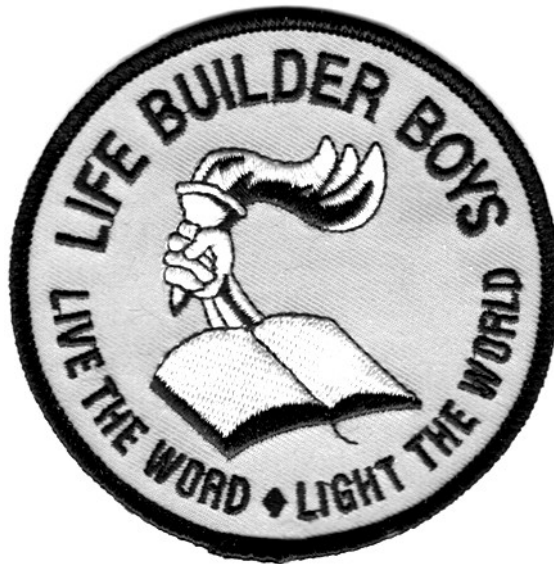
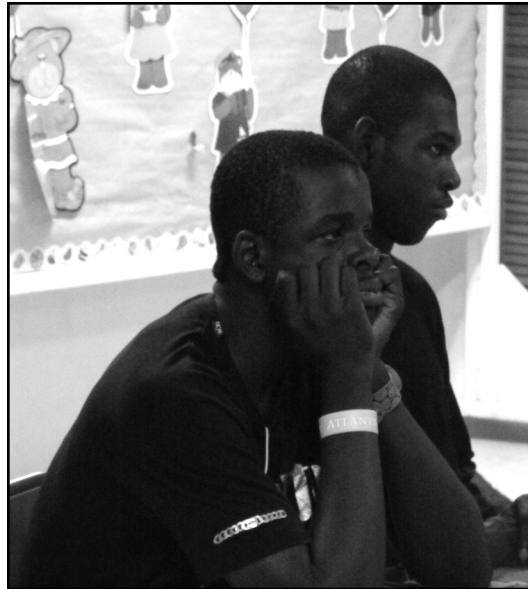


The Journey of Boyhood

Meeting The Needs Of All Our Boys



Guiding boys from Calvary to Christian service

A boy's life is an adventure full of challenge, discovery, rewards, and disappointments. Every boy needs the Lord as his travelling companion. But he also needs to have 'guides' who know the 'trail', equipped to assist in special circumstances, doing so using wit and wisdom to help him enjoy his journey. This is the job of adult leaders in Life Builder Boys!

Boys have a job as well: to acquire the skills, patience, and confidence to take on those challenges, to make discoveries, appreciate rewards, and learn from disappointments. Many tasks will often seem harder for them than for us because for them many experiences are first time ones! Here is where the ministry of Life Builder Boys helps to make sense of these things, and provides skills to deal with them, enabling young men to grow toward maturity and achievement. As a leader in this program it will be important for you to know your boys: the characteristics of their age group and the circumstances of their personal lives. The following notes will assist you in this. And, perhaps, help you to learn a little about yourself as well!

THE NEEDS OF ALL BOYS Physical & Social

ACCEPTANCE. Often a boy's sense of self-worth is dependent on feeling worth something - to his family, and to his peers in school and community. Of course, in Christ, we have great position and value. But, until these young men come to your ministry and learn from experience with you who they really are (and can become) they will need to feel welcome, receive mutual respect, and enjoy opportunities to participate on an equal field.. A place they can belong to, where being themselves is fine for now (though we know full well that the Lord has more in mind for them!!)

ACTION. Boys of all ages (that includes us leaders) need to release energy and anxiety by being challenged in ways that improve this ever developing mind and body. Such an urge can often be the source of disciplinary problems at home, school, or church! A boy's body is a dynamo – a power plant that keeps producing, whether for good or not. Focusing that energy into something positive and productive is one of the benefits of Life Builder Boys! Most rewarding is knowing that each boy can do his best without the intimidation often felt in competitive activities (such as sports.) This is a Christian ministry, where the emphasis is on being 'our part' of the Body of Christ [see Eph 4:16]. We each have our role to play, our contribution to make. The only comparison to be made is whether we are doing our own 'personal best' or not.

ACHIEVEMENT. Learning is an important part of life. It answers questions, resolves conflicts, and builds character. However, just acquiring knowledge is an incomplete process. One needs to be able to demonstrate a new skill as its result, and receive recognition (awards) for such, for the experience to be complete. This is an important strength of the Life Builder Boys program - that boys receive supportive and tangible honors as they move upward in their accomplishments.

THE NEEDS OF ALL BOYS Spiritual & Emotional

FRIENDSHIP. So much of our sense of self-worth is dependent on the opinions of others. This is why many of today's youth are at great risk. A dog-eat-dog world greets them every day, including friends or classmates who appear to offer friendship but are more apt to hurt than to help due to their own struggles. Some adults may think this an unnecessary concern but this is not the world we adults grew up in. Of course our times had their trials, but take it from this writer – we should be glad those days are behind us. For the boys who come to us their days have just begun! They need men willing to “bear...one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” [Gal 6:2], who know that “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” [John 15:13] Care and commitment – things harder to find in this current world – are that which will draw young men to you, Life Builder Boys, your church, and ultimately to the Lord.

FAITH. What we are to believe is stated in God's word but is demonstrated in His people's works!! Boys need faith: not the kind just talked about, but that which is lived and proven before them (hard to do just on a church pew or in a Sunday school room!) Faith must show itself in challenges faced and good deeds done. “Faith without works is dead...” [James 2:26] Not that you don't have it, just that others can't see it. The shortest distance to a boy's heart and soul is across a ‘field’ of experiences where men and boy leaders can demonstrate God's word in action and where Biblical principles are practiced in ‘real life’ applications. What one sees always goes farther than what one just hears, and that especially applies to young boys (“...I will show thee my faith by my works.” - James 2:18)



FELLOWSHIP. Upon planting churches all around the Gentile world, the Apostle Paul stressed that it was necessary to not only teach right faith, but also encourage right fellowship. It is not just where time is spent but with whom it is spent which makes all the difference in a young, growing Christian life. Paul's counsel to the Ephesian church, though hard-hitting, is appropriate here (please read Eph 5:7-16.) Risks should not be taken in a world spiraling downward. This is why the ‘new-born church’ of Acts 2 drew together and grew together (v. 41-47). The very same will happen in your boy's ministry when you arrange a quality place to meet, and prepare a quality program for your meetings!!

THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL BOYS

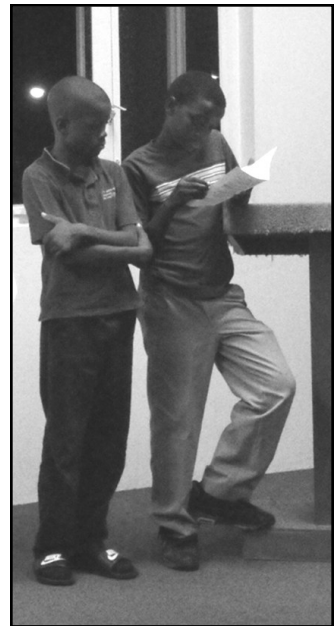
SINGLE PARENT HOMES. Increasingly, boys are having to grow up in a single-parent home (more often with a mother or grandparent than a father.) For this reason their need of strong, male role models should draw them to Life Builder Boys. But it may also create situations of misunderstanding and resentment by a man's approach to and handling of things. Men in leadership can often seem harsh or uncaring. Being aware of this may help prevent some conflicts from occurring. More importantly, it can aid in restoring peace when tensions arise. It is not a young man's 'fault' (to be who he is, where he is) as he comes to your care. But it can become your fault if he is hurt (or lost) as a result of any over-bearing, insensitive behavior on your part!!

It is the primary goal of Life Builder Boys to introduce young men to Godly manhood and to meet the man Jesus Christ! As role-models, we must strengthen their appreciation of what it means to be men of God. The following suggestions will go far in establishing a relationship of mutual respect and nurturing interaction, well worth any special efforts on your part:

BUILD ON POSITIVES. Boys in single-adult homes often have more responsibilities (though less hostilities among family members once the source of conflict has left), and acquired skills for chores once belonging to the absent adult. Recognize these positives and show respect to the remaining parent who has to carry 'double duties' in the care of your young crew member.

BE AVAILABLE TO TALK. Keep communication open with this boy, especially on what he likes or dislikes about his 'unique home situation' - your choice of words are important here. Commend him where possible on what he does, something that may be missing in his family life.

BEFRIEND HIM IN A MEANINGFUL WAY. Leaders in boy's ministries must endeavor to 'share' themselves equally with all those in their charge. But you will find that boys in single parent homes may need an extra measure of 'validation', that who they are and who they can become is just as important to you as with any other boy in your group. Remember, you being a big brother or substitute father is not measured by quantity of time, but by quality of caring. Let them know you care!



BOYS WITH DISABILITIES. It should always be your desire to do whatever you can to provide a quality, spiritual experience for every boy who comes your way. Most times this is possible – sometimes it may not be. Boys with physical, emotional, or intellectual disabilities may or may not fit in with you. Make your best efforts, know your limitations, and let the Lord bring together that which serves His will. Do avoid being too cautious or making a fuss over a disadvantaged boy, or causing him to feel alienated from the rest. Have high expectations and you will be pleased to see him give you his best efforts. Make provisions for accommodating special need boys (wheel chair ramps, leaders dedicated to helping them individually, etc.) and you will be blessed by how the Lord will entrust them to your care!

BOYS WITH BEHAVIORAL ISSUES There are a variety of reasons that some boys misbehave. Sometimes it is a misunderstanding of rules or expectations. Sometimes it is the result of a temporary distraction, or even a medical issue where he just doesn't 'feel well'. Intimidation and taunting by peers may draw him into something he later regrets. All boys will misbehave – sometimes. Our concern here is with the boy who seems to misbehave as an incessant pattern (as though it is all he knows – and perhaps that is the case.) Every boy needs to be given the benefit of the doubt, a second chance, to see where your patient correction and prayer will lead him.

Yet, there may be times when boys will come into your ministry who lack self-control, respect of others, or the temperament (behavioral ability) to conform to the very least of your expectations. They grab your heart as souls in trouble, but may well be out of the reach of your concern and care. The results are often resources (man-power and man-hours) consumed by such unruly few while the rest of your boys are deprived of the ministry attention they deserve. You may think this point being made is an insensitive, calloused attitude, but it is a matter of fairness: it is not fair to deprive all the others what they deserve just because one (or a few) want all the attention for themselves!!

Follow these important guidelines:

- Ensure that your expectations (rules) are clearly understood.
- Take offenders aside to deal with so they are not just bringing attention to themselves.
- Speak plainly and precisely about the consequences of continued misbehavior.
- Determine if any further action is necessary (speak to parent, speak to pastor?)
- If the child responds - forgive (if the response appears appropriate.)

Remember, even God does not forgive until one repents, and repentance is both a change of heart and a change of behavior. It is difficult, but please accept this inevitable truth: there will come times when all evidence clearly confirms that a certain boy (or boys) should not be a part of your Life Builder Boys program. If you have done your best, it will be they who have made that decision. Though hard to do - you must remove them from your program!

The Journey of Boyhood

The Life Builder Boys' program is intended to serve the needs of all boys, but also recognizes that those needs vary through their stages of development (from K-12th grade) and that objectives and methods must be adjusted accordingly. What is fun and productive learning for one age may be tedious or boring to another. It may be that an LBB site will be small in number of boys and manpower, and that boys of all ages will be working together at the same time on the same things. This is challenging but not impossible. You as leader need to always observe whether every boy is being fulfilled in their experience.

As well, every care should be taken to place adult leadership with the right age group so that interests and abilities are as well-matched as possible. In a short-handed church (where volunteers are 'whoever-is-available') this may turn out less than perfect. But remember: prayer changes things - people as well as circumstances. And, it has happened more than a few times that someone 'less qualified' becomes passionate about the program and their boys, and a kind of metamorphosis takes place. The one who was thought 'might not make it' ends up outshining the rest! Still, in as much as possible, boys should be grouped with appropriate adult counterparts, giving as much careful attention to the men as to the boys they will be with.

Study the information provided on the chart that follows (next page) for insight into the interests and skills that may be expected from most boys in their respective age groups. But always consider that life circumstances and character traits may enable some boys to excel while others struggle to keep up. Your kind and considerate heart will help all your crew members to have a successful "Journey of Boyhood"!!



Age 5-7

Age 8-11

Age 12-14

P H Y S I C A L S O C I A L E M O T I O N A L S P I R I T U A L	Boys are energetic, not knowing when to slow down, but do tire easily. They need to run, jump, kick - activities demanded by developing muscles. They get frustrated working with some projects as their hand/eye coordination does not work well together. Slow, careful projects (well supervised) will build skill and patience.	More robust and self-assured, they enjoy organized games with rules. Can work with tools due to better hand/eye coordination and willing to learn more skills. However, some boys may seem clumsier or weaker, in need of encouragement. Avoid situations where comparisons are made, embarrassing some.	Growth spurt may cause an awkward clumsiness, though physical strength and motor skills do increase. Male identity traits become more noticeable. However, changes are not consistent and those who may be "late bloomers" need to feel they still fit in with the rest. Avoid letting bigger, older boys "show off" to their smaller companions
	Friendships expand as the new school year begins. He enjoys being a center of attention. Name calling is a method of defense. May choose to 'dish it out' rather than 'take it'. May idolize an older brother or another boy, but also rivalries may occur. But note, too, if some seem 'outsiders' with no one on 'their side'.	Compares own strengths and weaknesses with others. A best friend becomes more important, so too being part of a group (gang), often imitating the behavior of others. May take a stand for what is perceived 'right', and prone to own private thoughts which may make him seem distant.	Peer pressure exerts more influence, and 'rejection' by his 'group' causes more hurt, often driving him to try to be someone he is not. Criticism of his parents and other authorities may be common. Displays of immature or selfish behavior possible. Thrives on having responsibilities and enjoys recognition for it.
	Needs approval and acceptance, not criticism! Can get discouraged easily. Temper may flare. Wants to do things himself but will avoid new or difficult situations. Needs to feel secure and will benefit from firm adult leadership and your approval by kind praises for his successes.	Will compare himself with those around him but feels more adult-like. He enjoys games that are competitive but may not handle intense competition. Winning can be too important, losing a 'total failure'. May try to be a perfectionist or overly critical of himself. Help him to improve but also praise him!	Self image affected by the rate of his physical growth. Can be moody, up and down in the same hour. Needs sense of his own identity. Seeks more independence. May be more mature than his youthful looks, but can also be very childish at times. Be flexible in your expectations and let him set his own goals.
	Will be curious about God and finds stories about the power of God fascinating. May have many questions and genuine interests. Can be ready to receive Jesus into his heart (though each child arrives at such a point in their own time!!) Watch for signs of their interest, especially as you lead prayer during your meetings.	Understands the seriousness of sin, but does not always see it in his own life. Does have a keen sense of justice which helps him take responsibility for his own wrong doing. This opens the door to repentance and should be suggested often by you. New reading skills lets him read for himself truths in the Bible.	Deeper spiritual truths are now open to him but he will also require more 'proof' of Biblical claims. Encourage discussion but avoid arguing (never make it seem you are 'putting him in his place.') He will listen and is more apt to follow your example in worship and Christian service.

Age 15-18

PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	EMOTIONAL	SPIRITUAL
Physical changes are nearly complete, but watch for some boys teasing those 'trailing behind'. Avoid any physical activities where boys of unequal strength and development might bring attention to their varied growing progress. Remember, referring to these fellows as "men" is helpful, and you should expect a more "adult" behavior.	Still confides within his group of friends, though may be moving away from their influence. Interest in girls increasing and will need guidelines to follow. Career and education choices should be discussed. Stress that prayer about God's will is important to find their place in the world. They need to feel their life will make a difference!	Usually a more even disposition though feelings can be strong. Earlier hurts may still bother him, though they may have been repressed making your task challenging at times. A full or part-time job may give him a feeling of greater worth. He needs patience and space, to be and to do for himself though your input can be very helpful.	Now he thinks more deeply on spiritual things and has some of his own ideas. He may also be more apt to criticize what he perceives as 'hypocrisies in the church' or in your boy's program. Be patient (2Tim 2:24) and let him explore his own feelings and own faith with your careful leading.