

A few thoughts on

Planning retreats for your local church youth ministry

Tim Price / August 19, 2003

As a resource speaker and retreat leader, I have seen many changes over the last 15 years. When I first started in music and speaking ministry, I was constantly getting calls from churches who were inviting me to serve during their weekend retreat. I made a living through college traveling from one youth retreat to the next. Then about 5 years into the ministry, I noticed that things had shifted. (I of course didn't notice the shift; it just dawned on me after it all happened.) But with the resurgence of youth conventions and conferences we stopped getting calls for single church youth retreats and began getting calls for larger conference and multi youth ministry gatherings. There were many factors that accounted for this wave. One of them being the excitement of more students, although I believe there must be a balance in large and small. There is possibly a danger is hopping from one larger youth conference to the next all through the year. A second possibility is the ease the larger multi youth a gathering gives to the youth worker. The planning then becomes raising the money and transporting the youth, and while this is very important and needed, it's much easier then also planning the whole program as well. I love large, multi church youth gatherings and believe that they can offer lots of resource to the local church!

Now, after 15 years of experience, I am noticing a trend (and with a little experience) as it seems to be happening. Now, are we not only getting calls for larger conferences, we are also getting calls for single church youth groups. Could the pendulum be swinging again? So, just in case you haven't thought the possibility having your own youth ministry retreat lately, here are some thoughts and ideas for retreats!

Planning:

- ❑ Don't go to a mall, watch a movie, or do other "everyday" stuff.
- ❑ Girls only? Guys only? Leadership youth only?
- ❑ Bring in a music person or speaker - spice it up.
- ❑ Take a planning retreat with the youth group or youth sponsors.
- ❑ Have traditions....youth love em'.
- ❑ Have a silent time on your retreat - just have students take a vow of silence from 30 minutes to 3 hours. Amazing what happens in silence. When you do this at the beginning of the retreat, it puts everyone at the same level for the rest of the time spent together.

Scheduling:

- ❑ Think about starting later on Friday - after all the school activities – have the bus leave from the home football game. Or go on retreat after church on Sunday, when you are off school on Monday.

- ❑ Set a goal for your retreat - what do you want to accomplish through this?

- ❑ Take video of the weekend - show it each night or have someone edit it and make a keepsake.

- ❑ Don't let discipline get out of control - set standards and hold to them.

- ❑ Make a banner for the weekend.

- ❑ Let youth participate in planning.

Programming

- ❑ Take plenty of adult leaders- a good time to invite new ones to it - they begin to build tradition with the kids.

- ❑ Be flexible.

- ❑ Get preparation done early, so that you are able to have time with the youth during the weekend.

- ❑ Have a variety of learning styles - small groups, listening, active and experiential learning.

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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