



SHEPERD

THE COUNTERFEIT

A Biblical guide for shepherding students through substance use and addiction.

FROM COUNTERFEIT TO CALLING

A GENERATION REGENERATION MINISTRIES RESOURCE

FRAMEWORK ATTRIBUTION

The SHEPERD and FACTS frameworks were developed for Generation Regeneration Ministries. They incorporate generally accepted safeguarding, trauma-informed ministry, and factual-documentation principles.

Purpose of This Resource

This resource equips youth pastors and ministry leaders to respond when a student is using alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, misused medications, or other substances. It is not a replacement for medical care, licensed treatment, emergency services, safeguarding procedures, or applicable law.

The goal is not merely to stop a behavior. We want to shepherd a young person toward Jesus, truth, safety, repentance, renewed identity, healthy community, and a life of purpose.

SCRIPTURE THREAD John 10:11

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**PROMISES RELIEF.
JESUS OFFERS
FREEDOM.**



JOHN 8:36

1. The Counterfeit

Satan has a counterfeit for what God offers. Substances may promise peace, comfort, escape, belonging, courage, pleasure, numbness, or relief. The promise is temporary; the cost can be real.

Ephesians 5:18 gives a powerful contrast: do not seek intoxication as the source of fullness; be filled with the Spirit. We should use that truth carefully. Substance dependence can involve trauma, mental-health concerns, social pressures, and physical dependence. Spiritual care and appropriate professional care are partners, not competitors.

Leader question: Don't only ask, 'What are you using?' Ask, 'What is the substance doing for you?'

SCRIPTURE THREAD Ephesians 5:18; John 8:36; 1 Corinthians 6:12

2. FILL • FEEL • CHASE • MASK

FILL

What emptiness are you trying to fill? Listen for loneliness, boredom, identity, belonging, grief, or a sense of being unwanted.

FEEL

What are you trying to feel? Listen for confidence, joy, calm, energy, connection, courage, or simply the ability to feel something.

CHASE

What feeling, experience, acceptance, high, performance, or relief are you chasing?

MASK

What pain, fear, memory, stress, shame, anger, anxiety, or overwhelm are you trying not to feel?

These questions are not an interrogation. They are a doorway into the beliefs, desires, wounds, patterns, relationships, and spiritual habits underneath behavior.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Psalm 139:23-24; Proverbs 20:5; James 1:19

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**WHAT IS THE
SUBSTANCE
DOING FOR YOU?
FILL. FEEL.
CHASE. MASK.**



PSALM 139:23-24

3. SHEPERD Response Framework

SEE

Notice the student, the behavior, changes, patterns, context, and immediate safety concerns.

HEAR

Listen before you fix. Let the student tell the story in their own words.

EXAMINE

Assess what happened, what was used, when, how much is known, immediate safety, possible impairment, access to more substances, and what the student may be trying to fill, feel, chase, or mask.

PROVIDE

Provide safety, calm presence, appropriate supervision, parent/guardian involvement, and connection to qualified help when needed.

EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING

Communicate compassion without approving or minimizing the behavior.

REVEAL TRUTH

Speak God's truth with grace and clarity. The substance is not the student's identity. Harm is still harm. Freedom and repentance are possible in Christ.

DISCUSS & MAKE A PLAN

Tell the student what happens next. Involve the appropriate adults. Create clear next steps, supports, boundaries, and follow-up.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Ephesians 4:15; Galatians 6:1-2; John 10:11

4. Immediate Safety Comes First

If a student appears severely intoxicated, has taken an unknown substance, may have overdosed, has dangerous withdrawal symptoms, is unconscious or difficult to wake, is having trouble breathing, is having a seizure, is threatening self-harm or harm to others, or otherwise appears medically unstable, treat it as an emergency and contact appropriate emergency services.

Do not ask a student to simply 'sleep it off.' Do not attempt detox in a youth ministry setting. Do not let spiritual language delay needed medical care.

Follow your church safeguarding policy and applicable reporting requirements. Document facts, direct statements, actions taken, and times.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Proverbs 27:12; Proverbs 31:8-9

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**NO SURPRISES. I
CARE ABOUT YOU
TOO MUCH TO
KEEP HARM A
SECRET.**



EPHESIANS 4:15

5. Bringing Parents Into the Conversation - With Grace

For a minor, substance use that is causing harm cannot remain an exclusive secret between the student and youth pastor. Parents or guardians generally need to be part of the safety and support plan.

NO SURPRISES applies here. Tell the student before the call. Give them appropriate voice in how the conversation begins. Do not threaten them with their parent.

Suggested language: 'I care about you too much to keep something secret that is harming you. I am going to help you tell your parent/guardian. You will not have to walk into that conversation alone.'

If involving a particular parent or guardian could reasonably place the student in danger, follow safeguarding policy and seek appropriate child-protection or professional guidance rather than improvising.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Ephesians 4:15; Galatians 6:1-2

6. Parent Meeting: Grace + Truth + Plan

Start with care: 'We care about your child and want to partner with you.'

Share facts, not labels. Explain what the student disclosed or what leaders directly observed.

Name the concern without catastrophizing. Substance use is harmful and deserves a real response.

Invite the student to speak where appropriate.

Discuss immediate safety, access to substances, supervision, medical or treatment needs, school/community concerns, and the next ministry step.

End with a written plan and a specific follow-up date.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Colossians 4:6; Proverbs 15:22

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**BRING PARENTS
IN WITH GRACE.
NO AMBUSH. NO
SHAME.**



GALATIANS 6:1-2

7. Roots of Regeneration - Discipling the Root

Roots of Regeneration does not define a person by addiction. The discipleship path addresses behavior while also examining the roots underneath it.

1

Realize the Root Problem: bring bondage into the light.

2

Receive Jesus as the True Cure: salvation, identity, and freedom are in Christ.

3

Repent and Renounce: turn from sin and toward God in active obedience.

4

Renew My Mind: identify lies and replace them with Scripture.

5

Receive God's Forgiveness: live from grace rather than condemnation.

6

Release Others Through Forgiveness: release vengeance while keeping wise boundaries.

7

Rebuild Relationships: pursue appropriate amends and rebuilt trust.

8

Remain in Christ Daily: Scripture, prayer, worship, community, obedience, accountability.

9

Reproduce Regeneration: grow from receiving discipleship toward helping others follow Jesus.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Romans 12:2; John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17

8. Accountability Without Control

Ask what happened rather than beginning with accusation. Help identify triggers, choices, lies, access points, and the next faithful step.

Accountability means telling the truth in love. It does not mean a youth pastor becomes the student's twenty-four-hour crisis line, savior, detective, or controller.

Keep parents/guardians and an appropriate broader support system involved. When the situation exceeds your training, seek qualified help.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Hebrews 10:24-25; Galatians 6:1

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**DON'T JUST
ADDRESS THE
FRUIT. DISCIPLE
THE ROOT.**



ROMANS 12:2

9. Relapse: Serious, Not Identity

A relapse or return to use should be taken seriously, but it should not become the student's identity.

Use this sequence:

SAFETY

determine whether emergency or medical help is needed.

TRUTH

invite honest disclosure.

GRACE

point toward Christ rather than condemnation.

REPENTANCE

identify what must change.

PLAN

strengthen boundaries, supports, treatment, and spiritual practices.

FOLLOW-UP

do not allow shame to drive isolation.

Restoration is not pretending nothing happened. Trust may need to be rebuilt over time.

SCRIPTURE THREAD Proverbs 24:16; 1 John 1:9

10. D4 Pathway - From Counterfeit to Calling

DISCOVER / IDENTITY

Who am I in Christ? The student is not their substance use, failure, diagnosis, family story, or worst decision.

DEVELOP / GIFTS

What did God place in me? Recovery cannot only be about what a student stops. Develop character, spiritual disciplines, healthy coping, gifts, responsibility, and purpose.

DEPLOY / MISSION

Where do I live it out? Freedom becomes active through service, witness, obedience, and using the student's story wisely.

DWELL / COMMUNITY

Where do I belong? Students need family, healthy Christian community, mentors, accountability, Scripture, prayer, and ongoing support.

D4 is not a graduation sequence. These are rhythms of a life being formed in Christ.

SCRIPTURE THREAD 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 10:24-25

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**RELAPSE IS
SERIOUS. IT IS
NOT YOUR
IDENTITY.**



1 JOHN 1:9

11. Leader Boundaries & Self-Care

Do not promise absolute secrecy. Do not conduct your own criminal investigation. Do not provide medical advice outside your competence. Do not create exclusive dependence on yourself.

Stay accountable to ministry leadership. Know your church's policies. Maintain appropriate documentation. Seek consultation when you are unsure.

Ask yourself: Am I listening? Am I protecting safety? Am I reacting from fear or frustration? Am I pointing this student toward Jesus and a healthy support system rather than toward dependence on me?

SCRIPTURE THREAD Proverbs 11:14; Ephesians 5:15

12. From Counterfeit to Calling

We don't just help students put something down. We help them build a life in Christ.

The counterfeit may have promised relief. Jesus offers truth, identity, community, freedom, and purpose. Our role as shepherds is to protect the flock, pursue the one, tell the truth in love, involve the right people, and keep pointing toward Jesus.

The goal is not merely improved behavior. It is a life increasingly rooted in Jesus Christ, renewed by God's Word, strengthened through the body of Christ, and bearing fruit that reflects a regenerated identity.

SCRIPTURE THREAD John 10:11; John 8:36; 2 Corinthians 5:17

SHEPERD

**DON'T JUST HELP
THEM PUT
SOMETHING
DOWN. BUILD A
LIFE IN CHRIST.**



2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

PRINTABLE TOOLS

FILL • FEEL • CHASE • MASK Student Conversation Sheet What am I trying to FILL?

What am I trying to FEEL?

What am I trying to CHASE?

What am I trying to MASK?

What do I wish adults understood?

What is one safe next step I am willing to take?

SHEPERD Substance-Use Conversation Card

SEE

What have I noticed?

HEAR

What is the student telling me?

EXAMINE

What safety concerns / roots / patterns need attention?

PROVIDE

What safety, support, supervision, or professional help is needed?

EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING

How can I show compassion without minimizing?

REVEAL TRUTH

What biblical truth applies?

DISCUSS & MAKE A PLAN

Who needs to be involved and what happens next?

SHEPERD

**FROM
COUNTERFEIT TO
CALLING.
PROTECT THE
FLOCK. PURSUE
THE ONE.**



EPHESIANS 2:10

Parent Conversation Planner

What do we know as fact?

What did the student directly disclose?

What immediate safety concern exists?

What do we need the parent/guardian to know?

What support may be needed?

What is the ministry boundary/consequence?

When will we follow up?

Student Next-Step Plan

My reason for change:

People I will tell the truth to:

My known triggers:

What I will do when I want to use:

Substances/access points that need to be removed or restricted:

Professional/medical support in place:

Spiritual rhythms I will practice:

My next check-in date:

Relapse Response Worksheet

SAFETY

Is medical/emergency help needed?

TRUTH

What happened?

GRACE

What is true about identity in Christ?

REPENTANCE

What needs to change?

PLAN

What boundary/support/treatment needs strengthening?

FOLLOW-UP

When and with whom is the next check-in?

D4 From Counterfeit to Calling Plan

DISCOVER - What truth about my identity in Christ do I need to live from?

DEVELOP - What gift, discipline, or healthy skill will I build?

DEPLOY - Where can I serve or live differently this week?

DWELL - Who are the healthy people and communities I will stay connected to?
