



## YOUTH PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

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### **Ministry Description**

The youth ministry of Saving Grace Bible Church is guided by the church's philosophy of ministry, which places a high value on the role of faithful Bible exposition in the work of transforming hearts and lives.

Our purpose is to partner with parents in ministering to their teenaged children (ages 12-18). We accomplish this purpose through: (1) weekly Bible teaching, (2) the shepherding of students and parents in the application of biblical truth, (3) monthly youth events – which help students build and deepen Christ-honoring relationships – and (4) annual camps and retreats – which allow time for intensive Bible teaching and discipleship.

### **Sunday Morning Expositions**

Each Sunday morning at 10:45am, our youth meet in the youth building for our weekly Bible exposition. We study verse by verse through books of the Bible and seek to draw out the timeless truths of the word of God and impress upon the students the implications of the truth in their lives. We have completed the book of Hebrews and are now in Ecclesiastes.

Before the exposition, a typical Sunday morning meeting begins with one of our youth leaders leading the class through a brief opening devotional. This time may include teaching on a passage of Scripture, instruction in thinking critically and biblically about current events, learning about the missionaries supported by SGBC, hearing a salvation testimony, learning church history, or other timely and helpful topics. All of our youth leaders are adults and parents who are faithful members of SGBC and have demonstrated a commitment to investing in the lives of our students.

In addition to the corporate worship service and the teaching students receive at home, weekly Bible expositions benefit students by drawing out implications that are appropriate to their season of life, and by pressing into questions that they should be prudently considering.

### **Wednesday Nights**

Mid-week meetings are held in the youth room on Wednesday evenings from 6:45-8:15pm. We open with a time of fellowship, usually with a game time, and then turn our attention to the teaching of the Word of God. Our game time is more than recreational—it is strategic. Since students are responsible to plan and facilitate the games, this provides opportunities for teens to exercise service and leadership. As students cultivate peer relationships during games, this creates opportunities for discipleship and shepherding.

Since we have in-depth Bible exposition on Sunday mornings, the Wednesday evening teaching time is used for introducing topics from Scripture that are especially pertinent to teens, such as: relationships, spiritual maturity, apologetics, the attributes of God, the fear of God, and fear of man, etc.

During the summer break from Wednesday night study, we offer youth home groups. This is an opportunity to break into smaller groups led by one of our youth leaders. The small group discussions are centered on helping the students apply the truths that they learned in the two sermons that they heard on Sunday morning.

### **Youth Events**

Our monthly youth events are intentionally oriented around strengthening relationships with both students and parents. Because our Sunday and Wednesday meetings are primarily teaching-focused, youth events provide greater opportunities for building affinity, trust, and camaraderie.

Students are welcome to invite their friends to our monthly youth events. These occasions usually include a devotional time in the Scripture or a salvation testimony from one of the youth leaders.

Activities and locations vary from month to month. These events are hosted at the church or at the home of a church family, and occasionally we gather at the beach or at a local public establishment where students can enjoy activities like bowling or miniature golf. Of course, we are always looking for families who would like to open their home for a youth event. Please contact one of the youth leaders if you would like to do so.

### **Summer Youth Camps for High School and Jr. High Students**

One of the highlights on our annual ministry calendar is the ABIDE senior high summer camp, where Saving Grace Bible Church partners with other like-minded churches for a week of ministry dedicated to faithful preaching, discipleship, and fun activities for the youth. This camp is intended for grades 9 through 12. Historically, we've limited participation in ABIDE to SGBC teens of members and regular attendees, as this enables us to focus on our own students.

Since we also want our junior high students to benefit from the intensive and exciting nature of camp ministry, we have organized a junior high retreat for our students in grades 7 and 8. This is a valuable time for students to hear the truth and to build relationships with other students and youth leaders. In the past, we've hosted this retreat at the DaySpring Conference Center in Ellenton at the end of the summer.

## **Navigating the Perils and Benefits of Youth Ministry**

There are many current trends in youth ministry that are dangerous and that we must be careful to avoid. The most common of these is following the culture as a means of attracting and exciting the interest of teens.

While we certainly want teens to enjoy themselves, we dare not allow anything other than the authoritative preaching of God's Word to take the central place in ministry. Our primary purpose is not to entertain, but to evangelize and disciple. Students will only be edified and equipped as we uphold the centrality of rightly dividing the Word of God.

Another recent trend is the rejection of youth ministry altogether. This idea has been promoted through the "Family Integrated Church" movement and popularized by Voddie Baucham and others. While Voddie Baucham has been (and continues to be) very helpful to the Church in many areas, we disagree with him in his philosophy of family ministry. Voddie rightly points out the flaws in much of modern evangelical youth ministry (e.g., negating the parents' role in discipleship, basing youth ministry on entertainment rather than edification, etc.), but there is neither a biblical warrant nor a compelling biblical case to be made for the abandonment of youth ministry altogether.

The mission of the Church is not at odds with the biblical responsibilities of parents, nor is the Church meant to assume their role. However, we can say with boldness that the Church has a critical, God-intended part to play in the instruction of Christian families.

How can we say this with absolute certainty? Because the Church is the context in which children are to be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Hence, a sound youth ministry can be a valuable resource for parents that desire to faithfully shepherd their children.

## **A Biblically Sound Youth Ministry Benefits the Whole Family**

For some families, youth ministry is a season where parents see the fruit of biblically faithful parenting through the pre-adolescent years. As the children mature and learn, the ministry team simply serves as an encouragement, teaching the Word of God and helping the students to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

For others, youth ministry commonly reveals heart struggles that were hidden or unrecognized until circumstances brought them to the surface. In those instances, Pastor Nick can come alongside parents and their student to help them gain biblical clarity on how to grow and mature through a season of difficulty.

When additional wisdom is needed to help families work through a matter, parents have the comfort of knowing that all the staff pastors are available to meet the needs of both teens and parents, and often work together to minister to families.

## **A Maturing Ministry**

We are confident that the SGBC Youth Ministry will continue to mature and grow as we trust in the Holy Spirit to do His work through His rightly-divided Word. This commitment makes the ministry stable and predictable, and guards it against the influence of cultural trends as well as questionable fads and movements that often come and go in evangelicalism.

Our commitment to ministry maturity enables us to focus on the ultimate hope and goal for every student and parent involved in youth ministry: life transformation through faith in Christ. This all-important goal can only be achieved as we gain clarity on our own spiritual state. Thus, we must understand all that Scripture has to say about our sin, the fruits of repentance, the blessings of salvation, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification.

### **Youth Ministry Leaders:**

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