



## FOREWORD

In your hand is one of the most intentional resources a youth leader can use in making lifelong followers of Jesus Christ.

As youth pastors in the early 1970s, Rich and Robin Wilkerson shared the call of the Lord to take students in their youth ministry into the deeper truths of walking with God. Then, in 1983, Rich Wilkerson published the first edition of the FIRE Institute. Now, twenty-five years later, we have a fresh new update of the FIRE Institute for twenty-first century disciple-making in youth ministry. Most importantly, the FIRE BIBLE: Student Edition is the perfect Bible text companion with this updated version of the FIRE Institute.

The FIRE Institute is a leadership development school in Christian faith. Most of the youth who successfully journey through FIRE will be ready for a leadership role in the Church. With the trust and blessing of Rich Wilkerson, we are launching another generation of youth through this newest version of the FIRE Institute. The goal is to move beyond youth ministry to youth in ministry.

As young youth pastors in 1988, the passion of leading students into a deeper walk with the Lord also struck my wife Laura and me. A fellow youth pastor friend shared the FIRE Institute with us. It catapulted our total understanding of ministry to a new level. Nothing we endeavored in local youth ministry produced more lasting fruit than the FIRE Institute. It helped us identify, disciple, and deploy a generation of bold leaders for Jesus Christ. And to cap it off, we grew in our own walk with Jesus Christ! Get ready; you are about to encounter the purifying power of the Holy Spirit through the FIRE Institute yourself.

Why is it called the "FIRE Institute"? FIRE is actually an acronym that stands for Foundation, Inspiration, Responsibility, and Evangelism. The Institute is comprised of four different eight-week segments that forge these elements of Christian faith. Through each of these sessions, students will learn to pray, live, tell, serve, and give. These five core values put feet to the Christian faith.

Jesus taught that disciples should love God first and love others as themselves. (Matthew 22:37,39)

- Pray regularly
- Live the Word of God
- Tell the story (God's story and your story of faith in Him)
- Serve people
- Give graciously

They do not guarantee that someone will have an authentic faith in Jesus Christ. However, Jesus modeled these characteristics among the first disciples. And He calls us to follow Him too.

In session 1—FOUNDATION, the FIRE Institute concentrates on building a foundation in students to pray, live, tell, serve, and give. In session 2—INSPIRATION, students will be inspired in these five disciplines. In session 3—RESPONSIBILITY, students will discover the responsibility these characteristics bring to a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ. And in session 4—EVANGELISM, students will recognize that a relationship with Jesus Christ is a naturally evangelistic lifestyle.

As a youth leader, you are the pacesetter. You must do more than point the way to Jesus. You must do more than challenge the students to go after Jesus Christ. You must lead the way. You should be able to say, "Follow me as I follow Jesus."

Get ready to take students through God's renewing fire. There will be challenging and championship moments. All of them work together to forge a maturing faith that says, "I am ready to follow Jesus Christ anywhere He leads me."

Keep this truth in mind: Discipleship is a process. That process should mature a believer to lead another into a like relationship with Jesus Christ. Disciples of Jesus make disciples of Jesus.

A final word from Rich Wilkerson,

Without prayer, the FIRE Institute will be just another program. You will have intellectual information, but lack spiritual understanding. Nothing of a positive eternal value ever happens separated from prayer. Prayer will put you in the place where you can be transformed and changed forever in the presence of the Almighty God. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, released through fervent intercessory prayer, that makes this discipleship concept come alive and prove effective.

Lead the way!

Jay Mooney