

relevant STUDENTS

Small Group Leader Packet

WELCOME TO RELEVANT

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

-Hebrews 13:7 ESV

In 2007 a movement began. From a small group of students, leaders, and pastors a ministry was born, and the focus of that ministry from the very beginning was for movement of Jesus for students here in Clarksville to spread. It started small and has grown into the biggest student movement for Jesus in Clarksville, TN.

You are part of that movement

No matter what area you serve in, you are playing a **VITAL** part in the movement of Jesus Christ into the lives of students. We have the opportunity every Wednesday to help students see that there is a Savior who loves them personally, intentionally, deeply, and to carry that truth in a decision to live every single day for Him. You have the opportunity to point them to the Rescuer of the un-lived life, the One who gives us **Real Life**.

Every Wednesday through

**greeters,
security protectors,
tech controllers,
childcare workers,
worship leaders,
pastors,
and small group leaders**

we are attempting to impact students.

We are fighting to show students the Jesus who brings them healing, love, peace, and Real Life above all. What you are preparing to take part in, by serving in Relevant Students, is hard work. It is tiring and emotional work, but it is also the most rewarding, powerful, and beautiful place to see God at work.

This booklet serves as an introduction to our ministry, a training, a reference, and a means of helping you to feel equipped in whatever area you lead in.

Make sure to intentionally read and study this booklet, because through this booklet you will begin to set yourself up for success this year in leading students to Jesus.

Above all though, no booklet or training can equip or prepare us in the way that dependence upon Jesus can. Make sure throughout this year **your greatest teacher and leader is Him.** It is only through our devotion to Him that we will be able to impact our students this year.

Finally, leaders I am so proud of you all for having a desire to lead. I can't begin to tell you how thankful I am for each and every one of you. We couldn't reach these students without you, and I don't take that truth for granted. I am praying for you all this year, and I know you can lead students toward real life change.

LET'S GO!

-Van Riggins
Student Pastor

WHO WE ARE

*“For the word of God is alive and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword,
it penetrates even to dividing soul
and spirit, joints and marrow;
it judges the thoughts and
attitudes of the heart.”*

-Hebrews 4:12

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Relevant Students is a ministry of Grace Community Church, which is a church that is non-denominational (unaffiliated with any specific church denomination). **We believe in Jesus Christ and His ability to change lives above everything else.**

Below are the more specific pieces of what we believe in regards toward God, the church, our possible relationship with Him, and our continuing growth in Him.

Scripture

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”

-2 Timothy 3:16

We believe that the **whole** Bible is the inspired Word of God, written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, **the Bible is true, reliable, and authoritative.** It is one of our most powerful, and prominent means of hearing from the heart of God, which means it should be the guide for our lives in what it looks like to live more and more like Jesus daily.

God

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...’”

-Matthew 28:18-19

We believe that **God is the Creator of all.** That He is the Holy Father that is spoken of in scripture. God is worthy of all our lives, worship, and praise because He is worthy in His goodness in creating life, in His power in being able to do so, and in His love for giving us a possible eternity with Him.

We also believe in the Trinity, that **there is one God who eternally exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** Each equally the same One God, but with distinct differing roles in creation.

People

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

-Romans 3:23

We believe that **men and women were perfectly created by God** to experience rich life in relationship with Him and obey His commands. **However, all people have rebelled and fallen short** of God’s intention. Therefore, men and women are all spiritually dead, subject to God’s judgment, **and incapable of saving themselves.**

Salvation

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

-Romans 6:23

God is good and loving that He doesn’t desire eternal punishment, separation from Him, or spiritual death, so He sent a rescuer, a Savior, His own son Jesus Christ.

We believe that Jesus, while on earth was 100% human and 100% God. **Jesus lived a perfect life and did everything we were supposed to do.** Then, in obedience to the Father, He died on the cross as a sacrifice in our place to pay for the penalty of sin. Three days later He rose from the dead through the Holy Spirit’s power. **We are saved, forgiven, and restored to the life God intended for us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.**

The Church

"...We are many persons. But in Christ we are one body. And each part of the body belongs to all the others parts."

-Romans 12:5

We believe that the Church is built of believers, those who have trusted in Jesus for salvation, and who, as a result, have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. **The local church is God's primary tool in the world today for accomplishing His mission** to forgive and restore, which will be ultimately accomplished when Jesus returns to the earth to fully establish God's Kingdom.

Next Steps

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

-2 Peter 3:18

We are called to grow in our relationship with Jesus, and to look more and more like Jesus. We believe this is done through taking next steps in our relationship with God and others, to deepen our fellowship with Him and His people. Everyone has a next step, and we must be pursuing ours regularly.

Our next steps can be as simple as wanting to know more about Jesus to accepting Him into our lives. **Next steps are personal and appear in many different ways to us, but we can have confidence in our next steps by the convicting strength of the Holy Spirit.**

If you have any more specific questions in regards to our beliefs please email Van Riggins at VRiggins@GraceClarksville.com

Our Mission

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’

-John 14:6

No matter who you are, where you are from, how old or young you are, what you believe or don't believe there is something that can't be denied, **we all desire something in life**. We are a people of passions, dreams, aspirations, desires. All of these things manifest to an idea that if we could just have that thing, achieve that goal, be with/like that person we would find ultimate joy and satisfaction in this life, but the undeniable truth is:

nothing in this world ultimately satisfies.

We will always be left wanting more from what this world has to offer. Why? Because we weren't made for this world, we were made for the perfect world, and life, God created for us. So deep within us our hearts and souls long for Him, and only Him, but sadly we miss that by our passion and desire for the cheap and quick satisfactions of this world.

We exist at Relevant to point students toward what they truly desire in this life, Real Life, which can only be found in a life for Jesus.

In Middle and High School we all live for something that we think will bring us life: Girls, Grades, Sports, Likes, Popularity, a Car, Friends, Dance, Music, Cheer, Video Games, Jealousy, Etc.

But these things won't and can't satisfy, so every week we are fighting to show our students the One who does, can, and will.

Every week we fight for the hearts of our students to be saved by Jesus!

What We Value

We have four values at Relevant that influence the way we expect our staff, leaders, and students to be able to understand and live out. Our values shape the way we do everything in our ministry to help our students discover Real Life. These values are:

Everyone is Welcome

“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

-Romans 15:7

We all come from different walks, different places, with different baggage. **No matter who a student is, what they have done, what they believe, how they live, or how they respond when here; we want every student to know they are welcome.** Grace means welcoming those that don't deserve to be welcomed, but because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are all welcome.

We're Better Together

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

-Proverbs 27:17

God created us to be in relationship. Our most important role on a Wednesday is to help students know there is a relationship for them: FIRST and ULTIMATELY with Christ, but also with His people. **We live our best life when we do it with Christ and community.**

Being the Difference

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

-Matthew 5:16

We were made to be different. **God has set us apart from the world to live counter to what is “the norm” in this world.** When we understand we are made to be different, we can begin to be the difference in this world. We can begin to make a difference by loving others, serving others, and leading others to new, different, and real life.

Pursuing Next Steps

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

-2 Peter 3:18

Everyone has a next step in their relationship with Jesus. When we search, find, and pursue our next steps with Jesus, we grow in our relationship with Him. When we pursue our next steps regularly, we begin to look more and more like Jesus.

Roles and Responsibilities

*“Make a careful exploration of who you are
and the work you have been given,
and then sink yourself into that.
Don’t be impressed with yourself.
Don’t compare yourself with others.
Each of you must take responsibility for
doing the creative best you can
with your own life.”*

-Galatians 6:4-5

Roles

We have all been blessed with different spiritual gifts by God. For some of us it hospitality, for others it is teaching, others may be gifted in kindness. **No matter your spiritual gift, we have a place for you to not only serve, but thrive.**

Here are the roles available for serving at Relevant:

Hospitality

Help students feel welcomed through introducing them to Relevant for the first time, signing new students up for small group, selling food and drinks, or selling merchandise.

Set-Up/Tear Down Team

Help create an environment for students to feel welcomed and worship.

Parking and Security Team

Help facilitate students to where they need to be, keep students safe, and secure our ministry from “unwelcome guests” (adults in the building who are not parents/have no role).

Tech Team

Help prepare an environment for focus and worship during the student service.

Connection Team

Help students feel welcomed and prepared for worship through games and connection with other students and leaders.

Worship Team

Help students worship and fall in love with God in active worship through music to the Savior.

Small Group Mentors

Help small group leaders navigate their groups and their lives in a way that deepens their group and personal relationship with Jesus.

Small Group Leaders

Help students navigate life in a way that deepens their relationship with Jesus.

Responsibilities

One of the most beautiful and intimidating parts of being a small group leader is being responsible for students.

Leaders are not only responsible for their students during a Wednesday night or camp, but they are responsible for helping lead them, navigate them, and developing them in their spiritual growth.

This is a huge task to undertake, and we want to help you. Through the following list of responsibilities as a leader, we want to show you what to focus on doing for your group and how to lead them in this

BIG responsibility of discipling them. These responsibilities are designed to not only help your students grow closer to you, other students, and their Savior, but these responsibilities all for you to have the best possible experience in leading your group!

Be Present

Show up predictably, mentally, and randomly

Predictably- As a small group leader you are committing to a one year service (August 2018-August 2019) unless previously discussed with the Student Pastor. You are also committing to be present at Relevant 97% of Wednesdays, which means you are committing to not miss more than 5-6 Wednesdays in a Relevant school year. Wednesday's that you need to miss make sure notify the small group coordinator and your co-leader as soon as possible, preferably at least one week in advance.

Wednesday nights begin for Middle School leaders no later than 5:30PM and High School leaders no later than 7PM when leaders are expected to be in their Leader Huddles. Leader Huddles will cover important information regarding the night, dates for events that leaders need to know, general updates, and most importantly spiritual focus through prayer. Leaders are then expected to be present with their students for the remainder of the night through interaction before service, games, worship, message during service, and small group.

Finally, leaders will wait with students until their last student has been picked up (or for Middle School leaders: is in their designated area awaiting a sibling or parent to be done with High School service.)

Mentally- As a small group leader when you are present on a Wednesday you are fully here from the moment you walk into the building until the moment your last student leaves. Whatever may be going on outside of this building, leave it behind you as you worship through serving.

Randomly- As a small group leader your job is more than just showing up on Wednesday's; it means being a part of your student's lives. Small group leaders pray for their students, encourage them during the week, and make an effort to spend time with them several times a semester outside of Wednesday nights.

Create a Safe Place

Extend grace, be appropriate, remember the time and place

Extend grace- As a small group leader you are called to forgive your students. Let's be honest, your students will probably do something at some point to upset, annoy, or bother you. Remember to love each student, no matter what they have done in the past.

Be appropriate- As a small group leader you are held to a higher standard, which means that what you share and how you share it needs to be appropriate to where you are and who you're speaking to. It's important to not discuss marital or relational discord, personal struggles that are too scary or intense for the age or experience of a student, or to joke/act in a way that is unbecoming of a leader of students.

Remember the Time and Place- As a small group leader you are expected to protect your group and students. Remember that group time is not a time that we can guarantee privacy. We can't ensure that students won't share what another student says outside of group. **It's important for a student to express what is honestly troubling them or where they're struggling or growing, but something that could cause them harm isn't safe.**

Make sure it is known that students can share anything with you, but **navigate your students to safety if they share "too much" with everyone in the group.** Make sure to follow up with that student one-on-one immediately after group, to learn more and guide through the situation. If the situation involves: physical/sexual abuse, suicidal thoughts with students, life threatening situations with students, pregnancy, runaway situations, felonies, situations where a student expressed something strange or suspicious, substance abuse, or if you suspect a student is going to commit a crime make sure to inform the Student Pastor or Small Group Coordinator.

Partner with Parents

Encourage the relationship and keep them in the loop

Encourage the relationship- Parents are a student's greatest influence. It is vital that we encourage our students to see who their parents are, why they do what they do, and to always value that relationship.

Keep them in the Loop- All gatherings, outside of a Wednesday night, must be done with parents permission. If you meet with a student, have a night out with your group, or learn of something serious with a student (such as: physical/sexual abuse, suicidal thoughts with students, life threatening situations with students, pregnancy, runaway situations, felonies, situations where a student expressed something strange or suspicious, substance abuse, or if you suspect a student is going to commit a crime) you must make sure the student's parents are in the loop either by informing Student Pastor or Small Group Coordinator.

Model Faith

Be appropriately transparent and practice what you preach

Be appropriately transparent- Students need to know that faith is a journey we go on for our entire lives. No one has everything figured out. Honesty of who we are, that we struggle, and that we all need God is key for a leader to demonstrate, but it must be done appropriately. Remember who your group is, what they can handle, and what is appropriate to share.

Practice what you preach- Hypocrisy is a relationship killer. When we encourage those we lead to do something, or stop doing something, we should be pursuing the same thing. Remember, you are a *leader*.

Expectations

*“We don’t put anything in anyone’s way.
So no one can find fault with
our work for God.”*

-2 Corinthians 6:3

As a leader you don't only represent this ministry, you represent the name of Jesus.

We want to make sure our leaders are above reproach, so there's no obstacle between a leader discipling a student in Real Life.

The following expectations are intended for that purpose, but also to help leaders develop their personal relationship with Jesus as well. By agreeing to these expectations, you are agreeing that Relevant Staff members hold you accountable to each of these things.

Personal Expectations

Who I am before I'm a leader

- I have trusted in Jesus for salvation and am in the process of my next step
- I support what Relevant Student Ministry believes
- I will gather with the church regularly, and work to grow in my relationship with Jesus
- I will not use illegal drugs or practice substance abuse
- I will strive for sexual purity
- I will be part of a small group for my spiritual feeding/growth

Leader Related Expectations

Who I am as a leader

- I will serve with a positive attitude
- I will strive to honor the marriages and relationships of other leaders. I will maintain a professional relationship with all leaders
- I will consistently fulfill my responsibilities as a leader

Student Related Expectations

Who I am around students

- I will notify the Small Group Coordinator at least one week in advance in the case of my absence on a Wednesday night (unless of emergency in which I will let her know as soon as possible)
- I will lead as a mentor, leader, and friend in that order
- I will strive to love each of my students equally
- I will admit when I don't know something, and seek to find an answer
- I will strive to help each of my students discover and apply Real Life/Next Steps

Student Leader Expectations

How I lead as a student (For Senior student leaders only)

- I am a student first, before I am a leader, which means I am expected to attend High School Relevant services, and my Relevant Small Group, on Wednesday nights. I am aware that there will be nights I hear the same message twice, and hear the same small group questions twice, but there is a difference between feeding students (leading them) and being fed as a student (being led by my Relevant leaders)

Safety

“But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.’”

-Matthew 19:14

At Relevant Student Ministry, we exist for students first. We exist to help students navigate Real Life in Jesus Christ. As a result, we put student safety as a priority in our ministry. We want to make sure that students have a safe place to gather with friends their age, worship together, and grow together in a safe environment.

Without a safe place to worship, our students will be hindered in their worship.

To help ensure student safety we have rules and expectations in place to protect our students *but also* our leaders. The following procedures and expectations are in place to help you navigate how to help students in crisis and danger. They also exist to help you lead with **confidence, clarity, and conviction.**

Conduct with Students

Who I am around students

- I will not drink, smoke, or party with any students, nor will I encourage them to do the same
- I will not use foul or inappropriate language toward or around other students
- I will not talk about another student negatively around other students
- I will not message or text a student of the opposite sex
- I will not put myself or a student in a compromising situation. I will disclose the time and location of meetings with Student Pastor or Small Group Coordinator

- I will meet with a student one on one at a public place and with parent's permission
- I will never be alone with a student where another leader, or adult, is not present
- I will never ride in a car alone with a student without a parent's permission
- I will not participate in, encourage, plan, or start pranks
- I will not date or be romantically involved in any way with a student unless consulted with Student Pastor or Small Group Coordinator
- I will report to the Student Pastor or Small Group Coordinator immediately with any issues related to physical/sexual abuse, suicidal thoughts with students, life threatening situations with students, pregnancy, runaway situations, felonies, situations where a student expressed something strange or suspicious, substance abuse, or if I suspect a student is going to commit a crime.

Conduct on Social Media

Who I am online

- I will not friend or follow any student of the opposite sex, nor will I follow or friend any student back that is of the opposite sex
- I will NEVER message a student of the opposite sex
- I will NEVER friend a student on Snapchat
- I will be aware of what I post online. Foul language, alcohol, or inappropriate pictures are unacceptable. I will be smart and be aware of what I post.

Protection of students

How I ensure safety of my students at Relevant

- I will familiarize myself with and refer to the emergency handbook for how to handle all the below emergency situations in greater detail.
- I will do everything in my power to ensure the safety of students and myself.
 - In the case of a lost student, weapon found, weapon observed on a person, brandishing of a weapon, or suspicious package, I will notify a Relevant Staff person or security guard immediately. I will not attempt to touch a weapon or disarm an individual.
- I will notify Relevant staff immediately following a person expressing suicidal thoughts.
- I will notify a Relevant staff member or security guard immediately if a person attempts suicide. I will make sure someone stays with the person until help arrives and provide medical care if needed.
- In the case of a tornado, fire, lockout, lockdown, evacuation, I will refer to the emergency handbook and move students to their designated safe locations.
- If there is a threat of altercation, I will not put myself at risk. I will attempt to separate those involved and deescalate the situation.
- If there is an altercation, I will not put myself at risk and report the altercation to a Relevant staff member or security guard immediately.

Training

“...Train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

-1 Timothy 4:7-8

Being equipped and feeling equipped as a leader is not a once a year task. We are constantly in need of guidance to lead our students the best we can. There are many different things that will happen throughout a year: new students, students struggling with family drama, students involved in tragedy, relational strain between students and leaders, questions and doubts in regard to faith, depression, and so much more.

It is vital that we are looking to grow in how we lead.

Which is why we encourage you to talk with the Student Pastor, Small Group Coordinator, other pastors, and other leaders, about where you have questions, concerns, or are simply struggling in small group. We also encourage above all else to go to God.

God is our greatest leader and through the power of His Holy Spirit we find direction in where to go and what to do in leading our students.

Finally, our staff will be calling, meeting, and checking in on you throughout the year to offer guidance, advice, and support. You are not in this alone.

Remember, we're better together, so make sure to lead with the help of God's people.

HOW TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

Sharing the gospel is one of our greatest privileges. It is one of the most humbling missions that God gives us to share the truth of what He has done through His Son Jesus. It is also one of the most important things we must be equipped to do as small group leaders.

There are lots of ways to share the gospel, but the best I have seen involves this:

1. Know the Gospel

We can't possibly share the gospel accurately if we don't know it for ourselves. We spell out the beauty of the gospel in 4 points on the next page. Make sure you're familiar with the truth of the gospel.

2. Begin a conversation

Where a lot of people lose those they're sharing the gospel with is when they try to turn it into a lecture or sermon. When someone comes to you and asks about Jesus, how they find salvation, or to understand the gospel it is vital that we begin a conversation. **The beauty of the gospel is that it is a global eternal impact, but it is personal above all else, so the way we share it must be personal too.** We begin the conversation by:

3. Ask

Ask the person you're talking to questions. "What does your relationship with Jesus look like?" "What do you feel like is missing in your life right now?" "Why do you want to know more?" Questions are a key to counseling. **We are able to teach more through asking the right questions than trying to answer unasked questions.**

4. Share

Once you know specifically what is going on in the life and heart of your student begin to share with them your story, your testimony. **One of our greatest evangelistic tools is our lives.**

Your story is powerful. Your story is a tool for impact, for life-change. Your story changed your life now let it change another's.

Your story should be able to point to where you were, where He met you, and what that has done for you.

5. Invite

When you have shared your story open the floor for the student to ask questions, share where they are, or just process it. The conversation should inevitably lead to an invitation toward a next step. Ask the important question: "do you feel like you're ready to accept Jesus?" If they're not ready ask them what they think their next step is. Walk them through this.

6. Pray

If a student is ready to ask Jesus into their life stop and pray with them. **The prayer needs to be a confession of sin, an invitation/welcome of Jesus into their hearts, and a praise for what He has done.** If a student is not ready ask to pray that God would lead them in their next step toward Him whatever that may be.

7. Disciple

One of the worst things we can do after leading a student to Jesus is then leave them confused. They are going to want to know what to do next. How should they feel? What should they begin to do? Encourage them to share this decision with others (family, small group, friends). Begin to meet with them regularly for a bible study, to answer questions, and to guide them. Make sure they have a bible and encourage them to begin to read Romans or the Gospels, and journal what they feel like God is teaching them and calling them to do next.

HOW TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

1

GOD- Romans 1:19

"But the basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of His divine being." MSG

- God is the King of the universe because He made it.
- He is good, just, and loving.
- He has authority over everything

2

MAN- Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." ESV

- We have rebelled against God.
- We will be punished for our rebellion against God, because He is just.

3

CHRIST- Romans 5:8

"...but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." ESV

- God sent Jesus to the world to save us.
- Jesus was perfect and met God's standard.
- He died on the cross to pay our debt
- He defeated death to offer the hope of new life.

4

RESPONSE- Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." ESV

- We're made right with God by believing in Jesus.
- We're all responsible to accept or reject Jesus
- We can be absolutely confident the moment we believe in Jesus that we will have the most rewarding life possible in Heaven.

Stay Connected

We never want you left in the dark of what is going on at Relevant. Make sure to stay connected with us throughout the year in these ways in order to best lead your group:

Online

- RelevantStudents.com

Text

- GroupMe (mandatory)- A group message for Relevant Leader updates
- Parent Text- A weekly text to parents with Relevant Updates @RelevantP to 81010
- Student Text- A weekly text to students with Relevant Updates @RelevantS to 81010
- Draw Close Text- A daily devotional text @DrawClose to 81010

Email

- Emails are sent out once a week to leaders with updates about Relevant. These emails include announcements, small group questions, and last minute changes. These emails are not optional. Make sure your email address is updated in accurate on your TheGraceLink.com account.

Contact Student Pastor or Small Group Coordinator for issues with email or questions about TheGraceLink.

Social Media

- Instagram- @RelevantStudents
- Facebook- @RelevantStudentMinistry
- YouTube- YouTube.com/c/RelevantStudents

Leaders, we are always here for you, so feel free to reach out to the Student Pastor or Small Group Coordinator at any time. You can contact and follow us here:

Student Pastor- Van Riggins

- Phone- (931)-436-7962
- Email- VRiggins@GraceClarksville.com
- Instagram- @VanRiggins
- Facebook- @Van.Riggins

Student Small Group Coordinator- Breanna Drew

- Phone- (317)-441-1485
- Email- BDrew@GraceClarksville.com
- Instagram- @Bre_Drew
- Facebook- @Breanna.Drew1