

5 Essentials for Youth Ministry

There are certain ‘**essentials**’ our youth at College Church of Christ need to be grounded in by the time they graduate from high school. For the following essentials to take root within the hearts and minds of our teens, they are to be ‘**ongoing conversations**’ that weave into everything we do. It’s important for these essentials to become a lifestyle of thoughts, words, and actions as we have a unique opportunity to plant the seeds and strengthen roots daily. What is possible when you are baptized into Jesus Christ?

1. The Bible (Word of God) is living truth inspired by the Holy Spirit, always pointing us to Jesus Christ.

- Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:16 - 17, and John 14:6 speak to this while we discover the Old Testament as Christ concealed, and the New Testament as Christ revealed.
- It’s important for teens to know that Jesus is our *objective standard of truth in life*. We have the Bible as a lamp to our feet/path as we walk in this journey with Him, as we discover a personal faith through a Christ-centered lens.
- As we partner with families it’s important that we show students how *relevant* Jesus, and His Word are for us today. It truly is living and active.

2. To know a good and loving Father through the person of Jesus Christ.

- A common theme throughout the gospel of John is Jesus saying he doesn’t do or say anything that is not from the Father. He is the will of the Father in the flesh and Hebrews 1:3 says, He is the radiance of God’s glory, the exact representation of His being. Through Christ we get to experience how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is for us (Eph. 3:14-21).
- He is a good and loving Father, and this was settled on the cross (Jn 3:16-17). **He loves us right where we are and loves us too much to leave us there.** While we all deal with consequences of poor choices, when you’re united with Christ in baptism, His love for you is not performance-based. His performance on the cross was enough.
- Our view of the Father changes everything and we must recognize, receive, and release the love of the Father through Jesus Christ. To consistently abide in the presence of our Father, we must view Him through a Spirit of sonship (Rom. 8:15-17). This relational view of our Father must become a way of life for us.
- As a son/daughter I believe it’s important we see God as our loving Father to live by the law of love. We are totally accepted in His love and secure in His approval as every teen hungers for true love and acceptance. This is big in their need for approval from their peers to continually remind them that nothing can separate them from the love of their Father.
- We are to model to our students the **power of prayer** as we get to approach His throne with confidence and boldness as His sons and daughters. The prayer of a righteous man/woman is **powerful and effective** as we are the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ. If it matters to our teens, it will matter to their Father. He is very approachable as in His sovereignty He has chosen to co-labor with His sons and daughters.

3. **A deeper understanding of our union with Christ as a New Creation, a branch to the Vine.**

- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Galatians 2:20, and John 15:5 are an important foundation of our faith under the New Covenant as we pursue excellence through Christ, within the body of Christ. When you **take Christ on in baptism**, how does this change you?
- It's vital to remind students of their true identity/potential in Christ. As we disciple them, we'll have opportunities to address mistakes by first reminding them of who they are as a Branch, and His unconditional love for them. We can then address the issue at hand, reminding them that's not what defines them.
- Whatever their struggles are, we get to remind them of the hope they have in Christ and how the Spirit can lead us to more and more to an overflow of our union with Christ. This is an ongoing conversation, to remind them in all the aspects of their lives that Jesus desires to bear much fruit through them for His glory. *Their daily responsibility is to respond to His ability within them.*

4. **How to honor/respect each other as servant-leaders.**

- The Bible tells us to honor the Son, be devoted to one another in love, and to honor each other above ourselves. It's important that we model a culture of honor as we desire to see the teens learn to honor and respect themselves and each other.
- Ephesians 4:29 is such a powerful reminder of how we are to build each other up, not tear each other down. Effective leaders are servants and encouragers.
- We need to intentionally give our teens an awareness of the power their words have over themselves and each other. Words usually release life or death. The gift of encouragement and **speaking life** to each other is an ongoing conversation with teens. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.
- As we equip our students to serve and share the Good News of the gospel here and beyond, we desire our students to cultivate a culture that intentionally looks for the gold in each other. They'll know we are Christians by our love for one another. (John 13:34 & Galatians 5:22-23)

5. **The importance of renewing our mind of the Good News, as we become aware of the lies of the enemy.**

- The Bible tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to take thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. In the Battlefield of the Mind, we need to remember that **in Christ** we battle 'from' a place of victory, not 'for' victory. (Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, 1 John 4:4, Philippians 4:8, and Ephesians 6:10-17)

Jesus came full of grace and truth (John 1:16-17). There is much grace on this journey for our teens, and for us as parents. Grace is not opposed to effort; grace is opposed to earning. Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ. ~Todd Miller