

CBC Youth Core Values | For Teachers & Counselors

We don't do things randomly here in our youth program (although it may seem that way). Our belief is that Scripture dictates philosophy and in turn dictates how everything is run. Everything from Servant Team, to our internship, to ACCESS, to discipleship, and even to teaching and interacting with youth...everything has a purpose. All of those things are rooted in our core values which are rooted deeply and firmly in Scriptural commands.

The following are our core values in which everything flows out of. And it's not "just a system", but it's our understanding that this is what Jesus has called us to when he said, "Follow me". However, these core values are modified and adapted for teachers & counselors. The first part of the core value is how it specifically applies to your life. The second part of the core value gives practical suggestions on how to apply it your teaching and mentoring.

Again, these core values aren't something we just made up for you to fulfill...rather, this is what we've found in digging through scripture and this is what is *expected* from a genuine believer of Jesus Christ...not for Him to love you, but in order for us to live the fullest life and to align ourselves with the way God wired the universe.

Depth: (Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Ro. 12:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:7; Eccl. 12:13-14; Ps. 84:2; Deut. 6:24-25)

Our deepest prayer is that you might finally see what you're wrapped up in. Not church. Not religion. Not us trying to be good, moral people...that is not what our end goal is. I continue to beg God that you might understand first and foremost the depravity of your soul (Ps. 36:1) – not just the fact that you continue to consciously sin against a holy and just God (Ezek. 36:22), but that you continue to chase things that will NEVER satisfy you (Jer. 2:13). That you and I continue to understand that left to our own plans we would ruin ourselves in vain pursuits (Eccl. 1:14). I plead with you that you see that you, of all people, desperately need a savior (1 Chron. 16:35) – not to fix you, but to save you from the wrath of God and your pride. This is about the real, historical, Jesus Christ that was incarnated to live the life you couldn't live and die the death you couldn't die in order to take upon your sins and give you his righteousness.

And when you understand this, you realize that there is no enemy that is flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). Our eyes are unveiled and now we see something much bigger than this world. We are adopted into another kingdom as his sons and daughters (Eph. 1:5). Our focus is now on another reality and though we still inhabit our earthly bodies and reside on this earth, we know that there is coming a day when "all things are made new" (Rev. 21:5) and "we are united with Jesus" (Romans 6:5). Our goal, then, is not to live against the world. This is NOT an "us vs. them" battle. But this whole thing is about all of us as sinners...but God saves. And because this is so...we want to live in light of this knowledge. We don't abuse his grace, we don't pride ourselves in anything but the Cross and we constantly remember the blood-splattered Cross that has been offered to you and I.

I also pray that you might consider the path that Jesus has called you on. That you when you gave up your life and submitted everything to follow him...it came with commitment and demanded all aspects

of your life. I mean, it's not like he was joking when he said, "take up your cross and follow me." If we need to sacrifice whatever just so we can experience him more...then we do it with joy. We risk everything to follow after him. I mean, do you understand the weight behind this? This means for some of us giving up hours of television and video games in order that we might in turn spend time in study or praying with my neighbors, or...whatever. For some of us, it's giving up what Scripture calls sinful; it's starting up something that we've been neglecting; it's apologizing when we're wrong (even to our children & parents); it's waking up early to commune with God because there's no time in the day, and so on. It's taking this spiritual journey seriously...and not because you "have to" but in the end you TRUST that God knows what He's talking about and that this Jesus is honestly worth following, worth trusting my life, money, and energy.

Please teachers & counselors...this is not a game that we're playing here. We don't just "do whatever we want" and then in the end go, "alright...I've done all that I wanted to do, now I'll give you whatever time I have left". That's a foolish, sinful way to abuse the grace of God. And what's worse is that you sacrifice all the joy that could have been yours had you truly trusted and followed Jesus to lead you. And this is why I'm begging God for...that you might see and experience this reality. I'm begging you to quit making excuses for yourself and that 1) you kill your pride and confess your weakness and inability to actually change; 2) you begin to search all of scripture and live out what it commands of you – that you will be obedient and that you risk. And in doing so you might be transformed from the inside out and consequentially be the light of the world. I pray that you are NEVER satisfied with where you're at spiritually and that your quest in following Jesus is contagious to your spouse, to your family, to your co-workers, friends, and students.

Lastly, as you, with all the grace God continues to supply, live this out...so that you might desire this for those you teach.

- Pray, beg, plead that God will save those you teach and come in contact with.
- Always remember the Gospel for yourself and when you interact with people.
- Always remember that our end goal is NOT morality. It is not that we want our youth to be "good people" – they're not, they're sinners by nature...we want them to be transformed by the Gospel. There are root issues behind how they act, it is your job to help address those root issues.
- Push for depth – want more for those you teach. Help them see that there's more than just attending church. Help your students see that in everything that you teach that the end goal is depth...not mere knowledge.

Problems to watch out for:

- Settling: We tend to be very comfortable after we reach a certain place in our life. Just from my own observations and experience, the plateau phase hits around 2.5-3 years. I think what happens is that the youth (and ourselves) get familiar with what we're doing and they begin to relax and just settle for mere knowledge (or routine). This is perhaps one of the biggest dangers of Christian growth. We become complacent. We think that we know it all and thus have no

further need to grow. For you personally, do you have ways to keep growing? Is there a particular sin that you're not addressing that is forcing you to become retarded in your growth? Do you need to be reminded of what you are caught up in?

- Burn out: Burn out is what happens when we forget the main idea. Either we try to do too much or we just get overwhelmed with everything we're "supposed" to do. Don't get me wrong...we try to push as hard as we can, but the growth is primarily up to the Holy Spirit and the youth. Don't get too discouraged when they're not growing at the pace you want them to. In the end, the youth are responsible for growing too. Remember the idea of Sabbath – that it is not dependent on us for ultimate transformation. When we get to a place where we believe that "we're the only one being obedient" or "this wouldn't work without me"...that's when we should be worried.

Community: (Acts 2; Heb. 10:25; Rom. 14:13-19)

Our understanding of community (esp. in relation to CBC) has to do with the fact that:

- (1) We're all sinners saved by grace (Eph. 2:8);
- (2) God has given us our talents and gifts for the building up of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12);
and
- (3) God has chosen to use the Church as his representative in the world (Eph. 3:10)

We have been teaching 3 levels of community:

- (1) Universal Church (Matt 28:19, Acts 4:32): All the believers who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior throughout the world and through all time. This is why we continually partner with other churches and ministries...so that we communicate that Christians aren't just middle/upper-class Chinese people. A very easy practical thing teachers can do is bring in stories from other believers from around the world or city. Our students need to see that there are believers outside our walls that are going through, have been through, and will go through this journey of following Jesus.
- (2) Local Church (Acts 11:19; 1 Cor. 1:2, 10): This is Chinese Baptist Church as a whole. The youth isn't a "special" group that God is only interested in. Rather, we exist as a Church with 3 primary language groups. We try to integrate the youth in all aspects of the church from leadership to joining functions with other fellowships. As teachers, we need to stop isolating the youth from the rest of the church. Try to get other members of the church involved in your classes. Promote the youth to other fellowships. Actually, what I would do is find the CBC members in a youth's neighborhood and have them get involved in their life. I guess this is where we're the weakest...we tend to hide ourselves from the rest of the church and just do "youth" things. We're going to have to model this as well as push our students to do the same thing. Harder still is getting the rest of the church to buy in as well. But we know

better...so let's be obedient.

(3) Internal Church (Acts 2:42, Eph 4:11): This would be primarily the youth group itself. Our role as teachers is to equip and train these youth not just in theological foundations, but also inter-personal relationships. I think a huge assumption is that youth "should" know the basics of society...but I think that's where we can get off. For the most part, a lot of them haven't been taught how to communicate, disagree, and form relationships. As a teacher, patiently walk them through these things instead of assuming it. Sometimes we need to teach from above – we need to teach the "why" (because we're one body, because the Gospel...); other times we need to teach from below – teach the "how" (walk them through how to talk to other people). Help them to understand what true community looks like (Acts 2) and then actually try to get them to apply it (i.e. set up lunches; get them to call each other; if you know of a disagreement...get them to work it out soon). The internal church should bear several of distinct characteristics:

- a. Honesty & openness: should be a place where people can safely share their lives and have others come alongside and minister to them. We should have a community that knows each other so deeply that we don't ever have to be fake. We should be willing to open ourselves up to others as well as receive others as they open up. We should never be a community that judges or even makes fun of people. That just shows we really don't understand the Gospel at all.
- b. Safe, loving discipline: we don't just let sin go unchecked...that isn't true love. We love people enough so that when we see sin we go with grace, love, and patience to engage that person on it. And then we become a lifeline for that person and we walk with them through that issue and we keep them accountable.
- c. Engaged: members in the church ought to know what's going on in each other's life. They are able to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who are glad. There is always a mutual care and concern for those in the body. (Romans 12:9-13)

Problems to watch out for:

- Excuses: I can't tell you how many times we are disobedient because we believe "it's awkward." Regardless of how awkward the situation might be, our job as leaders is to help foster genuine community. And if that means that we open up first and we share, then that is our role as leaders. Coach them and guide them...show them how to develop this community that Scripture mentions over and over again.
- Understanding Membership: While we definitely encourage community at the universal church level, I must warn you to be careful here. As a member of a local body, that is where you have committed to serve AND to fellowship. It is great to support and help other youth groups and churches, but when you're constantly doing that at the expense of community and service at your local body, it becomes problematic at many levels. I would warn you to be careful of being too involved in other ministries outside of your local body context. Yes, I think it's good that we

help other ministries...but don't forget that you are a *member* of this church. Another thing is that as a member of the church...be part of the church – go to the meetings, go to its events, tithe to the church, support the church...why? Because Christ will hold you accountable of how you treated his bride.

- Generational-centric: I know this isn't a word or a phrase but what I mean is that we get too focused on our own generation and neglect the edification of the whole church. We don't minister and serve alongside of any other generation and so what happens is that they lose the ability to bless us and vice versa. In the end, the church losses and the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10-11) is profaned.

Truth (Psalm 119; 2 Tim. 1:8-14; 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:15; Luke 24:27; 2 Kings 22; Gal. 1:6-10)

Our understanding of truth comes from a long history of Christendom. It flows from the Triune author of truth and was perfectly revealed by God the Father through the Logos (Jesus). It has been revealed to us in nature and in creation and explained fully through the pages of Scripture. The Reformers fought for it and the Conservatives of the SBC went to war on this issue of truth. We stand firm on the inerrant, infallible, power Word of God. We believe the Bible is God's revelation of himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ. And because of that the entire Bible points to Jesus. The pages of Scripture reveal the promises of Jesus and the commands of Jesus.

We read the bible exegetically – where we allow Scripture to say what it says and we humbly submit ourselves under its authority. We understand that there are difficult passages that will ask us to sacrifice, commit, or even change our opinions...but we will, in faith, trust that God knows what He's talking about and we will do it. We also preach and teach the bible **unapologetically**; which means we teach the full council of Scripture and we don't shy away from anything. This is a battle that I am willing to die for...because once the Bible becomes only useful and not necessarily true, we have left what is historic Christianity. Objective truth must be found in the person of Christ and from the words that point and lead to him (John 18:37; 14:6). When we start questioning the validity of Scripture and thousands of years of orthodoxy, we have nothing left to stand on other than "personal revelation" and conjectures.

As teachers & counselors, this means several things – in order to teach what the bible talks about...we must know what it says. This is actually going to require us to study it for ourselves and do some serious thinking when we read it. And then we're going to have to allow the pages of Scripture to mold and shape us. Some of us are weak in this area just because we know the stories but we honestly have no clue what it's talking about. This will require you to suck up your pride and ask for help. I've learned that people have different ways of learning – video, audio, and reading. So please figure out which way you learn best and let us help you.

Our students (I guess church in general) have always been weak on this topic. I don't know why but we're kind of scared of going deeper into theology. But we need to stop feeding our kids cotton candy theology. And this is based off of my fear that they'll graduate High school and go, "Oh yeah...the gospel, the gospel is good." But when we ask them what it is...they have no clue. The core value of truth challenges everything – from their presuppositions, to their faith, to learning more...but why? Because

we want them to know and understand their own faith for themselves. And here's the thing...there's a difference between *knowing* something and then being able to articulate it. What are we asking of you dear teacher? I'm glad you asked:

- Know the material: this is where your personal study and understanding will sustain or it will fall. Your personal devotions, bible study, theological classes, and general knowledge will come through. Here's the thing...you're probably not going to teach them everything you have studied...but when you have that knowledge already there, you can use teach correctly and with confidence. Another big thing: please don't make up answers. If you're not sure how to answer something, just admit that you don't know. It's probably a lot better than you simply tell them that you don't know but here's the kicker...teach them how you would find the answer.
- **Internalize** the material: how does this affect them? Why should this stuff matter? Teach them how this applies to their life. Find the principles and apply those to their life.
- Teach the material: this is our ultimate goal. The students should be able to walk away from your lesson and then be able to go and teach someone else what you taught them. This actually might require you to teach them not only what the material is, but also *how* to teach the material. Show them how you prepared and what you did to communicate the lesson.
- Challenge them to move past 3rd grade Sunday school. Personally the process of Christian education is very similar to how systematic theology books are written:
 - Biblical hermeneutics (learning how to study the Bible and find the main idea, meta-narrative, understand context and content, etc.) *Recommended readings: "Grasping God's Word" by Duvall (Zondervan); "Gospel Centered Hermeneutics" by Goldsworthy (IVP); "Studying the Bible for All Its Worth" by Fee (Zondervan)*
 - Basic Doctrines (Scripture, Gospel, Jesus, God, Holy Spirit, Creation, Prayer, Sin, Man, Resurrection, Salvation, Heaven/Hell, Church, End times, and Angels/demons) *Recommended Readings: "Bible Doctrines" by Grudem (Zondervan); "Basic Christianity" by Stott (IVP); "Orthodoxy" by Chesterton (WaterBrook); "Theology" by Tabb (Think); "Concise Theology" by Packer (Tyndale)*
 - Worldviews and Apologetics; Church History; Christian Counseling; Comparative Religions. *Recommended Readings: "On Guard" by Craig (Cook); "Correcting the Cults" by Geisler; "Worldviews" by Yeats (Think); "Church History in Plain Language" by Shelley (Tyndale); "Turning Points" by Noll; "Vintage Church" By Driscoll (ReLit); "Total Truth" by Pearcey (Crossway); "Sacred Marriage" by Thomas (Zondervan)*
- What sets truth for your life teachers? And here's the important question...what are the **implications** of what you believe? Because you can believe this or that, but the implications matter tremendously. If you decide to reject Jesus...what are the implications? If you decide to join a church, what are the implications? We need to make it very plain to students that beliefs lead to implications.
- Another area that we have neglected to teach is that of **consistency**. The more I'm around people, the more I realize how inconsistent people are with their thoughts and their actions (i.e. worldview). It is our job as teachers and counselors to really push for a consistent way of life.

And even expose where that goes funky. So when we teach youth, we teach but also expose the inconsistencies in their lives..."Hey, you say that you're a member of this church but you don't attend, you don't serve, and you don't seek genuine community...that doesn't make any sense".

- Questions for yourself: Are you studying regularly on your own? What are you deficient in? What is your plan for studying? When do you plan on doing it?

Problems to watch out for:¹

- Losing Jesus | Colossians 1:15-20. Beware of teaching everything besides Jesus. Salvation history begins and ends with Jesus. The Old Testament looks forward to Jesus. The New Testament testifies about Jesus. Now we wait for Jesus and live out the way of Jesus.
- Moralizing: Psalms 14:1-3; Isaiah 64:6. We tend to moralize scripture and unconsciously turn it into a religious manual. We love take scripture and say "This is good – do this. This is bad – don't do this". Scripture loses its weight because it is turned into a manual of morality. And if anything, we wrongly teach to merely address the symptoms of sin rather than the heart of the problem. Actions are rarely what's wrong with the person...it usually stems from the heart. Walk patiently with all people and in love address the issues of the heart together. At the end understand that there is no one righteous – not you, not me...only Jesus.
- Eisegesis | 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Proverbs 14:12. Beware of forcing your own opinions & ideas into Scripture and making it fit. Beware of taking a "moral lesson" and using Scripture to conform to your agenda. This is typically called "Eisegesis" (ahy-suh-jee-sis). We want to do the work of "Exegesis" meaning to "draw out". Let the Scripture speak for themselves in its own context. Read the text for what it is and draw out the meaning that is in the text rather than manipulating it to say what you want it to say. You don't have the full story without both the good and bad parts. Make sure you're able to speak on both issues.
- Ignoring the Gospel | 1 Timothy 1:15-16; Psalms 51:17. The Good News has to do with the fact that we are completely and thoroughly sinners. Left to our own devices we would be as wicked and deplorable as the next person. The Good News has to do with the fact that we cannot get our hearts right even if we wanted to nor could we fix ourselves...we just tend to fall into the same holes we create. The Good News has to do with the fact that our past is wicked and we (and our posterity) suffer the consequences now. The Good News is that Jesus has come in the flesh as God, placed the wrath of God due us onto himself as our substitute, that he lived a perfect life, was brutally murdered and rose again. The Good News is that we are completely helpless but Jesus saves. He died for my sin past, present and future and allows me to chase ultimate joy.

Discipleship (Ps. 145:4; Deut. 6:20-25; Ruth 1:16-18; Prov. 23:19-28; Eccl. 12:9-14; Matt. 5:1-2; Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2-14-26)

¹ I've written several documents titled, "The Potholes of Teaching" explaining the typical issues of teaching. It can be found on <http://www.cbc-youth.com/resources/articles>

The idea of discipleship for us flows out of the fact that we don't know everything. The word "disciple" simply means *"one who engages in learning through instruction from another."* We constantly try to have this thought in our minds – "If I were to leave this place, have I done everything I could to equip the next generation for life and godliness?" We believe that we have a responsibility to continue to learn ourselves and then pass on this wisdom to the next generations.

We've come up with a 3 tier system of discipleship

1. Mentor: I always want someone to be teaching, instructing, and correcting me. I realize that I don't know everything and there are people out there who have done life a lot better than I have. There are those out there who have gone through the ups and downs of life and I want to be taught those things. This is hard because it requires me to actively submit my life under their leadership. But this mentor is someone who I can seek advice from and someone who I can model my life and disciple after.
2. Lifeline: This person is someone who I can be completely honest with. They know my strengths, weaknesses, past, present, and hopes for the future. They give me advice when I'm lost and encouragement when I'm struggling. This peer is someone who I can grow alongside with.
3. Mentee: This is someone who I can pass on my life to. My responsibility to them is to teach them everything there is to know about life and godliness. I teach them how to study the bible, basic theology, what God says about _____, as well as how to function as a godly person in society and in the home.

What Discipleship is NOT:

- It is NOT a short-term project: what we understand from scripture is that discipleship takes a lifetime to develop and we don't drop them because we've finished our assignment. We are committed to this person for the rest of their lives and vow to equip and train them for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12).
- It is NOT easy: the frustration with discipleship is that we're dealing with people. It takes a lot of time trying to get to really know another person. Not only that...we're dealing with sinful people. You're going to be counseling the heart of the person, not just the symptoms of it. So take your time and realize that YOU cannot ultimately change them and that's why you need to constantly need the power of the Holy Spirit to do it for you through you.
- It is NOT a buddy system: one thing I want to warn you about is that discipleship is not just hanging out...I mean, that is a part (small part) but it must move beyond that. And your ultimate goal is to lead them to Christ (his salvation, his way of doing life, and his truth). You're going to need to correct them at times, come alongside of them and teach them patiently, and encourage them when they fall.

I know that a lot of you are busy with everything. But as much as you need other people speaking wisdom into your life...you need to be pushing back on the next generation. We tend to think about our needs, our time, and our spiritual growth and often neglect a whole group of students that are coming

through the world...and they desperately need you to guide them. Yes, I know you're not perfect and yes, I know that you're worried about teaching them the wrong things. But know this, that doesn't excuse you from the commands of scripture. Don't purposefully teach them things that are wrong or sinful. But if you do find yourself teaching them something at one moment and then realize it was wrong...go back and correct yourself. You're not going to be perfect or know everything. So the excuse of "I can't do it" is just what it is – an excuse.

- Where do I start? I suppose you start where everyone else has started – your own faith. Hopefully you have a good enough grasp on your own foundation before you start discipleship. However I suppose any believer for that matter is commanded to disciple whether they're a 50 year old veteran Christian or a 2 week baby Christian. But here's the thing – know the basics for yourself. What are the basics? Salvation, The Gospel, Jesus Christ, Bible, God, and The Holy Spirit.
- Student Teacher: You must be first a student before/while you teach. We say here all the time that you can't teach someone what you don't know. What will happen is that you will end up knowing all the right answers and teaching all the right answers and you yourself will NOT be living it out. Your soul begins to shrink and you lose all the power of what God intended you to possess. You need to constantly be growing, learning, studying, and on your knees asking God to grow you deeper.
- What do I teach? Always remember that you are to teach life to your disciple. Imagine if you had a year to live and you had only had a certain amount of people to teach. You want to be able to teach them as much as you can – all the wisdom God has shown you through life, all the potholes you fell in and you teach that because you want them to avoid where you've messed up, all your current struggles because they need to know you're still walking through this life, and what God has been teaching you through Scripture.

I started all my discipleship with how to study scripture. I believed that if I were to die immediately...at least they knew where to go to find Jesus for themselves. So I took them through books of the bible and went word for word through them and asked questions, made observations, and applied it to life. And here's the catch – you show them that you're willing to learn as much as you want them to learn. From there I taught simple doctrines and theologies...and then we'd move into relationships, marriage, and sex. We would then talk about biblical roles of men & women, how to deal with church politics, parents, and life circumstances. You teach them about life, Jesus, and how Jesus leads you to the best kind of life.

- What do I do? This is something you must answer for yourself. The way I do discipleship is a lot different than how my friends disciple and how I was disciplined. I start most of my discipleship relationship with casual food & fun. We'd go out to a meal or just hang out somewhere. But where all discipleship needs to go is the same – depth. Yes, go hang out and allow the relationship, honesty, and trust to build...but sooner rather than later you need to "get real". Open up and talk about the deep issues in life. Talk about struggles, frustrations, temptations, and victories. For you who can't drive...you have a variety of ways to still disciple (i.e. texting, facebook, email, phone calls, a small opportunity on the weekends). You need to put in the effort though. You need to do the planning. Most of all you are to do the bulk of the praying.

Get on your knees and beg God for their salvation; beg God for their spiritual depth.

Missions (Genesis 12; Ephesians 3:7-13; 2 Cor. 11-21; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 17; Deut. 26:16-19)

Maybe your story is different than mine, but when I heard the term “missions” I immediately had an image of a people group living in the middle of the jungle where there’s no running water and everyone eats bugs. I’m not sure where I got that image....maybe it was because of watching too much Lion King. But I mean, if you have attended youth group, “missions” became synonymous with something you do in the summer once a year. “Missions” was building houses, vacation bible schools, inner-city camps, etc. And for most of us, missions became that once a year type of thing. One week of doing missions and...done.

Where we have gotten off:

Although I think you can say that building houses and whatever counts as a “mission” project, I think we’ve missed the main idea of why we go/do missions. So if you would let me lay some foundation, I’d like to help you restructure where we’ve constructed our definition poorly.

1. **Gospel:** When the Holy Spirit finally unveils our spiritual eyes (Acts 26:18), we finally see that we are broken, hopeless people that continue to chase temporary things rather than the eternal, most beautiful, awesome God of the universe (Ro. 1:21ff). And in a moment of clarity and complete desperation we fling ourselves to the foot of the cross of Jesus and ask him to save us. And the crazy thing is at that moment he doesn’t go, “Get away from me you nasty, dirty, rotten piece of garbage...go clean yourself up first and then come to me.” Rather He takes us as we are and saves us (Luke 15:20ff). And what’s crazy is that all the punishment that was meant for us has now been diverted and pour out onto the one and only perfect man – the Son of God, and Jesus absorbs the wrath of God and satisfies the punishment meant for you and me (2 Cor. 5:21). So that now we are no longer bound to chase useless things; we no longer live in fear and guilt and our lives are changed as we now follow Jesus who brings us the best possible life.

I mean this changes everything for the believer does it not? The one who finally submits their life to this can’t live the same any more. The way they spend their time, their money, what they pursue...it all changes. This is the foundation for understanding missions. For the believer...their purpose is drastically shifted off of themselves, off of pursuing worldly pleasures, and now they chase and yearn for an everlasting God to satisfy them.

2. **Lifestyle vs. Event:** According to Acts 17, God has ordained the places and times in which you and I live. And if that is the case and we understand our role in the world is to reconcile it to the cross of Jesus, then missions isn’t an event, it’s a lifestyle that we take on. Alright...what in the world am I talking about? So now wherever we go and live, that’s our mission field. So like your table at lunch, your 3rd period English class, your local Starbucks...those are places were God has placed you to be the light of the world. You see? The problem with making “missions” a one-time deal is that all it does is reinforce the idea that missions is just an event. I mean, you can go

and check it off the list but have you really understood what Jesus was talking about living missionally? No! I think that's why we LOVE going on mission trips...because they make us feel good about ourselves. "Look at me...I helped some poor people. I feel great!" But we don't want to just "do" missions...we want to always be "on" missions. It's a lifestyle rather than an event.

3. **The Light of the World:** Both of these (gospel & lifestyle) lead to us being the light of the world. Imagine if we finally took time to understand who we're supposed to be and finally just man-ed up and quit making excuses for us not obeying the Holy Spirit....and we finally did it. Imagine what our world might look like. If everyone just lived consistently we could see lives finally changed. And I'm not talking about immediate change (although that could happen), but little by little...we start inviting our friends to dinner and instead of talking about sports and the latest movie, we talk about how their life is really going. And we start building some deep relationships and it gets to a point where we ask them where they're at spiritually – what they're ultimately living for. We get into the nitty gritty of life...the stuff that nobody *wants* to talk about. We see families being put back together. We see addictions being set free. Maybe we start selling some of our gadgets so that we can start adopting from orphanages. Or maybe we can find a job and give what we earn to someone who has a ministry in your area. Is this starting to make sense? It's just living out what we believe...being consistent. We get on the same level as people instead of looking down on them as if we're better (see #1 if you think you are). We start doing life with people and we stick it out when them when it's hard. Why? Not because we have to or else Jesus won't like us...but because our hearts have been changed and so we show the love of Jesus to the world and we grow into the fullness of the one we follow.
4. **So what do we do about missions as events?** Go on them! Go do World Changers, Living Water, Adventures in Missions...go do those things. Why? Because we have resources that the rest of the world doesn't have...go and faithfully steward those gifts that God has blessed you with. But didn't you say we shouldn't do these things because it's a lifestyle? Yes I did. But understand that you don't hold these one-time mission trips as THE thing. It's just one thing that we do...(as we live a life of missions). These one-time mission trips with your church help fuel your soul, they allow you to do a little bit more than you could on your own. This is why I would always encourage you to attend overseas mission trips. Because you see what God is doing in other parts of the world. You get to be the hands and feet of the Gospel to people who may have never experienced his love. You get to fly to places where you get to work hand-in-hand with people who don't speak your language, but because of the Gospel...you are brothers and sisters with them. They're good things. But they're not the only things.

Can I be honest about missions though? It's hard! I mean whether you're at home trying to talk to that dude at Starbucks or sleeping on a dirt floor under the African sky...it's hard. It'll challenge you more than you're comfortable with. It'll expose that you're a selfish being and ultimately, your life is inconsistent. But praise God that He allows people like us to join him in his work. It's so true that God DOES NOT NEED YOU. But according to Ephesians 3:10, God has decided to use the broken, addicted, prideful sinners who have been redeemed by his Son to BE the agents of change in this world. That is

some good news. And what will blow your mind is that you can't save people. God is the only one who saves...so it's our job to be faithful to his command and we go and allow God to change hearts. And in the end, we receive the joy of being changed ourselves and seeing others changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the grace of God and the passion of Jesus Christ along with the guidance and perseverance of the Holy Spirit be with you as you live out your faith.

Teaching/Living Missions daily:

- Pray for opportunities: Ask God to continue to give you and your people opportunities to minister. Actually, I think there are plenty of opportunities...the real prayer is that we recognize opportunities around us. I think if we look around where we're at, there are plenty of ways we can live out and speak out about Jesus. First place is look is right next to you.
 - How do they need to be ministered to?
 - How can I meet their need spiritually, financially, physically, and emotionally with the Gospel in mind?
 - Where can I go to engage people with the Gospel – in introducing them to it or equipping them?
- Strategically plan: Do the difficult task of planning how you are going to purposefully live missionally. Teach the students how to actively engage their culture.
 - Cultivate the neighborhood that you are in
 - Engage your current sphere of influence
 - Equip those you are currently discipling

Resources:

- <http://www.acts29network.org/>
- "For the City" Matt Carter & Darrin Patrick
- "Radical" David Platt
- "UnChristian" David Kinnaman
- "Worldliness" CJ Mahanney
- "Too Small to Ignore" Wes Stafford
- "America's God" Mark Noll
- "The Deliberate Church" Mark Dever & Paul Alexander

Service: (Matt. 5:13-16; Isa 58; Eccl. 11:1-4; 1 Cor. 12:4; Eph. 3:10; 2 Cor. 8; Ps. 112:5; Deut. 10:12; Rom. 12:9-18)

Presuppositions: Our prayer is that you remember these things before we talk about service:

1. You were saved (Rom. 8:24; 1 Cor. 15:2; Acts 2:47). Don't forget that we were once dead in our sins and chasing the unsatisfying things of this world until God, in his mercy, saved us through Jesus Christ. Remember that you and I had no part of this salvation...and while we deserved death and abandonment, we were given a new life by the wrath-absorbing death of Jesus Christ.

2. You were adopted into a community of believers (Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-12; Acts 2:37-47; Acts 6:1-6; Romans 16:1-16). The moment you receive the gift of salvation, you are transferred into a family of believers. The next step for any Christian is to belong to a local body of believers (i.e. the local church).
3. There are expectations that you should have for the church and there should be expectations that the church should have for you.
 - a. Preaching and teaching of the Word of God
 - b. Membership and accountability
 - c. Equipping, training, and ministry to the saints
 - d. Cultivating the world with the Gospel

Where does “service” play in?

1. We teach here that God gives us our time, talents, money, abilities, and gifts for us (as a loan) to push back the darkness and for the building up of the body of Christ. We don’t deserve any of this stuff but God in his grace has given each person what they can steward. We need to remember this... (esp. those who work)...Scripture reminds us “the earth is the Lords and everything in it” (Ps. 24). We will be held accountable for how we have used what God has given us (Matt. 25:14-30).
2. Serve with your foundations in mind. The heart attitude of service flows from those three presuppositions that we previously mentioned. You serve because it is a response to the Gospel, commitment to the local church, and is an expectation.
3. Service does NOT terminate on the individual. What does that mean? We don’t serve primarily to get something out of it for ourselves. Please help teach our students that we don’t do things to get something out of it. We serve regardless of how difficult, if nobody else does it, or it’s awkward...we serve because we’re commanded to AND because when we trust and are faithful, God tends to bless that obedience.
4. Teach the youth:
 - a. Tithing: the purpose of tithing is to ultimately remind God’s children who it is that provides for us. Help them learn how to sacrifice their money and release their grasp on it. Teach them how to use it wisely, to budget, but in the end use it for God’s kingdom. As leaders, try and live below your means as an example. Be generous with your resources for the sake of the kingdom.
 - b. Sacrificial serving: teach them how to serve with joy and without complaining. Teach them how to serve in the small and large areas. Help them serve even in the difficult times. Teach them how to serve as a leader and as a role player. When you ask students to serve, serve right next to them...don’t be caught teaching something that you’re not doing yourself. Teach them to serve regardless of any immediate “reward”.

Things to watch out for:

1. Neglect: Ask yourself if you’re actively serving? And what’s your motive behind it? Why are you serving? Have you lost the purpose behind it? Do you need to repent and correct your ways?

2. Over-serving: Many of us tend to do too much at times. Maybe because we feel like nobody else is doing it so we have to do it all. Watch out for that. Why? Because then it becomes more about you than what it's supposed to be. Instead, train up others to help you or take your place. Another reason why people over-serve is because they think that if they keep serving and serving, they don't have to deal with other issues that are more uncomfortable. Beware of using ministry as a crutch for laziness.
3. Pride: Be careful that you don't believe that the ministry lives and dies because of you. If you start thinking that "nobody else does it as good as me" your pride might need to be evaluated.

Prayer: (Matt. 6:9-15; 2 Chron. 6:21; Num. 21:7; Jer. 29:7; Luke 18:1; Rom. 8:26; Jude 1:20; Heb. 12:2)

Leaders, this is *the* crux of our faith and our ministry. Our whole foundation and purpose is built off of this one fact – that in the end, God is the one who moves in the hearts of His people. What we tell our youth is that "we can do an awesome job planning these events, we can teach our guts out, we can bring millions of students from all over the world...but if God doesn't move, then this is all worthless." We have not forgotten that fact. We realize that we are limited creatures – unable to produce life changed based on what we do. It is why we constantly ask and beg God to be the agent of change. Prayer is not something we just do out of formality; rather it is part of our understanding and acknowledgement of who He is and who we are. Prayer reminds us of our own weakness and our lack of control... it forces us to our knees in humble submission. Prayer also reminds us that God can accomplish far more than we could ever imagine. We remember the truths told in Scripture and we believe God is still active today.

1. Constantly be in prayer: whether you're alone, with people, walking, sitting, etc...be praying for yourself, for those you disciple, for the youth group, for the church, and for the lost. When a student ask you to pray for them, ask them for specifics and then immediately pray for them. Always be asking God to help you see with Gospel-lenses wherever you go.
2. Sabbath: Find purposeful time unplugged from distractions or even "good" things for the sole purpose of engaging the Lord. Take an hour a day, a day a week, and a week a year to get away and meditate on the truths of God.
3. Fasting: When God's people desire him to move and they take it seriously...they show it by fasting. I challenge you to constantly work this into your schedule. Give up something that generally demands your attention or affection and fast from that thing so that you might use that time, energy, and resource begging God to move. Fast for your youth and while you do it, beg God that He might save them, that He might change their worldview, that He might heal them from the affects of sin...

How should I pray for the youth?

1. Salvation: Pray for their salvation. When you pray for their salvation, pray that they might coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Pray that they may continue in their salvation. Because we (ultimately) really don't know who is saved and who is not, pray for all of the youth.

2. Family: Pray for their relationship with their family. Typically we don't know much about our youth and their family but I promise you there's a lot of stuff going on in their family. Pray for the relationship between the youth and their parents. Pray for the relationship between the youth and their siblings. Pray for a bond of unity as well as spiritual growth to be had in the family.
3. Gospel: Pray that the gospel would penetrate every part of their lives. That they will see everything with those lenses and that their theology might affect their actions.
4. 7 Core Values: Pray that they may be living out these seven core values wherever they are. Pray that they find genuine community with fellow believers. Pray that they are burdened with sharing the Gospel with their community. Pray that as they engage scripture, they are transformed by its truth. Pray that they might yearn to want more of Jesus and that they might replicate themselves in others.

Sources for Devotions:

- "Taste and See" by John Piper
- "More Light on the Path" by Baker and Heath
- "Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire" by Jim Cymbala
- "Crazy Love" by Francis Chan
- "By Grace Alone" by Sinclair Ferguson

Leaders, I pray that you take your role seriously because of the empirical fact that Christ has loved and purchased you as a son and daughter. I hope that you realize that you were called out of darkness and now into the light and we gladly submit our all to him. We have the honor of serving our King as his servants. We continue to live out the command to "make disciples" as we go. I continue to beg God on your behalf that you are constantly frustrated with where you're currently at...for the sole purpose that you might cling to Jesus. I hope that you're never satisfied with apathetic religion, that you have distaste for sin, and an insatiable desire for God. I pray that you taste the joy that comes with seeing lives changed as you patiently work with our youth. I know that ministry is difficult and at times crazy. But don't forget who we model after...we model our lives and ministry after the One who has suffered all things, endured all things, and in the end, conquered all things. Praise be to God that has allowed us to participate with him in transforming lives. Take your role seriously. May you continue to faithfully serve...regardless of the results. Praise be to our God.