

When 2 or 3 are Gathered

But you planned for 8!

Ever planned a great game or lesson for youth group and only two youth showed up when eight were expected? What now? Cancel? Seasoned leaders have probably experienced this many times but have learned to adjust the plan to fit the number or just do something different. Newer leaders in this world of ministry with young people will more than likely experience this at some point and will learn that preparation and having some ready resources will get them through.

Young people in today's world carry so much more than previous generations! The distractions are numerous and the pull on their time is difficult to manage, both for the young person and the parent. They juggle homework, group studies, jobs, athletic practice, scheduled games, music lessons, social media and so much more. Families and students have to decide daily which of these calls on their time and energy will be honored. Sadly, often Sunday School and/or Youth Group (opportunities of nurture and spiritual growth) drop to the bottom of the list. Our hope is that families know the importance of young people being active in all aspects of life, not just school and sports, and that the juggling includes room for faith to be explored and grown.

Paid staff or volunteers are called to lead, nurture, teach and accompany young people on their journey of faith. The call is to be faithful, present, compassionate, and prepared whether there are two students present or the whole group. Whatever the number, the attitude is one of welcome and care.

Here are some ideas and reminders to help refocus each semester or year as plans are made for the eight or the two young people that show up.

Helpful Reminders

- Remember the two-adult rule for your safety and that of the youth. No fewer than two adults present at all meeting times.
- Try not to cancel. This may be the best opportunity to make a difference in the life of a young person whose only affirmation may be from adults at youth group.
- Be prepared. Young people can instinctively tell when the leader has dropped the ball.
- Be flexible. Sometimes the plan just doesn't work. Have an alternate plan.
- Keep the lines of communication open with the youth, the parents, and the congregation by whichever means works best for your group.
- Trust that God's spirit is present. *For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.* Matthew 18:20 NRSV

Activity Ideas

- Create a ritual opening or closing like a blessing or a circle prayer where each is invited to give thanks.
- Keep an easily accessible cart or duffle bag stocked with supplies for a variety of games; pool noodles cut in half, playground ball, soft sided balls, carpet squares, frisbees, tennis balls, Jenga, large dice, pencils and note pads, water toys, tennis balls, buckets, playing cards. Uno.

- Have printed cards or plain, colorful cards, markers, stickers or other art products available to write to church members in assisted living or nursing homes, thank you cards for youth group meal providers, birthday cards, thinking of you, sympathy, or get-well cards.
- Have supplies on hand to make a seasonal decoration for those church members in assisted living or nursing homes.
- Purchase or have youth create journals to keep in the regular meeting space. Have a regular time once per month to write in them throughout the year. It can be a memory, a poem or song lyrics, a drawing, reflection on a scripture or retreat, a response to news of the day, a wish list, a prayer, *Praying in Color*, any highs or lows, or just doodle! It is there to take home at the last gathering of the school year. The leader may write a special message in each journal to mark the end of the school year.
- Go on a prayer walk in the neighborhood, praying for each family or business represented. Walk through the church building and pray for each room or space and the work, growth or learning that occurs there.
- Walk a labyrinth if one is available onsite, nearby, or during a weekend retreat. (Particularly during Lent.)

Game Ideas

❖ Gimme Five

Pass out paper and pencil for each group. The goal is to be the first to hand in answers. First responders are awarded 1 point. The magic number is 5! Call out a category. Teams write down 5 items in that category. Someone runs the answers to the leader. Answers are checked by leader and opposite team.

Categories:

- Animals bigger than a dog
- Sports that do not use a ball
- Items you can purchase in a tube
- Creatures that lay eggs
- Reasons to go to church
- Well known board games
- Things found in a kitchen
- Places where strangers have to sit next to each other
- Modes of transportation
- Things people do in the morning
- Expressions used to describe something disgusting



❖ Dice Game – Get to 50

Pass out paper to each person. One pencil or pen and dice to the group. Take turns rolling. When someone rolls a 6 the next person gets the pen. The object is to write the numbers 1-50 on your sheet of paper before the pen is taken from you. Continue where you left off. (It can also be played that if whoever rolls the 6 is the next person to get the pen).

❖ Count to 25

Someone randomly starts and some other random person says the next number. If another person says the number at the same time, the group must start over. Goal to make it to 25 without interruption.

❖ Dice Game – Block Out 10

Everybody gets a piece of paper and pen and writes down the numbers 1-10. 2 dice are passed around and each player takes one roll of the dice and blocks out a number. It can be the number on each dice or the combination of the two (example rolling a 1 and 2 could block out the number 1, 2 or 3). Play until you've blocked out all the numbers.

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