



# ELVT

## STUDENTS

### **ELVT Leader Handbook**

Our **Mission** is to reach and equip the NOW Generation by showing students Jesus and teaching them how to serve Him daily.

# Leaders Set the Tone

As leaders, we have the power to shape the culture within our group, and it starts with us. If we want our students to engage deeply, we need to set the tone with our actions. **Be the first to cheer. Be the loudest in worship.** If you are quiet, students will follow suit, and if you are passive, they'll mirror that same energy. **Culture is both taught and caught.** Meaning that what you model in the way you show excitement, enthusiasm, and reverence will directly impact the atmosphere of the group.

We are creating a culture, not just a space. A culture that is not only about events or the programs we run, but about the everyday moments when we live out our passion for Christ. **Let's create a culture where we celebrate each other,** where hospitality, trust, and excitement are the foundation, where every student feels welcomed, where every leader feels supported, and where every conversation is filled with anticipation to open God's Word.

**Energy is contagious.** When you show up with passion, the room will light up with energy. If we are excited to worship, our students will follow our lead and find themselves engaging on a deeper level. If we show them that we can't wait to dive into God's Word, they'll be eager to do the same. **When they see us excited, they'll be excited.** When they see us trusting God, they'll trust Him too. Our actions and attitudes are powerful, let's use them to create an atmosphere where students feel the freedom to be themselves, to connect, and to grow in their faith.

So, as we lead, let's not just focus on what we teach them; let's focus on the culture we are building and continuing to build. A culture of **energy** where we never settle for passivity. A culture of **hospitality** where everyone feels welcome. A culture of **worship** where the presence of God is our ultimate priority. A culture of **trust** where students know that they can rely on us. A culture that is **excited** to dive into the Word and see how God speaks to us

every week. And most importantly, let's **be excited to be here** because the environment we create will be the one that sticks with them long after they leave.

# Vision & Core Values

At ELVT, we believe students are not the next generation; they are the NOW Generation, called to live out their faith in Christ today. Everything we do flows from our vision to see students come to Jesus, grow as His disciples, and live on mission daily.

## Why We Exist:

- To help students encounter Jesus in a real and life-changing way (John 10:10).
- To equip them to live as His disciples, owning their faith now and not waiting until adulthood (Colossians 2:6-7).
- To create an environment where students feel seen, heard, loved, and challenged to grow (Romans 12:10).
- To raise a generation of leaders who influence their schools, families, and communities for Christ (Matthew 5:14-16).

## Our Core Values:

- **Gospel-Centered:** Jesus is at the center of everything we do. Every program, conversation, and event points students to Jesus (Romans 1:16).
- **Relational:** Ministry happens best in relationships; we intentionally build trust and community (1 Thessalonians 2:8).
- **Authentic:** We create an environment where students can be honest about their questions, struggles, and victories (Ephesians 4:25).

- **Fun & Memorable:** Laughter breaks down walls; joyful ministry sticks with students long-term (Proverbs 17:22).
- **Multiplying Disciples:** We are not just making converts; we are raising disciple-makers (2 Timothy 2:2).

## Leader Commitments & Covenant

Serving in ELVT is not just volunteering; it is a calling to shepherd students. As leaders, we commit to living lives that reflect Jesus both inside and outside the church (1 Peter 5:2-3; Titus 2:7).

### As an ELVT Leader, I commit to:

- **Prayer & Dependence:** Pray regularly for students, families, and the ministry (Colossians 1:9-10).
- **Personal Growth:** Pursue Jesus through reading Scripture, prayer, accountability, and daily devotion (Psalm 1:1-3).
- **Integrity:** Live a lifestyle that honors God, practicing sexual purity, financial honesty, and wise speech (1 Timothy 4:12; Philippians 4:8)
- **Team Unity:** We are all a team. We all must support one another and respect the decisions made by ministry leadership. We must have each other's backs, but correct each other when mistakes are made (Ephesians 4:3; Matthew 18:15-17).
- **Faithful Presence:** Be consistent by showing up on time, prepared, and being all in for every service, event, etc. (1 Corinthians 15:58).

- **Safe Ministry:** Follow all safety guidelines to protect students physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Proverbs 27:12).
- **Encouragement:** Be a voice of hope, speaking life into every student and pointing them to Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- **Represent Christ & ELVT Well:** We must remember that our witness extends beyond church walls, on social media, at work, and in our communities (Colossians 3:17).

### **Why a Covenant?**

A covenant isn't just rules; it is a promise that our team will pursue holiness, unity, and excellence for the sake of the gospel. Signing this covenant declares:

*"I will lead by example, pursuing Christ wholeheartedly, so students can follow my lead as I follow Him"* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

## **Leader Qualifications**

- Have professed trust in Christ
- Faithfully attend the weekend worship service at East Pointe Church
- Must be a tithing member of East Pointe Church
- Embrace the vision/mission of ELVT Students
- Commits to serving one year in ELVT Students
- Has completed the volunteer background check

# Leader Expectations

Expectations play an essential role in determining effectiveness. To achieve our goal of pursuing Christ in an authentic community, we have established the following expectations for our leaders.

## **Personal Spiritual Growth Expectations (Disciples Make Disciples)**

We must realize that we are all called to make disciples. There are always people who follow us, watching each of us in certain areas of life and taking our lead. The primary aspect of biblical discipleship is pointing people to life change through Christ. If we, ourselves, are not following Jesus, it will be challenging for us to lead people to follow Jesus. The very nature of biblical discipleship makes more disciples. As we reflect on our lives and the practices that we are involved in, we must continually evaluate what we are making disciples of. To accomplish our goal of continual spiritual growth in leaders, we require the following:

- Believe in our Core Values based on Biblical Truths
- Attend the main Sunday service at East Pointe Church
- Continue to grow in your own faith (Personal Quiet Time, Bible Study, Life Group, etc.)

## **Group Leader Expectations**

### **Student/Leader Relationship (Authentic Community):**

- Pray daily for each of your small group students
- We cannot stress enough the importance of maintaining a healthy relationship with your students! Contact them biweekly outside of the small group setting: texting, attending a sporting event, sending a card, making a phone call, etc.
- All leaders **MUST** arrive promptly 45 minutes before service starts (Sunday/Wednesday) for prayer and instructions. After that meeting, please greet and engage with students until service begins.

- All students/leaders must check in.
- Consistently attend the entire youth service for which you are serving (Games, Worship, Teaching, Small Group Discussion, etc.)
- Please sit among the students during worship and teaching time.

## **Moral Guidelines for Leaders**

As a leader in our ministry, your lifestyle matters a lot. That is why we ask you to commit to setting clear boundaries in your life to keep you far from the line of sin. These boundaries include setting boundaries in sexual purity, substance use, and social media behavior. Please make sure your social media use honors God and adds value to others (especially what you like and who you follow). Leaders are prohibited from using, possessing, or being under the influence of vaping, alcohol, or tobacco while working with or supervising students of East Pointe.

Lifestyle issues are further complicated by the reality that we hold a position of trust and influence in student ministry. Therefore, with respect to such issues as the use of language, entertainment, drinking, and other behavioral matters that are open to abuse, misuse, and misunderstanding, the following biblical principles must be followed:

- The Bible condemns self-indulgence while commanding self-control (Galatians 5:19-25)
- The Bible commands respect for one's body (1 Thessalonians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20)
- Community interests are to be put ahead of self-interest (Philippians 2:3-5)

### **Personal liberty is to be set aside:**

- When its use could hinder a student's spiritual development
- When its use could be misunderstood in such a way as to hinder one's own witness, or that of our student ministry.

- When cultural abuse suggests the need for Christian leaders to exercise self-restraint
- When an action could endanger another person's safety or well-being

### **Specific Ministry Rules: You Must Not...**

- Never be alone with a student of the opposite sex. If a student of the opposite sex wants to talk to you, direct them to a same-gender leader so they can speak.
- No driving girls alone in your car if you are a guy; no driving guys alone in your car if you are a girl.
  - o Sometimes, there are sticky situations that may seem unavoidable, but they are avoidable. Call someone, get help, make two trips, be honest, and do whatever it takes to avoid the situation. This sets parents' minds at ease, covers the ministry's reputation, and looks out for you as well as the students.
- Along these same lines, never be alone in a room with a student of the opposite gender... always in view in others. Always have a door open.
- No dating students! Youth leader/student romantic relationships are strictly prohibited!!!
- Leaders are prohibited from texting/messaging a student of the opposite sex. If they message you, add a leader of the opposite sex to the chat and respond, then proceed accordingly.
- Language boundaries: no swearing permitted...ever! In no way can foul language be accepted. This includes coarse joking, rude remarks, gossip, inappropriate sarcasm, and negativity.
  - o We also need to set an excellent example when it comes to stereotyping and prejudices, so please refrain from anything that is not uplifting or encouraging.

### **Communication & Team Structure**

Healthy communication creates trust and clarity. Miscommunication leads to frustration; clear communication builds unity (1 Corinthians 14:40).

### **How We Communicate:**

- **Team Channels:** All critical updates (schedules, prayer requests, event information) are communicated through our Leader GroupMe and email. Check both regularly.
- **Parent Facebook/Website:** Schedule and event sign-ups happen here and within the GroupMe.
- **Contacting Students:** Respect communication rules; never message a student of the opposite gender alone (2 Corinthians 8:21).

### **Chain of Command:**

- First point of contact: **Pastor Reed** (Student Pastor)
- If unavailable: **Team Lead** for your night or event
- Emergencies during service: Get help immediately and then notify leadership.

### **If You're Late or Absent:**

- Text Pastor Reed as soon as you know.
- When possible, find a substitute leader. Consistency builds trust with students (Matthew 5:37).

### **Feedback Culture:**

- Wins and challenges should be shared! Regular feedback helps us celebrate what's working and address what's not (Hebrews 10:24–25).
- Speak with grace, build each other up, not tear each other down (Ephesians 4:29).
- No idea is a bad idea! Please share any suggestions or ideas you may have for ELVT.

# Boundaries & Accountability Among Leaders

Unity among leaders models Christ to students (John 13:34-35). Conflict, gossip, and unchecked pride can destroy a ministry's witness (Galatians 5:15).

## Expectations for Team Unity:

- **Pray for one another** (James 5:16).
- **Keep short accounts:** Address conflicts directly and privately (Matthew 18:15–17).
- **Guard your words:** No gossip, criticism, or sarcastic remarks that tear others down (Proverbs 16:28).
- **Model respect and grace:** Even when you disagree, support leadership decisions publicly (Romans 12:10).

## Accountability Practices:

- Stay connected through leader check-ins, huddles, and one-on-one conversations (Proverbs 27:17).
- Invite feedback—ask another leader to call out blind spots in your life.
- Handle private matters privately; never vent about a student or leader in front of others (Proverbs 11:13).
- Keep ministry first: Our goal is not to win arguments but to win students to Christ (Philippians 2:3–4).

# What Students Need from Leaders

Helping students learn to live for Jesus and make Him their highest priority happens one student at a time. Students do not connect to programs; they connect to people. Programs have their place and are a necessary part of what we do, but long-lasting change happens in life-on-life relationships. The most effective way to influence students is through significant relationships with key people in their lives. Our goal is to develop leaders who will minister to students.

Students at ELVT need leaders who will:

- Love God and let Him live through them
- Show genuine interest in their lives
- Take initiative to spend time with them
- Be a leader, not a peer
- Keep confidence in appropriate times
- Make it clearly known that confidence cannot be kept if a student is in danger; a danger to others, or involved in illegal activity
- Pray for and with them
- Be real and appropriately vulnerable
- Say encouraging words
- Believe in them
- Laugh with them
- Cry with them
- When possible, attend their school and sports events
- Remember their names and care for them
- Share God's love through personal experience
- Be consistent in life and ministry
- Be patient

# How to Prepare for Your Small Group

As a small group leader, you should prepare each week for your group of students. The following suggestions should help you effectively facilitate your group each week.

- Pray for God's guidance and for each of your students
- Show up prepared. Review the questions, take notes during service, and prepare for the discussion.
- Create ways to be interactive with your group
- Be prepared to grow. These students have a lot to teach us, as well. Don't talk down to them because of their age or assume that your role is to be the giver of knowledge (1 Timothy 4:12). Be open to learning something new and growing deeper yourself.
  - Our goal is not to have all the answers; it is to point to the One who does.
- **ATTENTION: DO NOT DOMINATE THE CONVERSATION!!!**

# How to Lead Purposeful Discussions

## Starting Discussions and Keeping Them Going

1. Encourage your students to verbalize their views and feelings, however weird they may be.
2. Be grateful for every answer and give positive feedback.
3. It is okay to push their thoughts and make them think, don't be satisfied with the first response to your questions.
4. Keep the discussion moving.
5. Embrace the awkward silence; they are thinking. Long Pauses only add pressure for someone to speak, and they eventually will. Once one person speaks up, the rest of the group usually follows suit.
6. Turn difficult questions back to the group, let them figure it out together; we do not have to give them the answers.

7. Stay flexible and sensitive to the group's needs. If a student has taken you on a "rabbit trail," cut them off, reel them back in, and say that you can discuss this with them after small group time.
8. Ask open-ended questions. Start with words like: Who, What, Where, and Why.
9. Follow up a question with a deeper question. **Do not settle for Sunday School answers!**

### **Common Mistakes of a Small Group Leader**

1. Do not teach; facilitate the conversation.
2. Do not be **TOO TALKATIVE** and monopolize the discussion.
3. Do not be **INSECURE**, but be **TRANSPARENT**. The students need stability and confidence in their leaders to trust and rely on them. However, if you don't know the answer or aren't entirely sure, please tell them that you don't know, but you'd be happy to find out the answer for them. You can follow up with them next week. Make sure you follow up with them and your group.
4. Do not be **UNPREPARED** – All of us know we are more confident when we know what we are talking about. Teenagers pick up on this really quickly.
5. Do not be **INFLEXIBLE** – Sometimes your group is going to need to blow off steam and is not ready for the lesson yet. Try to make the most of your time and pick your spots to address the most pressing issues that need to be discussed.
6. Do not be their **FRIEND**. They have plenty of those. Be someone they respect and be stable, so when they really need someone, they will come to you.

### **Discipline & Handling Disruptive Behavior**

Our goal is restoration, not punishment. Discipline must always reflect love (Hebrews 12:11) and be handled with gentleness (Galatians 6:1).

#### **The ELVT Discipline Approach:**

1. **Redirect behavior early.** A gentle correction often prevents bigger issues (Proverbs 22:6).
2. **Address privately when possible.** Avoid embarrassing the student in front of peers (Ephesians 4:2).
3. **Explain why.** Connect correction to discipleship, not just rules (Colossians 3:16).
4. **Be consistent and fair.** No playing favorites (James 2:1).
5. **Keep short accounts.** After correction, restore the relationship; don't hold grudges (Ephesians 4:32).
6. **Involve leadership when necessary.** If a student threatens safety or refuses to cooperate, get help (Proverbs 11:14).

## How to Assess the Spirituality of Your Group

At the beginning of the year, you will want to start getting a feel for where each individual is in their spiritual walk. That way, you can tailor your questions to fit their individual needs and experiences. Here are a few ways to segue into a spiritually based discussion:

### The Direct Approach:

- When did you become a Christian? Can you share your testimony?
- What do you think it means to be a Christian? (Do they understand Jesus?)
- Are you 100% sure you are going to heaven when you die? (Assurance)
- What things are you doing to help you grow as a Christian? (Disciplines)
- Describe your relationship with Jesus.
- How has your life been changed by your relationship with Jesus?

### The Indirect Approach:

- What would you tell your friends about our church's beliefs?
- If you had the opportunity to tell your friends how to become a Christian, what would you say?
- Can a murderer get to Heaven? Is there anyone who can't?

- When is it okay for a student to lie or cheat? Why?
- Why is it important that Jesus rose from the dead?

## Safety & Emergency Protocols

### In an Emergency:

- **Medical:** Call 911 first, then notify Pastor Reed and locate a first-aid kit.
- **Fire/Evacuation:** Calmly lead students to the nearest exit and meet at the designated safe area (Proverbs 22:3).
- **Active Threat:** Follow “Run, Hide, Fight” if necessary. Keep students calm, call 911, and wait for all clear.
- **Missing Student:** Alert Pastor Reed immediately; never leave the group unattended while searching.

### Prevention is Best:

- Know where first-aid kits and AEDs are.
- Keep a mental headcount of students in your group.
- Always maintain appropriate leader-to-student ratios (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10).
- Never put yourself in a situation that compromises safety or integrity.

## When a Student Has Been Abused

When teaching or leading a small group, it is almost inevitable that students will share their life struggles with you. They will view you as a person they trust and to whom they can open up. Within these heart-to-heart conversations, there may be a student who shares some things that are hard to hear. These may include, but are not limited to: physical abuse (by adults in their life or their boyfriends/girlfriends), sexual abuse, harming themselves (cutting, bulimia/anorexia, or alcohol/drug abuse), or hurting others.

Below is a brief guide to deal with such a situation. The key is to know that you don't have to be a therapist. Most of the time, students just need someone to listen. So, listen, and listen intently, but make sure to tell them that you will do what is best for them. **NEVER** promise you won't tell anyone.

- Listen. Don't make assumptions. Don't act shocked.
- Let them know that you are there for them.
- Let them know you have to report this to a pastor.
- You, by law, must report any alleged abuse and any students who have talked about harming themselves or anyone else.
- Do not handle this on your own. Please contact Pastor Reed immediately.
- Third-person information or 'heard it through the grapevine' situations are not required by law to be reported, but should still be handled with care and concern.

### **When Should I Violate Confidentiality: Handling the Gray Areas**

With the case of abuse, it is easy to see the clear lines of reporting. When considering the area of adolescent behavior, the lines become a little blurry, especially when balancing the roles of maintaining our credibility with students while upholding confidentiality, and that of a parent's ownership and need for information about their children.

Most parents would want to know if their kids are using drugs or alcohol, or were sexually involved, or were involved in other illegal behaviors. Similarly, many parents will not appreciate a youth leader who kept knowledge of these kinds of behavior from them, especially if these behaviors and the youth leader's knowledge of them come to light.

Perhaps the best plan for youth leaders to follow to maintain this delicate balance is when a student shares something that we believe parents should know about...

1. Help the student see the need to share the truth with their parent(s).
2. Give the student a time limit (one to two weeks) to tell their parents on their own, in their own way.

3. Follow up with the student after the time limit is up. Ask the student whether or not they've told their parent(s). If they say they have, then tell the student you are proud of them and that you will follow up with the parent(s) to offer support. If the student doesn't hesitate, follow up with the parents. If the student hesitates, they probably haven't spoken with the parent(s), so let the student know that you will have to inform the parent (s) or accompany the student to tell them together.
4. Consult with Pastor in all instances before informing parents, or if you are uncertain about how to proceed.

# How to Lead Someone to Christ

## 5 Simple Steps for ELVT Leaders

### 1. Start with Relationship

*“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”*

- Be present, not pushy. Listen well.
- Ask questions about their story, their struggles, and what they believe.

### 2. Share Your Story

- Keep it simple: Life before Jesus → How you met Jesus → Life with Jesus now.
- Your story makes the gospel personal and relatable.

### 3. Present the Gospel Clearly

- Use Romans 6:23 or John 3:16 as a foundation.

Here’s a quick outline:

- **God created us** for a relationship with Him.
- **Sin separates us** from God (Romans 3:23).
- **Jesus came** to die in our place and rose again (Romans 5:8).
- **Salvation is a gift** we receive by faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- **Anyone who calls on the name of Jesus** will be saved (Romans 10:9, 13).

### 4. Invite a Response

- Ask: *“Would you like to put your faith in Jesus right now?”*
- If yes, lead them in a prayer like this: *“Jesus, I know I’m a sinner and I need You. I believe You died for me and rose again. Today, I turn from my sin and put my trust in You. Come into my life. Save me. I want to follow You. Amen.”*
- Encourage them to say it in their own words!

### 5. Celebrate and Guide the Next Step

- Celebrate like heaven does (Luke 15)!
- Fill out the decision card and inform the GroupMe
- Encourage them to tell someone.