

FRESHMAN FIVE

9th Grade VGroup

Village Church Student Center

Wednesday, 6:45pm – 7:30pm

VILLAGE **STUDENTS**

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Welcome to Freshman Five!

Dear Student,

The start of high school is an exciting and memorable experience. As you enter this next stage of life, keep in mind that the next four years of your life will play an important role in the development of who you become as a person. As you go through high school you will find that there are plenty of lessons to be learned, questions to ask, challenges to face, and important decisions to make. This will be especially true as you learn to navigate the transition into high school. The goal of Freshman Five is to lay a foundation and walk alongside and equip you to tackle the many challenges of high school by answering five essential questions throughout the course of the year.

For the first question, we surveyed current and former students and asked the question, "What are the top five things you know now that you wish you would have known as a freshman in high school?". Over the next five weeks, you will take an in-depth look at their responses and discover how their stories impact yours. Our hope is that at the end of this year you will be prepared to step forward confidently into the next three years of high school (and beyond) and that you will reflect and radiate Christ in the process.

Best,

KJ

Week 1 – “Adolescence is a Myth”

The Reality of Growing Up, Responsibility, and Diligence

Speaker: _____

WEEK 1 DISCUSSION

“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.”

1 Timothy 4:12 NLT

1. Why do you think teenagers often see their youth as a barrier to growing in their faith and making a difference instead of an opportunity?
2. Do you feel like you have made the most of your first couple of weeks as a high school student? Why or why not?
3. How does your work ethic, diligence, and the responsibility you practice as a high school student (and beyond) relate to following Jesus?
4. Paul tells his young protégé, Timothy, to be an example to all believers in every area of his life...what are some practical steps you can take this week to set an example and model Jesus to those around you?

Rethinking Your Youth

For the follower of Christ, youth is an opportunity not an excuse. The habits and character you develop now are the same habits and character you'll carry into adulthood. Too many people look back on their time in high school with regrets because they wait to do what God equips and expects us to do right now. We settle for the ordinary when God calls us to the extraordinary. Decide today that you're going to take full advantage of the time God has given you in your youth by serving Him faithfully and making the most of your time in high school.

Week 2 – “The Importance of Priorities”

Fixing Your Focus, Establishing Your Direction

Speaker: _____

WEEK 2 DISCUSSION

Do You Know Your Direction?

Where is the person you look at in the mirror every morning headed? As C.S. Lewis says, "We all want progress, but if you're on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive."

Unfortunately, it's easy to become comfortable driving down the wrong road. We mistakenly call this "progress" when really, we're just lost. Honestly ask yourself...Is Jesus becoming larger and larger in your front window because you're moving closer to Him or, is He getting smaller and smaller in the rear-view mirror because you're wandering away from Him? The direction you take as you navigate high school will be influenced by your focus and what you make a priority in your life.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:33-34 CSB)

1. What are some things you feel pressured to make your focus in life?
2. What does it mean to seek God and his righteousness first in our lives (Matt. 6:33-34)? How might your life look different if you embraced this as your goal and focus each and every day?
3. Why do we often find it difficult to trust God with our time and our commitments? How should the promise that God will provide everything we need when we put Him first encourage us?
4. Do you find yourself worrying about the future often? Why is this tendency problematic in our spiritual lives?
5. What goals do you have for yourself and for your freshman year? How are you allowing God to direct and shape those goals?

Week 3 – “My Identity”

Rediscovering Who You Are

Speaker: _____

WEEK 3 DISCUSSION

“The Bible says that our real problem is that every one of us is building our identity on something besides Jesus.”

- Timothy Keller

1. What do you think about the quote above? How would you describe your own identity?
2. Why is it that Jesus demands exclusive claim to our identity? (Is there really a problem if our identity is half Jesus, half something else?)
3. Are the strongest influences in your life having a positive or negative impact on how you see yourself?
4. Do you have confidence in your identity as a follower of Jesus? Do you ever find it difficult to embrace Jesus as your identity? Explain.
5. What are some things we can do to cultivate a strong identity in Jesus?

Identity Crisis

Our society is having an identity crisis. It goes something like this: We abandon God, the fountain of living water, and make broken wells for ourselves that can't even hold water (Jer. 2:13). We look to everything but God (the one who created us!) to define and fulfill us. There are plenty of broken wells to choose from – romantic relationships, academic achievement, beauty, sports and extracurriculars, peer acceptance, popularity, success, power, drugs and alcohol, sex, entertainment, and more. Ultimately, what we embrace as our identity will reveal itself in how we live. If you are a follower of Jesus, then your identity is found completely and solely in Him. Anything we put our identity in apart from Christ is idolatry – and idols will *always* fail to give us the purpose, hope, fulfillment and satisfaction that God desires and promises to give us.

“Despite God’s assurance that He’s absolutely crazy about us, most of us can’t believe He means US. But God’s Word is full of your identity and position as a believer in Jesus Christ...” - Verla Gillmore

YOU ARE:

- A child of God (John 1:12)
- Adopted by God (Romans 8:14-15)
- Accepted by God (Romans 15:7)
- One with God in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17)
- Free from sin (Romans 6:6, John 8:36)
- Made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)
- Intimately known by God (Jeremiah 1:5)
- God's special possession (1 Peter 2:9)
- Fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14)
- God's delight (Isaiah 62:4)
- Free from condemnation (Romans 8:1)
- Redeemed and forgiven (Ephesians 1:7-8)
- Never alone (Joshua 1:9, Matthew 28:18-20)
- Lacking in nothing (Psalm 34:9-10, Philippians 4:19)
- A new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Loved (Galatians 2:20, John 3:16, John 15:9)
- God's workmanship created for good works (Ephesians 2:10)
- Ransomed and bought at a price (1 Peter 1:17-19, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- A citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)
- More than a conqueror through Christ (Romans 8:37)
- Saved through faith, by grace (Ephesians 2:8)
- Dead to sin, alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11)
- Called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)
- Justified by faith (Romans 5:1)
- A child of light (Ephesians 5:8)
- A follower of Christ (Luke 9:23)

Week 4 – “The Value of Christian Community”

Finding Your Place in Community

Speaker: _____

WEEK 4 DISCUSSION

"They reminded me that Christianity isn't meant to simply be believed; it's meant to be lived, shared, eaten, spoken, and enacted in the presence of other people. They reminded me that, try as I may, I can't be a Christian on my own. I need a community. I need the church."

— Rachel Held

1. Why is it dangerous to view the church we attend or our youth group as just an event we attend or a building where we meet at once a week?
2. Scripture tells us that when we become followers of Jesus, we are called into the body of Christ. As individual members of it, our participation in the body is necessary and essential to the health and function of the body (1 Cor. 12:12-31). How would viewing the church and your youth group in this way change how you think about and engage with them?
3. How would you benefit from having a strong Christian community that you could consistently lean on as you navigate high school?
4. As a VGroup, how can we work together to make this group and our student ministry a community that consistently models the love Christ has for his Church?

*"The practice of Christian community, quite simply, makes the gospel a lived reality. It embodies a specific, personal way of life together in Christ. It strengthens us to live the life to which we are called; it conveys God's life and power to the world at large. And it is **necessary**."*

- George Fox, Community: God's Design for Growth

Week 5 – “How to Make Wise Choices”

Approaching Decision-Making with Wisdom

Speaker: _____

WEEK 5 DISCUSSION

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

- 1 John 4:1-2 CSB

1. What are some tough or challenging decisions you've had to make since starting high school? How did you handle them? What are some difficult choices you think you'll have to make in the future?
2. How much does your faith in Jesus impact your decision-making process? What are some practical things we can do to make Jesus central to this process?
3. How often do you seek advice or help from someone wise and trustworthy when you're faced with a challenging situation? (Do you have someone like this in your life?)

DECIDE WHO YOU WILL FOLLOW...

“Then Elijah approached all the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people did not answer him a word.” (1 Kings 18:21 CSB)

First Kings 18:21 describes a crucial moment of decision. It's the final showdown between the God of Israel and a false god called Baal. Elijah calls God's people to choose once and for all between the living God who delivered them, and this false god who has captured their affections...

Barry Cooper, *The Problem of Your Choices*

Personal Challenge

Redeeming My Freshman Year for God's Glory

Write a personal challenge to yourself. It can be a personal letter, a list of promises to yourself, or personal reflection on what has impacted you most from Freshman Five so far, etc. Do whatever will work best for you as a form of inspiration and accountability to look back on periodically throughout the year.

Next Steps/Looking Ahead

Congratulations! You've successfully answered the first question of Freshman Five! However, the journey is just getting started – check out the next four questions you'll be tackling together as a VGroup throughout the remainder of the school year...

Question #2: What is the real story of Scripture? (4 weeks)

- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Restoration

Question #3: How do I understand Scripture? (4 weeks)

- Why study the Bible?
- How to study the Bible (Observation, Interpretation, Application)

Question #4: What does the Bible Say About _____? (4 weeks)

- God's holiness
- Sexuality
- Success
- Sanctity of Life

Question #5: What does all of this have to do with me? (3 weeks)

- 3-week breakdown of 1 Peter 2:9-12
- Next steps in preparation for the summer

****Looking to dive deeper and grow in your faith? We've got you covered! Check out our student spiritual growth resources at <https://villagestudentministry.com/studentresources>**

Notes
