

OUR PHILOSOPHY ON SUNDAY MORNINGS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A LETTER FROM PASTOR CLAIRE

Our mission at Purpose Church is to help people – including students –connect with God (BIG), connect with others (SMALL), and connect others with God (SERVE).

The **BIG** is a necessary weekly encounter with God that also serves to help students over time know that Purpose Church is not just a place for their parents and grandparents, but it is their church as well. Their **SERVE** is equally important because for Jesus, serving was not an irregular voluntary experience, but a way of living. We want our students to begin regularly using their gifts and talents to serve their church. And their **SMALL** creates opportunities for students to be known and cared for on a consistent basis. We believe these three opportunities will give your student a better chance of owning their faith and connecting with the whole church in ways that last beyond their high school years.

INSIDE A HIGH SCHOOLER'S WORLD

I'm wondering...	My ultimate question is about my...	The focus is on...	My question is best answered by God's...	Experienced by students in their...
Who am I?	Identity	Me	Grace	BIG (some SMALL)
Where do I belong?	Belonging	Us	Love	SMALL and BIG
What's my purpose?	Purpose	Our world/church	Mission	SERVE

Because an essential question that high schoolers are exploring is about their purpose, on Sundays HSM worships with adults at one of our Main Services at Purpose (**BIG**), and serves (**SERVE**) in a ministry at Purpose. This has been our model since 2018. As your HSM Pastor, I want to work together with students and families as we help provide these experiences during your high school years.

Attached are some answers and thoughts to our Frequently Asked Questions about why we don't have a high school program for students during the main worship services on Sundays at Purpose Church.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SUNDAY MORNINGS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Why are Sunday's BIG and SERVE so important for my student?
2. If my high school student cannot attend Wednesday nights or I want something additional for them, is there a Life Group option on Sundays?
3. Why is it not an option to have Life Groups for students during one or all of the main services?
4. Is there an opportunity for increased Life Group time?
5. What if my student has not found a place to serve on Sundays?
6. Once my student has begun serving, how can we be sure they are being utilized and supervised?
7. What should we do if my high school student wants to invite a friend to church?
8. How will we engage a new high school student/family at Purpose Church?
9. Is this new model of students engaging in a BIG and SERVE on Sundays working?

1. Why are Sunday's BIG and SERVE so important for my student?

One of our primary goals with our Sunday model is to help high school students feel and know that they belong to the larger church and have a purpose within our church. When students are isolated from BIG and SERVE, it is easier for them to feel that Purpose Church is their parent's or grandparent's church, and their only place of belonging is within a high school ministry. This is not only dangerous for students (because when they graduate they feel no sense of belonging at Purpose Church outside of HSM), but it's dangerous for our adults as well. When a person is only connected to a church through one ministry, they miss out on the larger experience of worship and serving as a diverse and united church community.

We think the high school years, before students graduate and move on, are the best years to teach your students the benefit and joy that comes with being a part of a church through worship (and the conversations that follow at home and with friends) and serving (making an eternal impact and feeling ownership). We want to challenge families to actively use these high school years to instill a habit and commitment that will outlast their years in HSM. We also want to help families move from thinking of themselves as *spiritual chauffeurs* — whose primary job is to drop their students off at the right places — to become *spiritual leaders* who embrace the God-given and abundant influence you all have over your teen and their spiritual formation. You parents are our heroes and while this model has its challenges, the reward for all of us (the student, family and church) is over and above worth it. For that goal, we want to partner with you in the spiritual growth of your student through their SMALL, BIG, and SERVE.

2. If my high school student cannot attend Wednesday nights or I want something additional for them, is there a Life Group option on Sundays?

There is not a Life Group option on Sundays so that we do not conflict with our worship and serve model. If a student has Wednesday night conflicts, we highly recommend and encourage families to review their calendars and commitments to make sure there isn't any room to make adjustments so Life Groups can be a priority. What we offer on Wednesday nights is an amazing opportunity for students to be spiritually mentored, invested in, and disciplined through worship, teaching, and Life Groups. Our Life Group leaders make a four-year commitment to your students and show up weekly to invest in their lives, so you will also see them every Sunday as we worship together.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SUNDAY MORNINGS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

3. Why is it not an option to have Life Groups for students during one or all of the main services?

As we continue with the vision of seeing students engage in a BIG and SERVE on Sunday mornings, we are looking for ways to complement not compromise that vision. Since the majority of our students and families are either one or two service families, if we offered a SMALL on Sunday mornings during any of the services, the students who participate would not be able to both worship and serve. For the majority of students, a Life Group during one of the services is likely to replace their BIG or SERVE. We are excited to offer opportunities like Student Leadership for grades 10, 11, and 12 that meet during the school year after the last service because those would not compromise students having a BIG and SERVE.

4. Is there an opportunity for increased Life Group time?

Every Wednesday night at HSM, students experience worship, teaching, and Life Groups. We are going to continue to aim at ending worship, announcements, and teaching by 7:50pm so that Life Groups have 40+ minutes to read Scripture, share, and pray for one another... or in the terminology we use to train our leaders, their goal for each Life Group gathering is to foster an environment where students: **grow** (read Scripture and discuss), **know** (connect with each other), and **pray** (talk with God).

5. What if my student has not found a place to serve on Sundays?

We believe everyone is designed to serve--including students. Because we believe serving helps students own their faith and their role in the body of Christ, we are committed to helping your student find a place that works for them. There are two ways to get plugged into serving: 1: Fill out a printed Serve Card at HSM (on the back side of our Connect Card), or 2: Fill out the Serve Card via our online form: purposechurch.com/hmsserve. After your student fills this out, we will connect them with the Ministry Leader of the area they want to serve in.

We ask our parents to partner with us in making this experience successful. If your student no longer enjoys where they serve, we desire to get them plugged in somewhere they will enjoy. We will do everything we can to make that serve experience better and better. We think weekly serving creates ownership and buy-in that is essential for students as they build their faith. If it would be helpful, you can schedule a meeting with Pastor Claire to set up a great serving plan for your student.

6. Once my student has begun serving, how can we be sure they are being utilized and supervised?

Our HSM Team regularly checks in on and visits the ministry areas where high schoolers are serving — which is in every ministry on Sunday mornings! We do this because we want to make sure that SERVE opportunities are giving students genuine times to put their faith into practice on a regular basis while being supervised by Ministry Leaders. We hear countless stories from Ministry Leaders of how students are having an immense impact in many areas of our church! We have also begun an annual Serve Celebration in February where we hear from, celebrate, and encourage every HSM student who serves. At the Serve Celebration, students hear from fellow students who are serving in different areas, and encourage each other!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SUNDAY MORNINGS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

7. What should we do if my high school student wants to invite a friend to church?

One of our values at Purpose Church is “Found People Find People”. We have always been a place where friends are invited and meet Jesus! For a one-service family, the friend would sit in service with you all and enjoy the same experience together. A great opportunity is created in that moment, during the car ride home or a delicious meal, to process together what was impactful and life-changing about the service.

For a two-service family with a student who serves, we think it would be a huge opportunity for the friend to “observe” the serving student at work making a difference. There would be NO expectation for them to jump in and help or serve at that point--but this creates an opportunity for the friend to see what they could be a part of someday if they wanted. Then, either before or after the student’s SERVE, the family and friend would worship together. Our Ministry Leaders have committed to making an “Observing Culture” that is welcoming and helpful for your student’s friends to easily visit and observe. In fact, we have experienced many examples of friends who observed SERVE, and some of them plugged into serving themselves! Wednesday nights are a great opportunity for that new friend to get even more connected with a Life Group and experience the other benefits of HSM. Our hope is they would choose to connect there as well.

8. How will we engage a new high school student/family at Purpose Church?

When new families and high school students start to connect with Purpose Church by worshipping on Sundays, our Connect Center Team is trained to connect them with Pastor Claire. On Sundays, Pastor Claire is worshipping at one of the services or checking in on students who are serving, so she has the opportunity to meet these families, explain how Sundays and Wednesdays work and get them connected to other students, leaders, and a place to serve (when they’re ready) as quickly as possible.

9. Is this new model of students engaging in a BIG and SERVE on Sundays working?

Of all the questions, this feels like one of the the most important. The answer is YES! As of Spring 2023, we have over 55 HSM students serving every weekend at Purpose Church. In fact, almost every ministry at every Sunday Service has an HSM student serving, which means you cannot go far at all on Sundays without experiencing God using an HSM student to make an impact.

The stories of how God has used and is continuing to use BIG and SERVE on Sundays are so encouraging. We heard from one mom who shared that dinner conversations with her teenage son have radically changed. He is quick to mention how serving has caused him to think deeper about his faith and purpose. Our Ministry Leaders share that without HSM students serving in their area of ministry, they would not be able to effectively run their ministries. Another Ministry Leader said an adult volunteer shared how impressed he was by the consistency, commitment and maturity of the HSM students who serve in Guest Services. One student has shared, “I love working with all the kids and enjoy watching them learn more about God. My favorite part is just building a connection with these kids and talking and just seeing them talk about Him and His greatness. I love waking up on Sundays knowing I am going to make a difference.”

TESTIMONIES AND RESOURCES FOR THIS MODEL

- Ben (dad) and Hylke (Youth Pastor) talking about their church making a similar transition: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z5OedEJVf4SGiO2KvPmzApWOLAYtNhm/view?usp=sharing>
- Jake Walker (Youth Pastor) sharing about growing up in a church with our model and now leading at that church: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z7sbDMeuHOKYxf412UrJy2TFV4YUfxeB/view?usp=sharing>
- Article about youth ministries that help students stick to their faith after high school graduation: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cZHV0xXoFXyB9mfT_GKIFhtx4HIY4Apf/view?usp=share_link

I love you families so very much and consider it an honor to partner with you and your students. I appreciate greatly your willingness to process and think about how your Sunday mornings look as a family by supporting and encouraging your student to participate in a **BIG** service, Wednesday night's **SMALL**, and a weekly **SERVE** somewhere on campus.

Again, we believe the three opportunities for **BIG**, **SMALL**, and **SERVE** will help your student own their faith and connect with the whole church in ways that last beyond their high school years.

Please feel free to contact me directly if there are ways we can better help your family personally with this strategy.

Thank you so much for reading this. I'm here for you and love partnering with you!

Grateful for each of you,

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