

# Developing a Youth Ministry



The Go Hard for Christ Edition



# Table of Contents

Letter from Pastor David Winston	1
About Us	2
Part 1: First Things First	
- God's Word	3
- Prayer	5
- Mission	6
- Vision	7
Part 2: The Basics of Youth Ministry	
- Your Identity	9
- Your Brand	10
- Your Culture	11
- Connect. Disciple. Transform.	15
Part 3: Teaching Tips	20
Part 4: Choosing a Team & Best Practices	22
Connect With Us	26

## Letter from Pastor David:

Youth ministry can be exciting, frustrating, and fulfilling all at the same time. It takes uniquely strong individuals to work with teenagers by choice, but the great thing about youth ministry is that you have a direct impact on the life of a teen. Teenagers are still deciding what kind of individual they will become in this life. We get the unique opportunity to encourage them... to inspire courage.

Throughout the years we have learned a thing or two about effective youth ministry, and in this handbook we share some of the wisdom that we have acquired. We know that youth ministry can sometimes seem like an overwhelming task, so instead of doing it alone, let's do it together. Remember, with God all things are possible!

No matter who you are, regardless of what qualifications you feel that you have or don't have, this is the most important thing to note:

**Whoever God calls, He qualifies--and those who obey God, are empowered to do that to which they are called.**

My hope and prayer is that this resource will be a great help to you, providing you with answers, strategies, and insight. I know that God will use you and your ministry to impact the lives of many youth, encouraging them to live unashamed for Jesus. #gohardforchrist

Keep Goin' Hard,

*David S. Winston*

Youth Pastor, Living Word Christian Center

# About Us

## Who We Are...

Go Hard for Christ™ Youth Ministry was founded under the commission of our senior pastor, Dr. Bill Winston, out of obedience to the Lord. God has truly given us a purpose and a call to reach the young people of Chicago, and raise up a *Holy Army* for the **Lord!**

Go Hard for Christ™ began in September of 2009. This ministry is a rebirth of the Living Word Christian Center Youth Ministry, and a reintroduction to life as a teen living on fire for Jesus! We are not looking to “play church” or simply entertain young people but to transform their minds and their lives through the power of the gospel! When we minister to young people, there is a process of transformation that is taking place, and the end result will be youth that will be witnesses for the kingdom of God, not only in their speech, but also with their lifestyles. We are honored to be in this position of influence where we can teach this generation how to truly rep the King of kings!

# Where to Start?

## First things first...

# GOD'S WORD

*“What does the Word say?”*

At Living Word Christian Center (LWCC) the focus is definitely on the Word of God. If the Word says it's wrong, then it's wrong! Since the Word plays such an active role in everything that LWCC does, it makes sense that the youth ministry should focus on the Word as well!

It's been said that a structure is only as strong as its foundation, so when starting any ministry the strongest thing that you can build it on is the Word of God! By starting with God's Word, you can be sure that your ministry's foundation is STRONG.

God's Word also gives your ministry's identity immediate meaning and purpose. If the Holy Spirit leads you to a scripture about love, then your ministry's unique identity will probably involve love in some way. Maybe you'll love others like no ministry in your area has or maybe the love that your youth ministry displays for God will be uniquely different from any other ministry you've seen.

When Pastor David sought God's Word, the Holy Spirit led him to Psalm 63:8 (Amplified Bible), "*My whole being follows hard after You and clings closely to You; Your right hand upholds me.*" Because of the ministry's foundational scripture, not only did it gain a name, Go Hard for Christ™ Youth Ministry, but Psalm 63:8 (AMP) defines the end goal of every youth that comes to our ministry. The end goal is that they *Go Hard for Christ!*

*So what are you founding your youth ministry on?*

# PRAYER

*“Every ministry failure can be tied to a prayer failure.”*

*Pastor Bill Winston*  
*@DrBillWinston*

Prayer and God’s Word often go together. Sometimes, praying will lead you to your foundational scripture or it will clarify exactly what it is that God wants you to do. But there is no doubt in our mind that prayer is absolutely essential to achieving the success that God has in mind for your youth ministry!

And even after your youth ministry has been started, prayer is still instrumental to its success. When Go Hard for Christ™ was still in its beginning stages, this concept was illustrated to Pastor David. He had just completed a teaching on making good decisions. The youth had a bit of time to hang out after service before their parents were dismissed from Bible study. A fight broke out between two girls right as youth service ended. Pastor David was surprised but also frustrated because he had been teaching on *not* doing exactly what they began acting out. He decided to talk to his dad about it and Pastor Winston immediately told him something that he’ll never forget. He said, **“Every ministry failure can be tied to a prayer failure.”**

As a result of our belief in the importance and power of prayer, we have a team of volunteers cover our youth ministry in prayer before services even begin.

# MISSION

*“Whatever you do, as it pertains to youth ministry, must be a part of the mission of the church that the youth ministry belongs to.”*

*Pastor David Winston*  
*@DavidSWinston*

When founding your youth ministry, you want to be sure that its mission doesn't conflict with the mission of the church that it belongs to. One way that we ensured this at Go Hard for Christ™ was by simply adopting the mission statement of Living Word Christian Center as our own. So the mission statement for both our youth ministry and LWCC is, *“To empower believers, through teaching, preaching, and demonstration of the uncompromised Word of God, to fulfill their highest calling and change this world through Jesus Christ.”*

**Though your audience and method may be a bit different, your mission can still be the same!**

Sharing a mission statement has two advantages:

1. It promotes unity throughout the ministry and ensures that the youth ministry isn't trying to accomplish something that isn't a priority to the senior pastor; eliminate the frustration.
2. The youth will eventually transition to being shepherded by the senior pastor. You can make that transition easier by having a similar mission.

*How can you incorporate your church's mission into your youth ministry?*



# VISION

*What does youth ministry look like to you?*

Just because you (should) have a similar mission statement as the church that your youth ministry is a part of doesn't mean that you can't add a bit of creativity and do things a bit differently. Before you start a youth ministry, decide what you'd like it to look like. **Define your vision.**

*At Go Hard for Christ™ God has given us the vision to go out into all the world and raise up an army of young people through Jesus Christ that will fight against the immorality that is trying to plague the young people of this generation: An army to advance the Kingdom of God.*

Who are we and what do we stand for?

1. We are an army that will boldly speak about Jesus Christ and never back down, slow up, give up, or shut up.
2. We are coming to take back a lost generation and restore the moral fabric to a society that has been slowly desensitized by the deception of the devil. We will accomplish this through the revelation and power of the infallible Word of God.
3. We are the advocates of change. We will operate by faith and act in love - taking back our schools, communities, and cities for Jesus!

Defining your vision helps you to understand exactly what it is that you're trying to accomplish.

*What is the vision for your youth ministry?*

# PART TWO:

## The Basics of Youth Ministry

# Your Identity

*Every youth ministry/organization has a different **mission** and different **identity**. Be true to who God has called you to be.*

Once you've developed a mission statement and defined the vision for your youth ministry, you can begin the unique task of creating your identity.

Your identity is basically your ministry's philosophy, culture, and its overall image. To begin to create a ministry identity, you would first ask yourself (and the Holy Spirit) what you want this particular ministry to be known for. How would you want others to describe your ministry? For example, Go Hard for Christ Youth Ministry teaches the Word of God, with absolutely no compromise. We go 100% hard for the Word of God, and everyone who is familiar with us knows that.

Your own ministry identity is important because it casts your vision in a way that is relatable and gives your youth something to buy into. When developing an identity be sure that you **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**. Know where they are in life and what situations they are dealing with, so you can be relevant in your approach. Once you have decided who you are as a ministry, establish that identity by doing what you believe. Don't look back. Let your ministry be exactly what God has put in your heart for it to be.

Once your identity is established, you can start building your **BRAND**.

# Your Brand

Build your **BRAND**. Establish your **BRAND**.  
Protect your **BRAND**.



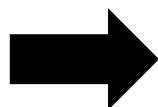
Your brand is important. A brand is what people think about when they hear your name. A great place to start when building a brand is with a logo. A logo provides an intentional image for your brand. It gives your mission, vision and identity a face. (We have protected our brand by trademarking it.)

...**THINK BIG!**

Build your brand as if you are reaching thousands or even millions of youth. If you're faithful with the few God has entrusted to you, He'll increase your scope and influence.

## BE OPEN

Your brand may evolve as your ministry grows or changes. At Go Hard we completely redesigned our logo (2012) and website (2014) to ensure that our brand grew as we did!



**Current & Relevant**

# Your Culture

*How do youth feel when they come to your youth ministry?*

*And how do they act when they get there?*

The culture that you create answers these questions. **Be intentional** about building a culture for your youth ministry. If you're not, you may find that you don't like the one that just kind of happens....

At Go Hard for Christ™, every new volunteer gets a copy of the culture that we've worked so hard to create and encourage. Because some things are better understood by seeing them, you can find our culture on the following pages.

## ***The Culture***

(Updated 9/21/12: Subject to change)

### ***In the World Today...***

Youth in the world today have forgotten who they are. Even in the Church, there are many youth that are not familiar with respecting their parents and authority figures, their peers, or even their own bodies.

### ***Prov. 30:11-14 says:***

<sup>11</sup>*There is a generation that curses its father,  
And does not bless its mother.*

<sup>12</sup>*There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes,  
Yet is not washed from its filthiness.*

<sup>13</sup>*There is a generation—oh, how lofty are their eyes!  
And their eyelids are lifted up.*

<sup>14</sup>*There is a generation whose teeth are like swords,  
And whose fangs are like knives,  
To devour the poor from off the earth,  
And the needy from among men.*

We are living in this time where ***children are purposely wounding other children*** with their words, cursing their parents, and disrespecting authority figures. They believe that because they “support” homosexuality and other perversions of God’s creations that it makes them more “pure” and “their eyelids are lifted up” from a false sense of compassion and “tolerance” when, in fact, it’s filthiness.

### ***Go Hard for Christ™ Youth Ministry is here to take this generation back!***

The devil has won many battles, but he HAS NOT won the war! The battle is ours, says the Lord, and Go Hard for Christ™ will fight this battle that rages against our youth, AND WIN! *The answer boils down to knowing who they are in Christ and having a genuine, intimate relationship with Him.* We make it our goal for every one of our young people to come to this place while under Go Hard for Christ™ Youth Ministry, however, ***while they are in our service, they MUST be held to our high cultural standard.***

The culture change starts right at home, in youth service, with our very own youth. We have a high expectation of our youth, young adults and Go Hard for Christ™ youth leaders. The following are some examples of ***The Go Hard for Christ™ Youth Ministry Culture.***

Go Hard for Christ™ Youth Ministry

**The Culture, Cont'd**

**Go Hard for Christ™ YOUTH culture:**

***We respect our speakers and the time they put into preparing to come before us:***

1. There is no texting, game playing or talking on the phone during service.
2. We don't leave our seat during service unless instructed to do so, or for an EMERGENCY bathroom break. We ask all youth to use the restroom before or after service.
3. We don't talk to or distract others while the Word is going forth.
4. We do whatever possible to encourage others to hear and retain the Word of God.

***We respect our bodies:***

5. We expect all of our youth to dress in a way that does not cause their brother or sister to stumble or be distracted.

***We respect each other:***

6. There is no negative or abusive talking between young people. We even discourage "treating" or "shade" (jokingly disrespecting or talking down to one another in a joking manner). We use words and conversation that AFFIRM, UPLIFT, AND SUPPORT!
7. The only excuse we have to lay our hands on each other is for a godly, loving embrace, or for a game or illustration wherein touching is necessary. There is no physical violence or public displays of affection (PDA) between unmarried couples during service.

***We respect the process:***

8. While we all know what is right and wrong, when an unsaved young person comes through that door, love is ALWAYS what they should receive and feel. We MUST be sensitive to people that do not know the truth, SO THAT they will COME TO KNOW THE TRUTH.

***We respect our youth:***

9. Disciplinary Action- If a youth is not behaving according to the standards we have set, we:
  - a. Ask them to control themselves by behaving properly (discontinuing whatever behavior may be distracting others).
  - b. If they cannot, we ask them to change seats/move away from others that may also be part of the distraction.
  - c. If they continue to be a distraction, we can remove them from visibility (i.e. The the back of the room). We will follow up by lovingly discussing the behavior with a parent or guardian. If one is not available, we can take the youth to one of the core leaders (see "Core Leaders" document) after service to discuss.
  - d. If they insist on being a distraction week after week, we can set up a one-on-one meeting between them, Pastor David, and possibly a parent or guardian, because all they want is probably a little extra attention anyway.

Go Hard for Christ™ Youth Ministry

**The Culture, Pg. 3**

**Go Hard for Christ™ LEADER Culture:**

***Your job as a Leader:***

1. To encourage and require our young people to behave at the standard we have set forth, and to do it in a loving manner.
2. To encourage and assist other youth leaders to do the same.
  - a. For some adults it is not as easy to discipline youth that are not their own.
  - b. For others, discipline comes easily, but doing it in a compassionate, loving way is a challenge.
  - c. We, as leaders together, are called to help each other find that balance.

***If, as a leader, we feel that you are not reflecting God's love, we will privately address you:***

1. We will first, simply ask you to make changes.
2. If there is not sufficient change, we will help you find avenues to learn more about the behavior we expect, including some possible time off from Go Hard Youth Ministry.
3. If after counsel, time-off and education tools provided by us, we have not seen the example of the Love of Christ in you that we were looking for (and you WILL receive MUCH grace and mercy), we will ask that you dismiss yourself from this ministry, and we will help you find another possible outlet for ministry elsewhere in the Church.

**HOW Pastor David Does Things...**

Some things you should know...

1. Approximately every year we have an "Encounter" (see "Related Ministries and Volunteer Opportunities" document).
2. Most often, messages are taught in a "series" format that last for several weeks.
3. We generally end each session with small groups (see "Related Ministries and Volunteer Opportunities" document).
4. All Go Hard for Christ new visitor follow up is accomplished by a follow-up phone call.
5. Pastor David puts today's technology at work for Christ, by communicating via group text, group email, group voicemail, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and via [www.gohardforchrist.com](http://www.gohardforchrist.com)
6. Pastor /David does not get heavily involved in disciplinary action that involves security or police. As a ministry, we do our part, and hand the situation over to the proper authorities. Once legal matters are taken care of, Pastor David's doors are open to the associated youth for wise counsel/spiritual guidance.
7. Pastor David does not counsel with young (or not so young) ladies (including leaders) on a one-on-one basis. Another person is always present with him when doing so.
8. Our doors are open. We are open and honest. What you want to know, we will share with you, and what you need help with, we will do our best to help you in a loving, non-judgmental manner.



**CONNECT.**

**DISCIPLE.**

*TRANSFORM.*

# CONNECT

## Social Media

From Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, to Kik, we're everywhere that our youth are! A great way to build a connection with young people is by interacting with them online. It's also a great way to encourage them and to reach more people with the message of Jesus!

## Events

Events are a great way to reach out to new youth and get them excited about what your ministry is doing! At Go Hard for Christ™, we have four "*The Spot*" events a year: one per quarter. The goal of our *The Spot* event is to allow our young people to have fun while still providing a safe positive environment. One of the cool things about *The Spot* is that while we don't do any formal message, youth still give their lives to Christ!

We've also had *summer camp* getaways a few times! Getting away and allowing our youth to get to know each other, their youth leaders, and God is always a unique experience. There's nothing better than swimming in the lake, roasting marshmallows, and teambuilding activities to bring a group together!

We like to have fun, but we never forget our purpose at Go Hard! Our *Encounter Conference* allows us to get **The Word** in our youth in one power packed weekend! Small groups, short messages, altar calls & healings, flash mobs and a celebration concert are just a few of the tools that we use to foster a *REAL transformation* in the lives of those that attend!

## Transparency

*When connecting with youth, always be as transparent as possible. This will make them feel like you can relate to them and they will open up.*

Using your story and things you've been through may be the perfect tool that will make your messages and yourself that much more relatable and approachable.

# DISCIPLE

*“To empower believers, through teaching, preaching, and demonstration of the uncompromised Word of God, to fulfill their highest calling and change this world through Jesus Christ.”*

We're not interested in being a prayer crutch for our youth! Instead we'd prefer to show our youth how pray! Part of our mission at Go Hard for Christ™ speaks directly to discipleship as is evidenced through the mission that both our youth ministry and Living Word Christian Center have adopted. That's why we started this section off with our mission.

We believe that as a part of empowering our youth, we have an obligation to show them the “how-to.” Our goal is to empower youth to make their own good decisions by giving them guidelines to help them determine what the right choice is. We will also find a scripture for them to stand on and prayer confessions for them to say, so that their walk with God is personal. We want to be sure that they know God personally and not just know of Him!

Go to [www.gohardforchrist.com/prayers--other-resources](http://www.gohardforchrist.com/prayers--other-resources) to download prayer confessions we use.

# TRANSFORM

IF THEN  
WE WE  
CAN CAN  
CONNECT INSPIRE  
WITH YOUR  
YOU LIFE.

The motivation behind everything we do at Go Hard for Christ™ is to create a lasting transformation in the lives of those we impact. It's the reason we CONNECT and DISCIPLE, and it's the reason why we exist. At Go Hard for Christ™, we believe that God has pre-arranged a life for the youth to live called *the good life* as it says in Ephesians 2:10 (AMP). But to live the good life, you have to live life according to God's ways.

When we teach the Word, we know that seeds of transformation are being sown into the hearts of many. As we know, transformation is a process, and though we may not see immediate results, you must have faith that your young people are receiving the seeds into the good soil of their heart. The Word tells us not to grow weary in well doing, but in due season we will reap if we don't give up. We must be sure that, though it may take a while to see, transformation is taking place. And as they live according to the Word, they will live the life that God meant for them to live... The Good Life!

# PART THREE:

## Teaching Tips

We've compiled a list of **teaching tips** that we've found to be helpful!

- Make the Word “culturally relevant.” **(TEACH THE WORD!)**
- “Cross the bridge” from teaching to application.
- **Use illustrations and personal stories/testimonies. This helps them retain the message better.**
- Keep them engaged! Once you lose their attention it is hard to get it back.
- Do not talk over people. Remember, you must create a culture of respect.
- **Teaching in a series format yields great benefits.**  
(Ideal length: 3 Parts - Max length: 5 Parts)
- Let the Holy Spirit lead and He will lead you to good resources. We don't use a curriculum, and you don't have to either. Sometimes we will just reinforce what our senior pastor is teaching but in a different and more relevant way.
- Often it helps to tell a youth why something is important in order to get them to “buy into” it.
- **We started a free audio Podcast.** Pre-recorded teachings can be streamed or downloaded. Youth are now able to listen to the teaching if they are absent. [www.Gohardforchrist.podomatic.com](http://www.Gohardforchrist.podomatic.com)

# PART FOUR:

Choosing a Team & Best Practices



# LEADERS: CHOOSING A TEAM



*Choose a team of individuals with different gifts & skills.*

Choose people who are:

- Committed
- Passionate about youth
- Willing to serve
- Can be transparent
- Will submit to authority
- Faithful
- Tithers

**Once you've chosen your team, remember two things:**

1. Background check them. This'll ensure that it's ok for them to work with minors.
2. Use, don't abuse them! They're here to serve, but remember that they have lives too!

# BEST PRACTICE

## When Dealing with the Senior Pastor

Manage expectations with the senior pastor. Be sure that his vision for youth ministry is being satisfied! Keep him/her informed and up to date on what's going on with the youth ministry.

## When Dealing with Parents

Always keep an open channel of communication. Parents like to be informed as well. We've noticed a funny trend with our Facebook page: we've found that many of the youth's parents like our page and comment on our content, sometimes more often than the youth themselves do.

## Dealing with Youth

- Keep your expectations high, but don't demand perfection (from leaders or youth).
- Be compassionate and understanding at all times.
- Know that some youth live a life that may be very challenging, making it hard for them to behave properly at church.
- Youth simply model the behavior displayed at home.

## When Dealing with Youth (continued)

- Speak life into these young people because they are the future of our nation. Words have power.
- **Make sure you have proper protocols when dealing with situations that may have legal implications.**

(Background checks are encouraged)

- Sexual/physical abuse, suicide attempts, rape, etc.
- Make a comprehensive plan to help restore broken or wounded youth.
- Establish proper boundaries.

## When Dealing with Anything

Remember to always incorporate the Holy Spirit in everything you do and He will lead you!

# Connect with Us!

Via Email:

[Youthministry@lwcchelps.org](mailto:Youthministry@lwcchelps.org)

Text: “**GOHARD**” to **55000** to receive our texts



[www.facebook.com/gohardforchrist](http://www.facebook.com/gohardforchrist)



[www.twitter.com/gohard4christ](http://www.twitter.com/gohard4christ)



KIK:

[@gohardforchrist](https://www.kik.com/@gohardforchrist)



[www.instagram.com/gohardforchrist](http://www.instagram.com/gohardforchrist)

Or connect w/ Pastor David on Twitter & Instagram  
**@DavidSWinston**