

CHAPTER 1

STUDENT RIGHTS K-12 FAQs

Can students pray in school?

Students can pray in school as long as it does not disrupt the class. Prayer before lunch or a test is certainly allowed. Students can also pray in groups during non-instructional time as long as it is not disruptive and is student initiated.

Can students express their religious beliefs in class or an assignment?

Students are welcome to express their religious beliefs in a class discussion or as part of an assignment when it pertains to the topic. Teachers and administrators cannot discriminate against religious expression as long as it falls within the guidelines of the project.

Can students express their religious beliefs in a school-wide talent show?

Yes. Talent shows offer students the ability to share about themselves. They can sing and dance to Christian music or recite Christian poems. Their talent falls into the Free Speech category and is therefore protected by the Constitution.

May students bring their Bible to school and read it in school?

Both carrying a Bible and reading it in school are constitutionally protected Free Speech rights routinely upheld by courts. Students' Free Speech rights would be violated if the students were not permitted to bring a Bible to school or to read it at appropriate times in school. *Schools are not religion-free zones.*

Can the school prohibit Bible clubs?

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states: “Congress shall make no law.... Abridging the freedom of speech..... Or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Therefore public schools cannot suppress student speech because it’s religious. Public schools are prohibited from discriminating against Free Speech including religious speech.

A school may not prohibit student expression during non-instructional time unless it (1) materially and substantially interferes with the operation of the school, or (2) infringes on the rights of other¹ students. A school may not prohibit student expression solely because others might find it offensive.² Christian Clubs can therefore not be prohibited.

Can a Christian club use promotional materials to spread the word about meetings or activities?

The right to freedom of speech has always included the right to communicate, promote and advertise. This right is supported by both the Equal Access Act and the First Amendment Free Speech Clause.

All Student clubs, including religious clubs, have the right to distribute materials, use bulletin boards, the school newspaper and even use the public address system to advertise their meetings and events. Schools may request a clarifying statement such as “*this is not a school-sponsored event.*”

Can students gather anywhere on the school campus or do they have to be restricted to a certain location or room?

Students can spontaneously gather in groups at lunch or during any non-instructional time or free period. It’s just like students in a group taking about sports, social media or music. Students can talk about anything in small or large groups, whether organized or spontaneous, as long as it does not disrupt academics.

¹ Tinker, 393 U.S. at 509

Retrievable at:

<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/393/503/case.html>

² Morse v. Frederick, 127 S. Ct. 2618, 2629 (2007) (rejecting use of “offensiveness” standard for regulating student speech because “much political and religious speech might be perceived as offensive to some”); Nuxoll v. Indian Prairie Sch. Dist., 523 F.3d 668, 672 (7th Cir. 2008)

Regular gathering places for clubs are decided by the school administration. However, the club cannot be banned to the furthest room if more convenient rooms are available.

CHAPTER 2

STUDENT RIGHTS ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL FAQs

Can elementary schools form Bible clubs?

Yes, even in elementary schools, students have the right to form clubs. These clubs also need to be voluntary and have to be offered during non-instructional time. They can meet inside or outside the school. In elementary schools, parents make the decision about joining the club. Students will bring home an invitation to the club with a sign-up portion of the flyer which is then returned to the school. This way, only students with parental permission can attend the club.³

Who can establish an elementary school faith-based club?

Typically parents, pastors, or youth leaders establish the clubs. At the elementary school level, the club does not have to be student led. Instead, the club communicates with the parents and obtains parental approval for the program that the club teacher proposes.

How are elementary school Christian clubs formed?

Elementary school Christian clubs are organized as community groups via the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause. (The Equal Access Act does not apply to elementary schools). The Club Teacher will request a community "facility use" form for using the school facility. But a meeting with the principal comes first. Club Organizers obtain approval from the principal for an after-school faith-based club according to Free Speech rights. The principal will approve

³ Good News Club v. Milford Central School 202 F.3d 502 (2d Cir. 2000), disapproved on other grounds, 533 U.S. 98 (2001).

the flyer so it can be distributed to all students. A parental sign up portion is part of the flyer which will be returned to school. This sign up signature also constitutes permission from the parent to faith-based teaching in the club. School sponsors are not needed because parents give permission for their child to attend the program. This will be explained in much greater detail later on in the Elementary and Middle School section of the book.

Some elementary school principals prefer to have a Christian program be part of their enrichment program or their after-school program. Schools send a program out to the parents listing all the classes students can take with the sign-up form attached. This works just as an individual form going out to the parents. In all cases, it's important to mention that this is a faith-based club. This will guarantee that only students whose parents want them in a Christian activity will attend. As the flyer explains, these clubs will freely talk about God.

CHAPTER 3

STUDENT RIGHTS IN HIGH SCHOOL

What laws apply to high schools?

Christian rights in high schools are not only protected by the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment, but also by the Equal Access Act. This act was passed by Congress in 1984 to make sure that Christian clubs have the same rights as any other club in high school.⁴

If the school has other non-curricular clubs can we have a Christian club?

As long as even *one single other non-curricular club* in the school exists such as a chess club, a drama club or football team, the school has to allow a Christian club.

What is a non-curricular club?

If the club is not related to a specific class or subject area and the teacher does not require attendance (or give grades or assignments), the club is a non-curricular club.

What is a “Limited Open Forum”?

⁴ In *Mergens*, Justice O'Connor, speaking for a four-Justice plurality, stated that "there is a crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the Establishment Clause forbids, and private speech endorsing religion, which the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses protect." 496 U.S. at 259-60, 110 S. Ct. at 2372 (plurality opinion); see also *id.* 496 U.S. at 250, 110 S. Ct. at 2377 (Kennedy, J., concurring)

Retrievable at:

<http://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F3/28/1501/581520/>

When the school establishes its first non-curricular club, it automatically creates a “Limited Open Forum.” If the school has created a limited open forum and receives Federal Assistance (which most schools do), then the Equal Access Act applies. The Equal Access Act guarantees that other clubs such as a Christian club have the same access to school facilities and enjoy the same benefits. This term only applies to the Equal Access Act in High Schools.

Which school rules have to be observed for a Christian club using the Equal Access Act?

The Christian Club has to:

- ◆ Be voluntary and meet during non-instructional time, such as lunch time, free periods or before or after school.
- ◆ Be student initiated and student led.
- ◆ Make sure that outside speakers cannot participate on a regular basis or more than once a month. However, speakers can be rotated as long the same speaker is not participating more than once a month.
- ◆ Be aware that school staff can only be present to maintain order, not to participate.
- ◆ Maintain order and discipline at all times to protect students, staff and property. Disorderly conduct is the only reason a club can be terminated.

Which school rules have to be observed for a Christian club using the First Amendment Free Speech Clause?

1. Be voluntary
2. Meet during non-instructional time

Can a Christian club meet in the classroom or other school facility?

Students can request the library, cafeteria, gym, classroom, etc. The school administration has to make every effort to accommodate the club within the requirements of other school activities. The Equal Access Act states that non-curriculum related clubs are allowed to meet on campus during non-instructional time such as before/after-school, free time, or lunch time.

Can the school limit the time or place students are allowed to meet in school?

A school can place limits on clubs as long as all clubs are treated equally. If the Christian club cannot use the library or cafeteria, then none of the other clubs can use them. Similarly, schools might have a policy which states that all clubs should be finished at a certain time after school.

Can a Christian club use school audio/visual equipment?

If the school allows other clubs to use supplies or equipment, then the school cannot discriminate against the Christian club according to the free-speech clause.

However, under the Equal Access Act, schools are not required to use public funds other than the basic cost of making space available. But again, if they make it available to other clubs, they need to grant you equal access.

Why do some school officials try to block a club?

They might be philosophically against a Christian club or be worried about offending atheists or the LGBT community. School officials may not be that familiar with the law themselves and merely need to be reminded that Christian clubs are legal.

What are some of the reasons school officials give for not allowing clubs?

Even though there are thousands of Bible clubs in U.S. high schools and the law is very clear about the legality of the clubs, some school officials are reluctant to allow them. They might state that certain parents will complain, or that all clubs have to be curriculum related, or that there is not a suitable space or supervision for the club. However, these are illegal obstacles.

What if the principal won't allow the club because it might endorse religion?

The Supreme Court ruled that equal access does not constitute the endorsement of religion. Allowing equal access to Christian clubs merely shows neutrality towards religion, not an endorsement of it.

What if a principal flat out refuses the Christian club?

Only two options exist for a principal to shut down a Christian club. Either the principal would have to close down all existing non-curricular clubs such as the

chess club, drama club, and even the football team. Otherwise, the school would have to forgo federal funding.

If those clubs are not shut down nor the federal funds sent back, then the principal has no right to discriminate against the Christian club.

You may then need to politely bring documentation of legal cases which fully interpret the Equal Access Act and the First Amendments Free Speech Clause. Many principals are not up on the law and just need to find out the facts. The information provided in this book should be sufficient.

If they still refuse after such a meeting, then you can contact Christian legal organizations such as *Liberty Counsel*,⁵ *Alliance Defending Freedom*,⁶ or the *Christian Law Association*⁷ to send a letter to the school on your behalf. Those organizations can send a demand letter to the school demanding your Christian rights to be honored.

However, it's best to be prepared and provide documents at the first meeting with the principal before a decision is made against a club.

Even if a Christian club is permitted, some school administrators may try to limit the club's rights.

Some schools may prohibit clubs from participating in club fairs or open houses or deny access to distribute materials or the PA system. They may prevent the club's picture from being placed in the yearbook or they may prevent the club's funds from being included in school accounts for clubs.

All of these endeavors try to limit faith-based clubs and are illegal for any club whether it's a Free Speech Club or an Equal Access Club.

Why does the club have to be student led?

At the high school level, students can use two legal paths for a Christian club. The first path is via the First Amendment Free Speech Clause. And the second one is via the Equal Access Act.

⁵[NOTE_LABEL] <http://libertycounsel.com>

⁶[NOTE_LABEL] <http://adflegal.org>

⁷[NOTE_LABEL] <http://www.christianlaw.org/cia/>

If the Equal Access Act is invoked, then the students need to adhere to its guidelines. The Equal Access Act requires that adults are only present in a non-participatory role to monitor, facilitate and supervise. This includes school personnel, coaches, parents and youth pastors. Adults cannot direct student groups. It has to be student-led if the club wants to be a recognized school club structured similarly to all the other non-curricular school clubs.

However, if a Christian club wants to have more leadership from adults, it has a choice to not register as an Equal Access Act Student Club. Instead, the club can be structured as a Free Speech Student Club using the school facilities.

Is it better to form a Christian club as an Equal Access Club or as a Free Speech Club?

If students have the ability to lead a club, it may be wise to set the club up as a recognized student club under the Equal Access Act. Although the club must be initiated and run by the students, it may occasionally invite an outside speaker such as a youth pastor. It's best to rotate speakers and only invite them about once every four times to assure that the club is still student led. Also, youth pastors can meet with student leaders of the club outside of School and fully train them to run the club. Youth pastors often consider this an excellent opportunity for youth leadership training.

However, if students prefer to have more adult help or if they worry that they cannot maintain or grow the club without adult help, they may prefer to have the club operated as a Free Speech Club. This type of club is set up just like a community club, which meets in a school.

Christian clubs organized as Community clubs can be led by adults and even school personnel during after-school hours and inside the school.(Elementary school clubs are formed this way as a Free Speech Club and are also called a community club.)

Does our Christian club need a faculty sponsor?

Many schools require a faculty sponsor for their “recognized student clubs” set up under the Equal Access Act. But the Act itself does not require sponsorship. Check out your school policy on student clubs. Sometimes you will find the policy listed on the school’s or the school district’s website, other times you have to request it. This faculty sponsor must be present in a non-participatory function only to maintain order. The teacher sponsor is

present as a school employee and therefore cannot participate in religious views as this would violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

A Christian club set up as a Free Speech Club does not need a faculty sponsor.

Are students restricted in what they can talk about or do in their Christian club?

Students are fully permitted to talk about any religious subject. The school is not allowed to censor nor control the meeting in any form or fashion.

The school has to provide equal access to all clubs under both the Equal Access Act and the Free Speech Rights without regard to the content teaching of the club. Students can read the Bible, worship, sing, pray, preach and freely share the love of God.

Are guest speakers restricted in their presentations?

Guest speakers can also speak on any topic. Schools cannot regulate speech or exclude religious views. That would be considered viewpoint discrimination which violates the Free Speech Clause.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHER AND SCHOOL STAFF RIGHTS

Do teachers and coaches have free speech rights?

Yes, they do, but only among adults, not students. Teachers can freely talk to their coworkers about God. They can also have prayer meetings or Bible studies during free time with other teachers or school personnel.

However, in front of students, teachers can only talk objectively about God. Since teachers act on behalf of the government, an endorsement of religion would violate the Establishment Clause.

Courts have decided that the Establishment Clause overpowers the free speech clause for school personnel talking with students.

Can the teacher have a Bible on the desk?

A teacher cannot have a Bible or Christian book on the desk unless it is needed for an objective lesson on religion, nor can a teacher personally read the Bible while students are in the classroom. Teachers are considered agents of the state and therefore reading the Bible would violate the establishment clause. However, a teacher can keep a Bible inside the desk and read it when no students are present.

Can a teacher have a Bible as part of the classroom library?

The Bible can only be present when other religious texts such as Hindu, Jewish, or Muslim writings are available.

Can teachers wear religious clothing?

Unlike students, who enjoy comprehensive rights to wear Christian jewelry or clothing, teachers and staff are much more limited in their rights. Teachers cannot wear clothing with outright Christian messages.

The Christian Law Association advises that if a jewelry item can be purchased at a department store counter, it may be worn since its use would not then be limited to religious purposes. Many “rock” stars who are not Christians like to wear cross jewelry onstage, for instance.

May coaches pray with athletes before games?

No, coaches cannot pray with students before games or else it violates the establishment clause as coaches are considered agents of the state as well. Athletes may otherwise feel obligated to participate.

However, bear in mind that students have many more rights than school staff has. Students are more than welcome to organize a prayer before or after games. The key is that the prayer has to be student led. The coach may even be present at the prayer in a supervisory role to maintain order.

May teachers pray privately with students outside of class?

Teachers and students have to be outside of the school building to pray. But to meet students outside of school, parents have to be informed as well. Teachers have lost their jobs over this, so it may be better to just privately pray for the student. This holds true even if the student requests prayer.

Can teachers allow students to talk about religion in the classroom?

Yes, students can fully exercise their free speech rights in class as long as they respond to the topic at hand and don't interfere with classroom instruction.

Teachers should try to stay objective with their own opinion, but students are permitted to discuss their religious beliefs. However, all viewpoints should be equally encouraged.

Is there a way a teacher or coach can lead a Christian club?

School staff cannot lead an Equal Access club. School personnel are limited to a non-participating role. They can only be present to maintain order if the school requires teacher sponsors.⁸

However, First Amendment free speech community clubs do not impose that limit on teachers nor staff.

Barbara Wigg, for example, a third-grade teacher at Anderson elementary school has taught at five different elementary schools within the school district. She has participated in after-school programs for Girl Scouts and also taught private reading and guitar lessons. After she helped with a Christian club, she was challenged by a teacher which resulted in the principal trying to terminate her involvement. This is an interesting story you can read in the footnotes.

Ultimately the United States Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit decided in the teacher's favor allowing her to stay involved with the Christian club.⁹

⁸ "Elementary teacher Barbara Wigg sued Sioux Falls School District 49-5 and Superintendent Dr. John Keegan (collectively referred to as "SFSD") to challenge SFSD's decision prohibiting her from participating in a Christian-based after-school program at schools in the school district. Wigg sought a preliminary injunction, a permanent injunction, declaratory relief, and damages claiming that SFSD's policy violated her First Amendment free speech rights. SFSD defended its decision on the grounds that Wigg's participation would subject SFSD to First Amendment Establishment Clause liability. Initially, the district court denied the temporary-injunction motion; however, the court later granted Wigg a permanent injunction after concluding that Wigg could participate in the after-school program at schools in the district-other than the one in which she taught-without raising Establishment Clause concerns for SFSD. The district court also ruled that SFSD's Establishment Clause concerns allowed it to prohibit Wigg's participation in the after-school program at her present school."

Retrievable at:

<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-8th-circuit/1033214.html>

⁹ In October 2002, the Club requested access to SFSD's facilities to hold its meetings. SFSD granted the request, and the Club currently meets at five elementary schools within SFSD, including Anderson Elementary. The Club meets at Anderson Elementary from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the end of the school day. Wigg attended the Club's first meeting in Anderson Elementary's library on December 15, 2002. Nine students attended that meeting, including some from Wigg's combined second-and third-grade class. At the meeting, the students played a game, learned a Bible verse, and heard a Christian story.

After the meeting, a staff member questioned whether Wigg could teach religion in the building. Noting staff use of the library at the end of the workday, the staff member expressed her concern to Anderson Elementary Principal Mary Peterson

over Wigg teaching the Club in the library. Subsequently, Peterson informed Wigg that she could not participate in the Club meetings (which were held on school grounds) because of SFSD's concern that her participation in the organization might be perceived as an establishment of religion. Since that time, Wigg has not participated in the Club's meetings in any school within the district. Following her exchange with Peterson, Wigg sent a letter to Dr. Keegan asking for permission to participate in the Club. She informed Dr. Keegan that the Club requires every participating student to obtain a parental permission slip. The letter also suggested language for a disclaimer that would explain that any school district employees participating in the Club were acting as private citizens and did not represent SFSD in any manner. On January 17, 2003, SFSD affirmed its decision not to permit Wigg to participate because the school feared that allowing Wigg to participate in the Club would present Establishment Clause issues for SFSD.....

However, following is the court ruling from: United States Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit.

With the guidance of *Doe* and *Santa Fe*, we conclude that Wigg's participation in the after-school Club constitutes private speech. Wigg's private speech does not put SFSD (Sioux Falls School District) at risk of violating the Establishment Clause: Wigg's speech did not occur during a school-sponsored event; she did not affiliate her views with SFSD (Wigg's counsel proposed a disclaimer explaining that any school district employees participating in the Club were acting as private citizens and did not represent SFSD in any manner); students participated in the meetings with parental consent; and nonparticipating students-unless supervised-exited the building before the meetings began. Under the inquiry provided in *Santa Fe*, no reasonable observer would perceive Wigg's private speech as a state endorsement of religion by SFSD. SFSD's desire to avoid the appearance of endorsing religion does not transform Wigg's private religious speech into a state action in violation of the Establishment Clause.⁵ Even private speech occurring at school-related functions is constitutionally protected, *Chandler v. Siegelman*, 230 F.3d 1313, 1317 (11th Cir.2000); therefore private speech occurring at non-school functions held on school grounds must necessarily be afforded those same protections.

While we are aware that school districts like SFSD must tread carefully in a constitutional mine field of Establishment Clause, Free Speech Clause and Free Exercise Clause concerns, we reiterate that Establishment Clause cases stress the government's neutrality towards religion. *Milford*, 533 U.S. at 114, 121 S.Ct. 2093 (citing *Rosenberger*, 515 U.S. at 839, 115 S.Ct. 2510). Wigg seeks nothing more than to be treated like other private citizens who are allowed access to Club meetings. SFSD's policy permitting participation by all interested parties-so long as they are not district employees-in after-school, religious-based, non-school related activities violates that mandate of neutrality. As such, we affirm the district court's order allowing Wigg to participate in the Club at other SFSD school locations, but we reverse the court's decision prohibiting Wigg from participating at Anderson Elementary.

Retrievable at:

<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-8th-circuit/1033214.html>

Florida passed the "religious liberties act," in summer 2017 that mandates school staff "may not be prevented from participating in religious activities on school grounds initiated by students before or after the school day, provided these activities are voluntary and do not conflict with the employee's other assignments. School districts must give religious groups the same access to school facilities and ability to announce or advertise meetings as given to secular groups."

Other states have enacted similar laws recently to reiterate Christian rights. This helps teachers who are inundated with the secular agenda to realize that the Christian viewpoint is equally protected.

Can a school board member teach a Christian club?

In *Good News/Good Sports Club vs. School District of the city of Ladue*, the court held that a former school board member's involvement with a Christian club did not raise the perception of an establishment of religion.

The following section provides scenarios which could take place in schools.

What's the answer to the following situations?

Incident One:

Teacher Tony Richardson told another teacher she would pray for him after he disclosed some personal information. The two teachers knew each other outside of school as well since they attended the same church. However a few months later the two teachers had a fallout, and a complaint was filed against the teacher who offered prayer. School administration gave her a "coaching memorandum" which labeled statements such as "I will pray for you," and "you were in my prayers" as not acceptable stating she "may have imposed some strong religious/spiritual belief system" on the person.

Answer:

The school failed to differentiate between student and teacher. A teacher cannot pray for a student without violating the establishment clause. However, private talk between teachers, even on school premises falls under the free speech clause. When no students are around the teachers can pray or also have Bible study in school.

(This incident happened May 2, 2017 in Augusta, Maine)

Incident Two:

School counselor Jill Roberts invited Christian teachers to her office half an hour before school to pray for students. Teachers loved their prayer time and felt it make a huge difference in the school climate and individual student lives. However, another teacher with an atheistic belief complained to the principal and stated that the counselor was establishing a Christian program. The school promptly requested the counselor to stop prayer meetings. The Christian teachers decided to meet in an adjacent parking lot instead and prayed in the car. That worked well and ultimately that principal found the love of God later in life.

Answer:

The principal was afraid. Furthermore, he was not up to par with his knowledge of the law. The teachers had the right to pray in the counselor's office. They should have brought the teacher's guide to him (see appendix) to prove their rights. (This incident took place a few years ago in the Orange School District in Ohio.)

Where can I get more help?

The Christian Educators Association International (ceai.org) is an excellent resource for Christian teachers. It encourages, equips, and empowers educators according to Biblical principles helping to:

- ◆ Proclaim God's Word as the source of wisdom and knowledge
- ◆ Portray teaching as a God given calling and ministry
- ◆ Promote educational excellence as an expression of Christian commitment
- ◆ Preserve our Judeo-Christian heritage and values through education
- ◆ Promote the legal rights of Christians in public schools
- ◆ Provide a forum on educational issues with a Christian world view
- ◆ Partner with churches, parachurch organizations, educational institutions and parents
- ◆ Provide an alternative to teachers unions through resources and benefits including professional liability insurance and job action protection.

CHAPTER 5

REACHING OUT: THE LIFELINE

Are You Concerned About Kids in Public School?

- Do you wonder how Christians fare in public school?
- What influence does the secular environment have on your kids?
- Do you want to witness to students and bring them hope?
- Are you afraid that your kids may become friends with the wrong kids?
- Does a secular environment concern you?
- Do you worry that they may lose their interest in God and church?
- What if they stop attending youth group?
- What if they get confused in a religiously pluralistic environment?
- What if they question the existence of God altogether?

These are good questions that should concern us all. Thankfully, there are very meaningful and easily do-able solutions.

You can't change the secular nature of our public schools, but you can change the micro environment of a student at the school. One of the easiest ways to do this is to form Christian clubs. Most people don't even know how easy and possible this is!

Clubs help students find other Christian friends and surround themselves with good people. This book is about how to set up and grow Christian clubs inside public schools so our kids can support and empower each other. It's like a Christian fortress to protect kids from negative influences as much as possible. From there you can branch out and do assemblies or mentoring, or have a

lunch pizza fest to just love on students; or whatever God is putting on your heart.

This book will give you the keys to open school doors, so you can let God back in. Imagine, a Christian club which serves as a launchpad to touch the hearts of non-Christians who so desperately need the love of God. Just think about all the school shootings. What if those kids would have found the love of God. One of the schools where I did my student teaching observation had six suicides between the beginning of the school year and February 2018.¹⁰ That's six suicides in six months. And a school where I was teaching just had a middle schooler accidentally shoot himself in the bathroom; he was obsessed with the Columbine shooter and wanted to beat that. That's just in our area. Only big school incidents make it to national news, but our schools are desperate nationwide. They need hope and love more than ever before. I have found we can provide it in a most unexpected way.

From Kindergarten to High School

When it comes to Christian clubs, most people think about high school first. Yes, our teenagers need that kind of support, but so do our elementary school kids. Why not make sure that they get a good start in school with the right friends. With young children, we might not notice the negative influences bad relationships can have on them. After all they are not yet interested in music, parties, or drugs. However, it's critical to be around people with good character from an early age.

Friends are a tremendous influence on kids in schools. Like a compass, friends can steer them in any direction. Kids get introduced to new things, starting early on with lying, cheating on tests, mean behavior, and later moving to provocative dressing, partying, alcohol and maybe even drugs. I know so many moms whose kids went astray because of bad friends; some of them looked good but were ultimately still a bad influence. My daughter, as I describe in a later chapter, hung out with the bad smart kids from speech club. They looked perfect and behaved well. I invited them to my house to check them out and was impressed with their manners and command of speech. I thought I was so blessed. Then I realized they were systematically destroying her faith and even her relationship with me.

¹⁰ Almsy, S. (2018). 6 teen suicides in 6 months in 1 Ohio school district. Retrievable at:
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/16/health/ohio-suicide-cluster/index.html>

While offering sanctuary for Christians, shouldn't we also send out lifelines to non-Christians? Christian kids can be the light students need. Young people question life. They search for answers at any student age. Why not engage in their journey to adulthood and provide answers teachers may fear to tackle? We have the opportunity to offer another option to the secular nature of public schools. In this book, you will be equipped with step-by-step instructions on how to set up a club in a public school and learn how to find help from other people in the community and school. You will be well prepared to speak with the principal. By the time you're done reading this book, you will know your free speech rights. You will not be intimidated by someone mentioning the 'separation of church and state' nor by school administration concerned about 'violating the establishment clause,' or other things you may have heard erroneously about.

Reach Our Public School Kids with God's Love

You will feel empowered and emboldened to reach our kids in public schools with the powerful message of God. I will show you the far-reaching freedom Christians have in public schools. You will be astounded to find out how many federal and civic organizations support Christian students.

And you will be delighted to learn how we can freely share the love of God and pray with others. As long as the club is voluntary, and operates during non-instructional school hours, you are allowed to teach any Bible lesson and talk about God as if you were in church. Imagine the change in atmosphere if this was happening all across the country.

I want to empower you to be a support for our students. It's difficult to maintain faith in a secular environment without a Christian community. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, pastor, church leader or any concerned adult, you're called to live out the Great Commission. Why not be that salt and light our students so desperately need. Why travel afar to share the love of God when the opportunity is so huge in our backyard.

A High Schooler Puts It This Way:

"During hectic days, it can be difficult to find time to talk about topics that you care about deeply. Imagine being able to settle down in a classroom full of students who care about the same issues you do. You are given a full hour

to debate and express your feelings about how to solve these problems and whom they affect.”¹¹

An open Christian environment even helps students solve personal problems and get support when needed. We need to bring hope into our schools. Our students are more confused than ever. Even our Christian students get confused when taught about gender identity issues. The Gay-Straight Alliance has set foot in most high schools and even middle schools in our nation. And most of the kids from those clubs are atheists often proactively dissuading Christians.

Many high schools already have Christian clubs. The content of this book will not only help establish a club but also help your resolve of maintaining a Christian club. You will understand your legal rights and how to navigate the gay-straight alliances and LGBT community. This book is not about judging any group but to fully describe the landscape of public middle and high schools we need to include the gay-straight clubs in our book.

The gay-straight alliance clubs are growing faster than our Christian clubs. Shouldn't we as Christians be there for our students? Maybe God has called you to do that. It's not rocket science, just a love for students to reach out and support them.

Elementary and Middle Schools

Very few elementary and middle schools have Christian clubs, despite the fact that they are extra beneficial at that age. One of the reasons fewer clubs exist in elementary schools is the fact that different laws apply. In high schools, most clubs are set up via the Equal Access Act (which will be further explained in a later chapter) However, for an elementary school club, the First Amendment's Free Speech and Free Exercise clauses apply. Parents, grandparents, pastors or youth leaders can run an elementary school club. So why not start one? You can structure it for as little as a six-week program, for one hour per week in Spring and Fall. In such little time, you can impact the life of a student forever. (More on this later.)

¹¹ Martinez, J. (2017). Students connect in religious clubs.

Retrievable at:

<https://thesagonline.com/25068/news/students-connect-in-religious-clubs>

News and social media primarily report about the ACLU, the separation of church and state, and that prayer was taken out of school. But the fact is: We can have Christian clubs as a voluntary after-school activity in our public schools. Because of all the negative news surrounding God and public schools, most people don't even know this. I certainly didn't.

The Department of Education Endorses Christian Clubs

Most people also don't know that sixteen national agencies, including Federal agencies such as the Department of Education and the White House Office for Faith-based Partnership, fully endorse Christian clubs in schools, and even the ACLU has never once challenged them. You will be surprised to learn about the Supreme Court and key legal cases which brought us such freedom.

This book will show you what you can and cannot do in public schools. You will feel confident in your rights, whether you are a parent, student, teacher, counselor or principal. You will see more of those eye-opening statistics, and you will receive very specific guidelines about setting up a Christian club or maintaining a current one.

Join The Movement....

Thousands of such faith-based clubs already exist nationwide. Not only in high schools but even in elementary schools. Why not start one for your local school? This is especially vital if you live in a challenged area of town or feel called to work in one. You will hardly do anything else in life with better eternal results than engaging yourself with such open hearts and minds.

Do you like to work with elementary school kids? If yes, then start praying and asking God to show you in which school God wants you to be the light. You may be called to serve God's interest in high schools where you can help rescue souls and empower students. From an early age, our kids need to surround themselves with good friends. This holds true especially in public school settings where they're exposed and influenced by friends every day.

Your choice to act can make all the difference in a student's life, their friends lives, and even the families represented. Please join me to bring hope to our public schools!

CHAPTER 6

IS GOD STILL WELCOME IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

"Zack won't come for dinner. I think he's crying in his room?"

"Do you know what happened, Addie?"

"I think it's something with his girlfriend, cause he talked to her earlier on the phone. When I get that age I'll never have a boyfriend."

"Good idea, cause you know they have the cooties!"

"That's right, let's just eat without him. I'm hungry."

"Hey Zack, I've got a plate of food for you. Can I come in, please?"

"No, I'm not hungry. I want to be alone."

"Please, Zack. It helps to talk."

"Not right now, mom."

"Come on down honey. Give him space," his dad called up knowing his wife's face was pressed against Zack's door in agony. "Maybe it's even best if she breaks up with him. You know she's not the best influence on Zack, and she's not even a believer."

Wiping Claire's tears from her face, he knew he had to come up with a plan, "If Zack could just find other Christians in school."

"What about me?" Addie piped in, "Elementary school is not so easy either. Some of my friends are mean, and they don't even know that God loves them. I wish I could tell them about God, but I don't know how."

"Maybe we should start a Christian club in both elementary and high school," Mom said.

"I'd love to have a club like that in my school," Addie brimmed with hope.

"Is that even allowed? Didn't they take prayer out of school years ago and doesn't that mean you can't talk about God at all?" said dad.

Here's what the Clark family learned:

Can Students Talk About God In Public School or Meet In Christian Clubs?

Yes, thanks to the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

Students do not, the Court tells us in *Tinker vs. Des Moines*¹² shed their constitutional rights when they enter the schoolhouse door."¹³

. . . In the absence of a specific showing of constitutionally valid reasons to regulate their speech, students are entitled to freedom of expression of their "views." Justice Fortas, speaking for the majority.

The First Amendment's Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses provide full protection of student religious speech in public schools. This includes all public schools from K-12.

¹² *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Community Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969).

"John and Mary Beth Tinker of Des Moines, Iowa, wore black armbands to their public school as a symbol of protest against American involvement in the Vietnam War. When school authorities asked that the Tinkers remove their armbands, they refused and were subsequently suspended. The Supreme Court decided that the Tinkers had the right to wear the armbands, with Justice Abe Fortas stating that no one expects students to "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

Retrievable at:

http://landmarkcases.org/en/Page/245/Summary_of_the_Decision

¹³ *Ibid.* Justice Fortas, speaking for the majority.

Students can talk about their faith just like they can talk about any other subject in class. Faith can be expressed in assignments or classroom discussions as long as it does not interfere with classroom teaching or is disruptive. Students can mention a biblical principal even referring to the Bible when appropriate in a classroom discussion.

More than that, students are at liberty to enjoy their constitutional rights to freely exercise their faith by having Christian clubs at school.

Why then are so many people confused about Christian rights in Schools?

It's because teachers and students have different rights. Sadly, both of them often get lumped together resulting in contradictory information. Teachers and the whole school staff have much more limited rights to talk about God. Therefore students often get confused and think that their rights are limited as well. However, that is not the case! Why? Because students can fully exercise their Free Speech rights as outlined in the First Amendment.

The First Amendment not only contains the Free Speech Clause, it also contains the Establishment Clause. Teachers, unlike students, have to uphold the Establishment Clause, which prohibits the government from trying to establish a religion. School administrators, teachers, and school staff are more restricted as they act in an official government position and therefore are not permitted to endorse religion. The establishment clause prohibits the government, and by extension school personnel, from officially establishing one religion, denomination, or even atheism over another.

Students are not considered to be representatives of the government and can therefore never violate the establishment clause. It simply does not pertain to students. That's why students are fully permitted to freely focus on expressing their faith. (This also includes any parent or adult who is not a school employee but teaches a Christian club even in elementary school.)

Students are only limited in one area: they cannot disrupt the classroom. For example students can bring up faith as it pertains to a discussion in class, but they cannot start outright preaching during class. But outside of class, even that is not a problem as students can talk about their faith just like any other subject. That's why it makes sense for students to get together in Christian clubs.

So far it was easy, but now it gets a little tricky:

Even though the Free Speech Clause is sufficient to start a Christian club in all K-12 schools we have another piece of legislation effecting the boundaries. It applies only to secondary schools.

Equal Access Act

The Equal Access Act was passed by Congress in 1984 in the wake of discrimination against Christians in the two decades after prayer was taken out of school. Congress wanted to make it crystal clear that Christian clubs have the same rights as any other clubs. It grants equal access to Christian student groups to meet on campus just like any other nonreligious group. Students can meet during non-curriculum, non-instruction time, as long as it doesn't interfere with instruction. The club must be voluntary, student-led, and student-initiated. Non-students, such as youth leaders, may not set up, direct, control, conduct, or regularly attend the group. And students cannot invite the same speaker more than once every fourth meeting.

The fact that the club has to be student-led is what makes a club using the Equal Access Act difficult to implement. Some high school students who want to start a Christian club may be overwhelmed by the responsibility of having to lead it all by themselves. Furthermore, they may want some help from a more experienced adult. That's when high school students have and option to ask themselves the question:

Should I Use The First Amendment Rights or the Equal Access Act?

High school Christian clubs typically use the Equal Access Act to set up a Christian club because principals are more familiar with Equal Access clubs. In fact, most principals do not even know that it could be set up via the First Amendment Free Speech Rights.

As mentioned, the Equal Access Act option works well if students are comfortable enough to lead the club, since the Equal Access Act requires the club to be student led.

The Equal Access Act also works better if the principal is not supportive of Christianity. A principal can hardly say no to an Equal Access club. The First Amendment club has just as much legal standing, but you'd have to explain it to the principal who is primarily familiar with the Equal Access Act.

But what if students want more help from adults than is allowed under the Equal Access Act?

High school students who want to have more adult leadership can instead set up the club using the First Amendment Free Speech Rights just like the clubs are set up in elementary schools. The great benefit is that this will allow students to have adult leaders to help set up and run the club. Those adult leaders also are allowed to teach without limitations. But because secondary school administration might not be aware of such a club which is set up as a community club, you need to provide further information to the principal. All of this will be covered in a later chapter.

Elementary Schools Use First Amendment Rights

If you want to set up a club in an elementary school, you don't have to rack your brain about which way to set it up. You only have one option: Christian Clubs set up in elementary schools always use the First Amendment's Free Speech Rights and are set up as community clubs. Clearly, an elementary school club cannot be student led and therefore was never included in the Equal Access Act.

Typically parents, grandparents, youth leaders or other community leaders teach the club. Parental permission slips are attached to club flyers for parents to sign up their student. However, club participation still needs to be voluntary and during non-instructional time.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT ABOUT THE ACLU?

Or Americans United?

Or the Freedom from Religion Foundation?

Jenna Clarke and Robyn Krause talked about the worldly influence on their kids in school. They worried not only about their high schoolers but also wondered if they could help their elementary schoolers from slowly losing faith. After kicking the thoughts back and forth, the two realized it would be great to find other kids in school whose parents were open to a Christian club. This way their kids would find good friends, and they could even learn to share their faith with others. Still, the nagging questions arose: "Is it legal? Would the ACLU prevent it?", and "What if the principal is afraid of the ACLU or one of the other atheist groups it backs?" came up.

Words like 'school' and 'faith' conjure up images of the ACLU or one of its branches. News reports remind us how the ACLU challenges school prayer and school religious symbols. Schools often cave to the ACLU. "We would rather spend our money on teachers than on lawyers" is a frequent justification.

We see the ACLU backing the Freedom From Religion Foundation against our Christian traditions in schools. The ACLU also supports Americans United in many anti-Christian efforts. But, there is no need to fear the ACLU when it comes to Christian clubs. In fact, the ACLU officially acknowledges and supports Christian clubs in public schools.

Because students won numerous lawsuits against schools who denied Christian clubs, an increasing number of principals are focusing on protecting their students' rights to free speech. School administration is not alone in becoming more cognizant of student rights; even the ACLU schooled a school in the spring of 2014:

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Tennessee stood up for the Christian rights of a student who was forced by teachers to stop reading the Bible during an After-School program.

In that situation, school personnel told an elementary school student that he was not allowed to read the Bible. When he refused to cave in to their demand, the teacher took the Bible away from him stating that the school could lose their funds if they allowed him to read the Bible.

Instead of turning to one of many excellent Christian legal organizations, the student's parents turned to the ACLU for help. Why? They must have been convinced of the student's constitutional right to exercise his faith. And they must have known that the ACLU had to back up their son's right to free exercise of his faith.

That is exactly what happened. The ACLU defended the student against the school.

In a letter sent to the school in April 2014, the ACLU requested that it's the school's "obligation under the law to safeguard their students' religious liberties - without imposing religion on them."¹⁴

To come into compliance with the law, the school responded by training its employees on religious freedom rights.

Students Have Constitutional Rights

"The First Amendment exists to protect religious freedom," said Thomas H. Castelli, ACLU-TN legal director. "While this means that schools may not impose or promote religion, it also means that students can engage in religious activities that they initiate, provided they do not cause a disruption or

¹⁴ Castelli, T. H. (2014). ACLU-TN protects student's right to read Bible in school. Retrievable at:
<https://www.aclu.org/news/aclu-tn-protects-students-right-read-bible-school?>

interfere with the education of other students."¹⁵ Those rights apply to non-instructional time such as lunch, recess and before/after-school time.

Hedy Weinberg, executive director of the ACLU's Tennessee branch, explained that "the goal of their letter was to clarify how constitutionally-guaranteed religious freedoms work. ACLU-TN has a long-standing commitment to uphold and defend Tennesseans' ability to practice religion, or not, as they choose."¹⁶

The ACLU Supported an Anti-Abortion Club

In May 2017, Parkland High School in Allentown, Pennsylvania, would not allow two students to start an anti-abortion club. Because the mother of one of the students had an abortion against her will when she was young, the students wanted to support other students who are in the same situation, but the school said, "the club was too controversial and too political."¹⁷

So they looked for legal help. Jocelyn Floyd, an attorney for the Thomas More Society, said in the Morning Call: "The law is clear and the lawyers know it. The school administrators are the ones who don't always understand what the obligations are under the law."¹⁸

The legal director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania, Vic Walczek, also thinks that Parkland High School violated the Equal Access Act. Schools often use words such as: controversial, political, or illegal, to intimidate students simply because the administration doesn't want to deal with parents who might object to a Christian club.

¹⁵ Castelli, T. H. (2014). ACLU Tennessee.

¹⁶ Weber, K. (2014). Boy Forced to Stop Reading Bible During Tenn. After-School Program; ACLU Defends Student.
Retrieval at:

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/boy-forced-to-stop-reading-bible-duringtenn-after-school-program-aclu-defends-student-117229/>

¹⁷ Allen, Michael (2017). High School Won't Allow Students' Anti-Abortion Club.

Retrieval at:

<https://www.opposingviews.com/i/society/high-school-wont-allow-students-anti-abortion-club>

¹⁸ Wojcik, S. (2017). National law firm says Parkland violating law in rejecting pro-life student club.

Retrieval at:

<http://www.mcall.com/news/local/parkland/mc-parkland-prolife-club-censored-20170517-story.html>

But to be fair, it needs to be stated that most principals decide to uphold the First Amendment Rights of their students no matter who complains.

Nationally, the ACLU never directly challenged a Christian club in schools. All they ever filed was an amicus brief in the landmark case: *Good News Club vs. Milford Central School*.¹⁹ However, the Supreme Court decided in favor of the Christian club.

The ACLU instead challenges Christian symbols in schools, such as the posting of the ten commandments or nativity scenes. The organization also likes to challenge Christian seals or Christian remarks in official school documents. And we all know the ACLU challenges mandatory school prayer.

Still, the ACLU fully recognizes and accepts Christian clubs in schools and respects students' constitutional rights. It's of paramount importance that we utilize this right to support our students.

¹⁹ *Good News Club et al. v Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98 (2001)
Retrievable at:
<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/533/98.html>

CHAPTER 8

WHAT ABOUT SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE?

Brittany looked on as her daughter boarded the school bus on the first day of school. She gave her a smile and a wave before heading back to the house, but Brittany's mind was full of worrisome thoughts. "What if she starts talking about God like she does at home? Will she get in trouble or even wind up in the principal's office? Or worse, what if she loses her faith?" Brittany was concerned. She didn't know who she could talk to about this situation. She didn't know any other Christian kids starting school that year, and she certainly couldn't ask the school office.

Brittany then remembered her son who had begun his first day of high school earlier that morning. She hoped he would stay away from negative influences and especially from drugs and alcohol. Suddenly alarmed she thinks, "What if he becomes a part of the gay-straight alliance?" Not that she thought they were inherently bad people, but she heard of that community having little tolerance towards Christians. Mostly, Brittany was wondering whether her son would stand firm in his faith, or if the separation of church and state would prevent him from talking about his faith.

Separation of church and state means that the government cannot exercise its authority in establishing a national religion.

Schools constitute a local extension of the government which cannot make religion mandatory for all students. That clause of the First Amendment is called the "Establishment Clause."

'Separation of church and state' is a well-known phrase. However, it is not found in the Constitution of the United States.

This term has been misinterpreted over the years and has evolved to the current interpretation demonstrated in the short story above. Our Founding Fathers never meant to separate state and church, but instead just wanted to make sure that the government does not interfere with religion. The original intent was that the government does not officially establish one particular religion or denomination over another or even establish non-religion over religion.

Here is the First Amendment Establishment Clause²⁰

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

Where, then, did the term “Separation of Church” originate?

It stems from Thomas Jefferson’s use of the phrase “wall of separation between Church and State”²¹ as he tries to explain the First Amendment religion clauses to the Danbury Baptist Association in a letter:

“I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting

²⁰ Establishment Clause,

Retrievable at:

https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/establishment_clause

²¹ “The fact is there is nothing wrong with Jefferson referring to the Establishment Clause as a wall between church and state in his famous Danbury Baptists letter. Jefferson was simply describing in a colorful way disestablishment, which in simple words means religion can no longer be an auxiliary of government control.

The words “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” means in simple words that no power was invested in Congress to established a national church and to compel by law worship of its tenets, which in return disallows the “free exercise” of religion. This is the “wall” the First Amendment erects to which Jefferson referred.

Retrievable at:

<http://www.federalistblog.us/2010/11/>

an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and State."²²

The first time the Supreme Court cited the phrase, "Wall of separation between church and state" was in 1947 in the case *Everson versus Board of Education of Ewing*.²³ Since this term did not exist in the Congressional records, they used it from the private letter of Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association quoted above.

Subsequently, the Supreme Court ruled that a wall of separation between church and state exists based on that personal letter rather than the Constitution. As a result, the Supreme Court created an erroneous precedent, ruling that law could be created from a personal letter instead of the Constitution.

Even if a letter was considered a law in the United States, the Supreme Court misinterpreted what Jefferson wrote. Jefferson's words were used as a legal precedent despite being used out of context. This redefinition of Jefferson's original meaning has provided the basis for the Supreme Court's definition of separation of church and state.

However, not one of the ninety Founding Fathers stated, argued for or against, or even referred to such a phrase when they debated for months about the specific words to use when writing the First Amendment. Congressional Records from June 7 to September 25, 1789, reveal that none of these men, including Thomas Jefferson, ever used the phrase, "separation of church and state." Two days after Jefferson wrote his "wall of separation" metaphor he attended church services held in the House of Representatives where the Speaker's podium served as the pulpit.

This was no isolated event either as he continuously attended church services held on government property during his two terms as President. President Madison also attended church services in the House on Sundays. Even the Treasury building was used as a church on Sundays where John Quincy Adams was known to attend.²⁴

²² Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 113 (H. Washington ed. 1861)

²³ *Everson v. Board Of Education Of Ewing* TP.330 U.S. 1, 15-16

²⁴ Madison, P. A. (2010). *The Federalist Papers* 14th Amdt House Report (1871)

The intent of our founding fathers was to protect religion from the government not to exclude and separate religion from government.

But the *Everson v Board of Education of Ewing* case changed all that by introducing the term “separation of church and state” for the first time in history. While it does not appear that making religion an outlaw in public schools was the intent of the founders, nor was it the practice in America before 1947, the *Everson* case set the stage for other challenges to religious practices in public schools.

Daily prayer and Bible reading were challenged and dismissed from public schools in the early 1960s. Other forms of the official religious expression became legally unwelcome in public schools with the elimination of graduation prayers in 1992 and prayers before football games in 2000.

So the term 'separation of church and state' can be considered a misnomer because the founding fathers never wanted to entirely separate their Christian belief from government. They just didn't want the government to choose one denomination over another and make that the state church. They welcomed the Christian faith at large even within government walls. However, this term has been interpreted by our courts in a stricter way for some decades now.

Our forefathers stated that violating the Establishment Clause means that not one denomination should be established over another denomination.

But today the courts state that violating the Establishment Clause takes place when a government authorized person such as a teacher endorses faith or tries to establish religion on behalf of the government.

Shall We let The Separation of Church and State Issue

Separate Us?

The following section will show you the bigger picture and how you can make an impact despite the Separation of Church and State. You have so many free speech rights and full endorsements of all major government agencies as you will see in the next chapter. All of us have great opportunity to share pure faith which draws people in willingly and undergirds our Christian beliefs.

Religious Freedom for All

James Madison words were adopted into the Virginia Constitution Bill of Rights²⁵ and stated:²⁶

“That religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and, therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience.”

Evidently, those Founders believed in free will. That's why they wanted to make sure government would refrain from making religion mandatory. Rather, Christian faith should arise out of personal conviction.

The early Founders came out of Europe which was influenced by state churches. These government endorsed state churches levied mandatory church taxes on people. That's precisely what our Forefathers wanted to prevent in the new colonies. They were also skeptical of government's fingers making faith decisions which they believed should be reserved for clergy.

The state churches in Europe, to this day, work to some degree with the government. The Supreme Court in Germany, for instance, still decides if Catholic or Lutheran believers get to take sacraments if they choose not to pay the church tax.²⁷ (And, by the way, the answer is “no.”)

Another problem with state churches is that the government can influence the upper management of Christian hospitals, schools, charities and even churches. State churches are so entangled with politics that their very faith and doctrines are affected by political motives.

Such government-influenced and ecumenical movements can result in inadvertently supporting anti-Christian trends. Multiple agendas might

²⁵ Bill of Rights.

Retrievable at:

<http://law.justia.com/constitution/virginia/constitution.html>

²⁶ James Madison, A Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, addressed to the Virginia General Assembly, June 20, 1785

²⁷ Kaemper, O. (2012). Keine Sakramente nach Kirchnaustritt.

Retrievable at:

<http://www.dw.com/de/keine-sakramente-nach-kirchnaustritt/a-16263114>

interfere with making decisions based on faith only. Jesus had nothing good to say about the church-state connection of the Pharisees. Attending church for social reasons, position or prestige (which easily happens in a state church) can result in a watered down version of the gospel. God likes us all in or out, not half hearted.

But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! Rev. 3:16 NLT

Do we want to create lukewarm Christians who go through the motions of school prayer without truly seeking God? If religion is not mandated, people see a more loving and pure version of the faith. Should our glorious faith be reduced to an obligatory prayer people might resent? Would that be a religious performance with little substance? God detests false idols. Does God also detest false worship?²⁸

In 1 Corinthians 13, Jesus tells us to be loving and kind. While we have our rights to exercise our Free Speech in schools, we need to be aware of being considerate towards others and their beliefs.

Instead, let's turn our eyes and hearts toward our full rights to exercise our faith through voluntary Christian clubs and inviting those nonbelievers who are truly interested?

Focus on the Free Speech and Exercise Clause

The Supreme Court's interpretation of the separation of church and state focuses as much on guaranteeing the free exercise of faith as it does on making sure it's not government endorsed.

"Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

The focus of this book is not to challenge interpretations of separation of Church and State, but to fully utilize the right to free speech and free exercise of faith. Students have the right and opportunity to freely meet and discuss faith on school grounds. Our courts and schools have faithfully upheld this right. It makes more sense to me to work on establishing and growing

²⁸ Ruth, J. (2016). One Nation under God . Lexington, KY., p. 62

Christian clubs instead of debating about whether the Supreme Court was right in how they interpreted Jefferson statement.

Respecting the Supreme Court Decision

Even though we might not agree with the Supreme Court decision, we need to consider Jesus' teaching on the temple tax in Matt. 17: 24:

"After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

"Yes, he does," he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak "What do you think Simon, he asked, from whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their children or others?"

"From others," Peter answered.

"Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him.

"But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth, and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Jesus did not agree with paying the tax, but he still instructed Peter to pay the tax to avoid people being offended. In the same vein, we need to respect the Supreme Court decision about separation of church and state and how they applied it to the Establishment Clause.

But keep in mind that separation of church and state only affects Christian teachers, staff, and administration - not our students. Our students can never violate the establishment clause because they are not held to those standards. Instead, let's focus on the task at hand of helping our students with the rights we are given. There is great legal protection in the Free Speech and Free Exercise clauses. They create opportunities that are vastly underemployed.

Setting up and growing Christian clubs in schools does not violate the establishment clause nor does it violate the separation of church and state. Christian clubs are regulated and fully endorsed by the Free Speech and Free Exercise Clauses. Separation of church and state only applies to school staff, not students.

Recent Ruling on the Separation of Church and State:

At a time when Americans are deeply divided over the meaning of “separation of church and state,” a ruling from the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 2014 provides a much-needed case study in how the First Amendment’s establishment clause is supposed to work.

In a unanimous decision, the three-judge panel dismissed a challenge by atheists to the display of a cross-shaped beam at the National Sept. 11 Memorial and Museum at Ground Zero in New York City.

As the court explained, “the Establishment Clause is not properly construed to command that government accounts of history be devoid of religious references.” The First Amendment, in other words, separates church from state – but not religion from public life.²⁹

²⁹ Haynes, C. (2014). "Cross at Ground Zero": History Lesson or State Religion? Retrievable at: <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/cross-at-ground-zero-history-lesson-or-state-religion>

CHAPTER 9

WHICH ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT CHRISTIAN RIGHTS?

As the mothers started to research, they were astounded by how many organizations, including government authorities, endorse Christian clubs in our public schools. Here is a list of them:

Supreme Court

Supreme Court Verdict States: Religious Clubs Can Meet At Public Schools

“The Supreme Court ruled in favor of a voluntary Christian club which meets during non-instructional time and inside the school facilities. The majority found that excluding the club was unconstitutional discrimination based on the club's views. Letting the meeting take place would not be an unconstitutional government endorsement of religion, the court ruled.”³⁰

NEA

The National Education Association Is Pulling In Faith-Based Organizations to Improve Student Learning In Their Priority Schools Campaign

Executive Summary: Strategy #5³¹

³⁰ United States Supreme Court, *Good News Club et al. v. Milford Central School*¹, (2001)

Retrieval at:

<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/533/98.html>

³¹ Anne T. Henderson, Senior Consultant to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and co-author of *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement and Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0*. National Education Association (NEA) 2011

"Building collaborations with community partners: Pulling in strategic partners and developing community by-in with colleges, social service agencies, community groups, faith-based organizations, local leaders, public officials, and businesses - to improve student learning and other outcomes."

Department of Education

Promotes Student Achievement by Connecting Schools with Faith-Based Organizations³²

"The mission of the Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the U.S. Department of Education is to promote student achievement by connecting schools and community-based organizations, both secular and faith-based."

The White House Office of Faith-Based Partnerships³³

States That Faith And Community Groups Are Critical Partners In Expanding Community Involvement.³⁴

"Education is a critical pathway to success for individuals and families. Partnerships between schools and faith-based and community organizations can help to achieve this goal of educational success for all students. That is why the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the Department of Education works to promote student achievement and build a culture of educational excellence within communities across the country."

"The White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships works to build bridges between the federal government and nonprofit organizations, both secular and faith-based, to better serve Americans in need. The Office advances this work through Centers in various Federal agencies."

Retrievable at:

<http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Family-School-Community-Partnerships-2.0.pdf>

³² Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships .

Retrievable at:

<http://sites.ed.gov/fbnp/>

³³ (2018). Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Retrievable at:

<http://sites.ed.gov/fbnp/>

³⁴ President Obama, (2010). PARTNERSHIPS for the COMMON GOOD.

Retrievable at:

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/faithbasedtoolkit.pdf>

The NEA Foundation

States That Successful School Districts Have Relied On Faith-Based Institutions³⁵

"Successful union and district collaborations have included creation of partnerships with community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, health and mental health agencies, and city- or community-based agencies focused on developing comprehensive solutions for the complex challenges of educating all students."

NEA Today

Encourages Schools To Develop Meaningful Partnerships With Faith Organizations³⁶

"Local Partnerships to Transform Priority Schools. Partnerships between priority schools and their communities help students succeed—in school and in life."

"While some local associations and school districts are in the beginning phases of developing meaningful partnerships with local businesses, civic, faith and social organizations, and community coalitions, several priority schools are already seeing the benefits these partnerships can have for their students."

ACLU

States That: "Student-Organized Bible Clubs³⁷ Are Ok As Long As Three Conditions Are Met:

- ◆ the activity must take place during non-school hours
- ◆ school officials can't be involved in organizing or running the club

³⁵ The NEA Foundation Report (2012, April). Expanding Learning Opportunities to Close The Achievement Gaps: Lessons from Union-District Collaborations.

Retrieval at:

<http://www.neafoundation.org/content/assets/2012/04/elo-final-2.pdf>

³⁶ Buffenbarger, A. (2011). Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Retrieval at:

<http://www.nea.org/tools/48684.htm>

³⁷ (2018) YOUR RIGHT TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

Retrieval at:

<http://www.aclu.org/other/your-right-religious-freedom>

- ◆ the school must make its facilities available to all student groups on an equal basis.

Pastors, Churches, Educators And Volunteers Support Christian Involvement In Schools

According To A Barna³⁸ Research Report From 2014:

95% of pastors believe that Christians should get involved in helping public schools.

80% of church-going Christians across all denominations feel the same way.

50% of public school teachers attend church at least monthly

65% of public school volunteers are Christians

50% of churches offer support for educators who attend their church

25% of churches offer mentoring or after-school programs

Reasons Why People Don't Volunteer In Public Schools According To Barna:

44% say they don't have children in the school

18% say public schools don't want Christians to help

17% don't know how to help

16% say the public school needs more prayer and religious values, not academic support

6% public school is contrary to their belief

³⁸ (2014) Public Schools: Christians are part of the solution.

Retrievable at:

<https://www.barna.com/research/public-schools-christians-are-part-of-the-solution/>

7% doubt they can make a long-term difference³⁹

³⁹ percentages don't necessarily add up because people could choose more than one category.

CHAPTER 10

KEY SUPREME COURT CASE STORY

Connecting With Community

Darleen Fournier, along with her husband Rev. Stephen Fournier, wanted to be active in their community and be a blessing to people. They had just moved to Milford to pastor a church and hoped to connect with others in town. Darleen found another woman with whom she shared the same desire and they established a Christian club at their Community Bible Church for elementary school students. After all, the Fourniers' two daughters attended the local elementary school. The club provided character education through faith-based stories, games, scripture, and songs. Parental permission was required before joining the club. It was open to all faiths or even non-faiths and stayed clear from denominational doctrines.

The Club was right after school, and parents let their children go straight to the church via the school bus since the church was a regular bus stop for the Fourniers' daughters. Parents then picked up their children at the church when the club was over. Kids were having fun while learning morals and character from a Christian perspective. The club became popular.

The School Superintendent Stepped In

Soon, the interim superintendent of Milford Schools decided against letting the students out at the Fourniers' bus stop. No specific reason was given, but the kids were told that there was no longer room on the bus. However, the Boy Scouts were still allowed to use the bus to transport the students to their meetings. To alleviate the transportation problems, the Fourniers decided to bring the club right to the school premises. According to school policy a proper "building use form" was submitted which is used by all outside organizations wanting to use school buildings for community meetings.

Stephen and Darleen Fournier were school district residents and therefore eligible to use the school's facilities upon approval of their proposed use. However, the building use request was not approved. The Fourniers communicated to the school that they were surprised the school allowed other clubs while denying theirs simply because of the Christian perspective. The school board stated that "the kinds of activities proposed to be engaged in by the Good News Club were not a discussion of secular subjects such as child rearing, development of character and development of morals from a religious perspective, but were, in fact, the equivalent of religious instruction itself." The Milford School Board unanimously denied the request stating that these activities are equivalent to religious worship which is prohibited in their Community Use Policy.

Communications Problems

Neither the superintendent nor the school board president agreed to a meeting to discuss the situation. That's when the Fourniers realized they needed help and found the Rutherford Institute. A letter was sent to the school to help remedy the problem. Not only did the school continue to block any amicable efforts, but the school board president was wondering about where the club would find financial support for a legal defense. This resulted in the Rutherford Institute drafting a legal plan to address the issue.

In January 1997, a legal suit was filed by the Fourniers and the Good News Club⁴⁰ in the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York against Milford Central School. The Fourniers alleged that the school violated the free speech rights of the First Amendment, as well as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The suit went all the way up to the Supreme Court and was decided in 2001 in favor of the Christian club.

The Supreme Court ruled that the Christian club's religious speech rights need to be upheld by the school. The court used the First Amendment's Free Speech right; the Religious Freedom Restoration Act was not needed to make the case.

The Rocky Road to the Supreme Court

⁴⁰ Good News Club et al. v Milford Central School, 533 U.S. 98 (2001)
Retrievable at:
<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/533/98.html>

The Fourniers and the Good News Club lost the first case in the Northern District of New York and turned around and filed an appeal with the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals. But they also lost that case as the Second Circuit affirmed the District Court's holding that the school's restriction was not unreasonable. The woman who helped teach at the Club with Darleen was disappointed, and as a result, discontinued, not wanting to be involved in more legal matters.

Still, the Fourniers and the Good News Club decided not to give up because in a precedent case the 8th Circuit Court held that it is unconstitutional for schools to turn down clubs when others are allowed. Since both the 2nd and the 8th Circuit Courts dealt with similar subjects but rendered different opinions the issue needed to be decided by a higher court. That road led to the Supreme Court.

As a result of this split among the federal appeals courts on the question whether speech can be excluded from a limited public forum due to its religious content, the Supreme Court decided to accept and review the case.

The Supreme Court agreed to hear the case, and it was decided on June 11, 2001. The verdict was that Christian clubs are allowed in public schools and receive the same free speech rights as any other club. This case has since served as precedent. The Supreme Court held, "By denying the Club access to the school's limited public forum on the ground that the Club was religious in nature, Milford discriminated against the Club because of its religious viewpoint in violation of the Free Speech Clause."

The United States Supreme Court Ruled:

- ◆ Milford School violated the Free Speech Clause by restricting the Club
- ◆ The school board's decision and policy to deny the club were unconstitutional.
- ◆ Milford discriminated against the club because of the club's religious viewpoint, a violation of the Free Speech Clause.
- ◆ Permitting the club to meet in the school did not violate the Establishment Clause and should, therefore, have been allowed by the school.

The Supreme Court decided that there is no difference between the viewpoint discrimination of this case and prior cases such as *Lamb's Chapel v. Center*

Moriches Union Free School District⁴¹ and Rosenberger⁴² v University of Virginia.⁴³

In Lamb's Chapel, the court held that a school violated the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause by denying a group the right to show a faith-based movie just because it had a Christian perspective. In Rosenberger, the court held that the denial of a university to fund a student publication because of its religious perspective violated the Free Speech Clause and constituted viewpoint discrimination. The Supreme Court applies the "strict scrutiny" standard when deciding on viewpoint discrimination. A denial of Christian clubs must be justified by a compelling governmental interest such as national security, preserving the lives of multiple individuals, and not violating explicit constitutional protections. The policy must also be the least restrictive means of achieving that interest.⁴⁴

The Supreme Court held that Milford School Discriminated Against the Christian Club

⁴¹ Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District, 508 U.S. 384 (1993)
Retrievable at:

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/508/384>

⁴² "A group of students formed a Contracted Independent Organization (CIO) at the University of Virginia, entitled Wide Awake Productions (WAP), which was organized for the purpose of publishing a magazine, which expressed Christian philosophical and religious viewpoints. When the Petitioners, Rosenberger and other members of WAP (Petitioners), submitted for funds from the Student Activities Fund (to which they were entitled, due to their CIO status) for printing costs, they were summarily turned down, because their publication expressed religious viewpoints, which might be construed as the views of the public university. The Petitioners filed suit, alleging that the Respondents, the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia's (Respondent), refusal to allot them a portion of the Student Activities Funds was an abridgment of their First Amendment Rights."

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Students.

Retrievable at:

<https://www.casebriefs.com/blog/law/constitutional-law/constitutional-law-keyed-to-cohen/religion-and-the-constitution/rosenberger-v-rector-and-visitors-of-the-university-of-virginia-2/>

⁴³ Rosenberger v. University of Virginia, 515 U.S. 819 (1995)

Retrievable at:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosenberger_v._University_of_Virginia

⁴⁴ "Strict scrutiny is the most rigorous form of judicial review. The Supreme Court has identified the right to vote, the right to travel, and the right to privacy as fundamental rights worthy of protection by strict scrutiny."

Retrievable at:

<https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Strict+Scrutiny>

The Supreme Court concluded that "Milford's exclusion is indistinguishable from the exclusions at issue in *Lamb's Chapel* and *Rosenberger*" and that the Court already decided in these prior cases that this violates the Free Speech Clause and applies to Milford the same way.

"Milford has opened its limited public forum to activities that serve a variety of purposes, including events pertaining to the welfare of the community." Milford had asserted before the Second Circuit that it would have allowed a public group to use Aesop's fables to impart moral values to children. Milford also allowed the Boy Scouts to "influence a boy's character, development, and spiritual growth."⁴⁵

Likewise, the Good News Club sought to teach moral values to children, albeit from an explicitly Christian viewpoint. The Court held that there is no difference between the Christian movies in *Lamb's Chapel* and the teachings of the Good News Club. According to the court majority, Milford, just like *Lamb's Chapel* and *Rosenberger* engaged in viewpoint discrimination. Milford violated the Free Speech Clause by engaging in viewpoint discrimination when adding to their school policy that the "school premises shall not be used by any individual or organization for religious purposes."

The Christian Club was Allowed Back in School

Therefore the Christian Club was allowed back into Milford school. Students have been blessed for many years now by the club's teaching, and Darleen is still teaching the club to this day. The Club has made a tremendous difference in students' lives as they learn about Christian morals and love. They also help guide those young lives to get a good start early in life.

The Court also held that no Establishment Clause violation exists since the club has equal access to the school facilities with other groups. If the school stays neutral toward religion, it is not trying to establish religion in schools nor entangling itself with the church. The Court held that approving the Good News Club would not favor religion over any other group since the limited public forum had already opened the door to other groups.

The Supreme Court disagreed with the school's argument that the young students would consider the presence of a religious club as an endorsement by the school. The Court held that if it were so, then education would be the

⁴⁵ *Good News Club et al. v. Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98 (2001)

Retrievable at:

<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/533/98.html>

answer, not censorship and that schools should teach about the difference between voluntary and mandatory activities.

"Allowing the Club to speak on school grounds would ensure, not threaten, neutrality toward religion."⁴⁶ The court also held that if students would consider a religious club as an endorsement by the school, they would equally consider the denial of a religious club as an endorsement and infer that the school is hostile towards religion.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 11

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Who Will Rebuild The Wall?

Our adversity is an opportunity. As we view the tumbled walls of the moral structure in our society, we have a choice of throwing up our arms in despair or rolling up our sleeves to reach out and rebuild strong new walls founded on Christ the cornerstone.

Let's consider Nehemiah's example. He decided to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem which lay in ruin, but first, he had to be sensitive to the need and see the city from God's perspective. It's no wonder why he wept over the city when he heard of its decay. Nehemiah's heart for God and the city brought him to his knees, and later to action to restore God's vision for Jerusalem. His blueprints for rebuilding were God's heart and destiny for Jerusalem. God used Nehemiah to restore His holy city to holy use.

We must know and understand God's heart for students and our cities. He desires His godly character and destiny for both. We are called as the salt and the light to bring the solutions. We can bring God back into the public schools in our cities - and you can be the agent of change. Are you willing to help rebuild the wall? Sixteen federal agencies specifically call upon faith-based organizations to stand in the gap and bring solutions to our public schools and keep them safe. This is your hour to stand in the gap. Are you ready?

Make Your Life Count

All you need is a desire to reach out to all public school students. Consider just elementary school kids. They still want to be loved. This age group is spellbound hearing Bible stories. Elementary school children are old enough to behave in class and yet understand about God.

Every student should have the opportunity to hear about God's amazing love. The doors to public schools are open! This may be the greatest opportunity for fulfillment in your life while making eternal life impact on children!

It just takes
One person
One smile
One ear
One day to
Change the
Course of a
Student's life

Wisdom In Making Decisions

God promises to guide us in this venture! 1 John 5:14-15 states: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

We need to pray for divine favor. As we pray and listen to God, He will make a way, and He will provide the wisdom we need. If we ask Him what person of the administration to approach first, He will nudge us in the right direction, be it through an impression in our hearts, or through the conversation of a friend, or through reading the Bible.

"For the Lord grants wisdom! His every word is a treasure of knowledge and understanding. He grants good sense to the godly. He holds success in store for the upright; He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless." Proverbs 2:6-7

We can never lean on God too much or ask too many questions. He holds the ultimate wisdom, and He is so willing to share it with us. God is waiting for you to ask the questions that are on your heart—even specific questions like

what person shall I approach and when. You cannot go wrong in discussing things with God in prayer and run things by him. He will give you peace with one decision over the other.

It is especially rewarding if you have another friend or mother to join you in your prayer and planning. "Two have good reward for their labor." (Ecc.4:9)

It's wise to go with His guidance. Since I have an MBA, I have made this mistake many times in my past. I always think I know what to do. But when things don't work out, I often realize that I should have asked God because He has called me and holds the ultimate wisdom.

In Job 12:13 it says: "But the true wisdom and power are God's. He alone knows what we should do; He understands."

Proverbs 2:9–10 states: "He shows how to distinguish right from wrong, how to find the right decision every time. For wisdom and truth will enter the very center of your being, filling your life with joy." The brother of Jesus says it this way: "If any of you lacks wisdom, they should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to that person." James 1:5

I have often been astounded about King David always taking time to ask God. Many times, the enemy battalions were already approaching when David decided to stop and pray. To me, this seemed a simple decision— 'we need to defend ourselves.' But David was never presumptuous. No matter how urgent the situation or how easy this decision appeared, he stopped to pray, and God answered him every single time. Sure enough, sometimes he wasn't supposed to go and even defend his people. Other times God told him exactly to go this way and then that way. He gave him a whole strategic plan.

That's what God wants to do for you. He will give you wisdom if you ask Him. Here is how David looked at it: "I will bless the Lord who counsels me; He gives me wisdom in the night. He tells me what to do". Psalm 16:7

Don't Let Fear Talk You Out Of It

"Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

We need to embrace the winning attitude by knowing that God has already won the victory for us. His burden is light, and He will carry it for us. He is asking for a willing vessel, and He will do it through us.

Paul said: "Timothy, keep what has been entrusted to you" (1. Tim.6:20). Perhaps God is entrusting a certain school or specific students to you. Can you see your name instead of Timothy's in that verse? God most certainly has entrusted something to you. The question is what.

Leaders

You are reading this book for a reason. God led you to it and will enable you to stand in the gap for public school students. If God has called you, He will help you bring it about, but you still need the courage to get it started. God rewarded Joshua for seeing the possibilities, not the giants.

The Lord gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you." (Deut. 31:23)

With the overwhelming bad news we hear daily, it's easy to feel like we could never make a difference. But God loves those odds! He is thrilled with those who heed the call and will give you the courage, confidence and strategy you need.

You were born for such a time as this. What is your calling?

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16

FINAL WORDS

You have just read the first 50+ pages of 288 pages from:

Bring the Light to School: How You Can Empower Christian Students and Bring Hope to K-12

by Ingrid DeDecker

We hope you liked it. This book is available on Amazon, and wherever books are sold. We keep the cost low, in the hope that you will get the book and reach our kids in public schools with the love of God. The ebook is loanable. All you need is an email address of someone and you can loan out the ebook to them. It will return to you automatically in two weeks. If you purchase a paperback you will get the ebook for free.

We also would much appreciate a quick five star review on Amazon if you like the book. This will help spread the word.

We would love to have you join our facebook community at: “Partner with Schools” for updates and encouragement. Feel free to share your questions and challenges.

Be sure to check out our website for more Resources at:
Partnerwithschools.org

Thank you again for your interest in sharing the love of God with our students and for empowering our Christian students to stay strong in their faith.

Praise for *BRING THE LIGHT TO SCHOOL*

"*Bring the Light to School* is a well-researched and practically helpful guide for teachers, parents, pastors, youth workers, and anyone God is calling to impact our public schools—the most strategic mission field in our nation. This book will answer your questions, even the ones you didn't know you had!"

David Schmus
Executive Director
Christian Educators Association International ceai.org

"*Bring The Light to School* contains invaluable pragmatic advice on Christian student rights. It provides step by step instruction on how to start Christian clubs. Ingrid DeDecker answers the questions about Separation of Church and State as it relates to faith in schools and brings them to a place of clarity and implementation for everyone. In a world of increasing anxiety about the safety and social-emotional wellbeing of our students, this book offers a roadmap to addressing those concerns. It is chock full of legal facts we can use to make a difference instead of cowering under fear-based a much needed assumptions."

Linda McLaughlin
Elementary School Educator, ret.

"*Bring the Light to School* is a much needed book as to how Christian organizers can help Christian students activate Christian clubs to deepen their faith. Our public school heritage has roots with many Christian churches but calls for separation between church and state which led to key Supreme Court decisions such as *Engel v. Vitale* and *Abington School District v. Schempp*. These cases disallowed school prayer and scriptures and also centered about the role of religion in public schools. Since these decisions, many Christian organizers needed

guidance as to how best to assist students deepen their faith with other like-minded students while attending school. Ingrid DeDecker's book provides much needed guidance and addresses everything from Separation of Church and State to first amendment rights. This book is a must-read.

Dr. Patrick Rice
Author , *Vanishing School Boards*, former
teacher, principal and adjunct professor

“Ingrid DeDecker identified the most urgent need in our culture—reaching our children for Christ! In her new book, *Bring The Light To School*, she gives practical instructions for how to legally bring the gospel of Jesus to our kids and public schools. We can no longer sit on the sidelines lamenting the fact that God has been taken out of our schools; we now know how to take Him back in! Many thanks to Ingrid for her work in establishing clubs and her research into this need. I pray that Christians will use this information to reach schools in their neighborhoods and communities as well.”

Brenda Hedgepeth
Teacher at Brookhaven Academy

“Ingrid DeDecker knows how to connect our kids in public schools. Whether it's in elementary or high school. Her book *Bring the Light to School* is an excellent resource when God calls us to do something for our schools. It shows how to get into public schools and is full of stories and motivation. An excellent book for any parent, pastor, Christian leader or even student.”

Jamie Overholt
Senior Leader, Attwell Revival Center

“Bring the Light to School is a thoughtful, comprehensive, well-organized “how to” book to help people share the love of God with students by establishing Christian clubs in public school settings. The book clearly describes First Amendment and equal access rights of students to express their faith in schools as established in court cases. It shows how groups have successfully set up clubs to meet school regulations. It gives insight on how to include school goals such as character education and school curriculum in the club’s goals and how to meet public school concerns that schools steer clear of endorsing religion.”

“Ingrid DeDecker uses her considerable experience with schools and Christian clubs, as well as her research of many online resources to provide an outline of the considerations and steps needed to set up an effective Christian outreach for student in schools. From gathering volunteers and resources and first approaching the school principal, to providing documents and forms to help invite student and parent participation, to outlining schedules and logistics for setting up a club and conducting successful meetings, Ingrid has included many things that Christian clubs have learned over years of experience that will be useful and necessary for running a club. Detailed footnotes are included that document information for every school level. May the knowledge provided in Bring the Light to School, the love that Ingrid shows for school children and the love of God help you share with your community and make an eternal difference in many lives.”

Warren Hershberger,
Public School Teacher, ret.

“Be careful reading this book. It will cause you to believe you can help change a city! I now know how to get a club started that can really make a difference in kid’s lives. I was uneducated on First Amendment rights before volunteering with the Torch Club. Ingrid’s character education program teaches caring, honesty and responsibility in public schools. Also, having volunteered with the club, I was able to see just how much kids want to learn about God. It’s so cool to see how God

opens doors so His kids can learn about Him. Kids are our future! This book gives you everything you need to be empowered!”

Mara Broda
Former Torch Club Leader

“As a 43-year teacher veteran, I saw first-hand the importance of the material shared in this very inspiring book. Ingrid DeDecker shares with the reader numerous ideas of how they can implement the teaching of Christian morals, character, leadership and values to our public-school children of all ages, legally. She challenges us to get involved, stop making excuses, and start making a difference in the lives of our young people.

Ingrid answers every possible question that an interested inquirer could possibly have along with much of the needed paper work that will be required. I applaud this author for her insight and professionalism in producing this valuable information.”

Mary Thomas,
Math Teacher, ret., #1 Bestselling Author

“Our schools are facing huge challenges. Students are struggling with violence, low self-esteem, bullying and so much more. However, Ingrid Decker has provided a well developed manual for how churches and para church ministries can effectively reach out to their local schools. Her book, *Bring the Light to School*, shows you exactly what you need to know so that your church or ministry can bring hope to the lives of children. I have established a Christian club in two public schools with Ingrid’s information. I know that it works.”

Pastor Samuel Hampton II
The Faith Place, Akron, Ohio

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THE NEED

Please look at these statistics about our high schools from the Center for Disease Control⁴⁷ for 2021. During the last 12 months:

42% of high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness.

22% of students seriously considered attempting suicide

18% made an actual suicide plan

8% of students had been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.

16% of students had been electronically bullied in the past year.

15% were bullied at school in the past year

12% had ever misused prescription opioids

13% had ever used select illicit drugs

18% used electronic vapor products in the past 30 days

16% used marijuana in the past 30 days

23% drank alcohol in the past 30 days

⁴⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Atlanta, GA 30329-4027.

With this book, I hope for Christians to grasp this amazing opportunity to help our students bypass these terrible statistics. Starting a faith-based character education club or any Christian club will steer our kids toward more hope.

Here's the book to purchase on Amazon:

[Bring the Light to School: How You Can Empower Christian Students from K-12](#)