

## GSM Philosophy of Ministry

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*A ministry guiding document for the student ministry of Summit Woods Baptist Church*

### Overview

As a ministry of Summit Woods Baptist Church, Grounded Student Ministries is committed to magnifying God by making disciples of Jesus Christ of the 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. GSM exists as a ministry of the church to devote particular discipling attention to students and their parents within the church. During these crucial formative years, we desire to come alongside parents in the discipling of their children. There are four primary ways we strive to do this: *preaching and teaching, discipling, partnering, and praying*. This document seeks to explain the biblical rationale behind *why* we do what we do and *how* we do it.

### Preaching and Teaching

*The first way GSM strives to magnify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ is through preaching and teaching (Matt 28:20). The primary means that God uses to save and sanctify is the preaching of his Word. Therefore, we want to faithfully preach and teach the Scriptures to our students (Matt 28:20; Rom 10:14-17).*

Our desire for every student who attends GSM is that they are saved (Rom 9:1-3), and that they then grow in maturity (Col 1:28-29). The preaching of the Scriptures is God's ordained means by which people come to faith (Rom 10:14-17). God's Word is the sufficient, powerful, and effective instrument by which God's Spirit brings those who are spiritually dead to spiritual life (Psalm 19:7-14, 2 Tim 3:15-17, 1 Cor 2:10-16, Eph 2:1-10). Not only that, but God's Word is the sufficient, powerful, and effective means he uses to sanctify and equip those who are justified (Psalm 19:7-14, John 17:17, Col 1:28-29, 2 Cor 3:12-18, Eph 4:11-16).

Therefore, the preaching and teaching within GSM is to consist solely of God's Word, not the thoughts of men. It is to be expository, meaning that what is occurring is the authoritative, passionate explanation and urging of God's Word. It is the simple preaching of the cross that God powerfully uses to save (2 Tim 4:1-2, 1 Cor 1:17-18; 2:1-5). Students need to have their eyes fixed on the passage being proclaimed in order to see for themselves that this is God's Word as it is being explained. We have confidence that when God's Word is being preached, God is going to accomplish all that he intends (Is 55:10-11).

In general, we will exposit either a passage or consecutively through whole books of the Bible. We will seek to wisely and prayerfully select particular passages of Scripture that are relevant to the unique issues students are facing. We desire to put forth the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) and to emphasize the relevancy, sufficiency, and authority of his Word.

Due to the expositional nature of what we are pursuing, those who teach our students must commit themselves to a thorough study of the text(s) being preached, executing proper exegetical methods to attain the author's intended meaning to his original audience in its original context (Neh 8:7-8, 2 Tim 2:15, 2 Pet 1:20-21). That truth is to be put in the form of propositional truths that transcend culture and time and that call for a personal response. Additionally, we think it is valuable for students to be exposed to a variety of teachers so that the authority of God's Word is put on display and not the "authority" of one man.

The preaching of God's Word to the whole church on Sunday morning is central to the ministry of the church, and the preaching of God's Word on Wednesday nights is central to GSM. In concert with the Sunday morning gathering of the whole church, we view our Wednesday GSM gatherings as an additional, yet significant time for our students to sit under the preaching of God's Word. It is a unique opportunity for specific attention to be given to how the Word of God should impact students and how they should respond.

The Sunday morning equipping class for the students is a crucial time for our students to be taught God's Word. During this time, we desire to equip the students to view the big picture of the Bible. We want the students to be able to understand how the Bible fits together, what the Bible says about who God is, who Christ is, who the Holy Spirit is, who we are, what the gospel is, and what the church is so that they gain a comprehensive view of life and reality before God, as he has revealed himself in his Word. Practically, this happens in a variety of ways in different seasons. The students may work through classes like New Testament Survey, Old Testament Survey, Church History, Systematic and Biblical Theology, or Sermon Study. The goal of these classes is to equip the students.

Finally, GSM's main events outside of Wednesday evenings (DNow, summer camp, and fall retreat) are intense and focused times of sitting under the preaching of God's Word and engaging in small group discussions. We view these as unique opportunities for students to be exposed to Scripture in an environment free from digital distraction in a unique period of life where crucial beliefs, convictions, and worldviews are being formed.

## Discipling

*The second way GSM strives to magnify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ is by discipling students and their parents. This consists of teaching and modeling.*

The mission of the church is found in the great commission in Matt 28:18-20, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

As discipling is central to the church as a whole, it is vital in GSM as well. Jesus spent the three years of his earthly ministry making disciples. Teaching and living an exemplary life were the two main components of his discipling. Not surprisingly, this is also how Paul instructs Titus concerning discipleship in the local church (Tit 2:1-8).

The teaching that happens in discipleship looks different in a small group or personal relationship than it does from a pulpit. However, the foundation remains the same – God’s inspired Word which is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;” (2 Tim 3:16). Small group leaders seek to use God’s Word to wisely “admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thess 5:14).

Primarily, discipling with the word of God happens in GSM during designated small group times on Wednesday nights. In response to hearing the preaching of God’s Word, small group leaders point back to, reinforce, and specifically urge the students to respond to God’s Word in faith and obedience. The small group leaders themselves need to rightly understand God’s Word and what an appropriate response would look like.

Beyond this, small group leaders engage students with God’s Word in ongoing relationships. Whether by studying and reading the Bible together, reading through a book that explains Scripture together, listening to and talking about additional preaching together, or through other appropriate avenues, small group leaders should be regularly engaging the students with the truths of the Bible. This is one of the major components of discipleship.

The other large component of disciple-making is modeling. Not only did Jesus teach his disciples and give them commands to follow, he perfectly lived out everything he preached as a model to be followed (Matt 16:24, Phil 2:5-11, 2 Cor 5:21, John 13:15, Eph 4:32-5:2, Col 3:13, 1 Pet 2:21, 1 John 2:6, 3:15-16). To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a follower of Jesus – both of his teaching and his example. The very goal of our salvation is that we would be renewed into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29, Col 3:10).

Although we are not perfect examples like Jesus, the New Testament still insists that leaders are to be models for those they are leading. This is a challenging and humbling reality to embrace. George Zemek says it well, “the revealed reality that we are not yet glorified and the inescapably clear mandate for modeling – should first develop in us genuine humility and then a renewed dependence upon God and his resources” (*Pastoral Ministry*, 215).

The best example of this imperfect, yet faithful and dependent modeling is the apostle Paul. Paul repeatedly called on those to whom he was writing to follow his example and commended those who did (1 Cor 4:16, 11:1, Phil 3:17, 4:9, 1 Thess 1:6-7, 2 Thess 3:7-9, 2 Tim 1:13). Not only this, but in his instruction to his disciples, Timothy and Titus, Paul challenged them to be an example to those they were leading (1 Tim 4:12-16, Tit 2:7).

In turn, the elders that Timothy and Titus were to appoint were to be exemplary in their character – above reproach (1 Tim 3:1-7, Tit 1:5-9). These qualifications for elders are no mere check list to “get in”, but rather they are the standard of character to be constantly upheld to the church as a model for what a faithful Christian looks like.

Additionally, Peter called the elders of the churches to whom he was writing, to be examples to the flock they were to shepherd (1 Pet 5:1-4). The author of Hebrews emphasizes this when he tells his readers to follow the example of those who taught them the Word of God (Heb 13:7), and John gives the instruction that we are to imitate those who do good and not those who do evil (3 John 11).

Therefore, being committed to discipling means being committed to modeling. This has two major implications for the ongoing ministry of GSM. First of all, GSM leaders must have a walk with the Lord and character that is imitable. Although the character qualifications for small group leaders are not that of elders, the pattern and trajectory of their life should be consistent with these qualifications. Through the ins and outs of daily life, they must be people who follow Jesus in such a way that they can say with Paul, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” (1 Cor 11:1) This is crucial for discipleship.

Secondly, since leaders are to be models for the students of what it means to follow Christ, the students have to see the leaders living in imitable ways. This means leaders need to strive to spend time with the students beyond the designated small group time on Wednesday nights. Jesus and Paul spent almost every day with their disciples. While this isn’t what we’re calling for, small group leaders should attempt to include students in their lives regularly to build relationships so that the students can see what it looks like to faithfully follow Jesus in a living example who is not their parent. This is the foundation for any

instruction, rebuke, admonition, or encouragement that a small group leader offers to the student.

The focus of this section has been on how GSM functions in discipling students. We recognize that this duty falls primarily to the parents of the students themselves. We dare not try to take the place of parents, so the next section will cover how we seek to partner with parents.

However, as a discipling ministry of the church for the church, we also want to come alongside parents to disciple them as well. We have a front row seat to the lives of the students and thus a front row seat to the parenting of the parents. There will be times when GSM leaders will come alongside parents, graciously seeking to shepherd them in their shepherding. We recognize that this may be uncomfortable and painful, but that doesn't negate the benefit it may bring about, by God's grace, in the lives of the parents and the students. We desire to humbly come alongside parents who humbly desire to grow as shepherds over the souls of their students.

## Partnering

*The third way GSM strives to magnify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ is partnering with parents as a ministry of the church. GSM is a ministry done by the church, for the church, while also engaging non-Christian students and families outside the membership of SWBC. In this dynamic, GSM must recognize our role as a ministry of the church, and our place partnering with parents.*

The church is what Jesus promised to build (Matt 16:18). Jesus gives gifted men to serve and equip the church to do the work of ministry (Eph 4:7-16). GSM is but one part of the shepherding and discipling ministry of Summit Woods Baptist Church. We are not the church and are not separate from the church. We dare not try to replace the church. As the elders of SWBC strive to shepherd the flock of God among them (1 Pet 5:1-4) they have designated the leaders of GSM to give special shepherding attention to the students of SWBC and their parents. We function in submission to the oversight of the elders (1 Pet 5:5).

As a ministry of the church, we desire for our students to be moving in the direction of active, healthy membership in the local church, which is for those demonstrating credible professions of faith (1 Cor 12:12-13). We want to equip students to be faithful members of the church, not procuring a feeling of isolation from the church in this specific ministry. We want to teach them about the local church, membership, baptism, Christian fellowship, and the Lord's Supper.

We want the students to engage with members of the body of Christ, to participate with the church, and to serve the church in ways appropriate to their

spiritual state. At the same time, we recognize many are not and should not yet be members of the church. The biggest part of congregational engagement will consist of the students developing meaningful discipleship relationships with adult members, namely small group leaders. However, we regularly encourage students to find members of the church who are imitable in their walk with the Lord and engage with them in conversations and discipling relationships.

We strive to hold our events in a way that supports and does not replace congregational gatherings, so we rarely schedule GSM events when another churchwide or ministry event is taking place. Having our students engage with other members in the Sunday gathering, through men's ministry and women's ministry, and other churchwide events is central to them building healthy relationships with other adults.

In addition to recognizing our role within the church, we recognize the God-given responsibility of parents to bring their children up in the fear and admonition of the Lord and to teach their children all that the Lord has commanded (Eph 6:4, Deut 6). Believing parents have an immediate and obvious responsibility to make disciples of their children who are born in sin and unbelieving (Ps 51:5). We also recognize that in the church era, the mandate for discipleship is given to the church (Matt 28:18-20).

In light of this dynamic, GSM is not a replacement for the day-to-day discipling that takes place between parents and their children. Parents should not relegate the discipling of their children to GSM. It is primarily their responsibility. GSM should be viewed as additional and complementary to the evangelizing, discipling, teaching, and instructing of parents. Small group leaders will always point students back to their parents, encouraging them to submit to and obey their parents, so long as it doesn't endanger the student or cause them to sin (Eph 6:1-3).

As a ministry of the church, we desire to come alongside parents to hold them accountable, disciple them, and partner with them in the endeavor to see their children come to faith in Christ (Rom 9:1-3) and then to mature in Christ (Col 1:28). We do this primarily by providing Biblical preaching, teaching, and additional discipleship for the students.

We desire for our small group leaders to have regular communication and interaction with the parents of the students. These relationships will develop over time. Engaging with the parents for the discipleship of the students should be viewed as a crucial element of the discipling ministry of GSM. We desire for our small group leaders to have normal member-to-member relationships with parents filled with the "one-anothers" of the New Testament (ie. Rom 12:5, 16, 13:8, 15:14, Gal 5:13, 6:2, Eph 4:2, 32, 5:21, Phil 2:3, Col 3:16, 1 Thess 5:11-15, Heb 3:13, 10:24, etc.).

In certain cases where parents are negligent in their spiritual duties and are outside of or resistant to the shepherding of the church, GSM is a ministry of the church that can step in to evangelize and disciple students as well as parents. We want to encourage students to engage with unsaved and unchurched friends and invite them to GSM.

## Praying

*The fourth way GSM strives to magnify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ is by praying regularly and fervently.*

Central to Jesus' discipling ministry, while he was on earth, was prayer. He prayed regularly (Matt 14:23, 26:39, Mark 1:35, 6:46, Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:28, 11:1, 22:41-44, John 17), told his disciples to pray (Matt 5:44, 26:41, Luke 6:28, 22:40), and taught his disciples how to pray (Matt 6:5-15, Mark 11:24-25, Luke 11:2-13, 18:1-14). Prayer was also central as his disciples strove to fulfill the great commission in the book of Acts (Acts 1:14, 2:42, 4:31, 6:4). In seeking to magnify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ, prayer is also central to GSM.

Prayer is central to student ministry for several reasons. First, we are simply commanded to pray (1 Thess 5:17). We are commanded to pray because God is glorified in prayer (John 14:13, 2 Cor 1:11). As a ministry devoted to magnifying God, we do so as we look to God and dependently cast all our cares and anxieties on the Lord knowing he cares for us and the students (Phil 4:4-8, 1 Pet 5:6-7).

Secondly, everything we do as a ministry must be done in dependence on the Lord. Prayer is an expression of faith in the Lord; we look to him as our heavenly Father who knows what we need and who cares for us (Matt 6:9, 21:22, Mark 11:24, Luke 11:9-13, James 1:6). There are many decisions that we make as a ministry that require wisdom. It is not necessarily a "right or wrong" thing, but a "what is best" thing. In dependence upon him, we are to ask the Lord for wisdom, confident that he will give it (James 1:5-8).

Third, prayer is effective. God acts and responds to our prayers. Because of the work of Jesus Christ as our mediator and high priest, we have access to the throne of God. He hears our prayers and acts on our behalf (John 14:6, 1 Tim 2:5, Heb 4:14-16, 10:19-22). When we pray according to God's will (Matt 6:10, 26:39, John 15:17, 1 John 5:14-15), our prayers effectively move God to answer (Luke 11:9-10). Scripture is full of examples of God hearing and answering prayer (Gen 18:22-33, Ex 32:9-14, 2 Chron 7:14, Dan 10:12, Amos 7:1-6, Acts 4:29-31, 10:31, 12:5-11).

Therefore, we earnestly pray that God would save and sanctify our students. We know of the depths of human depravity (Rom 1:18-3:20, Eph 2:1-5, Tit 3:3, etc.). We know that no one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws them (John 6:44), so we pray that God would do his sovereign work to save. We see the apostle Paul model praying for salvation and sanctification and instructing his readers to do the same (Rom 10:1, 15:30-31, Eph 3:14-21, 6:18, Col 4:2-4, 12, 1 Thess 3:11, 5:23-24, 2 Thess 3:1, 1 Tim 2:1-8). We also see that Jesus prayed his disciples would be sanctified in the truth of God's Word (John 17:17).

For these reasons, prayer permeates GSM. In practical ways, prayer plays a prominent role on Wednesday nights. We pray several times throughout the night for God to work through the preaching of his Word to save and to sanctify. We also pray that hearts would fervently believe the truths we are proclaiming to one another as we sing (Col 3:16).

Every month the leadership team prays systematically through the list of students who attend after we reach out to students and parents concerning their requests. Again, we pray that God would save and sanctify them. Small group leaders regularly and intentionally, devote themselves to praying for the students in their small groups. They also engage the student and the parents for specific ways to pray for them both.