

Hey there and welcome to the Il Shim Team!

Let me start by saying a big THANK YOU for taking time out of your busy life and other commitments to invest in the younger generation over the next 10 weeks! You are making a big impact on the experience of the Il Shim participants this year. I promise you won't regret it! Il Shim is our faith's coming of age tradition and that's what you'll be helping these youth do: come of age! The team who put together this curriculum has tried very hard to make it relevant, personal, and meaningful for young Unificationists, and even non-Unificationists. I hope that you find this curriculum is just that and much much more for you and your group of youth.

There is something so remarkable about having a group of youth whom you are working closely with for several weeks. A special closeness is formed because of the level of content and regularity of meeting. I remember my first time leading Il Shim as a young Youth Pastor. I found that the more I invested my heart and soul in my group of girls, the deeper my personal experience became. I was surprised how much I enjoyed my time as an Il Shim team leader. By the time graduation came around, I remember feeling like my group of girls were really my little sisters.

These youth are entering an important stage of adolescence, which is the transition between childhood and adulthood. Erik Erikson, a well-known psychologist, has cited this time period as an important time of identity formation which means they are trying to answer the question, "Who am I?" This important quest coupled with a ton of physical and emotional changes mean that these youth are going through a lot. It's important to keep this in mind while you work closely with them. It is also good to note if any participants are guests, or non-Unificationists. This curriculum was revised to be more inclusive towards anyone who wants to participate, and so I encourage you to keep that mentality and be more inclusive to each participant!

You are taking part of a very important and formative experience for your Il Shim participants. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to be a part of building a foundation for their development. They will remember this experience forever. If they choose to raise their children in our faith, they will tell their children about their Il Shim leaders. That means they will be telling their children about you!

That may sound like a lot of pressure, but don't worry! You are going to do GREAT! The fact that you have volunteered your time means God is ready to work through you. Here are a few tips that may help you be even more successful:

1. **Let God work.** Before each session, take a few minutes to prepare yourself spiritually so that Heavenly Parent can truly work through you and guide sessions as needed.

2. **Come prepared to sessions.** Take time the night before to review what you are teaching and the materials you need so that you are ready to be a great facilitator.
3. **Do the readings and homework yourself.** The best leader is the best participant. Model the behavior you want to see in your youth by doing the work yourself. You will find a greater ability to relate to their experience as a result.
4. **Communicate with Parents.** Let them know how sessions are going and encourage them to continue their participation at home. Make sure to also notify them of anything they need to know! They are what makes or breaks a participant's experience during II Shim!
5. **Use small groups.** Small groups are the greatest way to make an impact in the lives of these young people. If you have a large group, try to split them into groups of no larger than 10 to facilitate this program. You may also want to consider how you are splitting them up such as by gender, by age, etc.
6. **Make it personal for you and for them.** Get to know these youth on a personal level and let them get to know you. Allowing this to happen will also allow for more sincere investment in the program from your group!

Once again, thank you so much for being a part of this experience. I'm confident that you and your youth will have a fantastic and transformative time together. If you ever need more help please use our Youth Ministry website as a resource: ym.familyfed.org.

God bless you and your youth!

Sincerely,

Yasutaka Ozawa
National Youth Ministry Coordinator