

Watermark Student Ministries

2015-2016 Small Group Leader Handbook



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Junior High Website:

MoreWake.com

High School Website:

MoreShoreline.com

Foundational Scriptures for Relational Ministry

Matthew 28:19-20

19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

1 Thessalonians 2:8

We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.

Hebrews 13:7

Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

2 Timothy 2:2

You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

Watermark Student Ministries Vision

Our purpose and passion is to see students become *rooted in Christ* and grow to be *influential for His Kingdom*.

Watermark Student Ministries Mission

Our mission is to make disciples (fully devoted followers of Jesus) by helping students believe in Christ, belong to His body, be trained in truth, and be strong in ministry. We call it the 4Bs.

Believe, Belong, Be Trained, Be Strong.

The Role of a Small Group Leader

The role of a Small Group leader is to make disciples (fully devoted followers of Jesus)

Small Group Leader Goals

Inspire and equip students to experience the transformative power of Christ through:

- Believe: Personal Intimacy with God (Psalm 1:1-3)
- Belong: Community with Christian Friends (Proverbs 27:17, Hebrews 10:25)
- Be Trained: Practical Bible Teaching (Romans 12:2, Proverbs 3:13-18)
- Be Strong: Regular Service in a Ministry (1 Peter 4:10)

Our practical goal is for every student to have immediate answers for the following questions:

- If you were to die today, how sure are you on a scale of 1 to 10 that you would go to heaven? On what do you base your answer? (Believe)
- What's your time, place, and plan for spending time with God? (Believe)
- Who are your "iron sharpens iron" friends? (Belong)
- Who helps you understand and apply the bible? (Be Trained)
- What's the ministry in which you regularly serve? (Be Strong)

10 Expectations for Small Group Leaders

1. Be about the mission of making disciples
2. Tend to your own walk with the Lord
3. Commit to and engage with your own Community Group
4. Maintain membership at Watermark Community Church
5. Weekly planning, preparation, and communication for Small Group meetings
6. Weekly attendance at Wake or monthly attendance at each of (8) Shorelines
7. Participation in larger Events and Retreats *
8. Promotion of smaller Events and Retreats **
9. Attendance once per semester at Grade and Gender specific Leader dinners
10. Ownership mentality. This is your ministry. Help make it better and better.

* Junior High Retreat and DTown for Junior High, Hideaway Retreat and DTown for High School

** Dallas Experience for Junior High, Ski Trip, Camp Barnabas, and Haiti for High School

10 Characteristics of Great Small Group Leaders

1. Warm and relational (Host vs. Guest, “There you are” rather than “Here I am”)
2. Vibrant spiritual life. Know and apply God’s Word
3. Humble and teachable
4. Available and in contact with students throughout the week
5. Good listener (80/20, listening/talking)
6. Balance truth and grace (Velvet Brick)
7. A life worth imitating. Above reproach. Authentic about struggles
8. Communicate with and manage the group well
9. Initiate rather than respond
10. A catalyst for change

10 Characteristics of Great Small Groups

1. Reliance on God's word more than personal opinions
2. Safe
3. Authentic
4. Everyone gets to share
5. Open. Newcomers are welcome
6. Encouraging
7. Caring. Members genuinely support each other
8. No gossip
9. Conflicts get resolved. Both students and leaders are unified.
10. Everyone is committed

4 Measureable Wins for Small Group Leaders

1. Students attend Small Groups, Wakes or Shorelines, and Events
2. Students get involved serving in a specific ministry
3. Students are baptized (demonstrate ability to articulate gospel and share their story of grace)
4. Students become members at Watermark

Watermark Student Ministries Strategies

1. Small Groups

When it comes to environments for spiritual growth, circles are better than rows. This is why Small Groups are at the heart of our ministry. Hosted in homes all over Dallas and led by young adult volunteers, we have more than 80 Small Groups that meet throughout the school year. Using the provided curriculum and passing on important communication, leaders leverage Small Group as a hub of ministry for a school or area and a primary engine for evangelism, discipleship, and community.

2. Wake and Shoreline

Wake meets weekly on Sunday mornings during the 9:00 am and 11:15 am services. Shoreline meets monthly on a Wednesday evening. At both Wake and Shoreline, students gather on the 4th floor at Watermark for a city-wide event marked by fun, music, and practical teaching from the bible. These meetings are the perfect environment for newcomers to check out our student ministry. Everyone's welcome! Leaders leverage Wake or Shoreline as a tool to energize Small Group relationships and introduce/welcome students to our ministry.

3. LEAD Team (High School Only)

Meeting every other Sunday night, LEAD (Leadership Education And Development) Team is for high school students who have the potential to develop as Christian leaders. At LEAD Team, we call committed students to participate in ministry, encourage students with like-minded community, and equip them with specific leadership tools. Adult leaders leverage LEAD Team to develop student leaders within their groups.

4. Service

Leaders leverage Watermark and our ministry partners to connect students with opportunities to serve in personal ministry. The more you give, the more you grow. Since serving others is one of the most effective ways to honor God and develop spiritually, we want to do everything we can to help students get involved in a ministry that fits their unique interests and abilities. There's something for everyone. No matter what age, all believers can "be the church" and make a difference by serving others!

Service opportunities include: Kaleidoscope/Relay, Starting Blocks, K1Race, On Your Mark, Crossroad45, Wake, Shoreline LEAD Team, Tech Arts, and Frontlines: Greeting or Parking

(Strategies Continued)

5. Events & Trips

- Junior High leaders leverage the Junior High Retreat (Sky Ranch) as a tool to help strengthen Small Groups.
- Junior High leaders leverage Dallas Experience as a tool to inspire students towards ministry.
- All leaders leverage DTown as a tool to help strengthen Small Groups and inspire students towards ministry.
- High School leaders leverage Hideaway Retreat as a tool to help strengthen Small Groups.
- High School leaders leverage the Ski Trip as a tool to broaden community of Christian friends and help students develop a vibrant devotional life.
- High School leaders leverage Camp Barnabas & Haiti as a tool to inspire students towards ministry.
- Senior Group leaders leverage Senior Dessert as a tool to celebrate Christ's work through Small Groups and send out graduates to a life of influence.

6. Other

- All leaders leverage "contact work" (school lunches, sporting events, plays, recitals, etc.) as a tool to encourage current students and connect with new students.
- All leaders leverage seasonal external focus service opportunities offered to Small Groups (Operation Christmas Child, Easter Baskets, Second Saturday, etc.)
- High School leaders leverage Summer Bible Study as a tool to broaden community of Christian friends and help students develop a vibrant devotional life.
- High school leaders leverage the relational opportunity to sit with students on Sunday mornings in the Worship Center (North bleachers, 11:15 Only)
- Senior Group leaders leverage the "College Knowledge" curriculum during the spring semester.

20 Keys to Leading a Crummy Small Group

1. Only interact with your kids during Small Group times, anything beyond that might be awkward or just take up too much of your time.
2. Don't pray for your Small Group, their parents probably already do that.
3. At all costs make sure they like you. After all, you are here to re-live your teenage years and make friends that you never had at that age.
4. Never say specific words of encouragement to a kid in front of other people or write notes to them or their parents. You don't want to embarrass them.
5. Never confront or challenge a kid because they may drop out of your group.
6. Don't keep kids and their parents informed each week about where and when you're meeting, they should be able to network with each other.
7. Stand at the back of the room during large group events so the kids can just interact with each other without "the man" watching their every move.
8. So you don't cut into too much of your personal time, limit your Bible study prep each week to the time you have in the car on the way over.
9. Let any subject that comes up during Small Group be fair game. These kids have a sixth sense about what they need to learn and you should trust it.
10. Read straight from the curriculum and don't use any of your boring, personal examples.
11. Always say something right away to fill uncomfortable silent moments after you ask a question and nobody speaks up. Just answer your own question and move on.
12. If a kid gives a wrong answer or exposes some bad theology, make sure you either immediately change the subject to cover up or just have a good laugh at their expense.
13. Kids like routine. Never try anything creative or different during your Small Group time.
14. Make sure kids don't participate in leading the group. They may try to take over.
15. Kids should already know what your expectations are for their behavior during Bible study, don't ever tell them.
16. Let the length of your Small Group be determined by your most A.D.H.D. kid's attention span.
17. Never REQUEST that a student stop disrupting Small Group. Never RELOCATE that student to a different spot in the room. And never REMOVE a distracting student from the room during Small Group if they just won't participate appropriately.
18. End your Small Group 10 minutes late so parents waiting outside think you're really spiritual.
19. If a question comes up that is hard for you to answer, just make something up and end by nodding and saying "God is sovereign and holy".
20. When issues come up, don't call Watermark Student Ministries Staff. What do they know?

Small Group Community and Accountability

"Accountability" is not a word that you will find in the Bible but it is a concept that ties together many biblical principles and gives us the opportunity to put them into practice. Accountability allows us to deepen community (focus on improving our key, Christ-centered relationships with others) and enhance our personal growth in Christ.

Below are some key questions (and follow up questions) you can use to promote the community and accountability of your Small Group. Remember, every discussion is an opportunity to point students to Christ and the truth of God's word.

Key Community and Accountability Questions

1. How has your time with God been this week? What have you read or learned?
2. What has inspired or encouraged you this week? What was your "high" this week?
3. What has been weighing on you this week? What was your "low" this week?
4. How have you struggled with sin or temptation this week?
5. How have you shared Christ with and/or shown God's love to others this week?
6. How can we pray for you or serve you (advice, encouragement, support) this week?
7. What are your hopes or goals for next week?

Follow Up Questions

1. What does God's word say about that?
2. What do you think God is trying to teach you through that?
3. What do you think God wants you to do next?

Key Passages about Community and Accountability

Proverbs 27:17, Proverbs 28:13, Proverbs 20:5, Proverbs 25:12, Ecclesiastes 4:8-12, Romans 14: 13-23, 2 Corinthians 12:19-13:6, Galatians 6: 1-6, Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 4:9-13,1 Thessalonians 5:14, James 5:15-16, Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 10:23-25

4 Essentials for Working with Co-Leaders

1. Trust

Trust is an essential element to teamwork. In order for there to be trust between co-leaders there has to be a relationship. Especially at the beginning, it is important for co-leaders to spend some time getting to know each other on more than a surface level. Carve out time early on to share your story with your co-leader. As much as possible, keep each other up to speed and involved in each other's personal lives.

2. Communication

In order to work well together, there must be regular and clear communication. Discuss preferred methods of communication (email, text, phone, face-to-face, etc.) and decide what essentials need to be covered each week (meeting time, location, leadership responsibilities, upcoming events, etc.).

3. Expectations

Unnecessary conflict and frustration can be avoided if you take some time to discuss expectations with your co-leader. What is your vision for the Small Group? How do you expect the kids to act? What do you expect the kids to learn? How do you expect to handle disruptions in Small Group? How much time do you expect to spend with kids outside of group? How often do you anticipate missed meetings (should be rare exceptions)? These and others are great questions to discuss with your co-leader.

4. Roles

Each person is different and will likely end up playing a specific role when it comes to leading the group. Which leader is more organized? Who will be the primary scheduler for the group? Who will communicate primarily with parents? Will you share duties or take turns when it comes to leading discussions or keeping boundaries during bible study? To avoid confusion or errors in communication with parents/students, talk with your co-leader and decide with clarity who will play which roles.

3 Things Parents Need from Small Group Leaders

1. You are safe

Parents need to know that you will be responsible for the well being of their son or daughter. Here are three things you can do to help parents trust you as a safe person in the life of their child. First, keep your word. Do what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it. Second, be knowable. Connect with parents in person and on social media so they can observe who you are and the way you live. Spend time in their home before and after Small Group meetings sharing your personal life with them. Finally, make mature decisions. When the kids want to ride on the roof or your car, sneak out at 3:00 am, or go watch a questionable movie, ask yourself, "What would our most conservative parent do in this situation?"

2. You are available

Parents need to know that you are available as a resource and partner as they seek to shepherd their son or daughter. Make sure they have your contact information and know that you're eager to connect with and serve their family. Answer calls and return calls promptly. Be aware of potential pitfalls like A) losing trust from the kids because they feel like you're talking about them behind their backs, or B) being manipulated and thrown off mission by parents with a separate agenda.

3. You are not wasting their time

Parents need to know that Watermark activities are leaving a lasting impression in the life of their child. Small Group will slip on the priority scale if it seems like it's mainly goofing off. Parents need to observe that you are prepared for, intentional with, and in charge of your Small Group meetings. Kids should walk away from each meeting with something deeper than a fun time. Consider sharing the content of your Bible studies with parents whenever you send out reminder emails for meetings.

Drama Alert!

You may run into a parent or group of parents that try to push their own agenda. They might question everything from meeting day/time/location to who is or isn't on the group's roster. Try to listen to their opinions and validate their feelings but don't be steamrolled or pressured into making rash decisions that may not be in the long-term best interest of the entire group.

5 Steps to Small Group Order and Discipline

While a certain amount of distractions are to be expected for this age group, it is important not to let things get out of hand. We need to teach kids to honor God's word and the value of processing it with a community of believers. Follow these 5 steps (two C's and three R's) and you'll be well on your way to have a group that knows and stays within appropriate behavioral boundaries.

1. Clarity

You've got to be clear on the purpose of the group and the expectations for your time together. Be specific and give them clear cues. For example, when you're ready to transition from a time of hanging out to a time of Bible study, tell them every week what is about to happen and the behavior you expect from them. Have someone pray out loud as a way of marking the transition from social to serious. You also need to be clear up front about the consequences that will follow if your expectations are not met. Remind them regularly about the "Three R's" that you'll see listed below.

2. Consistency

Once you're clear about how things should be, you have to be consistent to ensure that you get the results you're hoping for. "First time, every time" is a good rule to follow. If you ask someone to stop doing something, you should expect them to respond the first time you ask and every time you ask. If they don't, you need to be ready to impose consequences with consistency. Be gentle and kind, but you've got to let them know who is in control. If you're inconsistent, they will walk all over you.

3. Request

If someone does something out of line, the first thing you should do is request that they change the inappropriate behavior. Along with this request, inform them that next time they misbehave, they will be re-seated beside you (like a child) and if they continue, your next step will be to remove them from the room. You don't want to have to do this but will have to for the sake of the group.

(5 Steps to Order and Discipline Continued)

4. Re-Seat

If you have a repeat offense, do not make a second request. The whole group needs to know that you mean business. Your next step is to kindly re-seat them next to you so that you can keep an eye on them.

You don't want to be a pushover but you also don't want to appear mean. Be sure the group and the individual know that you don't enjoy enforcing rules but that you are doing so because you really believe the discussion is important and you don't want anything to ruin it. You can even apologize for having to do it but don't back down.

5. Remove

This is the worst. If a student continues to disrupt the group, you will need to ask them to go into the other room. If you have two leaders, one may go with them to keep them company. Be certain to have a follow up conversation with them afterward and make sure they understand why they were sent out. Tell them that you aren't mad at them and that you care about them and that you hope they will come back and benefit from future discussions.

6 Challenging Group Members to Prepare For

Leaders take initiative and address disruptive or irritating members. This lets the group know that the leader is aware of issues and willing to address it. A good leader will speak up immediately during Small Group or go to individuals in private after group time is over.

1. The Excessive Talker

Thank them for sharing and remind them that the group needs to hear from everyone. Example "You have added a lot tonight. Let's make sure we hear from everyone." If needed, address the issue outside of the group time by affirming them, asking for their help, and asking for permission to stop them if they talk too much in the future.

2. The Rambler

Don't be afraid to cut someone off if they talk in circles or cannot keep it brief. One way is to stop them and paraphrase what you think they are saying and address that issue. If the problem persists talk to them outside of the group and ask them to think through some of their answers ahead of time and how they could answer them succinctly.

3. The Mute

Address the issue outside of the group and see if there is a reason they might not be sharing (nervousness, shame, concern about what others think of them). Ask them if it would be ok for you to call on them time next week with one of the questions during the discussion.

4. The Surface Leveler

Some people will talk a lot but won't actually say much. Ask follow up questions to draw out their true thoughts or feelings.

5. The Interrupter

Ask them to let others finish. If the problem persists talk to them outside of the group and ask them to be mindful of others.

6. The "Me Too" Member

Don't let someone continually share a similar story or somehow relate each issue to themselves. Identifying with someone is helpful occasionally but reveals a focus on self if it happens continually.

How to Make the Most of Large Group Gatherings

Pre-Program

1. Rally the Students You Know

Discover the routine for your group and roll with it. Students like to have a familiar place to connect when they arrive. Couches? Pool? Ping Pong? Foosball?

2. Include Visitors

We'll try to bring visitors to you but try to keep an eye out for loners, wanderers, and stragglers. Welcome new students into your circle. Talk to them about what to expect or just ask questions about where a person lives, goes to school, etc. Keep them with you for the entire program. Invite them to sit with you and your group. Be sure they fill out an Info Form at the welcome table. Invite them to join your Small Group!

During the Program

1. Sit with Students

Shared experience is a great way to build relationships. Students will feel a sense of value and connectedness when leaders sit with them instead of congregating with other adults.

2. Keep the Peace

We rely on our leaders to regulate cell phone usage, discourage side conversations, prevent disruptive coming and going, and be on the lookout for anything creepy or unusual.

3. Engage in the Program

Pretend like you're a camp counselor. The students follow your lead. You make the energetic times more energetic, the funny parts more funny, the worship more authentic, and the messages more meaningful.

Post-Program

Be sure to remind your Small Group about the when and where of your Small Group meeting. Have visitors fill out an Info Form and ask them what they thought about Wake ore Shoreline. Encourage them to come back and memorize their name so you can remember it the next time you see them.

Watermark Student Ministries Events and Trips

We host a few big events and retreats throughout the year meant to bond the group and help kids grow in their relationship with Christ. Some of the highest impact moments will happen when we get away from our normal routine and spend extended time with one another focused on Christ.

Registration

- Leaders go to most events for free – Just RSVP and tell staff that you're in!
- Registration Forms and payment are both required for students to reserve a spot. Be sure parents know this.
- Space is always limited and there are always deadlines. There are usually wait lists. Be sure parents know this.
- Direct parents to contact staff about scholarships or other questions

Expectations

- Leaders should have a mission mindset at events and retreats. Be with students!
- Responsibility - Leaders are responsible for keeping up with the kids assigned to them
- Discipline/Injury/Sickness - Bring to staff in charge

Preparation

- Review the schedule & use the packing lists provided
- Expect Special Assignments (Registration, Luggage, Etc.)
- Be on Time. Be mentally and spiritually prepared to serve sacrificially

Watermark Student Ministries Safety Policies

Providing safe environments for relational ministry is a top priority for our ministry. Maintaining trust with students, families, and the community is of utmost importance. Some of our policies seem really obvious but they need to be clearly stated. As we engage in relational ministry, we need to make every effort to apply wisdom to every situation in light of an increasingly morally challenged culture.

If there is ever a question about whether or not something would be appropriate, safe, or wise, don't hesitate to take the time to call and run an idea by any of the Student Ministry staff. Below are some specific guidelines we ask all of our leaders to follow:

One-on-One Time

Avoid one-on-ones with the opposite sex completely. Only have one-on-one meetings with the same sex in public places. If possible, always try to bring another leader or student. When driving students home, always drop off the student in a direct manner and not linger in the car. If they need to talk, do that in the view of others (in their house, outside the car in view of others, etc.).

Sensitive Information

Never agree to keep something in confidence. Always communicate with students that before they share with you that you will share with others if that is the best way to love and help them. The most likely person we would share information with would be their parents.

If you discover or even suspect that a student is being physically or sexually abused, we are required by law to pass that information on to Child Protective Services. Contact Watermark Student Ministries staff and we will walk you through that process.

Driving

Always obey traffic laws and be sure anyone riding in your car is wearing a seatbelt. For official Student Ministry retreats and events, you typically must be approved as a Watermark Community Church insured driver in order to transport kids in any vehicle.

(Watermark Student Ministries Safety Policies Continued)

Overnight Guidelines

If you are having a sleepover, it must be at Watermark or a parent's house with a group. Never would you host a sleepover at your house. Never sleep in the same bed as a student. Outside of our retreats and events, we would suggest you sleep in another room if possible.

Appropriate Behavior

Keep conversations free of comments or jokes that may have a sexual meaning. Do not make comments that are suggestive, off-color, lewd, or otherwise inappropriate. Never joke around about privates. Never do anything in the nude or in underwear (mooning, a lost farkle, swimming, etc). Avoid any physical touching or activity that might produce an appearance of impropriety. Never engage in anything that would hurt personal property or a person directly. Never engage in any activity (movie, video game, outing, etc.) that is inappropriate or not pre-approved by the parents of all students involved.

Watermark Student Ministries Leader Conduct

Leaders involved in our ministry are expected to display the highest Christian values and morals at all times and “always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and all people” (Acts 24:16). Leaders are expected to provide a good example and not engage in any behavior that could lead young people into inappropriate conduct themselves.

As followers of Christ, it is our desire to “put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.” (1 Corinthians 10:23-33, Acts 24:16, 2 Corinthians 6:3; Romans 14:13-19). Always ask the following questions when considering activities in your personal life: Could it cause the ministry to be discredited? Could it cause confusion, disillusionment, or disharmony with students, families, or with the other leaders? How would I explain my behavior to kids, parents, and Watermark staff?

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

23 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. 24 No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. 25 Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, 26 for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”

27 If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28 But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. 29 I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? 30 If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?

31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Things to Consider:

- Movies
- TV Shows
- Music
- Places I go with friends
- Beer, Wine, Drinks
- Wardrobe
- Who & How I Date
- Social Media
- Texts
- Tattoos

4 Ways to Respond to Hurting Students

It's not always easy to know how to respond when we find out a student we care about is going through a difficult time. What do I say to a student whose parents are fighting? How do I care for a student whose being bullied? Without question, the Student Ministries staff is always here to support you but these four tips will go a long ways. Listen, empathize, comfort, and pray.

1. Listen

Find a place and time where you can talk. Ask a lot of questions. Get to know the situation and the feelings involved. Let them vent. Call to check in. Make yourself available.

2. Empathize

Put yourself in their situation and imagine how you would feel. Allow your own emotions to connect. Share with them what you would be thinking and feeling. Show them that you're with them and that you understand.

3. Comfort

Remind them of God's love and nearness. Always lead them to the Bible and remind them of the gospel. What biblical characters share a story similar to theirs? What verses have comforted you in difficult times? Teach them how to look things up. Encourage them to memorize and meditate on God's word.

4. Pray

Always pray with them and for them and for others involved in the situation. Lead them to the source of hope, truth, and power. Teach them how to pray for themselves.

If a Student Threatens Suicide

During the course of our ministry we have opportunities to minister and share with a lot of people who need some type of emotional support and help. There are occasions when someone you talk with is very despondent and says things like, "life is not worth living," "I can't go on," or actually uses the words "I am thinking about suicide." Please read and put this in a place where you can access it easily.

If a suicide threat is made via text message, social media, or on the phone:

- 1) Call them and assess if the threat is real*. If you have reason to believe they are serious, ask the person to make a commitment to you NOT to take any harmful action. Ask them the physical address of where they are at and take down their phone #. Tell them you will hang up, call 911, and call them right back.
- 2) The police should be called immediately. Call 911. We would rather embarrass someone than take the chance and have them follow through with the threat.
- 3) Call them back and try to keep them talking with you until help arrives.
- 4) If you determine the threat is not serious, you can still follow through by caring for them. You will also need to report the threat to Watermark Student Ministries staff and possibly their parents.

***How to assess if a suicide threat is real:**

- Ask them right up front, are you considering taking your life? Do not fear that you are planting the seeds of suicide in their mind.
- Do they have the means to carry out their threat, i.e. pills, gun, etc.?
- Do they have access to the means to carry out the threat?
- Have they ever attempted to commit suicide in the past? It does not matter if the attempt seemed weak or not.
- Do they have a support system, family members, and small group? If NO, the threat is more dangerous.

(If a Student Threatens Suicide Continued)

- Do they appear to be saying goodbye to people? Once people have decided to take their life they tend to have a sense of peace because the struggle over the decision to take their life has been made.

We want to take all threats of suicide seriously, but must be careful in how we assess them as well. Try to determine if the person is reaching out because of loneliness, feeling overwhelmed or fear. Many times people will make statements of wanting to "end it all" because they really want to be connected and have not found a way to do that yet. We want to be especially sensitive to newcomers and members who have not been attending very long.

When to Involve Watermark Leadership

We trust you and your ability to lead and shepherd your group (2 Peter 1:3). You do not need to ask for permission or fill in leadership with *every* detail of your group. However, our leaders should feel free to ask for help or wisdom on a situation at any point. Leadership wants you to succeed and grow as a leader. You are not a hassle and we will always make ourselves available as a resource!

Please always contact leadership when there has been:

- A report or implication of physical or sexual abuse
- A report of drug or alcohol abuse by a student or student's family member
- A divorce or separation with parents of a student
- A report of outbursts of anger by a student or student's family member
- A report of self-harm or threats of suicide by a student or student's family member
- An unresolved conflict in the Small Group or amongst adult leaders
- A death in the family of a Small Group member

Small Group Limited Multiplication Model

Foundation

Our greatest potential for growth and evangelism rests on our ability to get students into Small Groups.

Process

Our Small Groups should to promote, not restrict, growth by consistently - even proactively - adding members. Then, they should slowly and thoughtfully multiply in order to protect the community and discipleship aspects of the group.

We will consistently add new students to your Small Group. We will match the addition of new students with the addition of new leaders. Intimacy should be maintained by creating two “sub groups” that break up to meet in separate rooms after hang out time.

Model

1 Group (Possibly divided into 2 Sub-Groups)

Up to 4 Leaders

Up to 24 Students

Top 10 Reasons to Multiply Groups

1. New kids will enter into a fully operational group (critical mass of committed kids)
2. New kids will have high probability of quickly finding common ground
3. New kids will be attracted to join their friends
4. More kids will be exposed to the gospel, community, and discipleship
5. More kids will “be strong” and invite their friends to the gospel, community, and discipleship
6. More kids will bring their families to Watermark
7. New leaders will have a much needed entry point (relational direction – a role)
8. New leaders will not be frustrated by the many difficulties of forming new groups
9. New leaders will have the opportunity to observe and learn from current leaders
10. All leaders will have increased opportunity to operate in a dynamic team setting

Starting a New Small Group

Watermark Staff will give you a list of names, emails, and phone numbers. Start by calling everyone in your group, introducing yourself to them and their parents, and inviting them to your weekly Wednesday night Small Group time. The other thing you must do is find a home to meet in the first month. We recommend looking for host homes that are centrally located for a majority of the group.

Suggested Meeting Times

- In our experience, Wednesday evenings are best. This is our recommendation.
- Please discuss any exceptions with Watermark Student Ministries staff
- Most groups meet for one hour but some will increase to an hour-and-a-half

Sample Phone Call Transcript

- *"Hello. Mr. or Mrs. _____? My name is _____ and I am a volunteer with Watermark Community Church, with the Student Ministry. I have been assigned as _____'s Small Group leader. We are trying to get together a weekly Bible study and I just wanted to introduce myself and invite _____ to our first Small Group meeting.*
- *Are you familiar with our Small Groups? (If not, explain how it is a weekly Bible study for a specific grade & gender).*
- *We have decided for our group to meet at _____ (day and time). Is there any reason why this time wouldn't work for your family?"*
- Get the parent's email so you can send group communication.
- Ask to speak with the student and give them a personal invitation (might be awkward - that's okay). You may also want to get their personal contact info...cell phone, email, etc.
- If someone can't meet during the Wednesday night time slot, encourage them that they can still be included in Small Group outings and other events and that they will still receive the same weekly communication about Small Group.
- *"We see Small Group as a very high value...Hopefully their schedule will change soon to allow them to make it to Small Group."*

Follow Up Communication (See Sample Emails Below)

After you've spoken with everyone, be sure to send an email with the FINAL DETAILS about your first meeting and get things rolling ASAP. Start a distribution list so you can easily communicate with the group on a consistent basis.

Sample Emails

Introduction and First Meeting Email

Dear Parents,

My name is _____ and I volunteer with the Student Ministry at Watermark Community Church. I spoke with many of you on the phone this week about the fact that I will be leading the Small Group Bible Study for your son. I'm really looking forward to connecting with your families. I wanted to send out this email to all of you to introduce myself and tell you a little bit about what to expect.

Here's a list of guys in the group:

(Attach List of Small Group Members)

Starting next week (October 9th), we'll be meeting for Bible Study on Wednesday nights from 7:00-8:00pm. The _____s have offered to host for October. The _____ home is located at 13378 Meadowside Dr. just north of LBJ and just east of Hillcrest. I'll put together a schedule of host homes for the rest of the school year and update you all each week with a reminder of where we're meeting and summary of our discussion.

So you know who will be leading your son, here's a little bit about me: I've been at Watermark for more than 2 years. I work at this really great company and enjoy rooting for the Texas Aggies. The best way I can introduce myself is by inviting you to connect with me by visiting my Facebook and Twitter. My cell phone number is (214) 555-5555. Feel free to call me any time.

Looking forward to this new adventure,

Harrison

Weekly Reminder Email

Dear Parents,

Details for this week's Small Group are below.

This Week's Details.:

When: Small Group is Wednesday Night from 7:00-8:00pm

Where: _____'s House at 13378 Meadowside Dr.

(Located just north of LBJ and just east of Hillcrest)

Discussion: (Describe or link to the weekly topic)

Bring your Bible!

Schedule of Host Homes

If you would like to have Small Group in your home, please "Reply to All" and let me know which month (November – May) you would like to claim. Thanks so much!

- Harrison

Watermark Student Ministries, Dallas Staff Team



(Top row from L to R) Harrison Ross (Junior High Director), Melissa Miller (Women's Director), Katie Baumgratz (Resident), Braun Brown (Student Ministry Director), Dale Wallace (Resident)

(Front row from L to R), Sean Hill (Junior High Men's Coordinator), Rebe Long (Junior High Women's Coordinator), Jermaine Harrison (High School Men's Coordinator), Anne Marie Mason (High School Women's Coordinator), David Penuel (High School Director)