



YOUTH MINISTRY

What Our Youth Ministry is All About

Our Goal in Youth Ministry

Our goal in Youth Ministry is simple. We aim to come alongside parents during the middle and high school years in gospel and discipleship ministry. This takes on a wide variety of forms through different events, opportunities to serve, and teaching formats, but the goal is always in view. We also have an uploaded philosophy for approaching Youth Ministry that touches on every aspect of the ministry. That philosophy, simply put, is that our ministry is meant to be a tool and a complement to the primary discipleship role of parents, helping teens in their transition years from childhood to adulthood to understand the faith and own it for themselves, see very clearly what it looks like to faithfully follow Jesus as teens, and prepare them for long-term faithfulness and ministry responsibility as Christ following church members when they're done with Youth Ministry.

To get there, we do have a Youth Ministry *program*. But the program doesn't cover all of the needs for Youth Ministry. The program is the Youth Pastor's primary teaching platform for the students. It's probably best to consider the Youth Ministry program as a trellis of the First Baptist Church's overall ministry. We will detail the program below. We also have a variety of youth-focused Bible studies, outreaches, and service opportunities, whether weekly or one-off events that are more organically led by several church members.

Youth Ministry "Program"

The word "program" for ministry has fallen on hard times in recent years. By "program," we simply mean the Youth Ministry Bible studies, events, trips and service opportunities that occur year-to-year.

Youth Bible for Life

Youth Bible for Life is our Sunday morning small groups Bible study. The large group is divided up into smaller classes along gender and age lines. We have a team of teachers for these classes, who dedicate their time toward personal study and prayer with the goal of faithfully teaching God's Word to their classes on a weekly basis, firming up each student's foundational understanding of the Christian faith. Class content in Youth BFL usually takes on broader topics, such as systematic theology, understanding whole books of the Bible, rather than very detailed expositional studies.

Wednesday Night Bible Study

Our Wednesday Night Bible study is part of the “glue” that organizes the ministry as a whole. It is not just a Bible study, but our Bible study is its most important feature. We fellowship before and after, giving youth a supervised time to hang out together, and even talk with adult volunteers about their walk with Christ. During our Bible study time, we pray together, the youth worship team leads us in praise songs, and then we teach the Bible study (most weeks). Our usual approach on Wednesday Night is an expositional Bible study, building week after week, going through a selected book of the Bible. The Bible study is more lecture style than the adult Wednesday Night study, but it is more laid back than strictly lecture, offering opportunities as appropriate for feedback, questions, and answers. In this teaching format, the goal is to help the youth understand Scripture, learn how they can study it on their own, help in application, and give them a grand vision for the greatness of God and the gospel of Christ.

Major Events

The major events we do capture a lot of attention, and take up a big chunk of our budget, yet we think they are a great stewardship of the time, energy and money given toward youth. Our major events include DNOW, camp, and the fall retreat. Also included in this category would be any smaller retreats, mission trips that include several youth, and other events that may not happen every year. Our major events often involve dozens of church members in ministry to our students; they help bring in visitors and loosely involved families into tighter fellowship in the church; they are often occasions for training, partnering, and service opportunities; the youth get very hands on in small groups in learning how to study the Bible; we challenge the youth in an intensive setting to follow Christ faithfully.

- **DNOW.** DNOW stands for Disciple Now. This is an event that centers around providing an intensive time of youth-discipleship over a particular biblical theme or text over the period of a weekend (usually focused on the external journey), along with service to the community. DNOW is an in-town retreat that involves over 100 church members every year to make it happen. Included in the weekend are Bible teaching sessions, worship, fellowship, service projects and evangelism, small group discussions, and games.
- **Summer Camp.** For summer camp, we've been going to MFUGE. MFUGE is a 5-day summer camp with great Bible teaching, worship, and fun. Plus, each afternoon teams go out into the surrounding communities to serve and/or share the gospel (the “M” in MFUGE stands for “mission”). The different categories of service include evangelism, children’s ministry, social ministry, yard work, and games and recreation. The youth spend time in Bible study before going out to serve each day. They team build, come up with a plan, and are very hands on in leading these ministries. In addition to the serving opportunities, the camp focuses on the gospel, helping the youth to understand how and why their lives should center on Christ. We have seen several youth make professions of faith in Christ while at MFUGE.

- **Fall Retreat.** Fall Retreat is similar to DNOW, but it takes place at a nearby Christian camp and the focus is more on the internal journey. The timing of the Fall Retreat is also very strategic, because it's a great way to introduce 6th and 7th graders to the Youth Ministry, and often their parents come along as chaperones.
- **Others.** Over the years, we have had parents lead smaller retreat weekends for certain segments within the Youth Ministry. This has been hugely helpful to the overall unity of the youth group and connecting families in friendship with one another. We have also had many one-off outreach and service opportunities that haven't been directly connected to DNOW, MFUGE, or mission trips. We don't necessarily do each one of these every year, mainly because these tend to be more organic, but also because we don't want to over-schedule the Youth Ministry.

Service Opportunities

We believe that Youth Ministry should include practical ways for students to "go and serve," in addition to the Bible training ("sit and learn") they will receive through our Bible studies. These service opportunities include partnering with the outreach efforts of our church plants, VBS, serving senior adults and others in need through things like yard work, and giving sacrificially to organizations like Baptist Global Response. Some of these service opportunities are aspects of our major events, others are smaller one-off projects, while others are in joint-partnership with other church ministries.

"Fun" Opportunities

In many cases, Youth Ministry has been unfairly criticized over the years as being entertainment-driven babysitting for teenagers, divorced from discipleship and serious Bible study. While we're sure there are examples that can be given of such a practice, much of the criticism that has been made is probably due to a misunderstanding of the place of "fun" in our lives in general. We believe that "fun" opportunities can be a valuable, although not a primary aspect, of Youth Ministry. Our Youth Ministry at FBC is a serious ministry, yet these occasional "fun" events can provide a place for fellowship, deepening of friendships, inclusion of visitors and others who are only loosely connected with the church to engage the Youth Ministry and find out more of what we're all about. They can also be great opportunities for youth to invite their friends to church, especially if they aren't currently attending a church anywhere else. These fellowship events include our summer after-the-Bible-study events, Turkey Bowl, and the Christmas Party. As for the latter two events, these give parents an easy opportunity to serve the Youth Ministry, spend time with its leaders, and fellowship with other families. Often, also, these kinds of events are coupled together with discipleship efforts.

Organic Youth Ministry

The Youth Ministry at FBC is much more than a program. There is family discipleship. Youth are encouraged, along with their families, to be regularly involved in our Home Fellowships small group ministry. (There isn't a designated "youth" small group.) Plus, there are many ways Youth Ministry goes on at FBC, whether it's formally connected to the Youth Pastor's oversight or not. These are signs of the church engaging in ministry to young people in a very healthy way. Our ministry to students at FBC would be very lacking, if all the ministry we did among them was our regular calendar program!

One-On-One Discipleship

Every year, there are several youth who are being discipled one-on-one, whether by a pastor or some other member of the church. Families have expressed great gratitude that there are people very interested in investing in their youth-aged children in discipleship. Usually, these one-on-one discipleship meetings involve high school students who have sought out a mature Christian to disciple them.

Small Group Discipleship/Bible Studies

Similar to one-on-one discipleship, there are usually two to four small group discipleship groups meeting during the school year, often early in the morning. Like the one-on-one meetings, these are usually being led by youth parents or FBC pastors, and are open to a number of youth coming. Some are in church members' homes, some are at coffee shops, some are at church. Some might even, at least occasionally, be youth led. Most of the time these groups are divided by gender and/or age/grade in school. Usually these small groups are studying through a book of the Bible, but they may occasionally do an age-appropriate book study.

Regular Outreach Ministry

Most regular outreach ministry opportunities for the youth will arise out of an ongoing ministry that is already being led by a church member. This includes the city apartment ministry outreach to children on Tuesday nights, and to youth on Wednesday afternoons. Youth have also served in the Caring Center, have partnered with South Durham Church in doing outreach, and have been recruited to serve in occasional or regular ways with FBC's International Connections Ministry.

Partnering Opportunities

Our primary partnership in recent years has been with South Durham Church, a church plant out of FBC Durham, which has resulted in a number of different service projects over the years. But we have also partnered occasionally with Durham Public Schools, CEF, Baptist Global Response, and Ridgecrest Baptist Church in order to put together certain accessible service opportunities for the

youth, always with the aim of hitting one or more of these three goals: praying, giving, going. Our partnership opportunities also include any mission or AGM-style trips that youth are given an opportunity to go on.

Connecting Youth to Other Ministries

While Youth Ministry as a program primarily focuses on aspects of personal growth in discipleship, one of the best ways for youth to have opportunities to share their faith or serve others is to connect occasionally to other FBC ministries as needs come up. These opportunities include VBS, serving at the Health Fair, doing canvassing or evangelism as organized by our evangelism team or International Connections, serving as childcare workers, and more. Youth are often encouraged to be a part of certain men's and women's ministry gatherings, as appropriate. There really are many, many ways for students to be trained up for ministry through opportunities like these.

Involving Parents

Every week, several parents and other adults are involved in assisting the Youth Pastor in the Youth Ministry. From co-BFL teachers to providing supervision or assisting with logistics, parents can easily be closely involved in our team effort for student ministry. Even for parents who are serving in other areas or don't feel personally led to serve in a very hands-on way in Youth Ministry, our major events and partnering opportunities provide many different ways for parents to help us help them in the discipleship of their teenaged children.

Baptism & Church Membership

As students come into the Youth Ministry, we want them to begin to have a firm grasp about what it means to be a Christian, what they must believe, and what Christ demands of his followers. As we walk through these things with students, we are encouraging them toward taking faith-filled steps. These especially include teaching them what the Bible says about salvation, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the importance of church membership. Our hope is that as students go through their years in the Youth Ministry, we will see many of them baptized, and in due time, many of them becoming church members, and serving in ways outside their group ministry.

Training Young Leaders

Our ministry to students also makes for a great opportunity to bring alongside FBC's leaders a number of young leaders (usually in their mid-20's) in training. We have done this over the years through internships, including young leaders in Youth BFL teaching roles, providing opportunities to teach occasionally on Wednesday Nights, and through being small group leaders at events like DNOW. We make an effort to provide helpful feedback and training for those who come alongside us to co-teach.