

WEST
RIDGE | STUDENTS

Parent
HANDBOOK

Hey there!

As a parent, we know your job isn't always easy, but here is what we want you to know: we are here to help, in any way we can. Sure we're a "student" ministry, but teenagers aren't the only people we care about. We care about you too.

No matter how connected (or not connected) you are with our church, this Parent Handbook will show you some of the ways we are trying to care for your teenager and serve you at the same time.

Thanks for letting us be another voice in their life. Your trust and partnership means so much to us.

We can't wait to see what God has in store!

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Who We Are

West Ridge Students: Building relationships with Students to give them a chance to be heard, be loved and be guided as they develop a relationship with God.

Middle schoolers experience three things: wonder for who God is, discovery of who He created them to be, and passion for loving others. We want to help middle schoolers begin to **take ownership of their faith** through these three basic truths:

- I will love God because He will never stop loving me
- I will follow Jesus because He knows me better than I know myself
- I will live out God's story so others can know who Jesus is

High schoolers love to engage in conversations and relationships and we are passionate about this next generation of students. We want to help our high schoolers:

- See God for who He is
- See themselves the way God sees them
- Love others the way He loves us

We believe that the church and family were made to work together to raise our children to be world changers. When parents embrace their God-ordained responsibility and lead their children to know God, then we as a church can support and resource this faith step.

As a Student Ministry team, we want to partner with parents to make all this possible...Because THEY MATTER!

Four Ways Students OWN THEIR FAITH

1. **SPEND TIME WITH GOD:** If teenagers are ever going to make their faith their own, they've got to start spending time with God on their own. It means opening the Bible on their own, having conversations with God on their own, and discovering how to best connect with God through worship on their own.
2. **SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS:** Engaging in a healthy community can and should be a spiritual habit we help our students develop. But "healthy community" doesn't just mean hanging out with Christians. This spiritual habit is about growing in Christ Like relationships with everyone.
3. **USE THEIR GIFTS:** Teenagers need to know that God made them unique, and special and with really specific gifts, talents, passions, and resources. Then they need to use those gifts to love God, love others, and influence the world around them. Because when teenagers begin to discover who God made them to be, and then use their unique identity to love both God and others, they grow.
4. **SHARE THEIR STORY:** Teenagers need to learn how to talk about God. Sharing your story is the spiritual habit of making faith a regular, everyday, go-to topic of conversation in our lives. Because when we talk about God and His place in our story (or, more accurately, our place in His story), it helps us believe, helps us understand, and helps us take ownership of our own faith.

We count it as a WIN whenever a student takes a step toward owning their faith by practicing one, or maybe even all four, of these spiritual habits.

WHAT WE DO

WEEKLY PROGRAM

Combined | Sundays 6pm–8pm

Students who are currently enrolled in 6–12 grades are welcome to come join us at the church for

- Activity: A time to have fun, laugh and get to know each other better
- Teaching: A time for students to learn how to live out their faith
- Small groups: A time to connect every student with a consistent and trustworthy adult and community of their peers and dig deeper in their faith (to be challenged)

EVENTS

Throughout the year, we will host several big events designed to help teenagers connect with their peers and small group leaders. Events are often the environment where teenagers will walk into our ministry for the very first time.

DISCIPLING TEENAGERS

Jesus told us to "Go and make disciples." Duplicate yourselves. Go and make more of you. Take your faith and pass it onto someone else. When we talk about helping teenagers begin to own their faith, we are really just talking about discipleship. So what is discipleship?

*DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT LIVING, NOT LEARNING

Rather than asking, "What can we teach a teenager about God?" we ask, "How can we help a teenager live out their faith?" It's not just teaching them about Jesus – it's about modeling what faith in Jesus looks like. That's why our small groups spend time together outside of the church. Because discipleship isn't taught in a classroom – it's modeled in everyday life.

*DISCIPLESHIP HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

In the Gospels, you don't really see Jesus doing one-on-one discipleship. That's because discipleship happens best in a community of people. That's why we focus so much energy on getting teenagers plugged into consistent small groups, why we emphasize the role of parents and families, and why we surround teenagers with tons of Jesus followers. Because discipleship takes all of us!

*DISCIPLESHIP IS A PROCESS

Discipleship is never really complete because learning to live out our faith is a life-long process. And because we know discipleship takes time, we want to put people in the lives of teenagers who are in it for the long-haul. That is why our small group leaders don't bail on their teenagers after a few months, but stick with them for several years – because it is a process.

ENGAGING WITH SMALL GROUP LEADERS

As a parent, you are making a huge impact in your teenager's life. The impact you are making is far more significant than any impact we, their church, could ever hope to make. You are the most important voice in your teenager's life. Both now and for a lifetime.

During the teenage years, kids begin to pull away from you in their search for independence. We want to come alongside you by creating a team of trustworthy adults who can help you influence your teenager.

That is why our ministry is so committed to small groups. Small groups are about more than just good discussions. They exist to connect your kids with an adult you can trust so you can better influence their faith and future.

So, this year, engage with your kid's small group leader. They can be a powerful ally for you and your family.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

The safety of your teenager is a priority for our ministry, so we wanted to get you in the loop on how we plan to care for and protect them.

WE SCREEN VOLUNTEERS

Before any volunteer is permitted to serve with us, they undergo an interview process and we run a background check.

WE SET BOUNDARIES

We have set a number of guidelines for our student ministry staff and volunteers. As a parent, you can help us make sure your child is well-cared for by helping us maintain these boundaries.

- No staff member or volunteer should initiate a one-on-one meeting with a teenager without the knowledge and consent of you, their parents.
- No staff member or volunteer should transport a teenager in a vehicle alone. If a teenager needs a ride, we must arrange to have another adult or teenager accompany them.
- All staff and volunteers must maintain appropriate physical boundaries with teenagers at all times.

WE REQUIRE PERMISSION SLIPS

We will ask for your consent in order for your teenager to attend any major event, retreat, or gathering outside of our regular weekly programs.

WE REPORT DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Every staff member and volunteer in our ministry is a mandated reporter, which means we are legally required to report any dangerous or potentially dangerous situations immediately, including...

- If a student is being harmed, neglected, or abused.
- If a student is harming or abusing someone else.
- If a student is harming or at risk of harming themselves.

WE ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE

If you ever have a concern about your teenager's care or safety, please reach out to us. We are just a phone call, text or email away!

CONTACT US

TEXT

For any last-minute changes or day-to-day information, we send out texts. We have different groups for our high school students and PARENTS of middle schoolers and high schoolers, so make sure you join whichever is relevant to you. You can sign up for these reminders by texting the following codes to 81010:

- Parents of high schoolers - @wrshsp
- Parents of middle schoolers - @wrsmsp
- High school students - @wrshs

Middle School Small Group Leaders:

1. Carole Lyon - 847.910.8033
2. Melissa Tamraz - 847.312.0670
3. Jon Doyle - 847.652.6283

High School Small Group Leaders:

1. Michael Bilek - 847.338.5138
2. Lindsay Alexander - 405.464.4264