

## Quick Youth Group Ideas

*"You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." - Plato*

### Five Simple Steps for Preparing for Youth Events:

**Step 1 - Create a welcoming and exciting environment for the youth.** Use lots of colorful props and things that make the space inviting an exciting and fun environment will make young people want to come to the activities. Examples . . . balloons, piñatas, twinkling lights, fabric, draped fabric, banners.

**Step 2 - Provide fun, interesting, and educational activities that all of the youth will like to do.** If you are unsure of what the youth like, simply ask them. Have something new during each meeting that will keep their attention and make them want to participate in your activity.

**Step 3 - Organize.** Be prepared ahead of time. Know what you are going to do before the youth group meeting starts. Teenagers need structure and organization. Otherwise, they will be more likely to misbehave or not participate in the activity.

**Step 4 - Keep accurate records.** Make sure you keep attendance records and other important records that are required by your organization. Make sure all of the records are up to date. Always keep medical records on hand so that you will know what to do with each child in case of an emergency. Always be aware of the safety rules in the meeting space.

**Step 5 - Make the group fun.** Laugh, play, create, and recreate together. Holy Motion and The Playbook are wonderful resources for playing together.

### When All Else Fails:

#### Fast and Simple Ideas for Youth Groups

No matter how well prepared you are or how long you have been working with young people, there will always be times when the program does not come together as it should. And there are those times when the designated leader cannot be there, and someone has to step in to run a program. Here are a few activities that require little to no materials or preparation. Most are activities guaranteed to get your youth group talking and sharing. Again, having Holy Motion or The Playbook on hand, is helpful as well.

#### Check-In Circle

Have the youth sit in a circle. Everyone gets a turn to share a low point of the day/week and a high point of the day/week. This a great way to learn about what is going on in lives of our youth. Leaders can also put the low and high points on their prayer lists.

### **Music Check-In Circle**

Following the instructions for the Check-in Circle, but instead of just sharing the highs and lows, youth must share a song that reflects those feelings. Youth may choose to say lyrics, song title, or style of music. In general, music is important to youth. Even if you don't listen to the same music, it is sometimes easier to understand a feeling when expressed in terms of beat, style, poetry, etc. This is also a great way to incorporate various learning styles and creative processes.

You could extend this idea by inviting youth to think about music in terms of their faith and how the music lyrics resonate with their understanding of the sacred. Another extension of this activity could involve inviting just one youth a week to bring in a song to play for the group—a song that connects with their faith, their understanding of God, their doubts and fears, their joys. Spend time listening to the song together and reflecting on its content as a group, looking for God in each person's weekly gift of music.

### **Graffiti Wall**

*Materials Needed: Newsprint, Markers and Music in the background*

Put up blank sheets of paper around the room, with different questions on them. Invite the youth to stand in small groups at each sheet, write or draw their responses, and then when you say "Next!" they move to the next sheet and respond there, also taking time to see what other groups have written.

### **Scavenger Hunt**

*Materials Needed: Imagination and Creativity*

Teams are sent out to collect a number of items, perhaps ten, within a given amount of time. The catch: they do not know yet what exactly is on the scavenger hunt list. They do not receive the list until they return with their items. They are then given a certain amount of time, as a team, to figure out which item best fits each descriptor on the list to come up with a persuasive argument that will convince the judges. (For example, if the scavenger hunt list item says "A new kind of drink holder," teens may try to convince the judges that the basketball they found best fits this description because it has a place for a straw to be inserted, can hold lots of liquid, and wouldn't break if dropped . . . ) Teams should be allowed, within reason, to modify their found items in order to make them better fit the chosen description on the scavenger hunt list. Or course, they will really have to work together to come up with their presentation of the object and how they will argue their connections to the scavenger hunt list. Some sample descriptors for the list might include:

- A symbol for peace on Earth
- A conversation starter
- Our new youth logo
- A tool to encourage sharing
- Something Jesus could have used
- A new way to study the Bible
- An aid for helping world hunger
- Something John the Baptist might have eaten

### **Speed Fellowship**

This activity is based on speed dating. It is a quick way for everyone to get to know each other. Half of the group will be sitting down before the speed fellowship begins. The other half will be standing until someone rings a bell to begin, then each member of this group will sit with a member of the other group for 5 minutes. The object is to ask each other questions to get to know each other better. When the bell rings, each person from the standing group moves to the next person who is sitting down. This ends when everyone has had a chance to meet all of the people individually in the group.

## Talk Tokens

*Materials Needed: Tokens such as Poker Chips, Pennies, etc.*

Sometimes the challenge of getting youth talking is that some talk too much and some talk too little. To try to break that pattern, provide everyone with the same number of tokens. During your discussion, each time a person speaks he or she must toss a token in the middle of the circle. Once their tokens are gone, they become a “listener” while they wait for everyone else to use up their tokens. The tokens are only redistributed after everyone has used up their turns to speak.

## Reverse Scavenger Hunt

*Materials Needed: Digital Cameras or Cell phones*

Usually, our photo scavenger hunts involve sending groups out with a list of things to take photos of, then they return, attach all the photos to a poster board and caption them. In this Reverse Caption Scavenger Hunt, you send the team out with a list of creative captions and they must take a photo of something they think best fits the captions. So, every team is free to use their imagination. Here’s a sample of some possible captions in which the challenge is to take a photo of the “THIS” in each caption:

- Everyone agreed that one look at THIS and you just knew all the beauty in the world was a gift from God.
- No one could prove it, but THIS looked to be evidence of an overly compassionate bunch of church youth!
- Amazing! THIS is an exact duplicate of (insert you leader’s name) face found in nature.
- All the townspeople agreed. THIS was truly a sign of God’s love.
- THIS is evidence of an “attempted servant hood with intent to cause smiles.”
- Surely THIS could only mean one thing: Harry Potter had been here.
- It was pretty obvious to onlookers how THIS was going to end.

## Talk Partners

Many people, particularly introverts, are uncomfortable just sharing their thoughts to a question off the tops of their heads but given time to think through their answer, they are more likely to respond. When posing a question to the group, invite youth to turn to a person next to them and share their thoughts. This gives each person some time to “rehearse” their possible answer without the stress of sharing it in front of the whole group. After a minute of two, call the group back together and invite those who are willing to share their answer or share something thoughtful that their partner offered.

## New Names

*Materials Needed: Small Slips of Paper, Pens, Small Containers*

*Instructions:* Divide group in to 3 teams. Ask “If you were to change your name, what would it be?” Give everyone a few minutes to write down their “new names” and place in the specified container. The leader will draw a name out of the container and read it to the whole group. Groups then have a chance to come up with who they think chose the name. If a group guesses right, then that person leaves their group and joins the other. (For example, Group A guesses that Sally wanted her name to be Emily. Sally was in group B so she now becomes a member of Group A). If a group guesses wrong, the next team has an opportunity to guess. This continues until all names have been guessed. The goal is to get all right and have the largest team at the end. Other ideas besides a new name include favorite cartoon character, favorite actor, favorite Bible character, etc.

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