

Knowing your rights: Starting a Bible Club at Your School

This document is intended for educational purposes only and is not legal advice.

Can I Start a Bible Club at My School?

In most cases, yes.

Federal law protects the rights of students to form and participate in student-led Bible clubs at public secondary schools.

The Equal Access Act

The Equal Access Act (20 U.S.C. § 4071) states that if a public secondary school allows any non-curricular student clubs, it generally must allow student religious clubs on equal terms.

Examples of non-curricular clubs may include:

- Chess Club
- Debate Club
- Student Interest Clubs
- Diversity Clubs
- Hobby Clubs
- Service Clubs
- Cultural Clubs
- Other clubs not directly tied to a specific academic class

If your school allows these types of clubs, it generally cannot deny a Bible club simply because it is religious.

What Does "Equal Access" Mean?

A Bible club should generally be given the same opportunity as other non-curricular clubs to:

- Meet on campus
- Recruit members
- Advertise meetings
- Use school facilities
- Participate in club activities under school policies

A Bible club is not entitled to special treatment, but it is entitled to equal treatment.

Supreme Court Decisions

The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly protected the rights of student religious groups.

Important cases include:

- Board of Education v. Mergens (1990)
- Widmar v. Vincent (1981)
- Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches (1993)
- Good News Club v. Milford Central School (2001)
- Tinker v. Des Moines (1969)

These cases helped establish that religious groups cannot generally be excluded simply because they are religious.

What Schools Can Do

Schools are allowed to:

- Require paperwork
- Require a faculty sponsor
- Set meeting times
- Set meeting locations
- Require compliance with school rules
- Apply the same policies to all student clubs

As long as these rules are applied equally to everyone, this is not religious discrimination.

What Schools Cannot Generally Do

Schools generally cannot:

- Deny a Bible club solely because it is religious
- Restrict a Bible club while allowing similar non-curricular clubs
- Exclude religious viewpoints from otherwise permitted student activities
- Treat religious clubs differently than other student clubs without a legally valid reason

A Reminder

As Christians, we should always approach school administrators with kindness, respect, and professionalism. The goal is not to create conflict. The goal is to reach students with the Gospel while honoring those in authority.

"Let your speech always be gracious." — Colossians 4:6

Need Help?

If your school denies your Bible club after you have followed the proper procedures, contact Freedom Generation.

Website: freedomgen.org

Instagram: [@freedomgenministries](https://www.instagram.com/freedomgenministries)

We would be happy to help you understand your options and connect you with additional resources.