

Thoughts on Lock-Ins

A fresh look at an old tradition

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Have you had a lock-in lately? Maybe you haven't because you almost burned the church down last time. Your pastor said no more lock-ins (or at least you told your youth that). You did a lock-in but you *were* the adult team. Here are some fresh new ideas so that we can revisit lock-ins and make them more useful:

Start your lock-in after the football or basketball game. Sometimes we plan lock-ins too long. By midnight, we have already been in the church for 5 hours and we are finished. Beginning later will help possibly draw in unchurched kids from the sporting events and may also help in programming more of the evening. This also gives us many more options of when to schedule a lock-in.

Who says you have to stay up all night? What about beginning to change the tradition (possibly starting with the younger ones in youth group) to just plan on sleeping at the church for at least part of the time.

Instead of a lock-in at the church, have it in homes. You could have the guys stay in some homes and the girls stay in some other homes – all on the same night. The youth leader or leader team could travel from house to house sharing the same devotion or program. The next morning, all the youth could meet at one larger home for breakfast. Note: you may want to re-name an evening like this so that it's not considered a "lock-in". being in homes, they would need to sleep for the host families sake.

Keep in mind, lock-ins are great for outreach. Kids that will never come to a church service will come to a lock-in. Set your worship time, devotionals, outreach types of things to a level consistent with youth who may have never heard of the gospel. Get every kids name, email and address. This will be one great fruit from your lock-in.

Plan purposeful / task oriented lock-ins. Spend the evening baking pies or assembling pizzas for a fundraiser, doing some sort of mission project, planning with your leadership youth. There will also be time for fun, but the goal for the night would be the project.

Plan to end early. Most of the fun of a lock-in happens before 12:00 or 1:00. What if you lock-in just ended then. It would become more of a late night party for the youth. You would more easily get sponsors, parents wouldn't mind picking kids up (since they do that for other late night events) and the next day wouldn't be spent sleeping all day. I know one church that actually took all the kids home on the bus at midnight.

Have plenty of adult sponsors for the evening. Having sponsors sign up for

shifts can help in getting people involved.

Talk positively about the lock-in. A positive attitude breeds a positive attitude when we are planning the event, dealing with the kids and dealing with potential helpers for the lock-in.

Spend part of the evening at a local YMCA or other sport facility.

Have a plan for plenty of good food. We were recently at a lock-in where an adult team was constantly making homemade pizzas, cinnamon rolls, setting out chips and salsa and just helping to create a festive atmosphere with great food! It's was a huge anchor for the evening. The kids appreciated the time and effort and definitely felt the love those adults were showing them.

Have a special guest musician or speaker come in for a lock-in worship time.

This can be someone from the church body or the community.

Lock-ins are great memory makers. Think about it - a 12 hour lock-in is like an entire quarter of one hour Sunday school times. You can accomplish lots of relational building and memory making during a lock-in. When young adults talk about youth group memories, lots begin with "remember when" stories. Use the lock-in to help create those times.

If you are planning a lock-in for your church youth ministry, and would like to have someone come serve as a worship leader, games leader, etc., we would love to send a team. Contact Harvest for more information.

Tim Price is the Director of Harvest Ministry Teams in Troy, IL. Since 1996, Harvest has been in existence to "equip young adults for ministry while providing a resource to the local church". Tim (along with others from the ministry) is available to lead worship and speak for your event. He lives in Troy, IL with his wife Suzanne and daughter Ruby.

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