

Embrace the Night! Goodbye Lock-In

An Excellent Update on the Tired Lock-Ins of Old

Gen Z youth value sleep. They need sleep for their mental health and to keep up with their full schedules. Lock-ins notoriously cause youth to stay up all night and eat too much junk food which can wreck the rest of the weekend as they try to catch up on sleep.

Hosting a Late Night is a brilliant alternative! You can get so much of the good stuff that you would from a lock-in with none of the terrible things. It is way easier to recruit chaperones when adults get to sleep in their own beds by midnight too. It is healthier for our young people and can still be a whole lot of fun and result in meaningful time together.

When to have one? What time of year? A Late Night is great at the start of the school year so that new youth can join in and get integrated in your group right away. It would also work well for a confirmation class to get to know each other or as a good midwinter pick-me-up. It is really good anytime, but these are just a few ideas!

Late Night Sample Schedule:

- 6:30 p.m. – Arrive having eaten dinner already.
- 6:30 – 7:00 p.m. – Service Project
- 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. – Devotion
- 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. – Team Building Games and/or Crafts
- 9:00 – 11:00 p.m. – Run Around Games
- 11:00 p.m. – Go Home
 - Some youth may arrange sleepovers with each other, but that is on them and parents to plan.

*Offer snacks at some point!

Service Project Ideas:

- **Blessing Bags for Unhoused People:** Pack gallon-size zip locks with gifts for unhoused people who youth may see asking for help around town. You can include socks, granola bars, beef jerky, water bottles, toothbrushes, toothpaste, lotion, etc.
- **Presbyterian Disaster Relief Packing Project:** <https://pda.pcusa.org/page/kits/>
- **Make Fleece Tie Blankets:** Find a local organization that needs fleece tie blankets and make them together. Organizations that often use these are Ronald McDonald House, foster care agencies, and shelters.
- **Makes Dog Treats and Animal Toys:** Reach out to your local animal shelter and see if they could use homemade dog treats or other homemade toys like colored ping-pong balls for the cat room or fabric braided dog ropes.
- **Assemble Snack Bags:** Reach out to a local organization that serves children to see if they need snack bags for the kids. Organizations that often enjoy snack bags include the Ronald McDonald House, domestic violence shelters, and homeless shelters that serve women and children.

- **Make Cards for Seniors:** Cards could go to all seniors in your church or just a specific group of seniors such as those who have lost a spouse or are homebound. You could also reach out to local retirement communities to see if they would accept cards.
- **Spread Kindness:** Paint kindness rocks with uplifting messages and put them outside around your church where folks can see them.

Devotion Ideas: These are general themes that you might consider related to service and group building.

- **Matthew 5:14-15** – Jesus is the light of the world. But we too are called to be the light. How can we be a light to others at home, school, and in our community?
- **Matthew 25:34-40** – How are we called to be the hands of Jesus? In what ways can we take care of the most vulnerable at school and in our community?
- **Romans 12:3-8** – How are we a community? What gifts might you offer to our group? What gifts do you see in others? How can this youth group community support each other?
- **Ecclesiastes 8:15** – Life can be hard and exhausting, and we will all experience grief and struggle. Yet, God wants us to eat, drink and enjoy life. We all need time set aside to play, laugh, and enjoy life. Tonight is about that, a time to have fun together. Where else do you enjoy the good of life? Do you have balance and enjoyment in your life? How might you add more balance and enjoyment?

Team Building Game and/or Craft Ideas:

- **Tie-Dye:** Make youth group shirts together using tie-dye.
- **Shrinky Dinks:** These are a fun way to make youth group swag for backpacks and keychains. These can be both churchy and silly.
- **Group Mural:** Work together to make art for your space. This could be a mural on the wall or on a sheet you hang up. Have them draw/paint/write around a topic inspired by the devotion, church, faith, or youth group.
- **Friendship Bracelets:** Youth love using string to braid and weave friendship bracelets. Come up with a fun way that they can exchange them with each other. They can also make bracelets for someone they care about, or wish was at the event.
- **Name Games:** If the group does not know each other well, google and play a variety of silly names games.
- **Obstacle Course:** Create an obstacle course throughout the church for two teams to compete against each other while working together and communicating with their teammates. Obstacle courses need at least 4-5 group challenges.
- **Four on a Couch:** <https://youtu.be/jtMAXP7re1o>
- **Turtle Walk:** https://youtu.be/c3Y_-56HJLs
- **Cold Wind Blows:** <https://youtu.be/GmQKAOsTh9M>

Run Around Game Ideas:

- **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**
 - o Supplies: printed pictures of the 7 dwarfs, tape, objects to tape the pictures to (such as bags or pool noodles), and (optional) pictures of the evil queen, mirror, poison apple, etc.
 - o Make 7 dwarfs by taping the pictures of the dwarfs onto the objects.
 - o Hide the 7 dwarfs in different locations around the church.
 - o Designate the adults or 3-4 youth to be “it” as the evil queen, mirror, poison apple, etc. One option is to tape pictures of these on to the people who are “it.”
 - o Assign someone to be the jail-keeper and designate an area as the jail.
 - o All the rest of the players are Snow Whites trying to rescue the dwarfs.
 - o If a Snow White gets tagged by someone who is “it” while searching for the hidden dwarfs, they will go to jail. They must sing a Disney song to the jail-keeper to get out. The jail keeper can make their own rules about how much of a song someone has to sing or how well they have to perform to escape.
 - o Play for 30 minutes or until all the dwarfs are found.

- **Indiana Jones**
 - o Supplies: balloons and trash bags.
 - o Setup - Decide how many teams you will have. Assign each team a color of balloon like red, blue, purple, etc. Put one balloon of each color in a trash bag. Fill 6-8 trash bags and hide the balloons around the church. You can also add a few golden or yellow balloons as bonus balloons. Choose an area to be home base. Designate the adults or 3-4 youth to be “it.”
 - o Team members must stay in the same general area and work together as they search for their color balloons and return these to home base. People who are “it” will be hiding and chasing everyone, trying to pop their balloons before teams can make it back to home base.
 - o If a balloon comes back to home base intact, it is worth 25 points. Popped balloon pieces are worth 10 points each (this also helps with clean up). Bonus balloons that are still intact are worth 50 points and popped bonus balloons are worth 30 points.
 - o Play for 30 mins or until all balloons are found. Add up each team’s points at the end.
- **Flashlight Game**
 - o Supplies: a flashlight, taken apart into 3 pieces – battery, handle, and light.
 - o Hide the 3 pieces of the flashlight in separate places in the church. Designate the adults or 3-4 youth to be “it.”
 - o The rest of the players will work together to find the parts of the flashlight. People who are “it” will try to tag everyone else. If tagged, youth must stay frozen in place until another youth comes to tag and unfreeze them.
 - o If youth find all three parts, assemble the flashlight, and shine it on people who are “it,” they win!
- **Classic Games**
 - o There are always classic games like sardines, hide and seek, and ghost in the graveyard too.

Youth love a Late Night! Chaperones love a Late Night! It meets young people where they are and scratches the itch for a fun event with running around their church at night and playing games. It gives everyone a good amount of time together to build relationships, create memories and grow in their faith in God. And since all still get a good night sleep, you may even be willing to do more than one a year!

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