



## **SENIOR CURRICULUM SAMPLE**

FULLER YOUTH INSTITUTE



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Please contact [fyi@fuller.edu](mailto:fyi@fuller.edu) with questions or comments

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## **Title: What Can I Do to Find a New Church?**

**The big idea:** Finding a church or fellowship group after graduation is important to sticky faith.

### **You'll need:**

- Optional: pictures (or even a slide show or video) that will trigger students' memories of what you've shared together. Odds are good you'll be doing this at some point before they graduate so you might as well get a jump on it now.
- Pizza
- Plates and napkins
- Bibles
- Copies of the **Questions About A Church or College Group** handout on page XX
- Ideally, a handful of computers with internet access
- To research churches or fellowship groups near your students' future colleges, homes, or jobs. Some helpful website links are listed in the **How** section below; you might also want to look for churches or fellowship groups through your denominational network.
- Ahead of time, create a handout with the website links given in the **How** section, as well as any other denominational online information that you locate, and make copies for your students
- Invite whoever leads your college ministry to come for this meeting, at least for the final portion; and/or your senior pastor or some other adult in leadership (particularly if you don't have a college ministry) who can participate in the last part of the session
- Copies of students' previously completed **Identity that Sticks** handouts from session two
- **Extra Prayer and Worship Option:** pencils and paper

## **NOW**

Greet your students and get the conversation rolling by asking: **What are you going to miss about our youth group after you graduate?** If you'd like, distribute pictures or play your slide show/video to help students reflect on the memories you've shared together.

Whether or not you show pictures or slides, share a few stories of some of your fondest memories of these seniors. Try to have at least one of those stories show how students have grown spiritually as you have journeyed together.

**Q: How would your life be different if you had never been a part of this group?**



**Q: How would your *faith* be different if you had never been part of this group?**

Continue: **Let's be honest with each other: once you graduate, whether or not you stay connected with our church, or get connected to a new one, or drift from church altogether, will be up to you. At least a third of seniors who graduate from youth groups like ours end up drifting from the church.<sup>1</sup> That's one out of three. Why do you think that is?**

**Q: If you had to give some reasons that a person who graduates from high school doesn't need to go to church, what would you say?**

At some point as students are answering that question, get out your pizza but before you hand out slices to students, explain: **Imagine this pizza was piping hot – way too hot to eat. It was so hot that if you ate it, it would burn your mouth.** Begin putting individual slices on plates as you continue: **Short of putting the pizza in the refrigerator, I might try to cool it off by doing what I'm doing now and take individual pieces and put them on plates so they can cool separately. Why would I do that?** Each piece of pizza will cool more quickly if it's on its own.

Hand out the pizza to student as you ask: **How is that similar to what might happen to you if you drift from the church and Christian community after you graduate?**

## **NEW**

At this point, distribute Bibles and invite students to turn to Philippians 2:12-13. As they are doing so, explain: **My goal today is not to make you feel so guilty that you'll get connected with a church or faith community after you graduate. Nor is it to scare you into doing so. Instead, my goal is to show you how connecting with a faith community will help you by allowing you to be the person you want to be after you graduate.**

Ask for a volunteer to read Philippians 2:12-13. Walk students through the passage by making the following points and asking the following questions: **Note that the two verses we read start with the word "therefore". Given that, we need to look backwards in the text to see what is causing Paul's "therefore". What does Paul describe in Philippians 2:5-11?**

**Q: What do you think is the connection between verses 5-11 and verses 12-13?**

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<sup>1</sup> Extrapolated from Barna Update, "Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years." *The Barna Group*, 2006, September 16, 2006; George H. Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll*, 2006; and Christian Smith with Patricial Snell, *Souls in Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105, 108, 109, and 116.



**Q: Are verses 12-13 written to an individual Christian or to a group of Christians? How can you tell?**

**The phrase “work out your salvation” has been very confusing to folks throughout history. Sometimes people think it means to “work for your salvation”. What’s wrong with that view of the verse?** Feel free to refer back to what you discussed in lesson one on the gospel as you help students understand that salvation by our work is impossible. It’s Jesus’ work on the cross that makes our salvation possible.

**Even if we realize that Paul doesn’t mean we should work “for” our salvation, it’s still tough to tell what Paul means by working “out” your salvation. What do you think Paul is after?** This is not an easy concept to understand, but the essence of Paul’s teaching is that once we choose to follow Jesus, we are saved. And yet, every day we continue to figure out and live out that new life in Christ.

One comparison that might be helpful for your students is to explain that it’s like being accepted to a college. You’re accepted the day the school writes you the acceptance letter. But then for the next four years (or in some cases, five or six or even seven years...), you “work out” (or experience) what it means to be a college student.

**I want you to remember a few things when it comes to working out your salvation. First, these few verses are written to an entire group of Jesus followers. Second, I want you to think about the way our pizza slices cooled down when they were separated from each other. Given that, what role do you think other believers could play in you continuing to work out your salvation after you graduate?**

**Let’s look at verse 13. Who is it that ultimately helps us work out our salvation?**

**The big theme for today is that we don’t have to live out our salvation alone. God wants us to live in community with other followers of Jesus. And even as you are graduating, the good news for all of us is that the more we in this youth ministry continue to stay in touch, the more likely it is that you’ll have sticky faith.<sup>2</sup>**

**As your youth leader, I want to keep in touch with you.** If you have a sense for how you’d like to keep in touch with your seniors (i.e., e-mails, social networking, phone calls, a dinner reunion at winter break), now would be a good time to share that. **And hopefully you know you can contact me any time.**

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<sup>2</sup> Fuller Youth Institute College Transition Project.



## HOW

Continue: **Having said that, the reality is that I can't go to your college or job or next city with you. I really want you to connect with other adults in a church or college group who can be part of the next chapter God has for you. In fact, the Sticky Faith research shows that connecting with adults who are older than you is part of what helps you develop sticky faith. Why do you think that might be?**

Continue: **It's logical to assume that those types of adults and friends who can help you live out your salvation will be found in a local church or college ministry. Yet one of the top three difficulties seniors face when they graduate is finding a church or college group.<sup>3</sup>**

**To help each of you find a church, we're going to talk about the type of questions we should ask ourselves, and others, as we try to find a group that fits how God is helping us live out our salvation.** Distribute pencils and copies of the **Questions About a Church or Group** handout and review it with your students. Be sure to highlight what's written at the top of the handout: there are no "right" answers. Some of your students will be drawn to a large group; others will prefer a smaller group. For some, worship is a priority; for others, serving the poor gets top billing. The point is not to selfishly ask "What can this church/group do for me?" but "How can God help me 'work out my salvation' through this church/group?"

Walk through the handout with your students, noting that at the bottom of this handout, there is space for "other" questions. Ask: **What else would you want to know about a campus group or church?**

**Q: It seems like asking these questions could make someone almost too picky, or feel more like a customer trying to "purchase" something than a follower of Christ trying to find a group to help them live out their salvation. How can you ask these questions but keep an open, humble attitude?**

Explain: **Youth group graduates like you often wish that their youth leader had done a better job helping them find a church or college group.<sup>4</sup> I don't want you to wish later on that I had done more to help you, so we're going to look for churches and college groups together today.**

At this point, show students the computers with online access and explain: **Using these computers, as well as your own phones, let's explore which churches and college groups are close to where you will be living or working after graduation.** Distribute the handouts you've prepared with the links below, as well as any other links

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<sup>3</sup> Fuller Youth Institute College Transition Project.

<sup>4</sup> Fuller Youth Institute College Transition Project.



you have added. NOTE: the reason we haven't made these links into a handout ourselves is that while the website addresses are accurate as of the date of the printing of this book, they may have changed by the time you're using this session. So please double check these links and do a bit of research yourself (if needed) before distributing them to your students. Feel free to add links connected with your own church, ministry, or denominational affiliation.

GENERAL DATABASE OF COLLEGE MINISTRIES:

[www.liveabove.com/](http://www.liveabove.com/)

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS THAT TEND TO MEET ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES:

Campus Crusade for Christ: [www.ccci.org/locations/locator/index.aspx](http://www.ccci.org/locations/locator/index.aspx)

Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship: [www.intervarsity.org/chapters/](http://www.intervarsity.org/chapters/)

The Navigators: [www.navigators.org/us/ministries/college/campus-locator](http://www.navigators.org/us/ministries/college/campus-locator)

Young Life College:

[www.younglife.org/Locator/Default.htm?SearchBy=Ministry&SearchFor=College](http://www.younglife.org/Locator/Default.htm?SearchBy=Ministry&SearchFor=College)

**Note:** If your denomination sponsors a particular campus ministry (e.g. Christian Reformed Campus Ministry or Wesley Foundation), please research it ahead of time and add that to this list as well.

After you distribute the handouts, explain: **My hope is that each of you finds one, if not a handful, of ministries located near where you're going to live or attend college. On this handout, jot down any contact information or meeting schedules posted online.**

**If none of the links above relate to where you'll be after graduation, then simply google your city, as well as the word "church", to see what pops up. Feel free to also include our denomination in that online search. Click through the search results to check out the churches' individual websites. Jot down on this handout the name, location, and meeting schedule of any churches that seem interesting to you.**

### **Have More Time?**

At this point, introduce the leader of your church's college ministry and give your students a chance to introduce themselves to him or her. Point out that even if your students will be living elsewhere for several months or the school year, they're likely to come home for breaks and summer vacation, so it's a good idea for them to find out



more about your church's college ministry. Give your church's college leader time to explain the mission and programs of your church's college ministry and field questions.

If there is no college ministry and/or no college leader at your church, invite your senior pastor or another key adult leader to come and share their enthusiasm for involving youth group graduates even more fully into the life of your church.

Hopefully you've also worked out some sort of plan for the upcoming summer to help students transition from the youth ministry to church events and/or your church's college ministry, and now would be a good time to explain that plan to your students. **END HAVE MORE TIME**

Give each student a chance to share one ministry or church that they have located that seems appealing to them. If a student hasn't found something, then commit to that student that you'll work with them in the next week to find a church or ministry near where they will be living or working, and then make sure you follow through.

### **---Identity Icon---**

If you have time, distribute copies of the **Identity That Sticks** handout that students completed in session two. Give students a few minutes to edit and expand their description of themselves at the bottom of the handout given how they want to get connected to a church or parachurch ministry in college. Invite a few volunteers to share any changes or additions they've made to their visions of themselves in a year.

Close by asking your college ministry leader or pastor to pray for your students' sticky faith, that God will help them stay connected not only to God, but also to a vital Christian community that helps them live out their salvation.

### **EXTRA WORSHIP AND PRAYER**

If you have time to incorporate more space for reflection, consider inviting students to connect their need for a church with the importance of intergenerational relationships. Introduce this exercise by saying: **Remember back in the second lesson when we talked about our identities and looked at a list of biblical names God has given us? The bigger truth about those names is that all of them are given not just to individual people, but to the WHOLE people of God, the whole church. So when scripture says we are beloved or chosen or holy, it applies to us individually but is also spoken to God-followers collectively, just like the Philippians passage we read earlier today.**



**As we touched on earlier, you're more likely to have sticky faith when you have relationships not just with people your own age but with adults who are older and even kids who are younger. So let's get more specific...**

At this point hand out pieces of paper and pens to students. Instruct them to divide the paper into four quadrants by drawing a line down the middle horizontally and another down the middle vertically. Then say: **Over the next few minutes I'd like you to brainstorm lists of people of different ages in the church who are part of your web of sticky faith relationships. Let's go through the quadrants and label them, then I'll give you time to make lists.** Walk them through the following categories, then give them time to write down names on each list:

- 1. Older "senior" adults—like your grandparent's age—who you are connected with in the church**
- 2. Adults around your parent's age or younger, probably including most of your youth leaders**
- 3. Peers around your own age**
- 4. Younger kids—middle school, elementary age, or younger who you are connected with in some way**

After students have finished listing names, continue: **Now look at your lists. Where are there more names? Where is there more blank space?**

**Let's take some time to pray silently through your lists. Pray for the people who are already on your lists, that they would continue to be part of your faith family as you grow into the next phase of being part of the church. Then pray that God would bring new people into your life to fill out the short lists, and if you're going away to college, that God would add to your lists from each age group to continue to help you work out your salvation.**

## Questions About a Church or College Group

As you're visiting different churches or college groups, keep in mind the questions below. You probably can think of additional questions that are important to you in particular and you can add those at the bottom of this list.

There are no "right" answers to the questions below. You might love large gatherings, or you might be drawn to smaller times of worship. You might want to meet on Sunday mornings, or you might want to attend Wednesday night gatherings. The key is to prayerfully and thoughtfully identify a church or college group that matches who you are and that can help you develop sticky faith.

1. What is the mission or vision of this group?
2. Where does this group meet? How am I going to get there?
3. When does this group meet? How does that fit my schedule?
4. How many people are involved?
5. Of those who are involved, how many people who are my gender and/or year in school and/or ethnicity?
6. Who leads this group? How do I connect with the leader(s)?
7. What tends to happen when this group meets?
8. What's the teaching like?
9. How about the worship?
10. Are there small groups or Bible studies that are part of this group?
11. What does this group do to reach out to people who don't know Jesus yet?
12. What does this group do to help those who are poor or marginalized?
13. How can I use my gifts and talents as part of this group?
14. How much does this group spend time together outside of gatherings?
15. Other questions that are important to you?