

FIVE STEPS TO
EFFECTIVE STUDENT
LEADERSHIP

Steps

5 About the Steps Series

The books in the 5 Steps Series are useful for anyone seeking bridge-building solutions to current issues. The 5 Steps series presents positive approaches for engaging with the problems that open up gaps and divisions in family, school, church, and society. Each volume presents five short chapters (or “steps”) on a single topic. Each chapter includes a relevant “excerpt”, “insights” from the author(s), and an “example” to consider. The “example” is a real-life story that illustrates how each step can be applied in daily life.

Topics include:

- Facing Suffering
- Living Christian Unity
- Effective Student Leadership
- Towards Great Parenting
- A Fulfilling Marriage

FIVE STEPS TO EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Insights and Examples

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and Hannah Trost



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Contents

Introduction.....	7
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Step 1

Love Everyone:

Finding God in All Things	13
Excerpt: <i>Gospel of Luke</i> — “The Good Samaritan”	18
Example: <i>No matter how busy you are</i>	20

Step 2

Share the Other’s Joy or Hurt:

Be Attentive	23
Excerpt: <i>Gospel of Luke</i> — “At the home of Martha and Mary”	27
Example: <i>Stopping to ask a real question</i>	28

Step 3

Love Your Enemy:

Cura Personalis	33
Excerpt: <i>Gospel of Luke</i> — “Forgiveness”	38
Example: <i>A Gift</i>	40

Step 4

Be the First to Love:	
Creative Companionship.....	43
Excerpt: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: “Living in Community”.....	47
Example: <i>Men and women for and with others</i>	51

Step 5

Love One Another:	
Men and Women for Others.....	57
Excerpt: Michael James et al — “Unity, Chiara Lubich, and Focolare”	59
Example: <i>Being in community with those around you</i>	63

Appendix:	
Student Leadership and the “Art of Loving:” A Road Map for the Cube of Love	67
Further Reading and Other Resources...	70

Introduction

THE TASK OF BECOMING human is a lifelong project. We are not born complete. Education at every level must be devoted to contributing something meaningful to this task of becoming fully human. Catholic education is informed by a tradition whose wisdom asserts that the education of the person is the education of the *whole* person. Ideally, Catholic educators, students, and their collaborators accept the responsibilities of fostering genuine community, of creating environments that demand cooperation and mutual support, of providing opportunities for all the members of the community to be served and in turn serving those in need, and of teaching the process of critical reflection on the prevailing cultural values that potentially enhance or damage the human condition.

Student leaders have a particularly rich set of opportunities to grow and discover their own

capacity to become fully human—fully themselves. This book offers a five-step approach to developing student leadership practices informed by a spirituality of communion and rooted in a deeper understanding of each participant’s moral identity. In campus settings too often marked by isolation, fragmentation, discontinuity, competition and individualism, we suggest that student leaders who practice the “Art of Loving” and live a spirituality of communion will generate counter-currents of interdependence, relational action, dialogue, and reciprocity.

The Ground Floor to the Five Steps

For someone who tries to live a spirituality of communion, the goal of “teaching the individual” really becomes one of “teaching individuals how to recognize God-Love within themselves.” In other words, it is essential to begin from the premise that we “Love the Other as Ourselves.” Ignatian spirituality calls this concept “reverence.” The complementary principle is, as the fifth of the *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities* states, to “challenge students to high standards of personal behavior and responsibility through the formation of character and virtues.” These are the conceptual principles at the ground-floor from which the five steps ascend in each chapter

of this book. And the twin goal of “building the community” becomes, to a certain extent, both the method and the consequence of individuals who are discovering God-Love. The choices of individuals in response to their community (i.e., the relationships that come about) will either damage the community or build it. And the identity of those individuals becomes defined by these choices.

Taking the Five Steps

This student leadership development guide is made up of five chapters, each corresponding to an aspect of the “Art of Loving.” The “Art of Loving” is born from an ethos of reciprocal human interaction such as in the Golden Rule. Practitioners have developed a helpful tool called the Cube of Love. Each side of a six-sided die is labeled with a component of the “Art of Loving:”

- Love the other as yourself
- Love everyone
- Share the other’s joy or hurt
- Love your enemy
- Be the first to love
- Love one another

At a given moment, often at the beginning of the school day or at the beginning of a meeting,

the group will roll the Cube and take the result as their watchword. At another moment, often at the end of the day or the end of an event, students and faculty or supervisors share their experiences of living that particular aspect of the “Art of Loving” throughout the day. Using the Cube of Love has helped schools, office environments, athletic teams, residence halls, and student leader organizations to establish a consistent ethos, transforming their cultures from ones based on rules to ones based on relationships. This changed way of being translates not only into interpersonal relationships, but also into extracurricular activities, student development programming, and academic performance.

Within each chapter or “Step,” readers will find:

- A **point** from the “Art of Loving” followed by a concept from Ignatian spirituality
- A **compelling case** for practicing these concepts in daily life enlightened by scripture, Church documents, and student development research
- **Concrete suggestions** for putting the concept into practice. Suggestions are informed by scripture, church teaching, and one of the *Principles for Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities*

- **An inventory** for personal reflection on how each of us can begin to implement the practice on a deeper level
- A “**real-life story**” from students about how they have tried to put the concept into practice
- A **checklist** of actions that you might take to move towards the concepts suggested in the chapter