

## **INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

The Student Ministry of First Baptist Church O'Fallon strives to promote and maintain an atmosphere of love and acceptance for students. Our ministry is a team of servant leaders dedicated to affirmation and encouragement rather than criticism and condemnation. All of our leaders believe that an atmosphere of Christ-like, unconditional love and affirmation is more conducive to growth and positive life change than an atmosphere of constant criticism.

Keeping this in mind, our ministry also recognizes the need for a healthy set of parameters. Even Christ himself established a set of guidelines for his followers as he encouraged them to strive to become perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). Those guidelines were given not to rob them of their joy, but to give them protection, blessing and an abundant life (John 10:10).

At First Baptist Church we recognize the closeness and similarity of the terms "discipline" and "disciple." If we are to become Disciples of Christ, we must become disciplined. Our student ministry believes that the right to discipline is earned through building trustworthy relationships with students. This is the motivation of our ministry in drafting and enforcing the following set of guidelines for staff and students alike, for the students will not be held to a higher standard than the staff, but vice versa. "...*From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked*" (Luke 12:48b). The following guidelines have been developed so that we may more effectively fulfill the purposes of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment within the Student Ministries of First Baptist Church O'Fallon.

## **WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY BEHAVIOR**

Times of teaching and worship are primary in church life. Students and other members who come to church in order to learn and grow deserve to study and worship in an atmosphere where that is possible without hindrance. Our ministry assumes responsibility for creating and maintaining such an atmosphere.

Students who make study or worship impossible for those around them need to be moved to an alternative study location. Generally, this will mean spending the remainder of the time with the youth minister or a volunteer staff member. Before dismissing a student from a study or service, leaders have a responsibility to tell a student that the behavior warrants dismissal. Students who choose to continue disrupting then should be dismissed. In most cases, leaders should inform parents when a dismissal has taken place. In most cases, a youth who has been dismissed from a group should be welcome at the next meeting.

## **RESPECT**

### **Towards Leaders: students obey leaders (ministers and volunteers)**

Students who choose to participate at First Baptist Student Ministry activities, events, and programs must agree to respectfully follow the instructions of leaders. Obeying those instructions and exhibiting healthy respect toward leaders is a condition for remaining at an activity. Listening to and respecting the adult leaders and sponsors is vital to the safety and morale of everyone. We desire to have a mutual respect between students and adult leaders. Flagrant disrespect toward adult leaders can and will result in appropriate discipline and/or an early trip home at his or her family's expense. Please remember that the adults on a trip are taking personal time away from work and their families to be there with you and make the trip possible, or they are investing time and resources into our recurring programs (ex; LIFE Groups, 610, etc.). Therefore they deserve respect.

### **Towards Others: respectful words and behavior is expected towards others (peers)**

Having a healthy view of and respect for others is an absolute must for students regarding their peers. Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment we can participate in is to love God with everything within our being. He continues by saying the second greatest commandment is just like the first: that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37—40). Our neighbor can be defined as church staff, leaders, fellow students, and anyone we come into contact with at church. Respect for others means that students treat one another as they would want to be treated. Respect means avoiding behavior, words, and even thoughts that tear down, belittle, and push others away. Respect for others demands that all students have a healthy understanding of the value of everyone around them.

### **Towards Self: students are responsible for their own behavior and work**

The Gospel message is a clear indication of the love and value God places on each individual person. In this light, we will intentionally lead students toward a healthy, biblical understanding of

viewing ourselves. Our hope is that all students trust in Jesus Christ for salvation and find their personal identities in Him alone. Because of this vision, the atmosphere within our student ministry will be that of love and acceptance of self. We expect that students will respect themselves as the individuals God has created them to be by treating themselves with love and acceptance. As with respect for others, tearing down, belittling, or being harsh towards self in any way is not acceptable.

### **Towards Property: students are required to care for property and possessions**

God has entrusted our church with top-notch facilities and equipment for our enjoyment and ministry. Certainly our facilities and equipment are for our use, and with time normal wear and tear will be experienced. However, students are expected to care for all church property and possessions, as well as the possessions and property of others and their own while at church. All that exists in the world is ultimately the Lord's, and we are stewards of His property. Therefore, we will hold students to a reasonable respect and carefulness with property and possessions.

**In each of these areas, students will abide by the ORR policy—Obedience, Respect, and Responsibility. Our obedience is to God above all and secondly to student ministry leaders (according to the guidelines to follow). Our respect is towards others, leaders, ourselves, and property (as previously described). Our responsibility is to love God and others through our attitude, words, and actions at all times.**

### **TRIP POLICIES**

The church assumes heavy responsibility when taking students out of town. For the student ministry to function off campus, obeying and respecting staff members and leaders is essential. When a breakdown in these areas reaches a critical point where the safety and/or well-being of other students and/or staff members is being threatened, the Minister to Students reserves the right to send the student home to his or her family. Whenever possible, a leader will provide transportation home for the student. If that is not logistically possible, then the family of the student will pay for commercial transportation home. Families agree to support the decision of the Minister to Students to send a student home, understanding that only those present on the trip can know all the variables involved.

On all trips, being sent home will be the normal result of habitually breaking curfew, possessing alcohol, drugs, or tobacco products, leaving the group, habitually breaking guidelines for physical affection, stealing, assault, or the possession of pornography or a dangerous weapon. Any other serious failure to follow trip guidelines will result in a trip home.

General trip guidelines will also include but not be limited to the following: students will be on time to all planned functions; students will abide by the stated curfew; guys are not allowed in girls' rooms and vice versa; students will check in periodically with leaders and staff, making sure that a leader or staff member knows where they are at all times; respecting the authority of staff and chaperones (who are taking time away from families and jobs to make the trip possible); and students will stay within the preset boundaries of any given location.

### **HAZING**

Many youth groups have a "tradition" of an initiation ceremony/ritual for the younger students in the group which takes the form of physical and/or mental abuse meted out by the older members of the group. It usually begins as innocent and fun until students begin to get carried away and a civil war ensues where students get hurt both physically and emotionally. More often than not, the younger student feels threatened and is paranoid to the point that their focus is on what might happen to them rather than what God wants to tell them, teach them, or deal with them about. The same goes for the older students who are preoccupied with what they are planning to do to the student when they get the chance. Obviously this is not in keeping with the purpose of the trip or that of the Student Ministry. For this reason, hazing of any kind will not be allowed and those who are engaged in this kind of activity will be sent home immediately.

### **THINGS TO BRING/THINGS NOT TO BRING**

Before any trip that requires us to be gone overnight, a list of what to bring/not to bring will be supplied to all students going on the trip and their families. Since we go on many different kinds of trips for different lengths of time, only very general guidelines will be given here.

On an overnight trip, students will generally need to bring the following: Bible, pen and notebook; personal articles such as toothbrush, shampoo, etc.; a **limited** amount of spending money (based on the duration and nature of the trip); appropriate clothing (see dress code guidelines); students may bring music/entertainment devices to listen to and use on the van/bus.

Some things students will need to leave behind on an overnight trip include the following: fireworks or weapons of any kind (including pocket knives); alcohol, tobacco, and noprocription drugs; water guns, water balloons, shaving cream (except for personal use), etc.

## **DRESS CODE**

The way we dress is an important part of our Christian witness. We want to reflect Christ in every aspect of our lives. We must remember that we are representatives of Christ and First Baptist Church O'Fallon and must dress accordingly. Also, teenage boys are visually stimulated and when girls dress immodestly, it causes them to have impure and lustful thoughts, and takes their focus off of Christ and puts it on what certain girls are wearing or not wearing. Inappropriate dress causes others to feel uncomfortable, not to mention the fact that it is not Christ-like to wear clothing that is too revealing or immodest. If nothing else, we should have enough respect for ourselves than to wear clothes that are too revealing. Thus we have established some guidelines that we feel are fair and appropriate for ministry activities, programs, trips and events that all participating students must adhere to in order to promote spiritual growth and maximize the ability for ministry to take place.

*Students may NOT wear revealing tank tops, immodest shorts or tops, distasteful designs or messages, and other extreme clothing. Clothing or apparel that contains sexual references or material, profanity, and alcohol or drug logos or references, is strictly prohibited from being worn or purchased while on a church-sponsored trip. Any such items will be confiscated and parents will be called.*

1. **WORSHIP** - Students and staff alike are expected to reflect a Christian example by their dress. Most clothes that are acceptable for school are also acceptable for student worship, activities, trips, programs, and events. Students may wear shorts, skirts, and dresses of modest length. Jeans are always acceptable. When participating in youth services held in the sanctuary, Jeans are a minimum requirement for guys and khakis are a nice touch. Girls should wear jeans, slacks, modest skirts, or dresses. **Shorts** should not come any shorter than the fingertips with arms relaxed at the sides. **Skirts** should not come any shorter than the knees. **Tops** should be modest in that they should not reveal the midriff when the arms are raised and should not be too tight or have a low-cut or revealing neck-line. Spaghetti straps and tank tops are not acceptable for worship.
2. **WATER ACTIVITIES** - There will be several occasions when we will have student ministry events or activities that involve swimming or getting wet. For these activities only one-piece swimsuits are acceptable. Bikinis should not be worn. Any student not adhering to these guidelines will be asked to change or wear a colored t-shirt. Any time other than at camps and some retreats, modest tankinis will be allowed, but must not show any of the midriff. Chaperones have the right to ask any student to change or put on a dark colored t-shirt if they deem the swimsuit inappropriate. Guys should wear modest swimming shorts.
3. **RECREATION** - For recreational activities, modest shorts and t-shirts are acceptable. Short shorts are not acceptable at any time – nor should shorts be “rolled” at the top to make them shorter.

If there is a question as to whether or not something is appropriate, it is probably inappropriate, so please do not bring on a trip or wear such articles to a youth function. ***IF ANY STUDENT IS IN VIOLATION OF THIS DRESS CODE, ANY ADULT/LEADER HAS THE RIGHT TO ASK THE STUDENT TO CHANGE IMMEDIATELY OR WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE.***

## **WEAPONS**

The physical safety of the student, leaders, and staff is one of our top priorities. Therefore, no student may possess a gun, knife, martial arts item, or any other weapon at any youth group activity at the church or away. **The presence of a dangerous weapon will result in an immediate call to 911 and full cooperation with the authorities that respond.** In the meantime, the leader/staff member in charge will coordinate a plan with other leaders to best protect the safety of the youth present. Actual

confrontation with a teenager with a gun will be left to the proper authorities. The parents of the involved student(s) will be contacted as soon as possible.

## **IN-TOWN POLICIES**

Assault, alcohol, illegal drugs, weapons as described above, pornography and tobacco products are not permitted at *any* student ministry activities. The breaking of this policy, including any other serious failure to follow student ministry guidelines, will result in the student not being permitted to participate in the next major youth trip and/or event.

## **PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE**

Parents have not assigned to church leaders the right to physically discipline students. Therefore, leaders only make physical contact with a teenager in order to prevent a greater harm, such as during a fight or an attempt to harm one's self. With rare exceptions, no other physical restraint or discipline is appropriate.

## **PHYSICAL AFFECTION**

Our goal and heart's desire is to promote and encourage moral purity for both leaders and students. This is the standard for which all physical interaction is measured.

Interest in showing physical affection toward the opposite sex is considered a normal and healthy part of maturing teenage relationships. Our student ministry also believes that appropriateness should dictate the extent of affection shown at Student Ministry activities. Our ministry strives to provide an environment that is conducive to the development of integrity relationships between males and females.

**The following guidelines are in place for four reasons:** **1.** We want to take appropriate precautions to prevent anything improper from taking place on a church sponsored trip as well as remove any temptation that may arise; **2.** We want to protect the reputations of everyone involved by taking away any question or doubt that may exist as to what may be going on; **3.** we want to provide a comfortable environment for all trip participants; **4. *We want to keep the focus on Christ and not what might or might not be going on physically between guys and girls.***

1. Holding hands and light hugs are generally appropriate. Times this is not appropriate is during worship services, 610, Bible study, or any other time that a student is actively participating in a program/event/activity. Any other type of physical affection is not permitted.
2. "Making out" in trip vehicles and on church outings or at church functions is not appropriate and will result in an immediate contact to the students' family.
3. Girls lying on guys and vice versa as well as any form of "cuddling" will not be permitted at any time. Furthermore, it is never appropriate for males and females to be under the same blanket, jacket, or coat at any time.
4. **Leaders reserve the right to amend or add guidelines concerning physical affection based on specific situations, environments, and behaviors for the four reasons stated above.**

"But among you ***there must not be even a hint*** of sexual immorality, or of ***any kind of impurity***, or of greed, because ***these are improper for God's holy people***". *Ephesians 5:3*

## **LOCATION OF YOUTH**

Church leaders can only be responsible for students who are actually in an area designated for a student ministry activity or event. Parents have no way of knowing whether students are where they should be and, consequently, whether leader supervision is being provided. Therefore, it is the policy of our student ministry that all students on church property must be in the actual area where the announced activity or event is taking place. The only options available to students are to be in the designated class or activity area or to leave the church property. Students who come to an activity or event by means of their own transportation and leave before the end of the activity or event are not permitted to take any other students with them without direct (written or verbal) parental permission. Once they leave, these students may not return to the event or activity unless previously discussed with and approved by the Minister to Students. Students attending activities and events of any kind will be asked to sign in so that we can have a record of who was there. Furthermore, if a student attending any activity, event, or program leaves early, that student's family will be immediately notified.

Church leaders provide supervision for 15 minutes after the end of a youth activity at church unless otherwise stated or agreed upon. Parents providing transportation home are responsible for knowing the ending time of the activity and arriving within those 15 minutes.

### **IN-TOWN TRANSPORTATION**

The church provides leader or staff-driven vehicles for **every** activity away from the church unless otherwise announced and agreed upon. For all trips further than approximately 10 miles, adult-driven transportation is the only option for students. Licensed drivers may take their cars on activities closer to home, provided they have parental permission. The student ministry staff will always announce when it is possible for youth to drive. Parents have the responsibility to clarify with their student whether student-driven vehicles are an option.

Student ministry leaders and staff cannot be responsible for the safety of student-driven vehicles and cannot guarantee the quality of driving. Also, church leaders and staff cannot be responsible for students who leave activities or events in student-driven cars. The timely return of students to church can only be guaranteed for those who choose church-provided transportation.

### **TRIP TRANSPORTATION**

Here are some things that we must consider and do for any ministry trip or event that requires extended driving time.

1. Please demonstrate courtesy to your driver and help them in any way possible. The person riding in the front passenger seat (shotgun) needs to take the lead in helping the driver in any way they can. **Please listen to, obey, and respect your driver – your life depends on it!**
2. Listen carefully to driver and adult instructions – (e.g. departure times, rules, rest stops, etc.)
3. Students may not leave the vehicle unless the head leaders say it's okay!
4. Do not throw anything out of the windows or hang out of them at any time.
5. **Drivers:**
  - a. We will communicate via walkie talkies and/or cell phones while on the road.
  - b. We will be driving caravan-style – single file.
  - c. There must be a complete count of each person in the vehicle (including drivers and adults) before departing each stop during the trip.
  - d. Be sure to keep the vehicle behind you in sight at all times. We only go as fast as the last vehicle in the caravan.
  - e. In case of emergency, flash your high beams at a vehicle in front of you. When safe to do so, pull your vehicle to a safe place on the right side of the roadway.
  - f. No one may get out of the vehicle unless the driver says it is safe to do so.
  - g. In case of emergency and you get lost or separated from the caravan, stay in one location and call the cell phone of another driver.
  - h. **Please be sure to fill in the mileage at the beginning and end of the trip.**

### **VANDALISM**

Any student who vandalizes, willfully destroys, or defaces personal, public, or church property will be solely responsible for the cost of such damages.

These policies and guidelines are provided as a proactive way to insure clear communication among members of the student ministry staff, leaders, students, and families. One of the primary priorities of the Student Ministry at First Baptist is to provide a positive, loving and affirming atmosphere for students.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY**

Social media & technology is a growing trend in the world around us. While this can be a positive avenue for communication and connection with others, there are also many drawbacks and risks to social media. The use of social media and technology within our student ministry includes but is not limited to the use of email, text messaging, websites, Facebook, and Twitter. Below is a basic outline of how our student ministry will use social media & technology in ministry to students and their families:

1. Social media & technology will enhance, not replace, real-world ministry and community.
2. Social media & technology will be used to connect and communicate with students and their families.

3. Social media & technology will be used to equip and inform students and families about upcoming events, activities, and programs.
4. Social media & technology will be used to enhance events and activities in the form of promotion, real-time updates, and debrief.

### **CELL PHONES/SMART PHONES/PORTABLE DEVICES**

Students and leaders are to refrain from using cell phones/smart phones/portable devices (such as iPod's) during ministry programs except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by a leader. Smart phone usage, text messaging, and phone calls can be a hindrance and distraction to the atmosphere of worship, fellowship, and spiritual growth. When a student disobeys this policy, they will be asked once to put their phone away. Upon the second infraction the student's phone will be confiscated and returned at the end of the program/event/activity. If this problem continues to arise in the future, the student's family will be contacted and a request that the student no longer bring their phone to church will be made.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF THE GUIDELINES\***

Before going on any Student Ministry trip or retreat, students and parents are required to sign the **Trip/Retreat Covenant** stating that they have read and agree to abide by these guidelines. Furthermore, anyone who participates in a student-sponsored event, program, or activity is also subject to these guidelines. In order for these guidelines to work, they must be strictly followed and enforced so that everyone participating in our ministry can focus on Christ and have fun at the same time (including the chaperones!).

***When a guideline or rule is broken, the following procedure will be followed:***

- Step 1:** The student will be given a warning. (More severe infractions may be cause for fewer or no warnings and may warrant an immediate call or even trip home.) In appropriate circumstances, the leader issuing the warning will, with dignity, counsel with the student about the problem and use the opportunity to teach correct behavior. The student will then be readmitted to their previous setting.
- Step 2:** Upon the second infraction, the leader will again, with dignity, counsel with the student and work toward correcting the behavior. If the student genuinely displays a correct change in behavior, the student will be readmitted into their previous setting. However, if the student evidences that their behavior will not be corrected, the student's family will be immediately contacted.
- Step 3:** Arrangements will be made for the student to go home at the expense of their parents if the problem persists further.

### **LEADER/VOLUNTEER STAFF GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines, though not official or binding, may be helpful to the Student Minister as he chooses sponsors for out-of-town youth trips. The selection of sponsors may be the most important variable in the effectiveness of a trip, both logistically and spiritually.

1. Leaders must, as a prime requirement for traveling with youth, model before students a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and a hunger for further growth.
2. Leaders must model before students a clear commitment to avoid alcohol, tobacco, and pornography, and must exhibit the highest integrity in marriage and dating relationships.
3. Leaders must be prepared and willing to lead small group Bible study sessions and to personally lead students to Jesus Christ.
4. Leaders must be prepared and willing to counsel with troubled students.
5. Leaders must be in full support of the church's Student Ministry Guidelines, and must be willing to implement the printed negative consequences in response to unacceptable behavior.
6. Leaders must be willing to be on-duty during every waking minute, approximately from 6:00 AM to past midnight. Sponsors must be willing to forego attractions and sightseeing when sponsor duties require.
7. Leaders will under no circumstances be alone with a student of the opposite gender in a one-on-one context.
8. Leaders need to model before students a love for their church and full involvement on a weekly basis.
9. **Leaders must evidence a growing relationship with members of the youth group**

**before the trip, indicated by knowing a growing number of youth by name and seeking to understand their lives and backgrounds.**

10. Leaders must look to the Student Minister as the leader on the trip and respond as team players to any assignments he makes.