

What I  
**Wish**  
**I Knew**  
at **18**

**Leadership and  
Life Skills Course  
Christian Edition**

**Leader's Guide**

LifeSmart

PUBLISHING, LLC

*Empowering the Next Generation™*



***What I Wish I Knew at 18: Life Lessons for the Road Ahead – Leaders Guide, Christian Edition***

First Edition Christian Leaders Guide, 2011

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## Special Message from the Authors

Welcome! We're glad you've chosen the *What I Wish I Knew at 18 Leadership and Life Skills* course as you invest in the lives of young people. We honor and applaud you!

We recognize that many communities influence the life of a child—family, school, faith, employers, and service organizations, to name a few. But while each has its own sphere of impact, their efforts are not always coordinated.

As a result of this (and various socioeconomic and cultural factors), we are observing a growing life skills deficit and a lack of direction among today's young people. This is taking its toll on both an individual and societal basis. It comes at a time when our world economy has become increasingly competitive and institutions are de-emphasizing the teaching of absolute values. The stakes are higher, and fixing this problem has become a societal imperative.

These challenges inspired us to offer a solution—a comprehensive and innovative Christian leadership and life skills course based on the success principles covered in the book, *What I Wish I Knew at 18: Life Lessons for the Road Ahead*. It describes the qualities and methods of honorable leaders while instilling practical, before-the-fact wisdom in key life decision arenas. Through its emphasis on (and opportunities for) personal reflection, peer interaction, and practical application, this course inspires, equips, and empowers students to reach their full potential and positively impact the world.

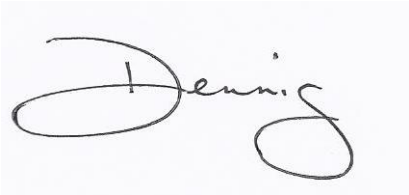
That's where YOU – the Christian teacher, faith leader, parent, or mentor—come in. You provide a MUCH NEEDED source of encouragement and inspiration for the young adults in your life to seek God's perspective, wisdom, and direction for their lives. Gary Kinnaman of the Barna Research Group says,

*Many young people do not seem to understand how a rich, historic understanding of the Christian faith and the gospel ought to inform their career aspirations. And faith leaders are not as intentional as they could be with instruction and coaching on these types of decisions. Understanding how teenagers hope to spend their professional lives can help faith communities and institutions better support these students as they discern God's calling in their lives.*

The Christian Edition of the *What I Wish I Knew at 18* course was written particularly for those students who are embarking on their life journey with a Christian perspective. We believe knowing that God has a plan and purpose for one's life is a primary foundation for building a life of impact. His Word provides invaluable and trustworthy principles for developing a student's worldview and life perspective—the foundation from which everything else in their life will grow.

May this course help you achieve your mission of preparing young people for a fulfilling, God-honoring life journey with lasting impact!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Dennis Trittin".

Dennis Trittin

A handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Arlyn Lawrence".

Arlyn Lawrence



## Guide for Leaders of the *What I Wish I Knew at 18* Leadership and Life Skills Course - Christian Edition

*leadership \* empowerment \* impact \* confidence \* integrity \* wisdom \* success \* purpose*

### What's So Important about Leadership and Life Skills Development?

*"...preparing young people for success in life is not just a moral obligation of society but also an economic imperative."  
Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education*

In an increasingly competitive world, our nation and economy depends on leadership from our young people. Not only is this important on an individual, personal level, but also it has societal and economic implications. The stakes are high, and we owe them the vision and practical guidance to achieve their full potential. Fulfilling this mission is precisely what this course is all about.

We hope this unique leadership and life skills program, based on the book, *What I Wish I Knew at 18*, will prove to be one of the most valuable and personally relevant course your students will ever take. In it, they will gain important skills and perspectives that go beyond academic knowledge, equipping them to *use* that knowledge for maximum impact in the real world. This is training essential for achieving a successful life of honor and impact. In this course, students will learn to:

- model the qualities of honorable leaders
- take a strategic, purposeful approach to life
- successfully transition to a college academic environment
- manage their money wisely and achieve their financial goals
- succeed in a well-matched career and reach their full potential
- become a masterful decision-maker and time manager
- build a winning competitive edge and market it strategically
- build enduring relationships and prepare for a lasting marriage
- use their time, talent, and treasure to positively impact the world

In the *What I Wish I Knew at 18* leadership and life skills course, students will discover what honorable and productive leaders look like, and gain the confidence that they, too, can be one! They will learn that “leadership” is not simply for the chosen few. Every person can be a leader in

his or her sphere of influence and express their leadership qualities in a host of different situations. As a leader of THIS course, you, the teacher, will have the opportunity to pass along this perspective to your students and be a part of inspiring, equipping, and empowering them on their life journey.

Students will learn valuable skills and life principles via personal reflection/self assessments, as well as through dynamic group discussions and role playing where they will collaborate in teams—in some cases, leading discussions and in other cases providing valuable feedback to their classmates.

## How to Lead this Course

One of the greatest aspects of the *What I Wish I Knew at 18* leadership and life Skills curriculum is that you needn't be a rocket scientist to teach it. Nor do you need to be a psychologist, a therapist, a child development expert or, frankly, any other kind of expert! You simply need to be someone with the desire and relational skill to help teens learn the foundational principles necessary for a successful launch into adulthood. All the tools you need are right here in this curriculum.

As you proceed, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Each day's lesson (based on one or more success pointers from the *What I Wish I Knew at 18* book) is divided into five sections, each marked by a distinctive icon:



**Prepare** – advance reading



**Consider** – large group teaching/discussion of the success pointer(s) covered in that lesson



**Discuss** – small group activities reinforcing the concepts presented in the "Consider" section

**Above and Beyond** – opportunities for prayer, Bible study, and deeper discussion of the principles from that chapter

**Words to Live By** – Scripture verses supporting the concepts in that chapter, to be used for reference or memorization



**Apply** – after class assignments for life application



**Journal** – opportunities for students to record notes, thoughts, impressions, etc.

- You can use the Lesson Planning Charts provided in this leader's guide to plan your class time(s). These may be photocopied for your personal use. A blank planning sheet is also included to provide extra space if needed.
- Students should start each session having read the corresponding chapter(s) in the book *What I Wish I Knew at 18: Life Lessons for the Road Ahead*.
- Be sure to encourage students to utilize the chart found in the prepare section of each chapter, where they are asked to identify the principles they think: 1) are most important in life, 2) come naturally to them, and 3) are either new ideas or are personally challenging. With these observations in mind, students will have opportunities to model their strengths to others (empowerment) and also be honest about the areas they need work on (accepting constructive feedback to improve).
- Allow five to ten minutes or so at the beginning of each class for participants to share the pointers they highlighted in the "Prepare" section of their student guides before coming to class. Plan for a few students to share each class session. (Note: Not all of the success pointers in *What I Wish I Knew at 18* are addressed specifically in the manual, so this can be a good opportunity to give attention to some of the sections of the book that are not covered by the course material.)
- After the opening discussion, read together (or permit students to either read silently or take turns reading aloud) that day's reading in the "Consider" section of the student guide. If there are personal reflection or application questions in the reading, allow a few minutes for students to record their answers before engaging in group discussions.
- Following the larger group time, direct students to the "Discuss" section of that day's lesson. Have them form small groups (you may wish to keep the same groups, for continuity, or change them up periodically, depending on your classroom dynamics). Assign an activity or discussion topic from the "Discuss" section of that day's lesson. (Note: you may wish to group students according to their answers from the "Prepare" section of their student guides for each particular chapter. Group students who identified them as "strong" in certain pointers with students identified themselves as feeling they need work in those areas, in order to take advantage of natural coaching and/or mentoring opportunities.)
- Keep in mind that some activities may require more than one day to complete. For example, the "Career Selection and Advancement" section directs students to make a Career Binder to help them in their college search and career selection. Also, the "Managing Your Finances" section provides opportunities to create sample Cash Flow Statements and offer recommendations to an imaginary "Spendthrift" Family that is in financial trouble. Consider these kinds of sections as you plan how to allocate course time to specific subject areas in your class.
- As much as possible, get the students to interact with one another and the class through discussion, activities, and opportunities for speaking in front of the larger group. In addition

to helping students to absorb valuable content, this will help them develop their confidence, relational skills, and public speaking ability.

- The “Words to Live By” sections contain Scripture verses pertaining to the biblical truths taught in that lesson and can be used for reference, memorization, or further study.
- Sections marked “Above and Beyond” contain opportunities for prayer, Bible study, or deeper discussion to dig further into understanding and applying the principles from that chapter.
- Use the “Apply” section for homework or follow-up assignments for the students to do outside of class, if desired.
- The “Journal” section is provided at the end of each chapter for in-class notes and personal reflection for future reference.

### The Leader's Role

- The leader's role in this course is not primarily to impart new information. Rather, it is to serve as a discussion facilitator and mentor in guiding participants into meaningful conversation and application of the principles being taught.
- Understand that in many cases, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the discussion questions. Participants should feel free to share their thoughts, ideas, and feelings freely without feeling pressured or judged to come up with a correct, objective answer.
- During the discussion times, monitor the groups to make sure they are making progress on the assignment and that the tone of the group is positive and cooperative. Be available to answer questions and help them move forward if they get “stuck.”
- Look for ways to integrate the principles in *What I Wish I Knew at 18* into other courses or aspects of your program. Even when not specifically teaching *this* course, you can be developing important life skills such as decision-making, character, relationships, communication, and personal productivity.
- Remember that teens are works in process. Their cognitive and neurological development is not generally complete until around the age of 20—even though they may appear physically mature much earlier than that. Many times their confident assertions—value statements that may seem dogmatic or idealistic—are simply their way of processing and working through what their real values and thoughts are on that topic. Allow them the freedom to explore ideas, to “think out loud,” to be dogmatic—and then don't act surprised if they just as dogmatically change their opinion the next day!



## Preparing to Teach

- The structure of the student guide is designed to provide enough material for a *daily class for nine weeks (one quarter)*. If conducting the class on an 18-week semester long-schedule (or other time frame), simply space out the discussions and activities accordingly. The lessons do not build on each other, so you can feel free to shorten, lengthen, or rearrange the order as you see fit.
- Recognizing that this course can be taught in various grades, teachers will want to gauge the age-appropriateness of the subject matter. For example, if you are teaching grades eight through ten, you may want to reduce the marriage component and increase the time allotted to other subjects. Meanwhile, for juniors and seniors, the career and finance chapters may deserve additional time and detail. Teachers/youth leaders should feel free to supplement this course with other resources on subject matter where additional detail/perspective is desired. For example, within the “Managing your Finances” chapter, teachers could train students on subjects like personal banking and investing. The key is that students end with a well-rounded look at life and wise principles to live by.
- Feel free to title the course as you see fit. Some suggestions include “Leadership for Life,” or “Leadership and Life Skills.”

## Media Resources

We highly recommend you utilize any technical or media resources available to further student engagement. If you have the capacity for showing film clips or YouTube® videos, or for creating and using Power Point slides to emphasize key points, take advantage of these opportunities. Any visual supplement you can add will only serve to inspire the students more actively in the learning process (not to mention it makes it much more fun and interesting!).

For example, for Chapter One, “Life Perspective,” to illustrate the pointer, “Don’t define success by riches,” you could show the final scene from the movie *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, starring Richard Dreyfuss. The YouTube link below connects to a clip approximately ten minutes long portraying a dramatic example of the reward of living a life invested in others, and reaping their gratitude and admiration as a result.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng3l4vEN3Dk>

In this clip, Mr. Holland’s former student and current state governor addresses Mr. Holland in front of a crowd of townspeople and former students from throughout his 30-year teaching career. She says of him, “He has achieved a success far beyond riches and fame.” And then directly to him, she adds, “Look around you. There is not a life in this room that you have not touched, and each one of us is a better person because of you. We are your symphony. We are the melodies and notes of your opus, and we are the music of your life.”

Another example would be the following clip from the TV show *Scrubs*, where the character Dr. Cox talks about what makes a successful relationship. This would be a good opener for the pointer

“Choose Your Spouse as a Forever Decision/Fully Explore Your Compatibility before Committing” found in Chapter Seven, “Love and Marriage.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICEZNBwQVv8>

Sometimes a song serves as a good illustration or discussion starter. The following You Tube® link will connect you to the Switchfoot song “The Shadow Proves the Sunshine” and might be a good choice for Chapter Nine, “Adversity and Spirituality.” Ask students to identify what they think the artist is saying about difficult times, and how this relates to what they learn in the pointer “Accept that adversity is part of life—it can be preparation for greater things and often makes sense in retrospect.”

It is beyond the scope of this leaders' guide to comprehensively provide media resource suggestions for every pointer in the *What I Wish I Knew at 18 Student Guide*. We have provided a section starting on page 10 to help you identify clips or resources you can find and assign to particular pointers. Following are some helpful websites for locating clips:

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

[www.bluefishtv.com](http://www.bluefishtv.com)

[www.wingclips.com](http://www.wingclips.com)

### Grading (for Educational/Institutional Application)

**NEW!** We have recently added a pre- and post-course survey to help you measure your students' progress and perceptions pertaining to their understanding and application of the leadership principles they will learn in *What I Wish I Knew at 18*. The survey can be accessed on our website as a free download at <http://www.dennistritin.com/resources/WIWIKStudent%20Survey.pdf>.

The *What I Wish I Knew at 18* course does not readily lend itself to quizzes and tests—it's more about effort and participation. You may choose to develop quizzes/tests, but the focus should be on honest reflection and effective group participation. One way to assess this is to gather the students' workbooks for periodic evaluations and grading/assessment purposes. Another is to incorporate peer evaluations by students as part of grading the participation component.

### Expanding the Curriculum

We encourage you to supplement this curriculum to best suit the needs of your students, and further concentrate in the subject matters most beneficial. For example, the finance chapter especially lends itself to further supplementation. You can:

- teach the students how to write, endorse, and cash or deposit a check, and how to balance a check book
- further explore the topic of investing
- encourage students to familiarize themselves with websites about money matters and investing, such as [www.cnbc.com](http://www.cnbc.com), [www.money.msn.com](http://www.money.msn.com), and [www.smartmoney.com](http://www.smartmoney.com)

- have students pick a stock (or a portfolio of three stocks) and follow them, have contests, etc.
- take the students on field trips or invite guest speakers in the financial arena

### **For Special Consideration**

- Students can become bored with school/youth ministry because they don't see how they'll use the information in "real life." Assure them that this class WILL be different! (And, after having completed it, they will likely agree.) By mentioning this fact up front, this will hopefully motivate them to engage in the course, take it seriously, but still have fun.
- High school students need to understand that the stakes are higher in terms of the way they live life and the disciplines they need to develop. Point out to them that this course will help them make the right decisions the first time and that it will help prepare them for success in the real world—PROVIDED they take personal ownership of these principles in life.

Success Pointers	Media Resource
<b>Chapter 1 – Life Perspective</b>	
Discover your purpose and inspiration	
Live life without regrets	
Don't define success by riches	
Diversify your life	
Commit to being a lifelong learner	
<b>Chapter 2 – Character</b>	
Cultivate a servant's heart	
When facing risky situations, preserve your values, reputation, and integrity	
Stand up for your beliefs and values with conviction	
Be an encourager rather than a critic and always look for the best in people	
Solicit and embrace constructive feedback	
Don't say something about someone else that you'd regret if they heard	
<b>Chapter 3–Relationships &amp; Communication</b>	
Put relationships before things	
Get connected with others who share your interests and values/Steer clear of destructive people	
Recognize that first impressions are huge, be inquisitive when meeting others, and notice how others react to you	

How you say it can matter more than what you say/Talk it out, don't write it out	
Regularly show appreciation and gratitude to others	
<b>Chapter 4 - Miscellaneous</b>	
Set and periodically assess your goals	
Time is precious...use it wisely	
Become a masterful decision maker	
Don't let technology rule your life	
Learn to speak comfortably in groups	
Be a discerning skeptic of all you read and hear	
<b>Chapter 5 – College Academics</b>	
Excelling is about planning, preparing, and performing	
Consider the rainbow highlighter study method	
<b>Chapter 6 – Career Selection/ Advancement</b>	
Choose your major and career after conducting a comprehensive assessment of yourself and potential career matches	
Build a winning competitive edge/Demonstrate the qualities that employers value	
Learn to persuasively market yourself /Likeability in the interview is huge	
Diversify your contributions to build your value and win promotions	

<b>Chapter 7 – Love and Marriage</b>	
Take a “3D approach” to dating	
Love takes time...and timing!	
Recognize the difference between love and lust	
Choose your spouse as a forever decision/Fully explore your compatibility before committing	
Key words for a successful marriage	
<b>Chapter 8 – Managing Your Finances</b>	
Strive to become a wise steward, disciplined saver, prudent consumer, cautious debtor, and cheerful giver	
Live within your means and generate positive cash flow/Create regular cash flow statements; analyze your spending/Use credit sparingly and wisely	
Develop a financial plan that reflects your short- and long-term goals	
Invest early, regularly, and as much as you can in a diversified, long-term strategy	
Grow your wealth patiently	
<b>Chapter 9 – Spiritual Life and Handling Adversity</b>	
<b><i>Spiritual Life</i></b>	
Invest in your spiritual growth/Reserve time for daily reflection and prayer	
Seek God’s wisdom in matters big and small	
Connect with a worship family and develop an accountability relationship with a trusted friend	

<b><i>Handling Adversity</i></b>	
Accept that adversity is a part of life/ It can be preparation for greater things and often makes sense in retrospect	
Release your pain/Take charge of your worries	

**CHAPTER ONE – LIFE PERSPECTIVE**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____  <i>Discover your purpose and inspiration</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Live life without regrets</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Don't define success by riches</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Diversify your life</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Commit to being a lifelong learner</i>			



**CHAPTER TWO - CHARACTER**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____  <i>Cultivate a servant's heart</i>			
Date: _____  <i>When facing risky situations, preserve your values, reputation, and integrity</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Stand up for your beliefs and values with conviction</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Be an encourager rather than a critic and always look for the best in people</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Solicit and embrace constructive feedback</i>			

**CHAPTER THREE – RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____  <i>Put relationships before things</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Get connected with others who share your interests/values and steer clear of destructive people</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Recognize first impressions are huge/ be inquisitive when meeting others/ notice how others react to you</i>			
Date: _____  <i>How you say it can matter more than what you say / talk it out, don't write it out</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Regularly show appreciation and gratitude to others</i>			

**CHAPTER FOUR – MISCELLANEOUS (BUT IMPORTANT!) LIFE SKILLS**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____  <i>Set and periodically assess your goals</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Time is precious; use it wisely</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Become a masterful decision maker</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Don't let technology rule your life</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Learn to speak comfortably in groups</i>			

**CHAPTER FIVE – COLLEGE ACADEMICS**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
<p>Date: _____</p> <p><i>Excelling is about planning, preparing, and performing</i></p>			
<p>Date: _____</p> <p><i>Learn to use the rainbow highlighter study method</i></p>			

**CHAPTER SIX – CAREER SELECTION AND ADVANCEMENT**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____ <i>Choose your major/career after conducting a comprehensive assessment of yourself and potential career matches</i>			
Date: _____ <i>Build a winning competitive edge and demonstrate the qualities that employers value</i>			
Date: _____ <i>Learn to persuasively market yourself / likeability during the interview is huge</i>			
Date: _____ <i>Diversify your contributions to build your value and win promotions</i>			

**CHAPTER SEVEN – LOVE AND MARRIAGE**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____  <i>Take a "3D" approach to dating</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Love takes time— and timing!</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Recognize the difference between love and lust</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Choose your spouse as a forever decision/ fully explore your compatibility before committing</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Keywords for a successful marriage</i>			

**CHAPTER EIGHT – MANAGING YOUR FINANCES**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____  <i>Strive to become a wise steward, disciplined saver, prudent consumer, cautious debtor, and cheerful giver</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Live within your means and generate positive cash flow / create regular cash flow statements and analyze your spending / use credit sparingly</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Develop a financial plan that reflects your short- and long-term goals</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Invest early, regularly, and as much as you can in a diversified, long-term strategy</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Grow your wealth patiently</i>			

**CHAPTER NINE – ADVERSITY AND SPIRITUALITY**

POINTER	LARGE GROUP TIME	DISCUSSION GROUPS	ASSIGNMENT
Date: _____  <i>Invest in your spiritual growth and reserve time for daily reflection and prayer</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Seek God's wisdom in matters big and small</i>			
<i>Connect with a worship family and develop an accountability relationship with a trusted friend</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Accept that adversity is part of life—it can be preparation for greater things and often makes sense in retrospect</i>			
Date: _____  <i>Release your pain / take charge of your worries</i>			



**CHAPTER:**

<b>POINTER</b>	<b>LARGE GROUP TIME</b>	<b>DISCUSSION GROUPS</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>
Date: _____			
Date: _____			
Date: _____			
Date: _____			
Date: _____			

