



# MAIN STREET STUDENT MINISTRY

November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009

Parents and Students,

Welcome to the greatest adventure you will ever encounter. Ok, that may be a stretch but there are some that would agree with me when I say that your experience in the youth group *can* have lasting effects on your life that will help shape who you are and whose you are. So why am I writing this to you? I think we have lost our vision as a youth group. We have forgotten why we exist and why we do the things we do. Why do we have NHC on Sundays or what's up with Robbie asking us to clean-up the highway on a Saturday when I should be getting some much needed rest? Why in the world do we go to Six Flags when we could be spending the money elsewhere? Have you ever thought that maybe the answers to those questions are a little deeper and more complex than we could possibly imagine? Maybe we have lost our focus and grounding and what used to be purposed-activities have now turned into mundane rituals of "helping people" and "having fun."

It's nothing new though as groups have forgotten who they are for centuries. Consider Israel; soon after God delivered them from Egyptian bondage, parted the Red Sea, guided them through the wilderness they found themselves enthralled with a Golden Calf (Exodus 32). But they repented and soon found favor with God up until the point where they were told to go into the land God would give them. 12 spies were sent only 2 said they could subdue it and as a result some people were not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Num. 13). Then Israel wanted a king—then the king was evil—then they had David—David sinned too—a period of evil kings. Then something amazing happened...When Hilkiah found the scroll and told King Josiah about it and let him read it...this is what happened: ***"When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes"*** (2 Kings 22:11). Josiah was torn apart because everything they had done up until that point had been a waste of time. What Israel needed was not some new plan, some hyper-active minister or even a snazzy catch phrase to put on the title of their ministry...what Israel needed was reform!!!

That is what I am asking from you!!! A revival! No, not some evangelistic campaign or some high-powered marketing slogan but a genuine revival in the hearts and thoughts of our people. I am tired of doing the same thing and getting the same results. I am not about having a youth group of 75 kids, with 190 parents and 35 volunteers. Bigger is not better. I would rather have a youth group of 12 kids who are completely stoked about Jesus Christ and want to follow God's will wherever that "will" may lead. That's what I want!!! That's Robbie's vision in a nut-shell. You want a verse to go with that vision?

***Ezekiel 36:25-27 <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you, And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.***

I believe, encapsulated in the prophecy section of the Old Testament, is a little bit of what God wants for all his people—genuine love. So what is the youth group about? Why should I let my daughter become involved or why should I invest my own free-time into something like this? Change! IN ORDER TO GET A NEW HEART WE MUST GET RID OF THE OLD ONE!!! Makes sense right? The youth group is not perfect, nor is it a “fix-all” for every problem you may encounter. But one thing is for sure, when your child is in the youth group and is willing to open up to new possibilities they will experience things they will not experience anywhere else. The youth group is a primer to new possibilities and a new way of doing things!!!

Below is an introduction to the youth group with explanations of activities and various rules and expectations. It is not my intention to be dogmatic so much so as thorough. There will probably be some things I miss on here that will come up on activities or different events. This is simply a “primer” to the youth group. What I want is for you to call me and talk with me if you do not understand something or maybe I was inconsistent on what I expected versus what actually happened. I hope this helps you in understanding what the youth group experience is all about.

Maranatha, (Come, Lord!)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robbie Mackenzie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robbie Mackenzie  
Youth Minister

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# What the Youth Group Is and What It Is Not!!!

- ☒ **It is not** a babysitting service for your child. Please understand that we are not here for you to “dump” your child on us and then go and do what you feel.
- ☒ **It is not** a substitute for spiritually training your own child. It is not my job to spiritually train your child, it is yours. If you get mad because your child is not developing spiritually then maybe you might need to look in the mirror and see if you are really doing an effective job yourself. Now we can refer you to other parents and resources for mentoring but it still must be your job.
- ☒ **It is not** a social club to simply hang out. This is more for the students than the parents. Students if you feel like you go to activities simply to socialize (even when it means during a class or during a sermon) then do not bother coming. I will be patient of course with you but do not expect for me to be happy when you show up to have fun but do not show up to serve.
- ☒ **It is not** a satellite church or seen as a sub-culture of the church. Yes we do different things at different times but we are a part of the whole body and we will work to be with other people in the whole church.
- ☒ **It is not** a “fix-my-kid” program. What your student needs is a loving relationship from their parents and solid peer influences. But they also need a personal relationship with God. Many students struggle in that they equate a relationship with God with doing youth group things. But when they leave the youth group their relationship squanders and they are left wondering, “What happened?” The only thing that can fix us is a viable, healthy, persistent relationship with God!
- ☒ **It is not** a dictatorship run by myself or a few parents. This group is led by God which means sometimes I do not get to do what I want because it is not what is best for the whole group.
  
- ☑ **It is** a safe-haven for kids to express themselves free from tyranny and oppression. If a student wants to talk about struggles or victories, that is what the youth group is about.
- ☑ **It is** a place to “aid” in the growth of one’s spirituality. It is a component to what you as a parent are doing in the home.
- ☑ **It is** a place to learn about God. Classes, devotionals, service-projects, mission trips, youth rallies are all geared towards a student finding out more about God! It is what we do!
- ☑ **It is** a place to find positive friendships. No group is free from cliques or personalities. What is unique at Main Street is that we admit we have these issues and have it out in the open. We want to learn how to love each other more in a unique fashion.
- ☑ **It is** a place of trust. Whether it is trusting myself with sacred information or trusting the group to help someone in the journey that is what the youth group is about.
- ☑ **It is** a place to learn what church means. Church is not a place, a building, or a time period. Church is a group of people, a community of believers struggling together against issues of the world. That means sometimes we disagree, sometimes our personalities clash and sometimes we just do not get along with people...but we are church and we learn how to accommodate one another in our communities.

# Expectations/Rules

This is the part of the handbook where I want to be as explicitly clear as I possibly can about what is to be expected of you and your child when it comes to the youth group. It is difficult to list everything so I apologize in advance if something is left out. What is expected of students is also expected of chaperones. You may disagree with some of these and that is fine but these are given to keep us safe and for us to be on the same page.

## Code of Conduct

- If our mission is to live for Christ in all places then we must act godly wherever we go. Part of that means we have to behave a certain way. *“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”* (Phil. 1:27, NIV).
- Worship should always be done appropriately. I do not force people to worship but I also ask that they do not talk, disrupt or distract others from worshipping. Worship is from the heart and the youth group is a safe place for your child to worship from the heart.
- Dress: This is always a tough situation and I hate having to even address this but please do not let your teenager out of the house wearing inappropriate clothing. That means shirts that have inappropriate things written on them, short shorts, low-cut shirts bearing all, or even tight shirts that outline every nook and cranny of the female body. Look, if it is not on the menu then don't show it. I don't care how impressed you are with your own body. Impress someone else. I will not embarrass the teenager or make a scene but I will make sure they know what is expected of them privately. If it is a female usually I will get a female chaperone to talk with them. Please help me out with this.
- Tobacco, cigarettes, alcohol, or any drug contraband is forbidden. Also please do not bring any weapons (pocket-knives are ok) or anything that would endanger the group (lighters, matches, fireworks).
- I am hesitant to allow I-PODS because they take away so much from the overall experience. It is impossible for me to successfully patrol this so I will allow them to bring I-PODS on trips. **HOWEVER, I reserve the right to take them up if I deem it a distraction or if I find trashy things on the I-POD.**
- Invariably on trips we stay in hotels where there are TVs and usually they have HBO, Cinemax and sometimes Showtime. A lot of junk occurs on these stations so I request that chaperones and students simply DO NOT watch them. Also students and chaperones should monitor all stations because nasty content sometimes shows up everywhere.
- Opposite sex interaction. The best thing is to avoid each other at all costs. I am not big into relationships and I do not care that this guy gives you that feeling that you feel which

you have never felt before! Who cares? Keep the Public Display of Affection to a nil. Also, sometimes it is difficult for me to really monitor couples sitting on the back of the bus so please, if you are a couple, sit close to the driver. For your well-being and mine. Also, when we have hotels please keep the girls and guys out of each other's rooms. I would think that this goes without saying but sometimes you never know what to assume. Please do not put yourselves in situations where temptation is an issue. We are all humans and some are more easily tempted than others. Just avoid each other!

## **Chaperones**

- A lot of times we are specific in what we require of our kids yet neglect to specify what we want with those who chaperone events.
- All of the things I ask of students I would also ask that the chaperones do the same thing. It sends mixed messages when I ask a student to do something yet the chaperone does something else. You may not agree with what I ask but please, for the sake of unity, set an example and do the same things I require for students.
- No chaperone is to be alone with a student of the opposite sex. Period. This is to keep both student and chaperone free from Satan and from a false accusation (not that this would happen but better to err on the side of caution).
- Chaperones must also have a clean record when it comes to a criminal history. Yes, I understand forgiveness is implied and that the church is a hospital. I am speaking more towards those who are convicted sex offenders. I don't perceive this ever being an issue but wanted to put this in writing.
- Chaperones, **at the minimum**, must be at least a year removed from the youth group. Why? If I am 18 year-old senior in high-school it is going to be difficult for me to show respect to an 18 year old freshman in college. I will allow you to chaperone things when you get a year of spiritual formation under your belt. I will, at times, make exceptions to this but this is not the standard rule.
- Because of the generosity of the Main Street eldership and the donations of members in the Main Street congregation chaperones only have to pay for 50% of each activity. There are two major exceptions to this rule. 1) If you go to camp you will go for free. 2) If you go to either the Spring or Fall Retreat you will go for free.
- Please commit to something you signed up for as it puts me in a bind when you sign-up for something but forget to show up to actually chaperone the activity (see below for policy on dropout).

## **Driving**

- This has become an issue with the youth group and I guess has been for some time.

- Here is the rule: ***ALL STUDENTS IN THE YOUTH GROUP MUST RIDE THE BUS/VAN TO ALL ACTIVITIES UNLESS APPROVED BY ROBBIE PRIOR TO THE ACITIVITY.***
- I understand that some of you have to work and some of you have prior engagements which are all fine. BUT, if you are simply driving to an activity just to drive then I don't want you to do that. I worry too much (a character flaw) and I do not need to multiply that by being concerned about what may happen on the road. Hope this makes sense.

## **Modes of Communication**

- The avenues by which the Main Street Youth Group communicates are as follows: Quarterly calendars, youth group information board in the foyer by the elevator, weekly bulletin announcements, weekly announcements at services (Sunday and Wednesday), e-mail lists (if you want on the list e-mail me at remackenzie11@hotmail.com), phone-tree messages, personal phone calls and sometimes a monthly newsletter. This is how we communicate and get details about costs, times, dates, etc.
- Sometimes I do not communicate like I should and invariably miscommunication occurs. To that I apologize. But what I cringe at is this type of discussion:
  - Robbie: Where were you on Saturday? We missed you at the Nashville Predators game!
  - Student: I didn't even know about the game! Why didn't you tell me?
  - Robbie: Did you check the sign-up board?
  - Student: Well...no.
  - Robbie: Did you check the bulletin because it has been in there for 4 weeks now?
  - Student: No.
  - Robbie: Did you hear me announce it for three weeks on Sundays and Wednesdays?
  - Student: I wasn't paying attention.
- I think you understand what I am saying.

## **Financial Responsibilities and Policy on Drop-Out**

- In the past few years we have had a number of students drop out of various youth activities for various reasons (some legitimate and some not). When your child drops out at the last minute it is imperative that you understand it will cost the church money.
- The main problem with this is communication. Sometimes the student does not communicate to the parents effectively. Sometimes I do not communicate effectively. I cannot hold you responsible for that.

- What is at stake is the Lord's money and the ability to be able to do many things for the youth with the least amount of money coming out of your pockets and the churches. Also this is a process to teach our teenagers some responsibility for their actions. By pooling our resources together we can affordably strengthen our student's faith without putting a crunch on our budgets.
- POLICY: The policy is that if you cancel within **2 weeks** of the following activities (go to the activities section for a full explanation of what these activities are) you will be required to pay the **total amount** (CYC, EU, FOCUS, Fall Retreat, Spring Retreat, Ski Trip, Summer Trip, Camp, Laser Quest Lock-in, Predators Game or anything that requires the church to pay up front).
- There are emergency circumstances that I completely understand and would be exempt:
  - Death in the family (immediate and extended)
  - Sudden illness (if you get the flu I don't expect you to go nor do I even want you to go 😊)
  - Your family member becomes sick and you have to take care of them.
  - Something happens in your family that requires **your immediate attention**. For example, your sister lost her job and needs someone to console her. You get the idea.
- However these circumstances **will not be accepted** as excuses:
  - I forgot I signed up ("Oh it's this weekend")
  - My child did not tell me he/she signed up (then make him/her pay for it)
  - We already scheduled something before (Usually the major trips are made months in advance so you know the schedules)
  - My coach said I had to be there and I could not skip
  - My friends were not going on the trip so I did not want to go
  - My boss would not give me the date off (Did you ask off 2 months in advance?)
  - Financial inabilities (The church is here for those of you who struggle financially. We can help—just let me or one of the elders know and we will take care of it.)
- Something else is important to understand and that is chaperones will be required to pay as well.

## **Disagreement/Communication**

- Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "*The people to fear **are not** those who disagree with you, but those who disagree with you and are too cowardly to let you know.*" That's too strong of language but you get the idea.
- The procedure in Scripture (e.g. Matt. 18:15-18) is that if you have an issue with a brother or sister then go to him directly. If they will not listen then bring a witness. If they still will not listen then you tell it to the church.

- I have learned that there is a way one can disagree without being disagreeable. There is a right way to speak and a wrong way to speak.
- I make errors like any other human being and I have many things that I am not good at (which is obvious to you 😊). I can take criticism when it is done constructively and in a loving manner.
- If you have a disagreement with me or an issue with me as a person then please, please, please, please come to me. **In confidence**, we can meet and talk about these issues. I have had parents, students and members who have all had disagreements with me and have called me, met with me or sent me an e-mail personally to discuss the issues!
- I love this! It brings the situation out in the open and allows people to handle the conflict in a constructive and healing manner.
- What is particularly damaging to any system (family, corporation, church or whatever) is when people do not talk about issues. Or, when someone does not come to me but instead goes to the elders about a situation that could have been addressed between myself and that person. This is harmful. I know it is counter-intuitive to go to the person immediately since confrontation is usually not people's strong points but it helps every system when communication is done immediately.
- So let me reiterate: If you have a problem with me or my ministry please come to me first so I can help the situation.
- Also, as far as communication goes, I need to know more about your son or your daughter.

## **Disciplinary Actions/Procedures**

- I shy at even mentioning this because I have never had a disciplinary process I have had to exact in my ministry. My philosophy is that if you treat people and love them like they are supposed to be that they will do the same in return. It does not always work that way. I will say this...**I have never had to send a student home or even ban a student from attending activities because of their behavior.** That could change but my goal is that it does not.
- Regarding dress what I typically will do is ask them to put something else on. If it is a girl then I will have one of my female chaperones address the situation. I will do this privately and I **refuse** to embarrass your child.
- If a student brings tobacco, alcohol, drugs or explosives that put the group in intrinsic danger then I will confiscate the items and will immediately inform the parents. At this point I will arrange for them to leave the activity they attend and all traveling expenses

will be paid by the parent. I will meet afterwards with the parents to talk about further steps to be taken.

- Sometimes students are disrespectful and show disdain towards authority which (if you are a parent) we all know that it is encoded in a teenager's DNA to do so. All joking aside, I think most of the parents will tell you that I am a very patient person with teenagers.
  - If your child shows a persistent attitude of disrespect then I will address it by talking with them one-on-one. **I will not embarrass them.**
  - If they persist then I will inform you as a parent and then take necessary steps based on communication with you.
  - If persistence is still an issue then we will ask them to leave the activity and parents will pay for those expenses. Again...this has NEVER happened since I came to Main Street in 2004.
- Sexual Activity. This has NEVER been an issue either but I thought it necessary to include this. If it is discovered that students are involved sexually on the trip then parents will be informed and both parties will be asked to leave. I will meet with the families afterwards to do follow-up and study to see what further actions we would need to take. This also means the viewing of pornography (internet, TV, phone or magazine).
- This is, by no means, an all-inclusive list but I want you to know that your child's safety is my concern and the safety of other students on the trip. I am also concerned with their spirituality as well. Situations arise that are unique and I will address them with the wisdom that I have at the time. I will always be in communication with you as a parent as you know your son or daughter better than I do.

## **Special Needs/Health Concerns**

- Each student is unique. If your child has specific health concerns I need to be made aware of that (see form at the end of the packet).
- Also I need to be made aware of any learning disabilities or family history issues (divorce, abuse, etc.) that would help me to minister to your child more effectively. All of this is, of course, VERY CONFIDENTIAL, and I will not share this information with anyone.
- I have a medical form that all students/chaperones/volunteers must fill out that I keep on file for your child. Also, I need a copy of their insurance card when we go on trips in case something was to happen. This information is confidential as well.
- If you know something about your child that I need to know which you believe would help me minister to them more effectively then I need to know this information.

# My Role as Youth Minister

I have often been asked by people this question, “What does a youth minister do all day?” I remember talking with one of my cousins in Canada and when I told him I was a youth minister he responded, “You can actually make a living doing that type of thing?” I thought I would include, in this handbook, a general idea of what I do and how I minister to your child. I will also talk about some boundaries I have set between myself and your child. Before you know me as a minister I feel like I have to give you a background of who I am.

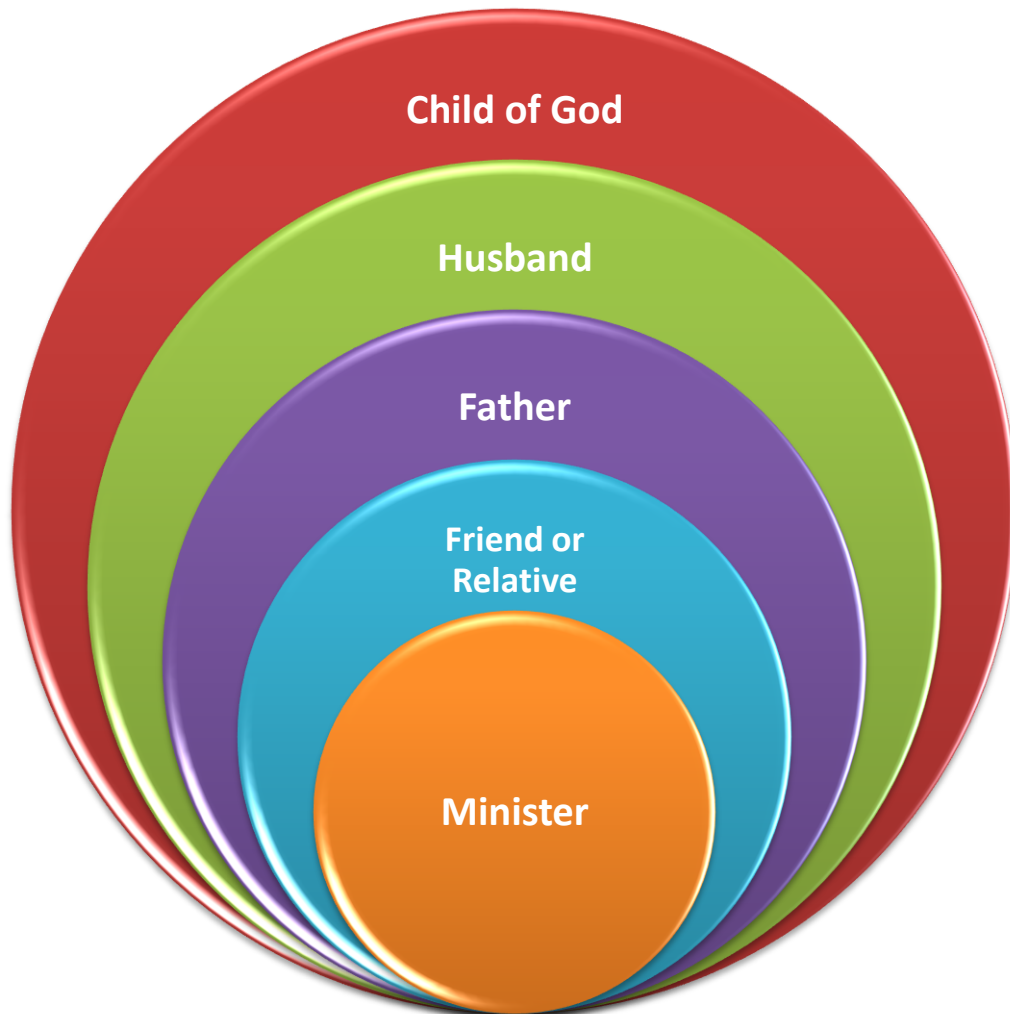
I did not grow up in the churches of Christ as my upbringing could be described as unchurched. My parents were (and still are) amazing people but religion was not something we practiced as a family even though many of the spiritual and moral practices I adhere to now were part of my parents’ principles growing up. I was sprinkled in the United Church of Canada simply for the sake of tradition in our family but after we moved to the “States” we did not attend services. I grew up in Marietta, Georgia and lived there until I was 14 then my father moved us to Chattanooga, Tennessee. I attended my freshman year at a public school and had the worst experience of my life. I had a GPA of 1.6 and was involved with some of the worst people in school.

My parents decided a change was necessary so they did some research on private schools and decided that they wanted me to attend Boyd-Buchanan School in Chattanooga. It was a private Christian school associated with the churches of Christ but it was also the only private school my parents could afford. I started my spiritual journey in 10<sup>th</sup> grade being “forced” to attend chapel services and sing songs that sounded weird to me. I attended a church of God for a little bit and even an Episcopal church for a period of time but was dissatisfied with religion. It wasn’t until my senior year when things finally started to click. I was dating a girl who was a devoted Christian and had recently broken up with her boyfriend. Her father was a youth minister at a local church and asked me if I wanted to study the Bible. I agreed and we studied for a while but it all did not make sense to me.

I read Romans for the first time by myself and was amazed. In high-school we had to take bible classes and in the senior bible class I knew more about Romans than most of the church of Christ students who grew up in the church. After much consideration, on March 7, 1999 I decided that I wanted to be baptized (immersed) and be a New Testament Christian. It changed my life! I went from being a marketing major at the University of Tennessee to a Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee (look it up...go to the middle of nowhere and take a left). I broke up with that girl after my freshman year and shortly met the love of my life Heather. We married in 2003.

I have a B.S. in Bible and a Master's of Arts in New Testament from Freed-Hardeman University and currently I am finishing up a Master's of Divinity from Lipscomb University. I have grown tremendously in 10 years of Christianity and I have a wealth of experience some being joyful while others being tragic. Youth Ministry is one of those jobs that is difficult to prepare for so much of my training has come under (as my youth group parents would attest to) much trial and error. God has graced me though and has allowed me to learn from my mistakes to help the kingdom of God in a more complete capacity. With the help of an awesome family (Heather, Kaleb, Amelia, Madelyn and our 4<sup>th</sup> child), dedicated youth parents, incredible students and a shepherding group of elders Main Street Youth Group has been able to grow leaps and bounds often not because of me but in spite of me!!! *Deo Gratias* (Thanks be to God!).

Before I give the tasks I wanted to communicate to you what I do based on my roles. You will notice that I value being a child of God above all else then I value being a husband after that and so on and so forth. But each sphere is affected by the other. For example, me being a child of God affects who I am as a husband, father, friend and minister. So if I am failing at being a husband that it affects all of my other relationships. All of this to say that I put God, Heather, my kids and my personal relationships before being a minister of a church. I will not be a slave to a church only to neglect (coincidentally) my wife and family in the process.



Below is a ***generic*** list of responsibilities and a list of boundaries. This will serve to help you understand what I do and why I do it but please understand it is not a complete list.

➤ Daily Tasks

- Sit at my desk and play solitaire or check out sports scores on the internet or see who I can talk to on Facebook. I hope you know I am kidding! I thought I would shock you at first and see if I could make you laugh.
- Spiritual Formation
  - Reading Scripture—for devotion and for study
  - Reading Religious Books—on numerous different topics
  - Prayer
  - Service – part of my spiritual disciplines is that each day I have to do a random act of kindness for someone in the community without them knowing it. I know—I’m weird.
  - Journaling→Blogging. I have a journal and the purpose of it is to allow me to put what I think, preach, teach or learn on physical paper. Then I transfer some of the material on to my blog ([robbiemack.wordpress.com](http://robbiemack.wordpress.com)) to allow others to learn. This keeps me accountable to others and accountable to God.
- Planning activities – long-range and short-term.
- Being a liaison to the congregation by having office hours.
- Studying for classes, sermons, and personal bible studies.

➤ Weekly Responsibilities

- Communicate with students via sending them a note in the mail, e-mail, texting, eating lunch with them or attending their extra-curricular activities. Being a presence in their lives.
- Personal Bible Studies
- Write a bulletin article for the Main Street *Reporter*.
- Implement the activities that have been planned for the Main Street Student Ministry.
- Teach Bible class on Wednesday and Sunday (sometimes both).
- Write encouragement notes to members in the congregation.
- Communicate with the eldership concerning any news associated with the Student Ministry but also Main Street in general.

➤ Monthly Responsibilities

- Process each month’s activities to see if we are accomplishing what we set out to do.
- Meet with parents either formally or informally.
- Preach one Sunday a month.
- October-March teach every other Tuesday to Senior-High Students.
- Make a report for the eldership as to the month’s activity in the Student Ministry.

- Meet with the seniors of the Student Ministry to discuss the ebb and flow of the ministry from a student's perspective and set goals.
- Quarterly Responsibilities
  - Plan out the calendar by meeting with the Youth Activities' Committee.
  - Meet with parents to discuss the calendar and to answer questions about the ministry.
  - Access the ministry to see if certain activities are achieving the vision set out by the Student Ministry.
  - Develop a plan for what we hope to achieve next quarter.
  - Talk with Mark Reeves on the Education Committee to see how the Bible class is flowing and to assess needed changes.
- Yearly Responsibilities
  - Ministry Evaluation
  - Personal Evaluation – Every year I fire myself and try to figure out reasons I need to be hired again. Heather and I discuss, as a family, our goals and look at ministry from a family perspective to see if we are doing the right thing.

### **Boundaries and Limitations:**

- Expectations of Heather
  - Every minister needs someone who ministers to them. Heather is my minister.
  - She is not paid by the Main Street congregation so she is not a minister for this congregation.
  - She helps out with the girls some but she can only do so much.
- Counseling
  - I do not have a counseling background and have taken only a few courses. In cases where professional counseling is needed I will **always** refer them to someone in that profession.
  - Sometimes situations are presented where I am told to keep confidentiality and I always respect that. By law, I am not allowed to keep confidence when there is imminent physical harm (suicide, bomb threats, etc.). By law, I am also required to report any abuse to the local authorities (sexual, physical, etc.).
- Opposite Sex Interaction
  - It is important for me to set boundaries between myself and female students. I will not meet with them one-on-one without an adult nearby. I have eaten lunch with female students before but it has always been in public places where I could be seen.

- I cannot drive a female student home unless an adult is with me. Please pick your students up yourselves or arrange transportation for them.
- Texting, e-mails and other interaction are always saved on my computer or phone and my wife (and you) have access to them to keep us accountable.
- I will be their friend, minister and mentor but I also do not want there to be an issue where you will have to be concerned about trust.

# Explanation of Activities

You can divide the categories in a number of different ways but basically I have two: Spiritual and Non-spiritual. The point that I would like to argue is that all of the activities we do are somewhat spiritual. Spiritual is not something we do rather it is who we are! Some activities will be left out so forgive me and the youth ministry will also come up with new activities periodically (They are also listed alphabetically for you perfectionistic people out there)! The church is an organism so we are constantly changing, adapting, and sometimes erasing. Many parents will tell you that I am not big on having an activity in place because we have always had it! If the ministry feels like, for example, that a camp is not necessary to accomplish the goals of our ministry then we will cut it out. We must be flexible in activities!

**ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY (QUARTERLY):** Once a quarter (on a Saturday 9am-1pm) we go out to the section of highway (2 Miles on 431 Starting at Walker Hardware and ending just pass the Springfield Sign) that the State of Tennessee has reserved for the Main Street Church of Christ to pick up trash. We do this to serve our community and to help in the movement to better treat God's creation. Gloves are required and usually pants should be worn as opposed to shorts (in the summer months it may be too hot for that). No flip-flops as we usually get into the grass a lot and it could be hazardous. *Cost: Money for lunch.*

**CHRISTMAS PARTY (WINTER):** We will have a party at somebody's house to celebrate Christmas with one another. It will occur on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of December (but we are flexible) and is simply a time to play games, laugh and exchange gifts. Bring a gift to share (\$10 maximum) with the group as we play Dirty Santa. "Dirty" may be misleading (☺) so we can call it "Strategic Santa!!!"

**COLLEGE VISITS (RANDOM):** I have never done this but would be interested in visiting college campuses with juniors and seniors for them to get a "feel" of what campus life is like. We would visit campuses like Harding (Bison Daze), Faulkner, Lipscomb but also public schools like UTK, UTC, TTU, MTSU, UTM and Austin Peay. We would then take time to talk with campus ministers about different things! Looks like a really cool time to be together! *Cost: Whatever lodging and food expenses that would incur.*

**C.R.O.S.S. (JANUARY):** Sometimes parents have come to me and said, "Robbie, it feels like I am competing with the youth group for attention from my child. We have hectic schedules and it is so hard to do things together!" So in January 2009 we had our first C.R.O.S.S. (Christians Realizing Our Spiritual Shortage) session. What we do is only have one major activity and then clear the schedule for a whole month. Instead of going somewhere for NHC we meet, sing, read Scripture and pray. Instead of Intensive Care we meet, read Scripture, sing and pray. Instead of

talking in homework socials and playing games we meet, read Scripture, sing and pray! Instead of scheduling something every weekend we open three weekends up for the families to spend together. I create devotionals for the families to use and we promote simple family time and push it. January is a good time to do this because it helps us start anew!

**C.Y.C. (WINTER):** We go to Gatlinburg usually the last weekend in February for Challenge Youth conference (C.Y.C.). It is an activity where many churches unite to discuss issues related to the church but mostly to challenge them to be better people in the kingdom. We stay in a hotel in Gatlinburg and then there are opportunities to shop and hang out. *Cost: \$45-65 depending on the hotel we stay at (plus money for 4 meals).*

**DEVOTIONALS (MONTHLY):** Once a month (usually on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday evening) we will go to youth group parent's home and have a devotional (7pm-9pm). This is a time for worship and food. The last devotional in each quarter is reserved for the Parent-Teen Devotional. This is where parents and teens worship together but is also a time where we meet and talk about the activities and hand out schedules.

**EVANGELISM UNIVERSITY (WINTER):** Evangelism University (E.U.) is an opportunity for high-schoolers (no junior-high) to intensify their knowledge of Scripture in an effort to learn how to evangelize their friends. It is a great moment for the teenagers and usually is the highlight of our year. *Cost: \$35 plus money for 2 meals.*

**HAUNTED HOUSE (FALL):** Sometimes we will go to a haunted house on a Friday or Saturday night to simply have fun. *Cost: \$10-15 depending on the location.*

**HOMEWORK SOCIALS (SCHOOL YEAR):** During the school year we meet every other Wednesday from 5:30-6:45 to have a meal and to catch up on homework. A lot of times we play games outside or it is a time to sit and talk.

**INTENSIVE CARE (FALL-SPRING):** From October-March we have intensive care which is a high-school only bible study from 7pm-8pm every other Tuesday night (will not be on the same week as Homework social). We study intense topics that might not be studied in regular bible classes. Examples: Hot Topics, Heart Issues, the Book of Job, etc. We meet typically in the youth house but often we go to the youth minister's home.

**LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE (SUMMER):** We collect money from the congregation and then purchase school items for those in need in our community. This is done usually toward the end of July and the beginning of August.

**LOCK-INS (RANDOM):** I hate them. Enough said. Seriously, we will do lock-ins periodically and they are usually big events and keep us busy the whole night. We have done a couple of Laser-Quest lock-ins and one year we did a progressive lock-in where we went to a few different places.

**LUNCH BUNCH (SCHOOL YEAR):** When the students have a day off school (ex.— President's Day) we will load up the bus and head down to a mall (Opry Mills or Rivergate) and

we will eat lunch together and then hang out in the mall. We usually do this from 11:30am-2:30pm. Just a time to keep them busy and get me out of the office (☺). *Cost: \$7-10 depending on what they eat for lunch!*

**MAIN STREET BACKYARD MISSION TRIP (SUMMER):** This is something that was started in 2008 as a way of reaching out to our community in a missional way. We knocked doors in our community, handed out flyers, and talked with a variety of different people. We also (each day) had service projects that we did in an effort to help our community. We cleaned the highway, washed the bus, passed out free bottles of water to construction workers, cleaned the Greenway and cleaned local parks. Each year we will be doing something different like painting houses, cleaning gutters, serving local schools and helping out our hospital. This is a way to teach people how to be missional but also that being evangelistic is more than simply telling others about what the bible says. It is about transforming a society into something that is extraordinary. Since this is in Springfield we sleep in our own homes so cost is limited. Sometimes we have to buy supplies so that will increase the cost based on what we do. Most of the money is spent on the meals that our prepared for us for lunch. *Cost: \$30-40.*

**MEXICO MISSION TRIP (FIRST WEEK OF JUNE):** Main Street is involved in the mission work in Mexico and two times a year the church goes to Mexico to work in the construction of a new church. It is physical labor from 7am-4pm everyday that involves anywhere from moving cinder-blocks, hammering nails, shoveling rocks and sand and transporting concrete in a wheel-barrel. The trip is led by one of our deacons, Don Jenkins, and he also supervises the building aspect of the trip. In order to attend this trip **a student is required to have his or her passport.** The passport must be secured months in advance in case there are any delays with the passport agencies. Since I have been at Main Street we have gone to the following places in the summer (Monterrey, Ciudad de Acuña and Saltillo). It is a good trip and safety is always a concern. All students are supervised at all times and we will not let them go out on their own. *Cost: \$150 for the trip plus money for food and souvenirs (\$200 is a good estimate but often one needs more than that).*

**NASHVILLE RESCUE MISSION:** The Rescue Mission in Nashville is a place that shelters, clothes and feeds the homeless in Nashville. Usually once a year we go down and volunteer at the mission by sorting donated items or serving the food line. It is an awesome opportunity to simply serve when needed without expecting something in return. Hopefully this initiates a lifetime of serving the poor.

**NEW YEAR'S EVE BASH (WINTER):** We usually unite with another church group(s) (Jackson Park) and do multiple activities then sing in the New Year and then we usually get home by 1:00am. *Cost: \$10-\$15 depending on what we do!!!*

**NH-C (MONTHLY):** The first Sunday of each month the youth group will conduct worship services at the NH-C Nursing Home in Springfield. After AM services we eat (bring your lunch to save money) and then, at 1:30pm, we conduct services for the nursing home. After the services we usually will do a fun activity. This includes bowling, putt-putt, scavenger hunts, softball and other activities. Sometimes we will have service projects after NH-C like a car wash for senior citizens or cleaning the bus (which one time I said we were going to have a fun

activity so everyone would show up and then we ended up putting together pamphlets to be mailed out to the community...I usually will not be deceptive like that but it was fun to watch!!!☺). *Cost: \$7-10 depending on the activity.*

**PARENT BANQUET (SPRING):** Simply a meal on a Sunday after AM services to thank parents for all of the hard work they do and to celebrate them!!! Sometimes we will have a special video made and sometimes it will just be a time of sharing and reflection. *There is no cost for this activity!!!*

**RAKE-N-RUN (FALL):** In late October or early November the youth group will meet on a Saturday (10am-3pm) to rake people's leaves in the community. Often the yards will be our shut-ins or the elderly but sometimes we randomly go to people's houses in the community and offer our services. *Cost: Money for lunch.*

**RETREATS (FALL AND SPRING):** This activity is the main thrust for the Fall and Spring. Usually we will go to a retreat center in Kentucky or Tennessee and we will spend the entire weekend learning about God, Scripture and our relationship to both. These are also times for us to relax and wind-down from the hustle and bustle of schedule-frenzy society. *Cost: \$20.*

**R.U.S.H. (FALL):** this is Freed-Hardeman University's fall advance for students and it is a time to have devotionals, learn in classes and also a time to visit a college campus. *Cost: \$30 plus money for 3 meals.*

**SKI TRIP (WINTER):** Every other year we take a ski trip to either Paoli Peaks in Paoli, Indiana or Perfect North near Cincinnati, Ohio. We usually will go up Friday night, ski all day and drive back Saturday night. It is always loads of fun for the students and we usually have 40-50 people attend this trip. *Cost: \$45-60 depending on location and hotel (plus money for 3 meals).*

**SENIOR DINNER (MAY):** This is a time where the seniors, Heather and I go out to eat at a fancy restaurant of their choice. We have a time of food and fun and then we reflect about our time together. *There is no cost for students!!!*

**SUMMER CAMP (SUMMER):** This is a time for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grades and up to have a week of bible lessons, devotionals, fellowship and fun. This is a massive production which is undertaken by many people in the congregation. We have had camp at two locations: Camp Sycamore Creek in Goodlettsville (2005-2007) and Reelfoot Christian Camp in Hornbeak, TN (2008-2009). Starting in 2010 we will have camp at Coldstream Christian Camp in Adams, TN. It will typically be in the second week in July but dates will be reserved well in advance (fall of previous year). *Cost: \$100 (all-inclusive) for first child, \$75 for second child, \$50 for third child and the fourth child is free.*

**SUMMER TRIP (SUMMER):** Every year we cap off the youth group year with a summer trip. It is usually 3 days and we have gone to many different locations (Cincinnati, Atlanta and St. Louis). We will usually attend a theme park, a baseball game and then some other activities in between. It is loads of fun but also has a spiritual component to it as we have devotionals and good times of fellowship. *Cost: \$75-100 depending on location, hotels, etc. (plus money for 5 meals).*

**SUMMER YOUTH SERIES (SUMMER):** In the summer months the youth group will go to a different congregation on Thursdays and we worship with Nashville area congregations. We then eat and sometimes play games and return home.

**SWEETHEART BANQUET (WINTER):** In February the youth group comes up with a theme, menu and games for which they provide to the senior citizens in the congregation. The youth group feverishly work on decorating and they band together to provide a wonderful time for the senior citizens. This is done on a Saturday in February.

**TOYS FOR TOTS (WINTER):** We collect money in our congregation then buy toys and Christmas gifts for people in our community. This is done in the month of December.

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (SUMMER):** VBS is usually the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of June and it is a time for the youth group to help the program by acting, being a leader for the age groups or in the design of specific crafts. It is typically Monday-Thursday from 9am-11:30am.

**WINTER YOUTH SERIES (FALL-SPRING):** In the winter months (November-March...I know they are not all winter months but Fall/Winter/Spring Youth Series sounds dumb) on the first Sunday of each month, the youth group will go to a different congregation and have worship with the congregation Sunday night and then we eat afterwards.

**YOUTH RALLIES:** Often we go to various youth rallies in the year as our schedule will allow. Normally we will go to FOCUS Youth Rally in Dyersburg, TN which is the third week in April. These are times where the youth can learn more about God but also meet new people. Average *Cost: \$20 plus money for 2 meals.*

# Opportunities to Serve

*“Family-based youth ministry is a paradigm, not a program. It is ministering to youth in the most biblical and effective way possible and empowering the most influential people in a teenager’s life—their parents” (Jim Burns and Mike DeVries, *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry*, p. 41).*

*“If we plan to effectively minister to students over the long haul, we must sincerely desire to minister to entire families, because a youth ministry that excluded parents is about as effective as a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage” (Doug Fields, *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry*, p. 251).*

There is no limit to what you can do in this youth group. I do not want to lead our students by myself as I want you to be incredibly involved in their lives. You may have talents in specific areas where I do not. Below is a list (remember...it is incomplete and organic) of some things you can do to help out this ministry.

- ✦ **Chaperone** – This is my #1 need in ministry. I need a parental presence at all activities. I need your involvement and your input when I am off at places. You are my eyes and ears when we depart.
- ✦ **Bus Drivers** – Do you have a CDL with a passenger endorsement? Do you want to? I always need drivers as it would help me tremendously.
- ✦ **Teachers** – Do you have love for God’s Word and want to teach teenagers who will challenge you spiritually? Maybe you can speak at a devotional or speak at camp. We need you!
- ✦ **Y.A.C. Meeting** – Are you creative? Then be on our Youth Activities’ Committee. 4 times a year (once a quarter) we plan out our schedule and I am always looking to have new people on the committee who think of unique things for us to do.
- ✦ **P.A.T. Meeting** – Parental Advisory Team. It is an informative meeting to ask me questions or maybe I will have guest speakers on a special topic. It is a time to meet to talk about how the ministry is going.
- ✦ **Homework Socials** – Can you cook? Well then cook for a homework social!
- ✦ **Retreats**: We always need cooks, teachers, etc. for retreats.

- ✦ **Creativity**: Can you design t-shirts? Can you take pictures? Can you maintain a website? Can you come up with cool logos for our ministry? Or maybe you are savvy when it comes to videos or computer software. We would love for you to use your creative juices and use them in this ministry.
- ✦ **Prayer Warriors**: Maybe you are just one of those who prays all the time. Can you meet with me at lunch or dinner and we can sit down and pray! That is all you can do but you do it well.
- ✦ **Community People**: Maybe you are one of those who knows everybody in the county. The ministry needs you to think of opportunities to serve this community. You can be our liaison in the schools, businesses and local entities of our county. Our “eyes-and-ears” sort of speak.
- ✦ **Organizational Gurus**: Maybe you come from the business world and you know organization and structures. Could you sit down with me and brainstorm and look at the program as a whole to see how we could develop it further?
- ✦ **Family Counseling**: Maybe you have a degree in counseling. Could you offer your services to students in the youth group and even to other families.
- ✦ **Financial Counseling**: Maybe you are good with money and are trained in the market, economy, investments and also counseling people who struggle financially. Could you counsel families who struggle financially? Could you sit down with members in our youth and teach them how to balance a checkbook and maintain a budget?
- ✦ **Curriculum**: Maybe you know the Scriptures and you have a passion for writing curriculum. We could use you as I am always writing new curriculum for our teenagers.
- ✦ **Tutoring**: Sometimes students in the youth group struggle with their school work. Could you meet them on Homework Social days at help them out with their school work?
- ✦ **Adopt-a-Student**: What if we had a student who really had no parental figures in their lives? Would you be willing to mentor this child to show them what positive parenting looks like?
- ✦ **Financial Assistance**: Maybe the only thing you could do is to simply donate money to the youth group. Maybe you can write a check for some of the students in our ministry whose families cannot fiscally afford to go on certain activities. Could you help out?
- ✦ **Medical Training**: Are you a physician or do you have medical training? Maybe you could teach the use basic CPR training. Maybe you can assist on mission trips and help out with vision, dentist or prescription drugs.
- ✦ **Any other skills to teach?** Carpentry? Plumbing? Auto Repair? Crisis Management? Farming? Cleaning? Teaching? What do you do that could be taught to someone else?

# Recommended Resources

I have an extensive library as does our church. Please ask if you want something to read. Things that are in my library have an asterisk (\*) in front of it.

## Personal Devotion

- \*Arbinger Institute. *Leadership and Self-Deception*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2000, 2002.
- \*Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community*. New York City: Harper & Row, 1952.
- \*Eldredge, John. *Journey of Desire*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000.
- \*Foster, Richard J. *Life With God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2005.
- \*Standish, N. Graham. *Humble Leadership*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2007.
- \*Stanley, Andy. *It Came From Within*. Multnomah, 2006.
- \*Young, William P. *The Shack*. Windblown Media, 2007.

## Marriage Enrichment

- \*Arterburn, Stephen and Fred Stoeker. *Every Man's Battle: Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time*. Colorado Springs: Random House, 2000.
- Burns, Jim. *Creating an Intimate Marriage: Rekindle Romance Through Affection, Warmth & Encouragement*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 2007.
- \*Chapman, Gary. *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. Chicago:Northfield, 1992, 1995.
- Dobson, James. *Marriage Under Fire*. Carol Stream, IL:Tyndale House, 2007.
- Edwards, Judith. *Super Mom Has Left the Building: Being a Proverbs 31 Woman in a 21st-Century World*. New Hope Publishing, 2004.

\*Ethridge, Shannon. *Every Woman's Battle: Discovering God's Plan for Sexual and Emotional Fulfillment*. Colorado Springs: Random House, 2003.

Eggerichs, Emerson. *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires, The Respect He Desperately Needs*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004.

*Fireproof: The Movie*. Provident Music Distribution, 2008.

\*Kendrick, Stephen and Alex Kendrick. *The Love Dare*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008.

\*Ramsey, Dave. *Financial Peace: Revisited*. New York: Viking, 2003.

Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage To Make Us Holy More Than To Make Us Happy?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

## **Parenting**

\*Arterburn, Stephen, Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey. *Preparing your Son for Every Man's Battle: Honest Conversations About Sexual Integrity*. Colorado Springs: Random House, 2003.

\*Burns, Jim. *Confident Parenting*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 2007.

\*Chapman, Gary. *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers*. Chicago: Northfield, 2000, 2005.

\*Clark, Chap. *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*. Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2005.

\*Ethridge, Shannon. *Preparing Your Daughter for Every Woman's Battle: Creative Conversations about Sexual and Emotional Integrity*. Colorado Springs: Random House, 2003.

\*Gerali, Steve. *Teenage Guys: Exploring Issues Adolescent Guys Face and Strategies to Help Them*. El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2006.

\*Lewis, Robert. *Raising a Modern-Day Knight*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1997, 2007.

\*Olson, Ginny. *Teenage Girls: Exploring Issues Adolescent Girls Face and Strategies to Help Them*. El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2006.

Parrott, Les and Leslie. *The Parent You Want to Be: Who You Are Matters More Than What You Do*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

\*Penner, Marv. *HELP: My Kids Are Hurting*. El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2005.

## **Books for Teenagers**

\*Arterburn, Stephen, Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey. *Every Young Man's Battle : Strategies for Victory in the Real World of Sexual Temptation*. Colorado Springs: Random House, 2002.

\*DiMarco, Hayley. *Mean Girls*. Revell, 2008.

----- . *Technical Virgin: How Far Is Too Far?* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

----- . *Sexy Girls: How Hot Is Too Hot?* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

\*Ethridge, Shannon and Stephen Arterburn. *Every Young Woman's Battle: Guarding Your Mind, Heart, and body in a Sex-Saturated World*. Colorado Springs: Random House, 2004.

Kindle, Jeff. *The Loser's Club: Lessons from the Least Likely Heroes of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Vols 1-7. HarperTrophy, 1950-1956.

Lookadoo, Justin and Hayley Morgan. *Dateable: Are you? Are they?* Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids, 2003. \*\*\*I had this but SOMEONE lost it!!!\*\*\*

Matlock, Mark. *Don't Buy the Lie*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

## **Websites**

### **www.more4kids.info**

This website is chock-full of articles on any aspect of parenting you can think of and for any age. Whether you're nursing an infant, potty-training a toddler, helping a third-grader with homework, or buying a cell phone for a teenager, this website has advice and ideas to help you out.

### **www.drtoy.com**

Need to buy a gift for a child? This website provides information and reviews on the best toys and educational products. It also offers tips on selecting and links to online toy stores.

### **www.familyeducation.com**

### **www.parentsoup.com**

### **www.parenthood.com**

### **www.tnpc.com**

These websites have a little bit of everything – printables for the kids, recipes, parenting articles for all ages, a message board, and more.

**[www.zerotothree.org/](http://www.zerotothree.org/)**

This website focuses on babies and toddlers up to age three. Its parenting section includes articles on nutrition, brain development, child care, sleep, and more.

**[www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org)**

**[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)**

**[pediatrics.about.com](http://pediatrics.about.com)**

**[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)**

These are the websites to go to if you have a questions about your child's health. They have articles about nutrition, fitness, general health, growth and development, and more.

**[familyfun.go.com](http://familyfun.go.com)**

**[www.ParentsforParentsMag.com](http://www.ParentsforParentsMag.com)**

**<http://www.parents.com/>**

Your favorite parenting magazines also have websites with articles, recipes, craft ideas, and more.

**[www.parentpreviews.com/](http://www.parentpreviews.com/)**

**[www.parentstv.org](http://www.parentstv.org)**

**[www.family-movie-reviews.com/](http://www.family-movie-reviews.com/)**

**[www.commonsemmedia.org](http://www.commonsemmedia.org)**

We all need help navigating the media choices available to our children today. These websites review movies, television shows, video games, and music to help us determine what is appropriate for our children.

**[www.collegesavings.org](http://www.collegesavings.org)**

This website includes information about 529 savings plans.

**[loveathome.com](http://loveathome.com)**

This website focuses on families that have more than two children.

**[www.parentsworld.com](http://www.parentsworld.com)**

This website has articles and resources for single parents.

**[www.parentingteens.com](http://www.parentingteens.com)**

**[www.parent-teen.com](http://www.parent-teen.com)**

**[www.safeteens.com](http://www.safeteens.com)**

Parenting teenagers brings a whole new set of issues and questions. These websites have articles and advice on everything from communication and curfews to drug use and internet safety.

**[www.pta.org/](http://www.pta.org/)**

**[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)**

**[www.nea.org/parents](http://www.nea.org/parents)**

**[www.nncc.org/](http://www.nncc.org/)**

These websites focus on education and child care issues for your children.

**[www.ultimateparenting.com/](http://www.ultimateparenting.com/);**  
**[www.howtobehave.com/](http://www.howtobehave.com/)**

These websites focus on specific discipline techniques. You can also find discipline articles on general parenting websites.

**[step-parenting.com](http://step-parenting.com)**  
**[www.stepfamily.org](http://www.stepfamily.org)**

These websites provide advice and information for stepparents.