



Church Helps

Serving Churches Serving Christ

Planning a Youth Calendar

by Melissa Woltmann

Summer is the time you can either lose or build your youth department depending on what you do, or do not do, with the time that you have. Balance is the key in your planning. Grand and extreme activities will bring in the crowds. But, how will you disciple? In planning activities you need to keep a spiritual goal in mind first and foremost. If you reach out into the community by encouraging your young people to invite their friends, a gospel presentation is an absolute must. If your group is going to be primarily your own young people, take the opportunity to address specific concerns of the group, disciple them more fully, train them to serve by ministering to others or work on unity.

How much "spiritual" time should there be? Base any lesson or devotional by how long your activity is going to be. Generally, a 15 to 20 minute devotional is appropriate for an activity that lasts two hours. The exceptions to this would be if you are conducting an overnighter, a VBS, or other long activity. A youth rally would also be an exception. For these activities a 30 to 40 minute lesson or sermon is not out of the question in addition to several breakout sessions. Always give opportunity for response even if it is only to offer to see them later; plan your time following the devotional so that your workers can manage without your direct input. You should plan time for the devotional either just prior to or just after eating. Planning this way is really more for logistics and crowd control than a hard and fast rule of thumb.

Your summer time activities are your opportunities for further training, both scripturally and in spiritual principles. Learn to recognize teachable moments. I specifically remember my youth pastor going around picking up trash at a picnic area on one activity. He was setting an example. He also had us pick up trash, whether it was our groups' or not, because we "should leave something better than we found it." He meant it specifically as a demonstration in stewardship to everything that the Lord has given us. For me, that simple statement applied not just to my physical surroundings, but also in my relationships. It was not a devotional, it was a sermon in action.

How many activities do you plan? First, you must check the major activities on the church master calendar. These would include Vacation Bible School, camp for both the juniors and the teens, mission trips, any revivals or special meetings that the pastor has scheduled, and any church-wide activities (Memorial Day, 4th of July, weddings, etc.). This will help you see what days you have left and will also avoid facility or responsibility conflicts. Double check with the pastor to make certain there is nothing missing on the calendar. Mark on your calendar the end and start dates of all the schools represented in your church - public, charter, private, Christian and home school. Do not forget to block off your own vacation time! You now should have a good idea of the available days for activities.

Junior aged children (1st through 6th grade) should have a few activities scheduled for the summer and one SNAC per month for the year. Remember, you are training and building your youth

Copyright 2010 Hold Fast Ministries All rights reserved.

Distribution of this material is expressly prohibited without written permission from Hold Fast Ministries.



Church Helps

Serving Churches Serving Christ

group. In addition, Vacation Bible School and camp should be planned for the Juniors. The "major" activities could include, but are not limited to, a hot dog supper and game time, a pizza party and putt-putt trip or a picnic at a local park with hiking and games. The activity should be kept simple. Length of the major activities should be kept to a maximum of two hours for at church activities and up to four hours if you must travel some distance. Remember, these are elementary children, not teens, so plan accordingly regarding activity level. Plan for enough adults to go with you; one adult per eight children is ideal. You can never have too many helpers. At least one adult of the opposite sex is a necessity.

Traveling with the junior aged group must be seriously evaluated. Check on your state laws concerning children and car seats to see how it would apply to your church's transportation. You may need to adjust ages of those eligible for the activity based on this information.

Teens can handle many more activities — and need more activities. Simple and low-cost (\$5 or less) activities include after-church activities (either at church or to a fast food place), all-day at the church "hang-out" sessions, all-day neighborhood canvassing, game times at the church (volleyball, basketball, crazy games, board games, etc.) to name just a few. A minimum of one or two of these activities should be included each month. These activities could include snacks or bring-your-own lunches. Low to medium cost (\$5 - 15) activities include putt-putt, bowling, Frisbee golf at a local park, pizza parties, local minor league ball games, etc.

More expensive activities such as amusement parks, overnights, extreme sports (i.e.; "rock" wall climbing, extreme obstacle courses, canoeing, rafting, tubing, etc.) should be organized sparingly. Do not feel pressure to include all these activities. Two activities of this nature spread out over the summer would be sufficient. You could also consider one of these activities in lieu of two smaller scale activities during the school year to help spread out your teens' interests.

Full-time youth pastors will be able to do more with the young people than lay workers will be able to do during the summer. Full-time youth pastors need to also plan for adult helpers when setting up activities; be sure that you will have enough adults and at least one adult of the opposite sex available. If you are a lay worker planning for the summer, plan for quality over quantity. Choose activities that will bring your group closer together and help you learn more about your young people. If at all possible try to include activities on week days as well as weekends and at different times of the day. Be sure to have the activity schedule handed out as soon as possible for the summer. This will help working teens plan their work schedules and possibly participate more often.

As you plan, think about cost. Spread out the activities that will cost a great deal. Always try to rotate high and medium cost activities with no or low cost activities. Parents will appreciate this. Also, be sure to let parents know on your calendar and in your flyers how much money will be needed for any meals or snacks.



Church Helps

Serving Churches Serving Christ

By the first of May your schedule should be 90% finalized. Prepare a calendar or a listing of all activities for the summer including cost and times. Be sure to include the church-wide activities as well. Begin handing out the calendars or listing by mid-May. Why so early? Parents need to plan for their children. Advance notice and details will go a long way to building trust between the youth leader and parents. Teens who will be working will also appreciate knowing in advance so they may have a chance of keeping activity days free. Families of split homes, where a child may visit the other parent for the summer, will also appreciate advance scheduling. Grandparents may also want to know about activities for visiting grandchildren.

Activities are an important aspect to a church youth ministry. Many times you are able to open doors to young people you may not have been able to reach any other way. Pre-planning will create excitement and avoid last minute scheduling conflicts. You will also already have established package prices that may not be available on a last minute basis. Pre-planning goes a long way in establishing trust with your pastor and the parents of the young people with whom you minister.

3/2006



Church Helps

Serving Churches Serving Christ



Church Helps

Serving Churches Serving Christ