

IMPORTANT: Do not use this letter unless you have first read either the Freedom Generation Bible Club Manual or the Know Your Rights Guide. This letter is not appropriate for every situation.

After reading those resources, if your situation applies, follow these steps:

- 1. Copy and paste this letter into a new document.**
- 2. Replace all bracketed sections with information specific to your school and circumstances.**
- 3. Review the letter for accuracy before submitting it.**

You may also choose to include language from your school's student handbook regarding religious freedom, equal access, or non-discrimination based on religion. While this can strengthen your request, it is not required. The letter starts below.

Dear [Principal/Activities Director/School Administrator Name],

We are writing to respectfully request reconsideration of the decision to deny the formation of a Bible club at [School Name].

Federal law and United States Supreme Court precedent affirm the right of students to establish and participate in student-led religious clubs on equal footing with other non-curricular student organizations. We respectfully ask that our request be reviewed in light of the legal protections outlined below.

1. The Equal Access Act (20 U.S.C. § 4071)

The Equal Access Act (EAA), enacted by Congress in 1984, protects the rights of student religious groups in public secondary schools.

Under the Equal Access Act:

- If a public secondary school permits one or more non-curricular student groups to meet during non-instructional time, it creates what is known as a "limited open forum."
- Once a limited open forum exists, the school may not deny equal access to students who wish to conduct meetings based on the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of their speech.
- Schools may not discriminate against a student group because its meetings involve prayer, Bible study, religious discussion, or other religious expression.

The United States Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Equal Access Act in *Board of Education of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226 (1990).

Because [School Name] allows non-curricular clubs such as [List Existing Non-Curricular Clubs], denying a student-led Bible club may be inconsistent with the Equal Access Act.

2. First Amendment Protections

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects both freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that religious speech is entitled to the same protection as secular speech and may not be excluded simply because it is religious in nature.

Students do not surrender their constitutional rights when they enter a public school.

In *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), the Supreme Court famously held that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

As a result, student religious expression is entitled to the same constitutional protections as other forms of student expression.

3. Supreme Court Precedent

Several Supreme Court decisions have specifically protected religious groups seeking equal access to public facilities and student organizations.

Board of Education v. Mergens (1990)

The Supreme Court ruled that when a public secondary school permits non-curricular student clubs, it must also permit student religious clubs on equal terms.

Widmar v. Vincent (1981)

The Court held that public institutions may not deny religious groups access to facilities that are available to secular groups.

Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District (1993)

The Court ruled that religious viewpoints may not be excluded from public forums that are otherwise open to community groups.

Good News Club v. Milford Central School (2001)

The Court ruled that excluding religious groups from school facilities based solely on their religious viewpoint constitutes unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination.

Together, these decisions establish that religious groups must generally be treated equally with other similarly situated groups.

4. Equal Treatment

Our request is not for special treatment, but for equal treatment.

If other non-curricular student clubs are permitted to meet, organize, advertise, recruit members, and utilize school facilities under school policies, we respectfully request that a student-led Bible club be given the same opportunity.

The proposed Bible club would be:

- Student-led
- Voluntary
- Non-disruptive
- Open to all students
- Operated under the same rules and procedures that apply to other student organizations

Faculty involvement would be limited to the level required by school policy and federal law.

5. Respect for School Administration

We recognize and respect the authority and responsibility of school administrators. We appreciate the work that you do to serve students and maintain a positive educational environment.

Our goal is not to create conflict or division. Rather, our goal is to exercise our constitutional rights while operating within the policies and procedures established by the school.

We are committed to conducting ourselves respectfully, professionally, and in a manner that reflects positively on both our school and our community.

Request for Reconsideration

In light of the Equal Access Act, First Amendment protections, and Supreme Court precedent, we respectfully request that [School Name] reconsider its decision and permit the formation of a student-led Bible club under the same terms and conditions that apply to other non-curricular student organizations.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and work cooperatively toward a resolution.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our school community.

Sincerely,

[Student Name]

[Grade]

[Student Name]

[Grade]

[Student Name]

[Grade]