meeting in the Auditorium for large group at 7:00pm while the high school students go straight to their small groups. Then at 7:45pm they swap with middle school students going to small groups while high school students go to the Auditorium for their large group.

Combined Schedule:

Once a month our JourneyLand children's ministry has a Wednesday night experience for 4th & 5th grade students (EXT45) on campus from 6:00pm-7:30pm. On these weeks all middle & high school students start off together in the Auditorium for our large group experience and then split up into their small groups at 7:45pm.

Who/What/When/Where for Leaders:

- Stop by the Auditorium foyer no later than 6:45pm to check in and pick up your clipboard for small group.
- If it's a split week, middle school leaders should hang out in the Atrium, Auditorium or anywhere in between greeting students while high school leaders head upstairs to greet high school students outside their small group rooms.
- In large group:
 - Sit with students to build relationships and shared experiences.
 - Regulate behavior: Manage cell phone usage, side conversations, and maintain order.
 - Model good practices: Bring your Bible & take notes during the service.

SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP

Small Groups:

Small groups (or Bible-focused community groups) are the heart of our ministry. They foster real life-change and application through relationships and conversations. We aim for small groups to be gender and age-appropriate, centered on Biblical teaching and community. Leaders should respect students and maintain control to guide them towards becoming devoted followers of Jesus.

Recommended Breakdown:

- 10-15 minutes: Group fellowship (catch up with each other & what's going on in each others' lives!)
- 5 minutes: Icebreaker questions to get everyone listening & participating
- 20 minutes: Teaching & discussion with open-ended questions
- Prayer: Close by asking for prayer requests & praying together

Small Group Discussion:

Each week we'll provide small group discussion questions based on the large group message. These will be posted on our website each Tuesday at journeystudents.net/leaders and we'll also have a copy for you on your small group clipboard. But as the year progresses you'll get to know your small group better than we do so feel free to "choose your own adventure" and tailor your discussion time to fit the specific needs of your group. Let us know if you'd like to do a specific Bible study (whether video-based or a book study) with your group and we can order needed supplies.

Engaging Questions:

If the provided lessons are not engaging, consider asking questions like:

- How has your time with God been this week?
- What has inspired or encouraged you this week?
- What has been weighing on you this week?
- How have you struggled with sin or temptation this week?
- How have you shared Christ with others this week?
- How can we pray for you this week?
- What are your hopes or goals for next week?

SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP

Maintaining Order & Discipline in Small Groups:

- Clarity: Be clear about group purpose and transitions.
- Consistency: Follow through on expectations and consequences.
- Request: Ask students to correct behavior and inform them of consequences.
- Re-Seat: If issues persist, seat the student next to you.
- Remove: As a last resort, remove the student from the group, and follow up with a conversation.

Note: Small groups are a privilege, and continued behavioral issues may result in temporary removal from the group.

Working with Co-Leaders:

- Trust: Build a relationship and keep each other informed.
- Communication: Maintain regular, clear communication.
- Expectations: Discuss and align on group expectations and handling disruptions.
- Roles: Define and share leadership roles within the group.

Leading a Student to Christ:

- Keep it simple: Explain the Gospel clearly.
- Admit, believe, confess: Guide students through these steps to accept Jesus.
- Next steps: Celebrate with them and inform JS staff of the decision for follow-up.

Sharing Your Story:

Share your testimony focusing on the work of Christ in your life, avoiding detailed descriptions of past sins, especially regarding sensitive topics. Always consider the age of your students.

STUDENT SAFETY, CARE & COUNSEL

4 Ways to Respond to Hurting Students

- Listen
 - Find a quiet place to talk with them.
 - Bring a co-leader or a trusted friend.
 - Ask questions to understand their situation and feelings.
 - Make them feel known and accepted.
 - Follow up and make yourself available.
- Empathize
 - Put yourself in their shoes and imagine their feelings.
 - Share your thoughts and feelings.
 - Show understanding and avoid belittling their situation.
- Advise
 - Guide them towards God's love and the Bible.
 - Share relevant biblical stories and passages.
 - Encourage them to memorize and meditate on God's word.
- Pray
 - Always pray with and for them.
 - Teach them how to pray for themselves.

Additional Guidelines:

- Leaders should never counsel students of the opposite gender alone.
- Do not promise confidentiality if the issue involves something illegal or harmful.
- Seek support from Journey Students staff when needed.

STUDENT SAFETY, CARE, AND COUNSEL

If a Student Threatens Suicide

Assess: If you are concerned someone is suicidal, ask the following questions directly:

- Are you having suicidal thoughts?
- If they say "YES" then ask, "Do you have a plan to take your life?"
- If they say "YES" then ask, "Do you have the ability to carry out that plan?"

If they say "YES" to all 3 questions, immediately call 911.

If they say "NO" to having a plan to take their life, but are having suicidal thoughts:

- Inquire about their faith in Christ and share the gospel with them. Jesus is our living hope. Encourage them with truth from God's word, pray with them, set up a time to meet with them to develop a plan of care for support, and notify Journey Students staff of the student's situation.
- Meanwhile, ask them to commit that they will not harm themselves between now and your meeting or their meeting with Journey Students staff. Make sure they have a list of a couple of people to call on in case they are struggling.
- Encourage the student to speak to their parents or guardian about their struggle with mental health and/or ask the student if you or a Journey Students staff member can notify their parent
- Next Steps: Develop a plan for the student to grow their **relationship** with Jesus, help the student find **community**, encourage the student to begin **servicing** so they can focus less on themselves, **consider the burdens** that the student might be bearing and help them carry this weight.

STUDENT SAFETY, CARE, AND COUNSEL

One-on-One Interactions with Students:

- Leaders should always make attempts to include another leader or students in meetings and communication with students.
- Leaders may occasionally minister to students on an individual basis. In this rare event, leaders should conduct one-to-one meetings with individual students at a location where others are present.
- Leaders should not visit a student in the student's home without a parent present.
- Leaders should not host students in their homes without parental consent and others present.
- Leaders should completely avoid one-to-one meetings or communications with students of the opposite sex.
- **Leaders, no matter their age, are not permitted to date or engage in personal, romantic relationships with students of any age.**

Transportation:

- Leaders should have verbal permission from a student's parent or guardian before providing transportation.
- Students should be transported directly to their destination. (Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided.)
- Leaders should avoid all physical contact with students while in vehicles.
- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while transporting students.
- Drivers should always obey traffic laws and be sure everyone riding in the car is wearing a seatbelt.

STUDENT SAFETY, CARE, AND COUNSEL

Mandatory Reporting:

Leaders at Journey are required to report suspicions of child abuse, neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker to an immediate supervisor on staff with Journey Students.

Who Must Report? Georgia has a specific list of people who must report, including "child service organization personnel." That definition includes employees and volunteers with any organization that provides "care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children." Thus, organizations must train both their employees and any volunteers.

- **Child Care Centers:** Employees and volunteers at these centers are mandated reporters.
- **Camps:** Camps are included in the definition.
- **Mentoring Organizations:** Most mentoring organizations will fit in the statutory definition.
- **Schools:** The statute specifies that school administrators, teachers, counselors, social workers and psychologists are mandated reporters.
- **Church Programs:** The statute does not specifically list church personnel, but the vast majority of church programs fit within the statute's definition. There is a specific exception for clergy who learn about abuse solely during "confession or other similar communication required to be kept confidential under church doctrine or practice."

What Must You Report? Georgia requires the reporting of "suspected child abuse," including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and endangering a child.

- **Endangering a Child:** The statutory definition sets out several specific actions:
- **Cruelty to Children:** Depriving a child of sustenance and causing excessive physical or mental pain.
- **Domestic Violence:** Allowing a child to witness a felony, battery, or family violence battery.
- **Drug Manufacture:** Allowing children to be present during the manufacture of methamphetamine.
- **DUI:** Driving under the influence of alcohol or other substances with a child under 14 in the car.
- **Abandonment:** A parent or guardian is guilty of abandonment when he or she "willfully deserts a child or willfully surrenders physical possession of a child without making adequate arrangements" for continuing care.
- **Prenatal Abuse:** Personnel must report "exposure to chronic or severe use of alcohol or the unlawful use of any controlled substance" that leaves effects on a newborn.

STUDENT SAFETY, CARE, AND COUNSEL

What Must You Report Continued:

- **Neglect:** The reporting statute does not define neglect, but the standard in custody proceedings is “failure to provide proper . . . control necessary for a child’s physical, mental, or emotional health or morals.”
- **Mental/Emotional Abuse:** Causing “excessive . . . mental pain.” Custody statutes describe “emotional abuse” as causing “any mental injury to [a] child’s intellectual or psychological capacity as evidenced by an observable and significant impairment in such child’s ability to function with a child’s normal range of performance and behavior,” or that create a risk of such impairment as diagnosed by a physician or mental health professional. Severe cases of cyberbullying would fit into this category.
- **Lack of Supervision:** Neglect includes “failure to provide a child with adequate supervision necessary for such child’s well-being.” There are no specific statutes or regulations, but the state Department of Family and Children’s Services has issued some guidelines: (1) children 8 years old and under should not be left unsupervised; (2) children between the ages of 9 and 12 can be left alone for less than two hours; and (3) children 13 years and older may be left alone and serve as a babysitter for up to 12 hours.
- **Physical Abuse:** You must report physical injury caused “by other than accidental means.” There is an exception for corporal punishment that does not cause physical injury.
- **Sexual Abuse:** The statute requires the reporting of sexual abuse and includes a long and exhaustive list of specific acts.
- **Teen Sexual Activity:** The age of consent in Georgia is 16, but there is an exception for consensual acts between a minor who is at least 14 and someone not more than four years older than the minor.
- **Sexual Exploitation:** Personnel must report anyone who allows a child to participate in sexual conduct or “lewd exhibition of the genitals” in film or photographs.
- **Sexting:** The sexual exploitation law covers “sexting” pictures of a minor, regardless of the age of the person taking or sending the photograph. The law does not apply to a minor who “takes or possesses” a picture of himself or herself, but does apply to anyone who transmits it.

STUDENT SAFETY, CARE, AND COUNSEL

When Must You Report? Georgia requires a report no later than 24 hours “from the time there is reasonable cause to believe that suspected abuse has occurred.” That standard is lower than the old “reasonable cause” standard. Now, any time you even suspect abuse, you must report it.

Where Must You Report? The statute requires a report to the Division of Family and Children Services. That agency has a statewide hotline at 1-855-GACHILD (1-855-422-4453).

The statute also allows a mandated reporter to make a report to a supervisor. The supervisor cannot change anything in the report, but may add additional information.

Notify Student Pastor (Chris Burch) immediately upon hearing of abuse. A Journey staff member will report to DFACS upon your behalf.

Why Must You Report? Knowingly and willfully failing to report suspected abuse is a misdemeanor.

Every Journey staff member is a mandated reporter and has completed courses with MinistrySafe to identify and understand signs of grooming and sexual abuse. Journey takes abuse and the protection of the children and students in our care very seriously.

All information and data provided above was published by The Taylor English Lawfirm on January 1, 2019.

JCC LEADERSHIP AGREEMENT

Thank you for your interest in serving as a leader at Journey Community Church. As a leader, you assume a position of influence and authority. Your lifestyle inside and outside the church should reflect your leadership role.

Key Expectations:

- Spiritual Growth
 - Maintain a real, personal relationship with Jesus.
 - Regularly engage in Bible reading, prayer, worship, fasting, and giving.
 - Keep your family a top priority.
 - Seek help if feeling burnt out.
- Sexual Behavior
 - Adhere to biblical teachings on sex and marriage.
 - Avoid sexual relationships outside of marriage.
 - Do not live with a member of the opposite sex if unmarried.
 - Do not engage in an LGBTQ lifestyle or pornography.
 - Seek godly counsel if struggling in these areas.
- Substance Abuse
 - Do not use illegal drugs or abuse prescription drugs.
 - Avoid regular intoxication.
 - Do not post about alcohol on social media.
- Social Media
 - Ensure posts reflect a lifestyle honoring to God.
 - Avoid profane images, videos, or words.
 - Do not repost from profane sources.
 - Refrain from dishonoring comments about others.

Our hope is that you lead effectively, positively influencing others and pointing them to Christ. We are here to support and discuss any issues you might have.

For a link to a detailed copy of the JCC Leadership Agreement and to provide your digital signature if you agree to the standards outlined above and in the the full document visit our leaders page at journeystudents.net/leaders.

JOURNEY STUDENTS LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Journey Students Leadership Manual. I have read this manual in its entirety and understand the importance of the matters set forth within its pages. I agree to follow and abide by the policies and guidelines during my service at Journey Community Church. Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended or revised. As changes are made public, I understand that it is my responsibility to review changes and adapt accordingly.

Furthermore, I understand the expectations set forth for Journey Students leaders and volunteers. I agree to follow and abide by the policies and guidelines for my personal relationship with Jesus, the leadership of students, my partnership with Journey Community Church, and my support for Journey Students leadership.

- I acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ in my life and I have a personal relationship with Him
- I am committed to growing and maturing in my relationship with God
- I am committed to choices and a lifestyle that are both Godly and above reproach
- I will be "ALL IN" at Journey. This includes regular attendance on Sunday morning and/or a J-Group, support of the mission/vision of our church, and a faithful giver of time, resources, and money to Journey AND attend at least one Access Group or Journey Students Bible study per school year
- I will have an "Investor Mentality" as I serve ("This is my ministry and I will help make it better and better. I am bought in and I am investing my time, not spending my time.")
- I am making a commitment to Journey Students through the end of the 2024-2025 school year (August 2024-May 2025)
- I will attend all programs that I am involved in each week. If I have a conflict, I will let a Journey Students staff member know as early as possible. If I cannot fulfill my commitment and serve on a consistent basis (as least 3 out of 4 weeks a month) I understand that I must remove myself as a Journey Students leader.

For a link to provide your digital signature to commit to serving with Journey Students this school year visit our leaders page at journeystudents.net/leaders.