



# CORE FOUNDATIONS STARTER KIT

Everything you need to know to provide *Core Foundations Courses* using the released time religious education model.



DESIGNED WITH INNOVATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES TO FOSTER 21ST CENTURY LEADERS

EMPOWERS STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION

STUDENTS UNCOVER AN INTEGRATED, HOLISTIC SPIRITUAL LIFE

CREATIVE MATERIALS THAT STUDENTS WILL BE PROUD TO CARRY

THEOLOGICALLY RICH, YET PRACTICAL AND ACCESSIBLE

EQUIPS STUDENTS TO IMPACT EVERY CHANNEL OF CULTURE

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## PREFACE

Research shows that to the emerging generation Christians are best known for what they are against. They are perceived as being judgmental, anti-homosexual, and too political. This generation is quick to point out their belief that *Christianity is no longer as Jesus intended*. It is unChristian.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity has an image problem. Teenagers don't see the real Christianity that Jesus introduced to the world. Instead, they see a religion that is, in many ways, antithetical to the faith Jesus described. Christians must acknowledge this reality, because if we don't, this generation will reject Jesus. We must do something to show this generation the beauty, the love, the grace, and the transformative power that Jesus brought into our world. But what can we do?

I am convinced that providing *Core Foundations Courses (CFCs)* using the released time religious education model is one of the best avenues in which to do this. CFC programs provide a unique opportunity for reaching this generation where they are - at school. CFC teachers have the opportunity to spend an entire school year (5 days a week, 180 days a year) exposing high school students to a holistic view of Christianity - a Christianity that is true to the gospel message of Jesus, the teachings of the New Testament, and has been lived out by Christians for thousands of years, NOT the Christianity most of these students perceive. Not a simplistic, judgmental, and hateful religion, but a holistic way of knowing and loving God and loving our fellow humans.

Core Foundations has been a pioneer in the work of released time ministries in the metro Atlanta area since 2004, and this resource you are reading is a product of the hands-on experiences that have made us an authority in how to create and run successful CFC programs. Through the successful implementation of the plans found in this Starter Kit, you will see students not only become committed followers of Christ, but also change the negative perception others have of Christians by the way they live their lives in front of their peers. You can initiate the transformation of teenagers into influencers who will leave high school with a desire to make the world the kind of place God desires for it to be.

Everett Bracken,  
Executive Director, Core Foundations

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<sup>1</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Thinks About Christianity...And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007) Taken from cover flap.

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# INTRODUCTION

## **What is the purpose of The Starter Kit?**

This resource is a blueprint to help you create successful *Core Foundations Courses*. Following our tried and true methods, you will make the kind of impact on high school students that you have dreamed of. There are very few ministry opportunities with the potential for impact that *Core Foundations Courses* provides, and these materials are your keys to making it happen.

## **Who is The Starter Kit for?**

The primary target for this Starter Kit is a local church or non-profit organization with a vision for having a deep and lasting impact on the students in their local public high school. While most of the successful programs are primarily supported by a single local church, others (such as a network of churches and non-profit ministries) have also used the concepts in this book to build thriving released time programs.

## **How will The Starter Kit help you?**

The resource you hold in your hands (or view on a screen) will enable you to realize the dream of providing daily, for-credit, off-campus *Core Foundations Courses* for your local public high school students.

This Starter Kit will:

1. Help you understand the history of the model and how you can legally operate this program.
2. Assist you to get approval from your local school.
3. Provide a way for students to receive credit for completing courses.
4. Give ideas and tools to recruit students.
5. Provide a process for finding the ideal teacher.
6. Explain the resources you will need to run the program and the most efficient ways to raise the funds.
7. Organize the operation of the program for optimal success.
8. Construct a program that will be built to last.

Ready to start providing your own *Core Foundations Courses*? If you're not convinced yet, Jane wants you to hear her story.

## JANE'S STORY



**I grew up knowing that there was a God, but I knew almost nothing about Him.** While I understood the most basic truth—that God loves me—“Jesus,” “sin,” and “the cross” meant nothing to me at all. In this way, I was the all-too-common product of a divided home. My mother was a devoted Christian, but my father was skeptical at best. To make matters worse, the church my mother took me and my sisters to did not help very much. I could never understand what anyone there was talking about, and there was no one I could share my questions with—no one with the time to answer. This is not to say, however, that my mother did not try to help me along a path toward God, but between her full-time job and taking care of three girls, there was simply no time for her to talk with me the way I wanted and needed her to. Like most teenagers then, I struggled to find myself, but the harder I searched for acceptance, identity, and purpose, the more lost I became. Throughout all of my searching, I never forgot that God loved me, but I felt separated from Him, wandering through my childhood and early teenage years until my sophomore year, when God bridged the gap between my heart and His through the *Core Foundations Courses*. I would never be the same.

It was registration day at school when I first saw the *Core Foundations Courses* sign. Questions like “Do you want to know more about God?” and “Do you want to learn more about the Bible?” instantly drew my attention. Those were my questions. They resonated with a longing in me for God that I could not explain at the time. After a few minutes of talking with the representative at the table, I made up my mind, and I signed up for the class on the spot. I will never forget how we started the first day of class with prayer—a routine I would come to cherish. For the two years I took the class, I always felt comforted by the morning prayers—like my days could not go wrong whenever we prayed. Beyond that, I always looked forward to being around the *Core Foundations Courses* teachers and students. They all brought a peace with them that I wanted, and, perhaps most importantly, they were always kind to me. Everyday someone would ask how I was doing. One student even invited me to dinner and a Bible study hosted by her family, and another student (now my fiancé) invited me to hang out with his friends and come to his church. It was through this *Core Foundations Courses* connection that I came to the Lord at the age of fifteen. After that, I redoubled my efforts in the class, trying to soak up everything there was to learn about both the Old and New Testament. Everything was broken down so well, I honestly do not know how I could have learned the material anywhere else. To this day, I am still able to call the staff that was once a part of *Core Foundations Courses* my mentors. They were always available. They were willing to meet out-of-class to answer my questions (a small group of us met at a coffee shop once a week), and they even stuck with me after the class was over. Today, I know I can still call them for help and advice.

I want to help spread the ministry that God used to change my life. To that end, I believe that this class could and should reach more students while continuing to impact each student on a deeply personal level. For some, like me, it might be life changing. For others, it might fortify an already existent faith, but in both cases, what this organization does is about more than just teaching students, it's a calling to change lives forever. I want to be a part of that, giving to others what I have freely received through this ministry. It has my heart.



# HISTORY OF RELEASED TIME RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**Released Time has been around for over 100 years.** The idea of Released Time in the United States was first discussed in 1905 at a Sunday School Conference in New York City. The proposal was that public elementary schools should be closed one day a week in addition to Sunday in order for parents, if they so desired, to have their children given religious instruction outside of the school building. However, it didn't really happen until 1914. That year, Dr. William Wirt, superintendent of the Gary, Indiana schools, established a program in which 619 students participated in off-campus religious education. Dr. Wirt believed that the church, home, playground, library, and school were all components in a child's education. **The Released Time programs were held on church property. The public school had no responsibility for teachers, curriculum, conduct, or achievement within the Released Time classes.**

Released Time grew and flourished. By 1932, thirty states had active Released Time programs in 400 communities with enrollment of 250,000 students. **Released Time peaked in 1947 with 2 million students enrolled in 2,200 communities.** During this time, favorable Released Time legislation was adopted by 12 states. **However, despite the fact that school officials were urged not to allow religious education classes on school property, this caution was not heeded.**

By 1947 over 40% of all Released Time classes were held in public school classrooms. An Illinois program was challenged in 1945, and in 1948 the United States Supreme Court held that it was unconstitutional because it used the state compulsory education system to aid in the teaching of religious doctrine and because tax supported school buildings were being used. Six denominations responded by passing resolutions in support of Released Time. However, in the aftermath of the Court's decision the number of Released Time programs dropped by twelve percent across the nation.

**In 1952 a New York Released Time program was challenged.** The state court upheld the program and the decision was appealed to the United States Supreme Court. **In the landmark *Zorach v. Clauson* case (1952), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Released Time. The stipulation was that the program had to be off of public property and could use no public money for support.**

Since that time Released Time programs have once again begun to blossom across the nation, even if the concept is yet to be widely known. Programs can be found for all grade levels, and the times of meeting can vary from daily to monthly. State and national organizations are springing up to not only publicize the concept but to encourage the correct and legal function of Released Time programs. As Justice Douglas said in the *Zorach* case: *"When the State encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it then follows the best of our traditions, for it then respects the religious nature of our people and accommodates the public services to their spiritual need."*



# KEYS TO SUCCESS

Before you dive into the nuts and bolts of this Starter Kit, let's take a look at the keys to success which will ensure successful *Core Foundations Courses*.

## **Keep It Legal**

Released time ministries are on solid legal ground, as long as three conditions are met:

1. The classes are held off-campus.
2. Parents sign a permission form. (See sample in the Resources section on page \_\_)
3. The program uses no school funds or other resources (school teachers, buses, classroom space, etc).

## **Clarify Your Vision**

What specifically do you want the outcome of this program to be? Evangelism? Discipleship? This Starter Kit does not answer this question for you, but experience shows that recruiting and accepting students who know what the class is about and really want to be in it, regardless of current beliefs, is a key component for having a successful class experience.

## **Select A Good Leader**

A capable and committed person must lead this effort, and while that person may have other people assisting, he/she must accept that the responsibility rests in his/her lap. One person has to be responsible for ensuring that the program succeeds.

## **Don't Settle for a Mediocre Teacher**

NOTHING is more important to a successful program than having the right teacher. The teacher will model what it means to follow Jesus in every area of life. This person must be able to interact well with students, be a good communicator and be able to manage a class of students. It takes a special person to do these three things well.

## **Be Prepared Before You Present**

Don't rush ahead and talk to school leadership until you're well-prepared. School leadership is, understandably, cautious about anything involving religion in their school. Don't assume they are familiar with released time religious education or *Core Foundations Courses*. Once school officials have become well-informed about the program, then their fears will be relieved. However, saying the wrong thing to the right person can kill the project before it gets started. Once the Preparation Checklist on page \_\_ is complete, then it will be time to move forward.

## **Support the School**

Make sure that the school knows that you are on their team, not an enemy trying to subvert their mission. Show how this program actually supports the mission of the school. We are in this together for the good of the students; we are just providing a service to the students that the school is not in a position to provide.

# COURSE SUMMARIES

## ***New Testament Survey***

Investigate the life and message of Jesus of Nazareth. Who was this influential Middle Eastern man in which the world's largest religion is based upon? Why do so many people follow his teachings? How did Christianity get started? What does the Bible teach and is it relevant to our lives today?

The New Testament Survey course guides students through a study of the Gospels in order to find out who Jesus is, what he taught, and what he did. The course then takes a survey approach to the rest of the writings of the New Testament so that students are familiar with the authors, letters and context of the New Testament period.

## ***Stories from the Old Testament***

Betrayal, abuse, love, forgiveness, and more are the themes found in the stories of the Old Testament. Intriguing story lines, but also lessons for us to learn for our lives today. Students will explore the over-arching 4-part story of the Bible including God and Creation, the Fall of Humanity, the History of God's People, and Ultimate Redemption - as well as the practical life lessons these ancient writings provide.

## ***Live Fully***

Students will learn how Christian faith impacts every area of life and human culture. The Live Fully course is the integration of three concentrations: worldview, identity, and calling. As a result of the course, students will have gained confidence and clarity to live as the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" in this complex, changing world.

## ***Blueprints***

Students are stressed out by the workload of school and the pressures to succeed. There is often a lack of clarity for why they are even sitting in the classroom in the first place. The Blueprints curriculum aims to give purpose to students' lives in the present while also casting a hopeful but realistic vision for their future.

## ***Comparative Religions***

This study offers students the opportunity to compare the Christian faith with other religions of the world. The study leads students through an evaluation of Christianity first, then proceeds to engage students with the beliefs and practices of other religions. The 6 areas of study for each religion are:

1. Historical Background
2. Authority/Sacred Texts
3. Major Beliefs (and common misconceptions)
4. Major Practices
5. Appeal
6. Comparison

# CFC TEACHER

## IMPORTANCE

The importance of the teacher for the success of your program can't be overstated. Your teacher will make or break the program. No curriculum, regardless of how great it is, can make up for a poor teacher. Don't settle for someone who is merely available to teach; instead, seek after an amazing teacher.

## DESCRIPTION

CFC teachers do NOT need to be state certified to teach our courses, but they must have a Bachelor's degree and enough formal or non-formal training to qualify them to teach our course material.

The Ideal CFC Teacher is known by the following characteristics:

Personality and Character	Spirituality	Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> pleasant disposition</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> relational</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> playful</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> caring</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> person of integrity</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> patient</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> forgiving</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> easy to get along with</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> intelligent</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> secure</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> teachable</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> accepts authority</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> works hard</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> characterized by love</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> the fruit of the Spirit can clearly be observed</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> identifies as a follower of Jesus</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> active participant in a local church community</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> knowledgeable about material</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> communicates well</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> understands how to use his/her leverage to influence others</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> understands different learning styles</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> knows when to be playful and when to be firm</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> keeps students engaged</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> flexible</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> easy to get along with</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> team player</li></ul>

## EXPECTATIONS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invest 10-12 hours per week.</li><li>• Respect and genuinely care for each and every student.</li><li>• Build relationships with students during and after class.</li><li>• Maintain appropriate teacher/student relationship.</li><li>• Provide a warm, loving and safe classroom environment.</li><li>• Make this the best class your students have ever had.</li><li>• Learn best practices for teaching.</li><li>• Teach curriculum with excellence.</li><li>• Be prepared for class each day.</li><li>• Arrive early.</li><li>• Find a sub when you can't be there from the approved sub pool.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use all available resources to enhance student's learning.</li><li>• Cooperate with school by promptly turning in required forms, grades, attendance, etc.</li><li>• Maintain a class structure and discipline appropriate for the learning environment.</li><li>• Collect and grade student work in a timely manner.</li><li>• Attend Core Foundations' training events.</li><li>• Communicate any problems, concerns or needs immediately.</li><li>• Write a monthly update about the class that will be sent to email list.</li><li>• Represent the CFC in the community.</li><li>• Embrace your role as the "face" of the CFC.</li></ul>
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## TRAINING, SUPPORTING AND EVALUATING

Teachers will be required to attend **two training sessions** - one in July before the school year starts, and the other in January as the second semester gets underway. The training is very important because most of our teachers have very little formal training in classroom management. The training covers topics such as how to motivate students, managing different types of students, learning styles, creative teaching methods and student discipline.

Teachers can always find **support** and help from Core Foundations by texting or calling 770-316-4679 or emailing [everett@corefoundations.org](mailto:everett@corefoundations.org).

A Core Foundations representative will **visit a class two times per semester** to observe how things are going and offer suggestions if needed. At the end of each semester Core Foundations will provide an official evaluation which will include:

- Student evaluations of class and teacher
- Teacher course and self evaluation
- Core Foundations staff evaluation of teacher

# SELECTION

Having considered the importance of selecting the right teacher and knowing the kind of teacher you're looking for, it is now time to find the right person by following the process below.

Finding someone from within your network is the best way to select the right teacher. As you read the characteristics and expectations listed above, a likely candidate may have already popped into your head! But if you don't have anyone in mind yet, don't worry. It is very likely that your teacher is either someone you already know or someone that someone you know already knows.

1. **Brainstorm.** Who are some people who might fit what you are looking for? Think about some of the following types of people:
  - Church staff like youth, children, associate or senior pastors, etc.
  - Para-church ministries like Young Life, FCA, etc.
  - Local missionaries
  - People with flexible schedules like stay-at-home parents, business owners, etc.

People often recommend retired teachers. That may be a good option, just make sure they are a good fit before getting too excited.

2. **Ask well-connected people for suggestions.** There are several people in your community who "know everyone." Share the teacher DESCRIPTION and EXPECTATIONS with them and see who they can come up with.
3. **Contact local churches.** Call and talk to the church secretary - he/she probably knows better than anyone else who might be a good fit from within their church. Share the teacher DESCRIPTION and EXPECTATIONS with them and see who he/she can come up with.
4. **Contact (Recruit) potential teachers.** Once you have identified some potential teachers, have them go to [www.corefoundations.org/teachers.html](http://www.corefoundations.org/teachers.html). From there they can begin the Approval Process below.
5. **5 Step Approval Process**
  - 1) Complete the [Teacher Questionnaire](http://www.corefoundations.org/teachers.html) ([www.corefoundations.org/teachers.html](http://www.corefoundations.org/teachers.html)) and this [Temperament Survey](http://www.16personalities.com) ([www.16personalities.com](http://www.16personalities.com))
  - 2) Observe a class
  - 3) Official interview
  - 4) Guest teach a class
  - 5) Pass Background Check
6. **Teacher is hired!** The most critical matter is now settled.

## PUBLICIZING THE CLASS

Know that your biggest source of publicity and recruiting are students. Utilize students in as many ways as you can. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Create a Flyer** (see page \_\_\_ for a sample).
- **Personally recruit a few students** to sign up then have them help spread the word
  - Perhaps you could give the students some incentives/rewards like if a student gets 5 students to sign up they receive a \$25 gift card or a free dinner at a cool place.
- **Current students spread the word.** Give them a vision of how they could help other students learn about Jesus and have an impact in their school.
- **Social Media.** Have students share info about the class on their social media accounts - especially Snapchat and Instagram. You (or a student volunteer) can easily create a shareable graphic with Canva (<https://www.canva.com>). You could also create social media accounts for your program and have students follow and share your posts.
- **Facebook Page.** While most high school students don't use Facebook, their parents and leaders do. Use Facebook to inform adults about the class and ask them to share with students.
- **Website.** Create a page specifically for recruiting and registering students. Many program use Weebly (<https://www.weebly.com>). Check out this site for an example - <http://www.parkviewclc.com>
- **T-Shirts.** We have used CustomInk (<https://www.customink.com>) to design and print our shirts. Pass them out to students to wear to school.
- **On Campus Possibilities.** Ask the school if you can set up a table at lunch one or two days. Some schools have a "Curriculum Night" or something similar in which parents can come and learn about electives.
- **Churches, Ministries and Youth Pastors** - connect with these folks and ask them to share about the program. Provide flyers for them to pass out and share digitally.
- **Video.** If you are really good at it, or have some students who are, create a viral video! Warning, don't make a cheesy video or it will backfire. No one will want to take a cheesy class!
- **Banners and Yard Signs.** Have some professionally crafted banners and yard signs strategically (and legally) placed within the high school community.



# POLICY HANDBOOK

While not required by the IRS, every nonprofit should consider adopting governance policies. A policy handbook clarifies what your organization does in order to accomplish its mission. The handbook serves as a manual for the leadership of the program to know how to address situations. The policy handbook also provides continuity as new leadership comes in. With policies in place, new leaders don't have to create their own policies. There is a sample policy handbook on page \_\_\_\_ that will give you an idea of a simple policy handbook.

