

MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY HANDBOOK



Meet Keiron- Minister to Middle School Students



Keiron joined the staff of Forest Hills in 2017! He grew up in Maryland as a kid and then lived in Georgia for high school and college. A graduate of Valdosta State University (GA), he earned a bachelor's degree in music education. During his college years, he worked on staff at both Winshape Camps (GA) and Cowboy's Rest Camps (NV), served on the Baptist Collegiate Ministry leadership team, and worked as a student ministry intern at Crossroads Baptist Church (GA) and the San Diego Baptist Association (CA). Upon graduating college, he served as a middle school coordinator at Reno Christian Fellowship Church (NV). Prior to Forest Hills, he was on staff at First Baptist Hendersonville (TN) as a student ministry associate. In 2016, he was recognized by the Georgia Baptist Convention as a BCM Distinguished Alumni! In the student ministry world- Keiron has served on the Lifeway Students National Advisory Board, has been featured on the Lifeway Student Ministry podcast, and been a camp pastor for Cowboys Rest Camps (NV) for over a decade. He holds both a masters of arts in Worship Leadership and masters of arts in Christian Ministry from Dallas Baptist University.

Keiron believes strongly in the power of the local Church to influence the next generation to impact the world in the name of Jesus! His prayer is for all students to be shaped by CHRIST, empowered by the local CHURCH, and inspired by the great COMMISSION. May students cry unto the Lord, "He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken." Psalm 62:2

When Keiron is not busy being a youth pastor, he keeps involved in the music education scene working on the instructional staff of the Station Camp High School band program (Gallatin, TN) and leading school groups on music trips with Music Travel Consultants! He also is a major foodie. Follow his adventures on Instagram- @klmiles1.

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Middle School Ministry Strategy

Evident Needs of a Teenager...

Adventure, Acceptance, Fun, Friends, Confidence, Direction, Boundaries, Faith, Consistency, Hope

Middle School Ministry Focus..

To Affirm their identity in Christ by helping them own their faith, own their Church experience, and navigate the challenges of growing up.

Benchmarks

- Learn their **identity** in Christ
- Learn to **discuss** their faith on a personal level
- Learn to discuss **real-life challenges and issues** on a spiritual level
- Learn that others around them are on **different** spiritual levels
- Learn to read God's word **personally** and **regularly**
- Learn to **share** their faith with their peers
- Learn to **pray** regularly, personally, and corporately
- Learn to practice **confession** and **repentance**
- Discover Jesus beyond the **God of their Parents**
- Experience an out-of-town **mission trip**
- Experience student ministry **camp**
- Experience student **worship**
- Experience **peer relationships** beyond their friend group
- Experience **serving** in the Church
- Experience **leading** and **teaching** others
- Experience **inviting** a friend to Church

What We Value

God's Word

Demonstrated by sound biblical teaching and adapting our lives to that truth. **Sunday mornings** brings **exploration** and **Wednesday nights** brings **application**.

**We challenge each student to attend at least Wednesday months, for a healthy balance of Church, school, activities and life.*

Sample teaching themes include: evangelism, worship, spiritual disciplines, money, sex, old testament, identity, and many other themes.

Family

Demonstrated by **partnering** with parents in a strategic way and holding to a family-friendly schedule.

Examples- enrichment seminars, parent meetings, multi-sibling discounts, scheduling in cooperation with other ministry happenings.

Fun

Demonstrated by engaging students through a creative, **energetic**, and safe environment.

Examples- lobby games, prize/ giveaways, fun themes, Weds-night GameTime

Relationships

Demonstrated by intentional **communities** on and off campus where students feel valued by other adults and each other.

Examples- small groups, special events, trips, going to games/performances

Prayer

Demonstrated by a lifestyle of **dependence** and **trust** in God.

Examples- prayer wall, teaching on prayer, modeling prayer

The Mission

Demonstrated by a compassion for **the lost** and a burden to share "our story." For most students, we take them on their first mission trip. In middle school, we keep a regional focus within a 5 hour radius expanding nationally and internationally in high school.

Examples- PLUS ONE, middle school mission trip, SERVE days

Student Ministry Lingo/ Things We Do

CONNECT- The Wednesday night midweek middle school and midweek high school service. A time of fun, worship band, message, and small groups. Students are encouraged to bring PLUS-ONE's

Lobby Games- Fun options for students before scheduled programming. Games include 9 square, Gah Gah ball, poly-pong, basketball, corn-hole and shooting pool.

Friends/ Guests- Peers whom students are intentionally investing in and inviting to the student ministry

REMIND app- This is our texting communication platform for the student ministry. The app allows dialogue via text, email, web, and app.

Serving opportunities- These are categorized teams in which students can serve for the school year. Past teams have included the worship band, audio and visual, and event planning.

Sunday School- Small groups divided by grade and gender. Students are always welcome to bring a friend. Donuts are served periodically. Students gather for announcements and play lobby games beforehand.

Student Center- The name of the building where we do student ministry.

Retired terms:

The SOC- former name of the student center

Youth- the old-school term for teenage programming in a Church. We now say "student ministry" or "students"

Da Bomb- 90's all the way.

How We Communicate

- The REMIND app (dialogue via text, email, web, app)
Join the graduating class of your student. Text the respective code to 81010. If your student has access to a device, have him or her subscribe, as well.
- Email (please keep updated with the church)
- Student Ministry Facebook Page-
facebook.com/fhbcstudentministry
- Instagram- [@fhbcstudentministry](https://instagram.com/fhbcstudentministry)
- Church bulletin and *The Mid-Weekly*
- Announcements on Sunday morns and Weds nights
- Handouts- sometimes available at the student center welcome desk

WE ARE HERE FOR YOUR STUDENT

Let us know if they are interested in discussing a spiritual decision like baptism.

Let us know if they just need someone to talk to about life whether a situation going on, advice, fear of something, etc.

Let us know if they have a major need like a medical situation, life changes, etc.

Let us know when your student has an event they are participating in.

Middle School Parenting Hacks

ProTips from former Forest Hills MS Parents...

“Love them even when you don’t like them. You know what I mean. There will be stages where your commitment gets you through. Remember, they will grow out of this. Each kid is different. What worked for the last one won’t work for this one. And sadly, whatever you have gotten figured out to work for this one won’t work soon. Paul told us to pray without ceasing. God gave us in-the-trenches practice by giving us kids :D. It’s hard to let them try new things, have new privileges, experience new freedoms. Pray for them. Pray for your spouse. Pray for yourself. Pray without ceasing. Be diligent in modeling your faith. Make memories. Savor the time”

- Mark H., Former and Current MS parent

“Encourage your student to come to Church as consistently as possible. The more they come, the more at home and included they will feel. They will be able to build important relationships with peers and youth workers that will help them grow in the Lord during their middle school and high school years. Student Ministry camp and retreats go along way towards building these relationships. Plus, I have seen that when we set aside time designed specifically for growing closer to Jesus, He really blesses this! Jump in with both feet!”

- Jenna P., Former MS small group leader and parent

“Middle school is tough. There is lots of drama, pressure, and temptations. Be their biggest cheerleader. Know all about social media; friend them, follow them, investigate new/hidden apps. Strongly encourage your child to become involved in the Student Ministry. If they do not connect during middle school, they may not connect during high school. Have spiritual conversations. Talk about YOUR faith and what YOU are learning. Pray with them and for them. Write them notes of encouragement with scripture. They will learn that God’s Word is real and relevant. And don’t be afraid to ask for help or advice. Many times, other parents have gone through what you are experiencing.”

- Teresa C., longtime MS small group leader and Former MS parent

“Determine your expectations and communicate them. Talk through them when they are met and when they are not. Teach that responsibility brings privilege. When you act responsible, you receive privilege. When you do not, privilege is taken back. Along those lines, Say “yes” as often as possible!”

- Emily B., Former MS small group leader and Former MS parent

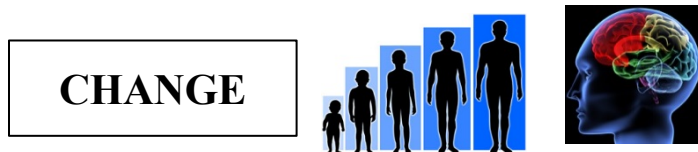
Fun Facts about Middle School Students

- The **2nd most significant change** people go through are the 2 years after the onset of puberty (middle school years). The 1st most significant change is birth – 2 years.
- **Sixth Grade:** “The Who Cares” Phase
Thinks like an Engineer. They design new thoughts and learn best by trial and error. They are wondering who they like. The goal for this stage is gaining stability. (*justaphase.com*)
- **Seventh and Eighth Grade:** “The Yeah..... I Know”
Thinks like an Engineer. They design new thoughts and learn best by trial and error. They are wondering who they are. The goal for this stage is discovering uniqueness. (*justaphase.com*)
- During childhood, friends were **based on proximity**. In middle school, they begin to choose friends according to likes and dislikes (affinity)
- They enter middle school with **concrete thinking** and over the next three years develop their **abstract thinking**.
- Their **emotions** are on a roller coaster. Many are brand new emotions. One minute they can be depressed and in the next moment be excited.
- They think they want more **independence** than they really do. They need boundaries and independence within that.
- They enter middle school with some kind of faith system. We get the opportunity to turn knowledge into application. This is also where they begin to doubt or become apathetic; we get to walk them through this. We can celebrate their questions. We can help them **reevaluate** their faith.

- A study found that the middle school years are now called “**preventative**” ministry. These are the years where they need to be taught “why” they should not do this or that. High School ministry is now called “corrective” ministry. These are the years where many students need help in getting past “why” or “what” they did.
- Research shows that middle school boys hang out in packs of 8-10 or they choose to act as a loner. Typically, girls hang out in smaller groups. Our job in the middle school ministry is to identify those who are alone and **connect them** with an affinity group.

The Wiring of a Middle School Student

MS years can be summed up by: **CHANGE** & **IDENTITY**



Adolescence comparable to Schizophrenia

Body:

- more **physical** changes in these 3 years than they will ever have.
Body, voice, menstrual period, breast, feet, ears/nose grow disproportionately for a while

Brain

- Growing at the same rate as a **toddler**
 - New **synapses** are forming to brain matter
 - Like adding props to storage closet
 - Access but hard to **find** things (MS forget and get lost)
- Influx of **hormones**
 - MS feels more deeply than before
- Frontal Lobe (Behind forehead)
 - “**Executive Office**” or Decision-Making Center
 - Responsible for: Focus, Forethought, Impulse Control, Organization, Planning, Judgment, Empathy, Insight, and Emotional Control.
 - Responsible for: **Emotional Interpretation**

IDENTITY



- Metacognition is developing
 - Inner **conversation** is coming online
 - "Thinking about thoughts"
- Asking really important questions:
 - **Who** am I?
 - How am I **unique**?
 - Where do I **belong**? (or to whom do I belong?)
 - Spiritually:
 - Do I **believe** in Parent's/Grandparent/Coach's God?
- Every MS'er will have a SPIRITUAL IDENTITY **CRISIS**.
 - Handle it carefully.

Bottom Line

MS ministry needs to be a place where they **BELONG** before they **BELIEVE**.

This content was compiled by Jeff Henry, a veteran middle school pastor who lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Meet Generation Alpha

Gen x 1965-1980 | Millennials 1981-1995 | Gen Z 1996-2010 | Alpha 2010-2025

- Majority from dysfunctional homes
- Celebrity generation: youtube, tik tok, Instagram, etc.
- More diverse than ever. Census says more than 50% from minority families
- Being raised in a post-Christian world
- Attending church less frequently than any generation
- Out number boomers
- May never use cash
- Older jobs will end due to automation; they'll work jobs that don't exist yet
- Been Tapping on smart devices since an early age
- They are used to automation: Alexa, siri, electric cars, robo servers, door dash, self checkout
- Tech is a tool for everything
- Born in 2010... the year the iPad was invented!
- Innovate and adapt

- Many will live to 100....Healthier (diets, plant based, sugar free, natural baked, etc), medical technology
- Creators....building playlist, vlogs,
- More of their generation will go viral than those older
- Used to sharing everything and hearing everything quickly..... increased FOMO
- More and more freelancers and entrepreneurs
- Adapt quickly
- Parents speak a similar trendy language. Play video games with them, etc.
- They can sniff a fake on technology
- They are influenced by divided adults: Who should they believe- mask vs no mask, fund the police or defund police, etc.
- They will never know a time without Columbine (safety) or an African American president (diverse)

Sources-

Dr. Shelly Melia- Dallas Baptist University

Sunrise youtube channel- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dID2PqygC0>

Brightside youtube channel- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHsXa4TgXT0>

Some Excellent Resources to Help You Out on the Journey...

Websites:

Empoweredhomes.org

Their mission is to empower and grow strong families. They offer dynamic resources for marriage, parenting, and personal growth.

justaphase.com

insight to parent through the emotional, psychological, and spiritual journey of students at each grade level. Gives great advice on parenting through each phase specifically.

Info.axis.com

Equip parent and mentors in a variety of issues that teenagers face like identity, mental health, sex and purity, technology, and much more. They have parent guides, conversation kits, and other excellent resources.

theparentcue.org

Very practical advice to truly lead your family well

www.cpyu.org – T

he Center for Parent/Youth Understanding: Connects parents with information about current youth culture

www.pluggedin.com – Great resource to get an overview of movies and music and what kind of content exposure it has for your student.

Books:

Kristen Ivy and Reggie Joiner, Parenting Your Sixth Grader

Kristen Ivy and Reggie Joiner, Parenting Your Seventh Grader

Kristen Ivy and Reggie Joiner, Parenting Your Eighth Grader

Russell Moore, *Storm-Tossed Family*

Steve Wright, *A Parent Privilege*

Tim Elmore, *Artificial Maturity*

Mark Oestreicher, *A Parent's Guide Series*

Rick Bundschuh, *Surviving Middle School: A Hilarious Guide That Will Help You Avoid Being a Dork* (For students)

Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers*

Walt Mueller, *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture*

Dr. James Dobson, *Life on the Edge, Raising Boys, Raising Girls*

Jim Burns, *Confident Parenting*

Vicki Courtney, *Your Girl*

Amy Pierson & Mona Corwin, *Table for Two*

Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*