



# **youth ministry blueprints**

**DNOW & RETREAT WEEKENDS**

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by YM360<sup>®</sup>

## **Youth Ministry Blueprints: DNow and Retreat Weekends**

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# introduction

## PURPOSE

**“BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL.” -BENJAMIN FRANKLIN<sup>1</sup>**

**“WHEN OPPORTUNITY COMES, IT IS TOO LATE TO PREPARE.” -JOHN WOODEN<sup>2</sup>**

Think back to the first time you ever planned an event weekend. Where did you start? When did you start? What were the focus points for you in preparing? Different people have different approaches to planning and executing these significant events, but we understand these events also bring stress. Weight stays on your shoulders as you always wonder, what did we miss? Preparation will not only ease your burden, but it also makes you more effective in your ministry. We've helped provide thousands of event resources, but we still felt like we weren't helping you adequately prepare.

We began putting our heads together on bringing the weight of these questions off your shoulders for your next event. What if there was a resource to help people plan an event from start to finish? Support to help you pick the weekend, theme, speaker. What about the smaller details? What about advertisement, registration, small group leaders, or even food? After researching this obvious need, we understood no one had put together this document. The idea was born, and our team was off to the races. We realized our staff would not be able to answer all of these questions, and our search began. We looked around the country and across denominations to put together the Youth Ministry Blueprints: Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends.

*Blueprints are vital for the building process. The plans laid out will not only guide the construction process, but these blueprints will serve as a reference for years to come. When issues arise, the blueprints are the first-place builders look. Builders want to see their building projects succeed, and the right blueprints ensure this happens.*

Our hope in creating the *Youth Ministry Blueprints: Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends* book was to create a quick reference guide for all of your Event Resource needs. We weren't looking for a 10,000-foot view of this project, but we wanted to engage with people who have handled the details of ordering paper goods for the nacho bar at lunch. Whether you have planned one-hundred events, or this is your first, we wanted to answer every question which might come up.

Not only does the *Youth Ministry Blueprints: Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends* answer these questions, it also gives you real-life examples of what to do. We include timelines, checklists, and example forms. Have you ever wanted to know what to include in a host home application? Head over to the Example Documents Section for an example. Have you asked when it is too late to order t-shirts? The “3 Months to Go” and “1 Month Away” checklists should help answer your question. These forms have been tested and proved in different ministries. The heart of putting this resource together was the success of one church to become the success of The Church.

What you do matters, and we want to help your events matter even more. We are thrilled to bring you the *Youth Ministry Blueprints: Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends*, and we pray it lightens the worry load on your shoulders. You've heard our heart, now let's jump into Chapter 1-Major Choices.

<sup>1</sup> “Preparation Quotes.” GoodReads, October 29, 2019. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/preparation?page=1>

<sup>2</sup> “Preparation Quotes.” GoodReads, October 29, 2019. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/preparation?page=1>

# chapter one

## MAJOR DECISIONS

Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend starts with decisions. As the leader, you have the unique privilege of making the choices that will shape your student's experience during Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. But before you start calling the shots... Pause. Take two crucial steps as you begin to ensure a powerful and well-executed weekend.

**Step 1: Pray.** Yes, this could just be the obligatory first step since this is a ministry event, but don't run past prayer. This is an event that will require the presence, power, and guidance of God. Invite Him into the process and pray every step of the way for His favor.

**Step 2: Assemble A Team.** No matter the size of your ministry, a Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend is a massive undertaking. As the leader, you may have an awesome vision, but it will take more than just you to accomplish it. Take the time to assemble a team at the beginning of your planning process so you will have help and investment from others on day one.

With these introductory thoughts in mind, let's take a look at the initial major choices for your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend.

### I. Weekend Choice

An event needs a calendar date to exist. Choosing the right one will determine your effectiveness in so many other ways: attendance, response, spiritual growth, etc. Start by looking at local school and sports calendars. Look for a window of time when you can minimize conflicts. Depending on the available dates, you may want to target the Fall or Spring to give it some distance from other Student Ministry events such as Summer Camp or Summer Mission Trips. Double-check with your church leadership to make sure there are no conflicts with the broader church calendar, then book it. Strive to set your dates 9-12 months in advance.

### II. Theme Choice

Setting the theme should be all about what you hope to accomplish during your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Here are some questions to help guide this decision.

#### ***What is the Goal of the Weekend?***

Is the goal to share the Gospel with students far from God? Choose a theme that will appeal culturally to lost students. Is the goal to have a time of intense spiritual growth. Choose a theme that addresses the needs of your student ministry. You can always choose a theme broad enough to accomplish both of these goals but remember: your theme is your greatest promotional message. Err on the side of appealing to those who are your greatest target to attend.

#### ***Are There Needs That Your Theme Could Address?***

Prayerfully look around your student ministry. Are there needs you could spend a weekend addressing? Look around the student culture in your community. Are there issues your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend could tackle that would be appealing to students far from God? You may invite some students to give you ideas on potential issues that could be addressed at Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend.

#### ***Stand-Alone Event or More?***

Events and weekend retreats are an amazing time for your group. In this very early stage, ask your team this question: "When it comes to our event and theme, is this a stand-alone event, or can there be more to it?" Here are a few options to keep in mind for general planning:

- Option 1: Do we want to build our midweek service right before the event as a “starter” to the event?
  - For the students that are going, all they’re going to be talking about and thinking about at the midweek service before your event is your event!
  - Leverage this and build a night that is an on-ramp to your event
- Option 2: Do we want to look at building a longer midweek series that leads up to our event, with the event closing the series out?
  - The benefit to this is that you can continue to push your event (depending on registration deadlines) through your (however many weeks) series leading up to the event.
- Option 3: Do we want to continue our event theme in our midweek services after the event?
  - This can be one week or more (more if you use your event to start a series)
  - This can help your students ease off the event/retreat high a little slower
- Option 4: Do we want to use our midweek service(s) leading up to the event AND after the event?

### **How Do I Ensure my Speaker Will Cover the Theme?**

Let me encourage you to get with your speaker **during** this decision to see if he would like to weigh in on the theme. Your speaker is the one most responsible for driving home the theme throughout the weekend. Find a speaker who will clearly teach the theme from the Bible. Even if your theme is topical, your speaker should still be committed to clearly showing students this topic from the pages of scripture. Which brings us to the next major choice... your speaker.

**Does selecting a theme sound stressful?** To see some of youth ministries most used themes, head to [ym360.com/dnow](http://ym360.com/dnow).

### **III. Speaker Choice**

Choosing your speaker is the make or break decision of a Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend weekend. Make sure your potential speaker aligns with your church’s core values and your goals for the weekend. Here are some helpful questions as you walk through this point in the planning process.

#### **When Do I Ask?**

Yesterday. Seriously, you want to move on this as soon as possible. Quality speakers are often booked far in advance, so make contacting and securing your speaker one of your first action steps. Getting a speaker booked early will also help you in the promotion of the weekend and allow you to include the speaker in some of the planning, such as theme.

#### **Do I Bring in an Outside Speaker?**

Your church may have a pastor or other staff members who could hit a home run as your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend speaker. The advantage of this is building deeper relationships with those who already lead in the life of your church. But keep this in mind: familiarity can make a speaker’s content become like white noise. To keep things fresh, your students may benefit from hearing an outside voice. Pray this through and make the best decision to keep the message impactful for your students.

#### **How Do I Find Quality Speakers?**

Think through your network of relationships with other pastors and ministry leaders. Is there someone who could be a good fit for your event? If not, there are several great places to look for potential speakers.

**Churches:** Look at strong churches, whose ministries you respect. Consider asking one of their student pastors to speak. **Camps and Ministries:** Ministries like Generate, YM360, and others have cultivated relationships with strong speakers. Ask for their recommendations. **Christian Universities:** Many have young gifted speakers. **One word of caution:** If you are bringing in a speaker you don’t know, check a reference or listen to a message BEFORE you approach them about speaking at your event. This will save you a lot of time and potential frustration. Be clear about your expectations and goals of the weekend, especially if you are bringing in a speaker who is new to your student ministry.

#### **What Do You Pay an Outside Speaker?**

Here is the principle: try to be as generous as possible without blowing your entire budget. Your speaker will pour hours of preparation into the messages. You are not paying them for the three or four 30-minute messages. You are paying them for all the prayer, preparation, and time away from family to invest in your students. There is no set rule on paying your speaker, but let generosity be your guide. You can always ask your speaker if they have a normal rate.

#### **Do I Use A Contract?**

It is common for speakers to use a simple contract, especially if speaking is one of their main streams of income. Do your best to accommodate the terms of the contract. However, if someone sends you a 25-page contract, you may want to go a different direction or at least get your church admin staff to read the fine print. Remember, a contract is a binding agreement, so make sure you feel confident your church can fulfill your end of the agreement before you sign.

Whether or not you use a contract, get a W-9 from your speaker for tax purposes.

### **III. Band Choice**

Your band has the potential to lead some of the most powerful moments with God throughout your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. They will set the tone for each session and be crucial to the spiritual impact of the event. Here are some good questions to think through as you consider your band choice:

#### ***What About Using a Band Already in our Church?***

Much like the conversation earlier about using an inside or outside speaker, the same principals apply. Using your in-house band could strengthen your students' relationship with worship leadership in the church. On the other hand, using an outside band could mix things up and help your students engage. The key factor is QUALITY. Do everything you can to get the best quality available within your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend budget. Speaking of budgets...

#### ***How Much Should I Pay the Band?***

Remember, your band must pay each individual member for their time, and there are additional expenses that bands incur for their equipment. When you are talking with the band, ask what their normal rate is and if there is any flexibility. Like your speaker, you want to be as generous as possible without busting the budget.

#### ***Should I Use a Contract?***

This is a key difference between your speaker and your band. Always get a contract that outlines the needs of your band. This will give your tech team a huge head start on preparing for the specific needs of your band. Make sure tech needs are outlined in the contract. You may even want to have your tech volunteers or staff review the contract before signing.

### **IV. A Few More Band and Speaker Questions**

#### ***Where Should They Stay?***

Try to accommodate your speaker and band in the best accommodations available. We are not talking about a 5-star hotel, but it should be conducive to a good night's sleep without fear of anything sketchy. Try to house your band and speaker away from your students. While you want to encourage your speaker and band to interact with your students, they need a little space to rest and recharge.

#### ***What if I Can't Afford the Band/Speaker I Want?***

Your band and speaker are your big-ticket expenses for the Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Spare every dollar you can here. You can always ask the speaker and band if they have any flexibility, but don't push too hard or guilt anyone. If they can't do it for what you can pay, show a lot of understanding and ask if there is anyone else they would recommend.

#### ***Should We Agree on Payment Before the Weekend?***

Absolutely. You don't want any surprises after the weekend. Make sure you agree on what you will pay beforehand and have the checks ready to give to the band and speaker during the weekend.

### **V. Recreation/Mission Time**

There are so many benefits of including recreation or missions in your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. It builds a sense of togetherness, creates energy, helps students come out of their shell, and can make a positive impact. Here are a few questions to consider on rec or missions:

#### ***Should I do Recreation or Missions?***

This depends on your goals. If you are trying to go big on building relationships, recreation is probably your best choice. Design recreation to include team exercises that will foster communication, building unity, and facilitate friendship. If you desire for your weekend to make an impact toward outreach, a mission project is a great option. Make sure your students know the goal of the mission project and how it will make a difference. This will motivate students to engage enthusiastically.

#### ***How do You do Recreation?***

This could be an entire book, but here are a few basics. Choose games that emphasize relationships, communication, and unity in your groups. Make your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend small group leaders the recreation team leaders to further grow their relationship with students. While you can download an endless supply of games from the internet, make sure that the games will relate to every age group you have represented. Recruit a "game master" who can execute the set-up, give instructions, and create hype around the games. Finally, consider giving each of your teams an identity like a color or team name. This will become something they can rally around. Warning: the fatal flaw of recreation is disorganization. Make sure you have a solid plan that will fill an hour.

### **Where do I Find Mission Partners in my Community?**

Consider supporting a mission organization that your church has a partnership with, so you can deepen the relationship and open the door for students to get more involved in the future. If you have to seek out a new partner, make sure it is more than a simple service project. You want a partner who is working toward a real ministry impact. Other local churches in your area may help you locate a reliable partner.

### **VI. Partnering with Other Churches**

Depending on the goals you have for your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend, you may consider partnering with other area churches. This can bring some great benefits, but also some potential pitfalls. Use these questions to navigate partnering prayerfully:

#### **Should we Partner with Other Churches?**

If the goal for your weekend is to speak to a specific issue related to your church, you probably want to stay solo for Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. However, if your goals are broad enough that they could easily be transferred to other churches, partnering might be a really good option. The key to make partnerships work is **common goals** and **clear communication**.

#### **Should we Partner with Other Denominations?**

There can be great benefits to partnering with churches in your community across denominational lines. It showcases what God is doing all across your community. However, this is where having common goals is crucial. For example: if the major goal of the weekend is giving students a chance to respond to the Gospel, make sure all your partner churches are on the same page for what that means. As long as you have the same core beliefs, these partnerships can be massively impactful. The best kind of partnerships across denominational lines are ones that grow out of friendship between student ministry leaders.

#### **What Should our Partnership Look Like?**

There are two ways to partner for your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend:

The first model is **Lead Church**. In this model, your church is leading the way on all major decisions such as speaker, schedule, venue, bands, theme, etc. Your church invites others to participate. This can be a blessing to other churches in your area, especially for student ministries that don't have resources to plan their own Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend.

The second model is **Collaborating Churches**. In this model, the leadership of several churches gather together to make major decisions such as speaker, dates, band, venue, theme, etc. Churches may rotate who hosts the event and delegate aspects of the weekend planning. For example: one church may handle mission projects, another may tackle meals, and another may take on stage design. Communication is the key to making this model work.

#### **What are the Benefits of Partnering?**

One of the primary benefits of partnering is resources. Perhaps you cannot afford the quality speaker or band that you would like to get for Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend, but if you partner, you could potentially pool enough resources to raise the bar. Another great benefit is giving students a picture of what God is doing across your community in the lives of students. This can be a powerful motivator for a larger kingdom impact in their schools.

#### **What are the Pitfalls of Partnering?**

Most partnerships fail because of misunderstanding and miscommunication. Everyone needs to be on the same page for what kind of partnership your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend is: Lead Church or Collaborating Churches. Keep the lines of communication open. You really cannot over-communicate if you have multiple churches partnering for the event. Finally, make sure you share the same goals for the weekend. Ask each partnering church, "What is the win for Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend?" The answer should be the same for every church. During the event, provide space for "church time" even if you are partnering. Each church needs time and space to debrief.

#### **Should I Always Partner?**

Partnerships usually last for a season. An area-wide Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend is a great idea, but you may need to take a break from these kinds of multiple-church events from time to time to address specific needs in your Student Ministry.

# chapter two

## REGI(FRU)STRATIONS

I LOVE filling out forms! Said a few people...ever. Whether using a pen or keyboard, registration forms can be frustrating. However, and upfront, your event registration process could be one of the very first impressions parents/guardians of students in your church get...of you.

Did you get that? Go back and read that last thought out loud!

Your registration process isn't just a potential first impression of you. It can be the first impression of your pastor, your church, AND Jesus. "Jesus,"? Legit yes. It is easy to preach to others something like "everything you do represents Jesus." After all, that's straight scripture. If that's true for your students, it is true of your registration process! So let's look at some key elements to take the "fru" out of "regifrustrations"!

The following are elements we recommend for your event registration form. Some elements have our thoughts in italics and an example(s) that follow. Layout and flow need to be determined by your organization and leadership!

### Element One: Registration Form Content

#### Full Name

*You want to include their full first, middle, and last name, as well as any suffix (jr). This is important for medical emergency purposes.*

Example:

Student's First, Middle and Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Suffix: \_\_\_\_\_ (Jr)

#### Primary Home Address

Ask for the student's primary home address as students can have multiple "homes" based on parent and family living circumstances.

Example:

Please list the student's primary residence where they live a majority of the time.

Street number | Street Name | Apartment number | City | State | Zip Code

#### Birthdate

The month, day, and year are important for medical purposes as well as noting if a student's birthday falls on/during your event!

**School Grade During Time of Event** (If the event is in the summer, please put the grade your student will be going into the next school year.)

This is important to ensure students are in the correct age group and for proper placement in small groups if you form your small groups this way.

#### Gender:

**Does this match your student's gender at birth:** (or on their birth certificate)?\*

*\*Your church leadership will need to decide if both questions will be on your registration form. If you decide to have both questions, a short statement as to why will either need to be provided OR will need to be ready for anyone that asks.*

Example:

Students have separate sleeping areas and are separated based on gender at birth.

## Parent/Guardian Information

- Full Name: You want to include a prefix, their full first, middle, and last name, as well as any suffix. This is important for medical emergency purposes
- Address: Street number | Street Name | Apartment number | City | State | Zip Code
- **Phone Number:**
  - Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Is it ok to text? Yes No
  - Home
  - Work
- **Email**

**Emergency Contact:** Please list a secondary emergency contact person

- Full name
- Cell Number | Home Number | Work Number
- Relationship To Student

## Medical Information

- Please list all food allergies your student has:
- Please list all medication allergies your student has:
- Please list your student's insurance information (if available)
  - Name of Insurance Company
  - Full Name of Insured Person
  - Policy Number

## In the event of a medical emergency for your student listed on this form:

- Do you give permission for (organization) to transport, or seek emergency transportation at the discretion of (organization), for medical treatment? Y N
- If insurance information is not available, do you give permission for (organization) to seek medical treatment for the student listed on this form? Y N
- Insurance Info if available

## Pickup From Event:

*It is important to understand if there is anyone that the student cannot be released for legal reasons.*

Example:

Upon pickup at the end of the event, is there anyone the student listed on this form cannot be released to? If so, please list their full name.

## Disclaimers:

*Parents must know their student will be transported to and from the event (if applicable) and may be photographed and/or video recorded throughout the event for promo/marketing purposes.*

Example:

By signing this form at the bottom, you understand, agree with, and give permission to (organization) for your student listed on this form to:

- Be photographed and/or video recorded to capture memories, as well as future marketing and promo.
- Be transported via (insert type of transportation here) to, during, and back from (event)

## Lodging:

*Depending on how comprehensive your organization wants to be, you can let parents know what type of lodging will be used at your event, if applicable. Your organization needs to determine if you want to do the work to try and accommodate student's lodging requests!*

Example:

The rooms we will be staying in sleeps up to 12 people. Each room will have two adult chaperones and ten students. Please list 1-2 other students (full name) your child would like to room with. While we cannot promise, we will do our best to accommodate.

## Signature:

*We are going to -re-emphasize what the parent is signing the form for here:*

Example:

Thank you for taking the time to invest in your student! Please remember that by signing below, you are giving (organiza-

tion) permission to:

- Transport your student to, during and from (event)
- Seek medical transportation and/or treatment at the discretion of (organization) leadership

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date:

*\*\*Head to the Example Documents Section to see an example of this form!\*\**

---

## Element Two: When To Open Registration For Events

Non-breaking news...today's students have a lot going on. The earlier you can get dates and cost into their (parent's) hands, the better chance you have of locking them in. That being said, if registration opens too soon, you risk your event becoming a distant memory or old news.

Different event types, and the consistency of your bigger events, play into when registration opens. Think about the Hillsong or Passion Conference. Registration for the following year's event opens during, or immediately following the current event! If you run a large annual event where students and families know what they are going to get, doing the same would be the move.

For lots of ministries, the infrastructure it takes to do that doesn't exist. And that is perfectly ok...we recommend setting a timeline to open registration three months out from your event—chapter five talks more about what to have ready by then so we won't discuss it here.

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## Element Three: Pricing and Registrant Numbers

"We can make a ton of money on this event!" Said no ministry leader...almost ever. While we all want to keep costs down for families, the budget is still important. Elements to include when setting the price for your students should include:

### Venue Cost:

We highly recommend doing an on-site visit to help set your per-person cost!

- Sleeping Rooms
  - How many rooms do they have to sleep people in?
  - How many people can sleep in each space? (This gives you their max occupancy and your max number of people you can allow registering)
    - Have the number of spaces you think you will need for your event at the on-site visit - include two chaperones per room
- Main Meeting Space (service, etc.)
  - What is the maximum occupancy?
  - Are sound, lighting, and video elements available
    - Are these included or additional cost?
- Break-out/Small-group spaces (rooms, open spaces, etc.)
- Large inside area for games and activities (in case of inclement weather)
  - The main meeting space could double as this space if the venue is ok with it and you will have the people to tear down and set up chairs
- Outdoor field/open area for games and activities

### Additional Tech Elements:

- Determine what you need to rent for sound, lighting, and video elements
- Build this into your overall budget

### Food:

- Get meal pricing from the venue (if available)
  - Some places include meals in their overall price, and some do not
  - If they do not, you can get creative and only include venue meals for non-travel times

- o Students could be responsible for their meal on the way to and back from the event
- Can you include a provided meal for students at the church before you leave?
  - o Include for food cost:
    - Main item plus two side items
    - Drink
    - Dessert
- Figure in snacks throughout the event (if you don't run a concession booth)
  - o Late-night snacks per student
  - o Bottled water or drink stations for warmer months

### Transportation Options:

- If the venue is within 45 minutes of your church, having students dropped off saves on the overall cost
  - o Determine if you want a late van or bus available for students in sports, etc
  - o Add this cost to your overall budget
- Church Bus/Vans
  - o Figure in roundtrip cost of gas
  - o If your stopping to eat on the way, figure in the cost of meals for transportation drivers
  - o If transportation drivers want to double as chaperones for the event, figure in the cost for them to stay, eat, etc.
    - Or include them at whatever cost you set for chaperones/leaders if different from the student cost
- Charter Bus
  - o Get multiple quotes and reviews to determine the best choice
  - o Divide the total charge by the number of people to get your per-person cost
  - o Example: Charter Bus Expense is \$2400 divided by 150 people equals \$16/person

### Supplies:

- Small group supplies
  - o Candy/snacks
  - o Identity Supplies (if you use small groups for games/competitions)
    - Team flag
    - Shirts or bandanas
  - o Small group book or binder for students to follow along
    - An option is to go digital and build an app or use YouVersion Events
      - Keep in mind that some students won't have access to a phone, etc. This can be an added element as opposed to the only option
- Big game/activity supply budget
  - o Set an amount to spend on supplies and divide that by the number of students
- Token
  - o Giving the students something to remember the weekend/event can add a lot of value
  - o An example could be giving everyone a key if the event's theme is "Unlocking God's Best"

### Guest Speaker (and family if you want):

- Travel Expense
  - o Airfare or rented vehicle
  - o Petty cash to use for travel
- Room and food
- Welcome Gift to be placed in room
  - o Snacks and drinks for their room
  - o Welcome note
- Honorarium
  - o Ask what they normally charge

### Leadership Cost:

- Determine how many leaders/chaperones you will need
- Determine the base cost for chaperones (bed, food, transportation)
- Build their cost into your per/student cost
  - o An option to keep student's cost lower is to charge chaperones a minimal amount to go towards their event cost
  - o For example, it will cost you \$75 per chaperone. Charge chaperones \$25 and build the balance of \$50 per chaperone into your student cost.

Once you have all of these figures available, add everything together, and divide the total number by the number of total people. This will give you the per-student cost to start your early bird pricing with!

### **Pricing Options: Early Bird, Regular, And Final Pricing:**

Because you desire to know registration numbers sooner than later, having three registration price points with different due dates will help you be better prepared. Make sure to know the maximum number of beds your venue has, reduce that number by

Example:

Event Date: Friday - Sunday, August 3-5

- Early Bird: \$150 if registered by May 5th
- Regular: \$165 if registered by June 5th
- Final: \$180 if registered by July 15th (this is when registration is closed for the event)
- Determine when the venue needs the final number of people by and base your final registration deadline on this

---

## **Element Four: Paper or Online Registration?**

You have grown up or lived in a tech-driven world for some time now. Since the world survived and thrived with paper forms and snail-mail, and because the world continues to digitally move forward, this is a matter of preference and ability. Whatever you choose, this needs to be done with excellence. Here are a few ways to handle getting registration forms out and back to you:

### **A. Print Everything**

- Create your form using Word, Google Docs, etc.
- Print out and have available for pickup at church
- Email blast to parents! This is still a thing...a thing that still works
- Students/parents fill it out and bring back to you/the church
- We suggest having an awesome obvious spot for collection of forms at church
  - Create a small banner to hang on the wall behind a pub table
  - Or have someone build a booth to use throughout the year and put the current event's logo on it
  - Or ask to decorate the church's welcome center with your event theme elements
  - Have a few extroverted people assigned to this area (a couple of students and a parent or two) to answer questions and collect money

### **B. Paper and Digital Download**

- Have printed forms available
- Have a PDF download available on your website, social media, etc
- Email blast to parents!
- Forms are printed off at student's homes and brought in to your awesome obvious booth.

### **C. Online Form**

- Create (or have one created, we talk about this below) an online form and have the link available everywhere
- Email blast to parents!

#### *Online Form collection*

- Set the online form to auto-download individual student responses to a spreadsheet
  - You can create the response spreadsheet to sort data however you choose (gender, school, and grade, gender only, etc.)
- Set the online form to email you individual student responses
  - Print them off and input data however you choose (gender, school, and grade, gender only, etc.)

### **Online Form Creation**

Have you ever heard the phrase "It's not just who you know, but how you use who you know"? If you have never entered the world of online form creation and recording of data, read that quote again. And then start putting feelers out to see who you know and what they can do.

If you are going to transition to an online registration form/data collection; and if you do not know what you're doing; and if you do not have a staff member that knows what they are doing, we highly suggest you include having this created for you, or through a service, in your budget.

# chapter three

## MARKETING + ADVERTISING

Have you ever planned a big event, and no one showed up? Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend take a lot of time and effort to pull off. You don't want to do all the work associated with the event then have no one show up. Here you will find a guide to ensuring students get signed up and attend the event so God can do amazing things in and through them.

### **Do I Need to Market My Event?**

This is a great question and one I have heard many times from hard-working youth pastors. And the answer is, "YES!" If you want students to show up and the church to buy into your youth ministry retreat.

### **Blueprint for Marketing Success**

Be sure your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend date is listed in your annual youth ministry calendar. Place the weekend on the main church calendar as well. These two basic things go a LONG way in helping ensure that the dates are saved.

Anna Archer, YM360's Event Resources by YM360 specialist, wrote in an online article *3 Ugly Truths About Weekend Retreats* that "there is no such thing as a perfect date" for your retreat. This is so true, isn't it! The perfect date does not exist. You may have 35 students at your event, but there may still be another 5-10 students who couldn't make it because of their debate team competition. One thing that can help is getting the date of the event on the youth ministry and church calendar as soon as possible. I'd even recommend getting it on the calendar a full year in advance. How awesome would it be to announce the dates and theme of your next Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend during the final session of THIS event?

### **Timing**

Be sure to have all marketing assets fully ready to deploy at least three months in advance. You will win the hearts and minds of your church leadership, parents, and even students with you communicate Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend event details at least three months in advance.

### **Set Your Pricing in Tiers**

Not knowing your specific setting, you might not have students pay for events like this. Then this isn't for you, and you can skip over this.

Most youth ministries charge something for their Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend events. If you don't, you can skip over this section. I'd recommend having three pricing tiers to work with. An Early Bird, Standard, and At-the-Door. If you get people to sign-up early and commit early, then you will be able to do two things. The first is you will get more people to your event. We all know that Nate won't sign up unless Michael signs up. And Michael won't sign up unless Will signs up. And Will won't sign up unless Nate signs up. We've all seen this in our groups. One way to help with this is to create an "Early Bird" rate. The second reason is you will be able to plan better. When people sign up early, you are able to gauge the logistical needs earlier. While there is no standard pricing for Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend events, I'd recommend something like this if your rate is \$35 per student for the weekend. Meaning this is what you'd normally charge a student. Make the Early Bird rate \$30.

Don't worry about the missing \$5 right now because you will make it back in the next sections. If you or your financial person at church is worried about it, go with the \$35 as the Early Bird. Then the Standard rate will be \$45. Finally, the At-the-Door rate will be \$55. I'd start the At-the-Door pricing the week before the Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend event. As you can see, you might bring in more than budgeted, and then you can do something extra with the funds. For more about budgeting, please go back to chapter two in this Blueprint.

In summary, the reason you have pricing tiers is not to make more money. It is to encourage your students to sign up early to create more momentum ahead of your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend.

*\*\*Check out the Example Documents Section for the Tier Pricing Example Sheet. \*\**

### **Getting a Deposit**

You might not be in the habit of getting a deposit for a Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend, especially if the cost is under \$50. But one way to help curb people backing out is by getting students and families to put some cash on the line. There is a financial reason to do this, as well. It helps you with having money in the bank to purchase your needed items. It's a weird physiological thing. When people pay a little bit of money, it is really hard to let it go.

### **Gifts for Signing-Up Early**

What about giving something away to the first group of students to sign up? Maybe it is something you have around your youth room. How about the first 20 people to sign up will get a FREE Youth Ministry Shirt, Sticker, and are entered in for a chance to win a \$100 Amazon Gift Card or other gift card that your students would love. Remember, with the tiered pricing from above; you will most likely have a little extra cash to do something like this. The next 10 people will get a FREE Youth Ministry Sticker and change to win a \$50 Gift Card. You can keep going, but I think you get the picture here. This is to get students and parents to sign up early and get the buzz happening well in advance of your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend.

### **Launch the Website**

But don't take any signups yet but put the date of LAUNCH for all to see, and you will push that date hard in other marketing.

"What website?" You may ask. The answer is the really simple one you are going to create for your event. With website builders like WIX and Squarespace, there is no excuse for not having a website for your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. "But we only have a small group, and I know everyone who will be coming." My question is, "would you like more students to come? Would you like your students to invite their friends that might not go to church?" Having a website communicates that your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend event is legit, trustworthy, and important. You will use the site on your additional pieces of marketing. Not only will students be looking at this page, but so will the parents of those students. The website will immediately give you and your ministry great street cred. Additionally, it will help if you are getting host homes from your church because it will show you are serious about this event and the impact it will have.

*\*\*See the Example Documents Section for the Website Wireframes Document\*\**

### **What Needs to Be on This Website?**

The website needs to be two pages, or even better, just one page. Nothing fancy. In marketing speak, we call this a "Landing Page." We need the main page and the signup page.

Here are is a simple blueprint to ensure students show up to your weekend!

Theme

3 Reasons why students want to be there

When

Where

Cost

SIGNUP Form. You won't need this for launch but will need it once you start taking signups. Don't worry about taking money here. Just use it as a Signup. Students first and last name, cell phone number (optional), email address (optional), food allergies, special needs. Parent/Guardian information. You can make this form really simple or in-depth. It's your call. Just have a section for them to sign up.

Testimonials

Pictures from previous youth ministry events. Make sure you have a photo release on file of any student's picture you post online.

Event schedule

Downloadable Permission Form WITH PHOTO RELEASE

FAQ

Bonus:

Promo Section. Images for your students to use on their social media posts. Make sure they are the right file sizes. You can find these by a quick google search of "Social Media Sizes." This information changes regularly, so be sure to search for current sizes.

## Create All PROMO Visuals

Since you have selected your theme well in advance, you can use the assets from that to create all your promotional visuals. Here is a quick list of items you might want to create.

- Slides for Youth Ministry and Church Announcements
- Social Media Graphics for your ministry to post as well as students
- Posters for around the youth ministry space and church
- Rack Cards for students to take and give to friends
- Postcard for mailing to your entire youth ministry database

If you aren't a graphic designer, don't worry as you might have a student, parent, or volunteer in your church that would be more than willing to step in. If not, you can use an online marketplace for freelance services like Fiverr to request graphics in your specified dimensions.

## Where Should I Put My Promos?

You want to saturate your parents and students with your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend event that they almost feel annoyed with seeing and hearing about it. I've heard it said before when you want to communicate something important in your ministry to parents and students; you want to say it so often that they start making fun of you for it. Then you know you have just begun talking about it enough.

- Church Email List - I might not send an email just about this, but I'd tag it on to an email the church is already sending out.
- Youth Ministry Email List to Parents and students if you have it. Send a dedicated email, meaning only talking about this Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Then add it to the bottom of every email leading up to the event.
- Church Bulletin Board - "But my students don't look at it." That's great! But parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, babysitters, soccer moms, and more do. You want all the help you can get to get the word out.
- In every adult Sunday School class - Just like the Church Bulletin Board, you want these impressions all over the place.
- Poster for the high-traffic areas in your church
- Church Announcements - if your church does these in your worship gathering(s), be sure it is talked about.
- Inside every sit-down bathroom stall at the church. And stand-up ones too!
- Church Facebook Page
- Your Parents Only Facebook Group for your ministry
- All your ministry social media platforms
- Banner in front of your church
- Worship Bulletin
- Insert in the Worship Bulletin
- A card to be given out with Communion or the Lord Supper saying This Meal is Sponsored by...." Ok, just kidding! Don't want you to get fired before the event.

You get the idea, right? Everywhere you can think of. You want adults asking you if they can sign up because they have seen it so many times. Better yet, what if adults started stopping you at church and asking if you needed any help with the event coming up? Major win, right!

## What to Have on Your Promos Items?

Create three sets of these to match your tiers. Five to six months in advance, the language might be, "Save the Date" along with the theme. Six months in advance, you want to change that to be, "Signup today at the Early-Bird rate. Be one of the first XX and get (whatever you desired from above)!" Be sure to include the website URL. The third and final set you will put out for the Standard time leading up to the date of your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend.

Don't try to put too much information on these promotional items. The goal is to get folks to your website to consume all the information needed. Keep it bold and simple. A great eye-catching headline is perfect. Maybe it is just a headline like, "DNow Is Coming. Don't Miss It." or "A Weekend Like No Other." or match it to your theme. Then the date and URL of your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend website. Remember... you don't need to put WWW in front of the URL. It's like putting your email address in the footer of your email. Think about it.

## Have a BIG Launch Day!

Make a really big deal about it. It doesn't need to be at your weekly event, either. How about make it a Monday? So when you talk about it at church on Sunday, there will be a good vibe around it. Say Monday at 6 pm. Why 6 pm? Well, parents are generally home from work, and students are done with school. All of your marketing up to this point has been pointing to this day on the calendar, and it is three months from your event.

## Continual Promotion

Once you open the gates for students to signup, don't stop talking about the event. Be sure to give it a plug EVERY time you are gathering as a ministry. You can do this in several ways. Here are a few ideas to get you headed in the right direction:

- Talk about it. Stand up and highlight the event and plug the way to signup and invite students to signup.
- Create a promo video to post on social media or show when you gather with students and invite students to signup.
- Have some students be creating and create a 45second to 60second video, promoting the event and invite students to signup.
- Get a couple of students to stand up and share why THEY are going to the event and why they are going and invite students to signup.
- Ask an adult small group leader to stand up and share what is going to happen during small group time and invite students to signup.
- During a weekly youth ministry event, ask for a show of hands, "Who has signed up for the event?" Give away a \$5 Coffee Gift Card at random to highlight the event signups and invite students to signup.
- INSERT YOUR CRAZY IDEA and invite students to signup.

Be sure to invite students to signup. This might sound silly. But just giving information without calling someone to action is like getting a million-dollar check and not cashing it. Ever wonder why politicians always ask for your vote? I mean they give speeches, spend millions on TV commercials, host big rallies, everything they do is to try to get you to vote for them, but they still ask for your vote. It's because there is power in asking. There is power in asking someone to take the action you want them to take. In the marketing world, we call it a CTA. Call-to-Action. We are calling students to the action of signing up.

## Once The Signup That's Not It

Be sure to regularly communicate with the students and the parents/guardians of the students signed up. Remind them of their awesome choice to signup for the event. If there is still space at the event, encourage them to spread the word and invite others to signup for the event. Share with them some of the behind the scenes happenings as you prepare for the event. It may sound silly to share with parents that you have selected the T-shirt design, but parents value being in the know. And it also keeps the event top-of-mind for them. That way, if the baseball team wants to schedule a tournament during the same weekend, parents can work to protect that weekend. This is another reason to get signups months in advance.

## Adult Prayer Guide

This is not only a brilliant way to get your church talking about the upcoming Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend event, but also it is an essential item needed for it. Create a prayer guide on a half sheet of paper you can have professionally printed with your youth ministry logo and theme of your event or print it on the church copier in black and white. Ask the leaders of all the adult Sunday School classes if you could stop in for three minutes and invite their members to partner with your ministry in prayer for the upcoming Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend event. Again, think of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, babysitters, soccer moms, and more. They will be praying for you, your students, and the event, but also you are creating a buzz about it. Granny will tell her grandson that he better signup for that event because she is praying for it! Wondering what to include in their prayer guide?

*\*\*Head to the Example Documents Section for some examples of Prayer Guides\*\**

## After the Event

What a weekend! That was totally awesome, right? All that hard work paid off. You and the team totally crushed it! Students entered into a relationship with the living God for the first time, others chose to go all-in with God, and yet others took another step into a relationship with God. It was an awesome event. A few key things still need to happen in the world of marketing your event. "What? The event is over why do I need to keep marketing my event." Awesome question! You want to have additional events in the future, right? Maybe a summer camp, mission trip, or another Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Here are a few things to think about after the event.

- Turn the website off. Maybe it is fully off as in No such page found. But what about putting a splash page with some of the facts from the event? 3 Days, 2 Nights. 35 Students. 17 Adult Leaders. 936 Meals. 12 Worship Songs. 4 Powerful Messages. 8 Hours of Small Group Time. 56 Transformed Lives. 7 New Followers of Jesus. 12,000 Gallons of Mt. Dew. You get the point. Put something on the website celebrating the event. Put photos of the event up online.
- Thank all who had a part in the event. Do this personally in person, email, phone, card.
- Put up a flyer with the high-level awesomeness God did in the through the event. Some of the same things as above.
- Take down all of your posters and flyers around the church. You'd hate to have someone upset that the posters are still up four months after the event. Don't be that house in July with Christmas lights still up.
- Ask for five to seven minutes to give a verbal report in each of the Adult Sunday School classes you visited before. And take a student or two with you to share a 60-second testimony of the event about something great

God did in their life. Have them share something that God did to change their Vision, Heart, or Actions. Vision - how did God change how they see their world, friends, church, family, and so on. Heart - how did God change the way they feel about the world around them or a specific area of their life. Action - what are they doing differently now because of this event.

# chapter four

## VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Once you have the general plans in mind, such as possible dates, speaker(s), theme, budget, etc., the next step is to recruit volunteers. This venture may only be a few days long, but it is a massive undertaking of details. You cannot accomplish this event by yourself! The first step is to take into account how many of your regular volunteers would be available to serve during this event. Your regular volunteers make the best small group leaders. However, to prevent burnout and exhaustion from your regular leaders that will be serving heavily during this event, you may need to consider recruiting volunteers for other roles, but more to come on that later in this chapter.

Small group leaders are the backbone of your event. They will stay with the kids throughout the entire event, stay in the host homes with the students, and, most importantly, apply what they are learning in your small group time.

If you can estimate how many students you are expecting, you can estimate how many small group leaders you may need. Your church may have rules in place for an appropriate ratio for how many leaders you should have for x amount of students. However, a good ratio for small group leaders is usually between 1:8 to 1:12. Twelve students is the top end of a good small group size so that every student can share during their time together. Although this is a good ratio, it is always wise to have two adults in a room whenever there are minors. Since these volunteers will likely be in a room alone with the students, getting background checks on them is just a good safety precaution. Check with your church because they likely have a company they already use for this.

*\*\*See Sample Small Group Leader Application in Example Documents Section.\*\**

This event will likely ask a lot from your leaders, so consider how you can show your appreciation to your small group leaders and special leaders that invest their time in this event. This is an easy thing to do but can go a long way. Your leaders who are on the go and keeping up with students will be tired, so showing thanks will encourage and energize them. Also, for the leaders that you recruited, this may encourage them to sign up to volunteer in the future.

Thanking your leaders will look different according to your budget. Treating and thanking your leaders can simply mean taking the time to write a thank you card. An even better step is to get the students to write thank you cards to their leaders!

Some other ideas include creating some break times or downtime for your leaders to unwind or take a needed break from "being on watch." Small group leaders are your eyes and ears for this event, and that can be exhausting for a long period of time. You can provide a space just for them to take a break and call it "the leader lounge." Include a special lunch, water bottles, coffee, tea, snacks, energy drinks, gum, or anything else that shows them that they are appreciated.

One of the most expensive (but best) ideas to appreciate your leader is to create a specific brand item just for them. For example, you may be getting t-shirts for your students, but consider creating leader specific shirts. This will get your leaders excited, as well as make them feel special. If creating an item is out of your budget, you cannot go wrong by creating a small gift bag with a \$5 coffee gift card, gum, and other miscellaneous items that might go with the theme of your event.

The biggest way to show your appreciation is to not charge your volunteers to serve at the retreat. Some leaders may be using vacation time to serve, and many are taking time away from their families. A sign that you are respecting their time and effort is to make sure that their registration is covered. The cost of the leader is usually covered in one of three ways. First is through your youth budget. Take into account all the costs of the leaders and absorb it into the youth bud-

get for the event. Secondly, it is through the registration cost of the students. Determine what the total cost is for all your leaders to be covered for the whole event and split that cost evenly to the registration costs of the students. This might mean raising your initial per student registration cost by a couple of dollars. The final way is to raise funds from some generous folks in the church. There may be some people in your church who would love to help the student ministry financially. Send them an email or give them a phone call asking them to sponsor small group leaders so they can serve without any obstacles.

### Other Needed Roles (optional, but helpful)

Small group leaders are the hands and feet working with the students, but other roles are needed to pull this event off. Consider asking your regular leaders that cannot attend the event to help out with pre-event or post-event tasks. Alternatively, this is great for parents who want to help but can't commit to the whole event. There are a lot of things that need to be accomplished before and after the event. There are many ways to get your whole church involved, even in the small roles, and even if it is not for the whole event. Ultimately, you cannot do everything yourself. More than likely, you will be exhausted before the event even starts if you try to handle too much by yourself. Delegate, delegate, delegate!

Let's start with some roles that you can delegate to those that want to help before the event. Change these according to your context.

#### Short-term-pre-event volunteers may include:

- **Volunteer Coordinator:** You are going to be busy managing everything, but making sure that each type of volunteer is communicated with before the event is super important. They need to have certain information ahead of time. You may have planned a training time before the event for your leaders, but having an extra person to double-check that you have communicated with each type of volunteer what their specific duties are would not hurt. Having someone overseeing the volunteers, communicating with them, and/or being the person they ask questions to will allow you to focus on the other millions to-do's that you have on your plate.
- **Paper Volunteer:** It may not seem like it, but this is a very critical role. This role may mean making or handling important documents, such as student information or parent contact information, in case an emergency happens. This role also can just mean that they are in charge of collecting or distributing all of the required student forms. If there are any print outs that need to be stapled, schedules, leader guides, breakout session posters, etc., this can be designated to the paper person.
- **SWAG Volunteer:** This is a role that can be designated and done days before the event. If you are ordering any kind of shirts, hoodies, hats, stickers, etc., or handing out anything to those attending, you need a person who can help you organize and plan a distribution process. They can help organize t-shirts by size, student, or group. Other ideas would be someone helping to put together schedule badges or name tags, weekend journals, or anything else that you are giving away.
- **Food/Game/Prizes Supply Shoppers:** Depending on where you are hosting this event will determine if you need to get supplies for the event. If you need help gathering food or props for a game or prizes for winners of games, assign it to someone to pick up/purchase/ and bring supplies to the church. Designate a person to be in charge of those supplies and where they will be when needed. This is also important if this volunteer is shopping for food. Make sure to communicate with them before about any allergies or any specific needs for the context of your event. You may have other people serving the food at the actual event, but everyone should be aware of allergies or restrictions.
- **Set up/Tear down:** Setting up rooms for where small groups or breakout sessions will meet is super important. These roles can be done by anyone, but preferably not your small group leaders who might be staying up all night at the event. They will be exhausted. Try to recruit for these setting-up and cleaning-up roles.

#### Other Volunteer Roles Needed:

- **Food and Beverage Volunteer:** Designate a specific leader(s) whose focus will be on preparing, cooking or heating up food, setting up tables, etc. whatever needs to be done regarding serving or distributing food. The best solution is to have this be someone's entire role. Even better is to have one or two people whose sole focus is on food provisions. Make sure they are aware of any allergies or dietary restrictions. They can recruit other help or students to serve as needed. It will all depend on your context. Parents are great at this job!
- **Greenroom volunteer:** If you are short-handed with volunteers, use your food and beverage volunteer and/or food shoppers to help prepare and set up a green-room. Alternatively, try to think of one of the most welcoming people in your church. Ask them. Having a friendly vibe in a green room makes a huge difference in

the room where your music leader, speaker, and other special guests will be hanging out.

- **Welcome and hospitality:** If needed, recruit some volunteers to be greeters or additional eyes and ears for your event. Try recruiting previous volunteers that may have had to step down because of work or commitment issues. Serving for one event is a lot more manageable, and you already know how they interact with others. Alternatively, try to get some of your other pastors or church staff involved in this event. Have your senior pastor mingle and welcome!
- **Registration-Help/Point Person:** You can split check-in/registration and the leaving process into different categories because sometimes they are not the same people in these roles. Try recruiting parents or non-small group leaders to help with check-in. If possible, try combining this role and the Paper Person's role, who may be knowledgeable about where you might be at with required student forms.

However, a suggestion would be to always have a designated leader as "Point Person." For example, you will always have students who don't check-in when check-in time is scheduled. Also, if you are hosting this event at your church and using a host home, students at times may not stay for the whole event for various reasons. So, if your event has students coming, going, and/or parents are required to pick them up at the end of the night, designate a leader as a point person for students to communicate with that may need to leave early, show up late, etc. You do not want your students to leave without knowing with whom, why, or where they have gone. Safety is important! Having a point person who can communicate with parents or guardians about consent to leave is critical. This volunteer needs to know about any rules or expectations about downtime, coming and going, and emergency contact information.

- **Medic Volunteer:** Designate a leader to be in charge of the first aid kit. This person can also be the person who may be aware of any medical instructions that were given at registration about dispensing medicine to students if that is required and needs monitoring. This volunteer should also be aware of any important medical information needed on the students so they can keep can tabs on the students who may need monitoring. Check to see if there are any nurses or former medical professionals in your church who may be available.
- **Drivers:** Depending on where you are hosting, you may need drivers for your event. These could be your small group leaders if they are willing to use their vehicles. This could also be the host home parents too. Parents of students with mini-vans make the best drivers. Communicate with your drivers about any rules or expectations that you have for this event (i.e., appropriate music restrictions, etc.) Pro-tip: Give drivers a printed list of important addresses.
- **Worship/Tech volunteers:** Depending on your venue and context, you may need to assign volunteers to lead worship or run sound. One of the easiest ways of recruiting for this role and to make it something special is to ask your worship leader or have a worship band come in to lead. If you can get your main service worship team to lead and, if it is in your budget, provide thank you gift cards for having them give up their time to help. Alternatively, check with local campus ministries at colleges in your area. They may have a young worship team that would love the opportunity to lead worship simply for food.
- **Photographer/Videographer:** Getting someone to document your event through photos and videos will be huge. First is because you can post things on social media while they are happening. Secondly, it can be used for advertisements for the next year. You can simply encourage small group leaders to take photos or videos and send them to a point person that can post on social media. However, having one person that can roam around the room to specifically take photos and videos is a huge win, even if it is with just a smartphone.
- **Prayer Team:** Your prayer team is one of the most important teams. Consider inviting elders or deacons, small groups or Sunday school groups, parents or leaders to be a part of this team. The Lord is the one who works in the hearts of the students; we are just the vessels. Bringing this whole event and committing it to the glory of God is the most important role. Prayer changes hearts and is the backbone of your whole mission.

### Host Homes

There are many benefits of having students stay in host homes, but there are also some negatives or challenges you need to consider.

Pros:

- Having host homes can be cost-effective. Many hosts would love to provide breakfast or snacks to your students.
- Your students will have extra bonding time as a group. Memories will be made.
- This will also benefit the host. This gives many people joy to open up their houses to serve and show hospitality.

Cons:

- Unless you specify a specific bedtime, having your students in one room (as opposed to hotels, dorms, or their own houses) may get the students hyper, and they may not get enough sleep.
- The other con is that you have to consider how the students will be coming and going from your main event venue to the host homes. You will have more students than leaders. Consider asking the host to also help with transportation.
- If you have to split up groups, you may hear groaning from students that their friends are at a different host home. This can be tricky, especially if you have students who invited friends. You want them to stay together.
- You have to consider who the host is and if students (and parents) will feel comfortable allowing their children to stay over. One way to get around this is to encourage families of students in your group who are well known to host.
- Some host homes may not be able to afford to provide a meal or snacks to the students. You may need to budget some money for each host home so that they can purchase drinks and food for the kids.

If you do not have the resources or ability to have recognizable host families to open their homes, consider having an application and expectation document to make sure your students are in a trusted environment. This will give parents peace of mind.

### **Host Home Application**

You may need a host home application to reach families in your church that you may not know personally in your student ministry. You will want to vet these host families you do not know well. We suggest asking for a background check from every adult in the home that will be in the house while the students are there as well. We have provided a sample host home application to help you create yours.

*\*\*See Sample Host Home Application in Example Documents Section. \*\**

## **More Host Home Thoughts**

### **Setting expectations and house rules**

Encourage the host home family to meet with all the students and leaders once they arrive home to explain any expectations they may have at their home. The family may only want the kids to use a certain bathroom or eat in only certain rooms. They may even have requests for quiet hours in their home. Have the host family set those rules and make sure that the small group leaders reinforce those rules.

### **Provide host home family with all the information**

Some host home families may want to be more involved than others. Make sure they receive a full schedule of the whole weekend, names of all the students, and the contact information of the small group leaders. Provide them with information of any important information when it comes to students' medical or allergy needs. It is better to provide them with more information that they may not need than to be stuck in a situation where they do not know who to call or what to do within their own home.

# chapter five

## THREE MONTHS OUT FROM YOUR EVENT

At least three months out from your event, if not before, tie-down more logistics for your event. Be aware that your venue may have certain deadlines or information they need to know at certain deadlines as well. One of the first things you need to consider for your event is your food situation.

### Meal Planning

This may be a non-issue for you if your venue provides food for you. Determine if you will be making the food yourself, the food is provided for by the venue, and/or if you will be catering. Food can get expensive quickly, but there are ways to make it less expensive.

### On the Way to and From Your Event

You might have to stop for food on the way to and from the event. If this is the case, make sure to write on the packing list for students to bring money for any meals that they will be responsible for themselves. **Write a specific dollar amount for food.** Suggestions: McDonald's, Culvers, & Chick-Fil-A's can handle large groups fairly quickly. If you can plan this ahead of time, call the restaurant a week before you will be eating there and let them know. They often can get extra crew for your group. If you are taking a charter bus, many of these restaurants will offer the bus driver a meal for free. Buffets are often willing to work with large groups to get a lower per-person price. Food Courts at malls are a great choice for variety, but you always run the risk of kids wandering into the stores.

### The Non-Food Needs

If you are hosting your event at a church or a retreat center, find out what you have available. Some venues and churches may provide certain items, such as paper products, cookware, utensils, etc. that you may not need to add to your supply list. Once you know what you are working with, then you can start planning more details.

### Making Your Own Food

If your group is responsible for your providing your meals, it can be very cost-effective to make your own meals depending on the size of your group. If you do decide to cook and provide meals, here are some tips:

- Try to plan meals that reuse the same ingredients. Searching Pinterest for meals on a budget or larger groups will also be helpful.

*\*\*See Example Documents Section for the Example Menu Document\*\**

- Ask for donations from small groups or Sunday schools in your church. You would be surprised how generous your church might be.
- Crockpot meals are winners. When you can borrow multiple crockpots and let the "chefs" of the week just throw in ingredients, the chef can also join in on the activities instead of being in the designated kitchen area prepping food all day. (Just be mindful of how many Crock Pots you plug into the same outlet. The breakers have been known to pop.)
- Look for discounted bread and desserts at grocery stores because they may be expiring soon. Even if it is not advertised as discounted, ask a grocery store manager to be a sponsor, and they may be able to give you a discount or even give you almost expired food for free. (Be willing to offer a document with your church letterhead on it that shows how much they have donated so they can use it as a tax write off.)
- Remember that anything you have to refrigerate or freeze needs a refrigerator and freezer. Scope out the kitchens you are using before you buy tons of ice cream or something that perishes.

### When Catering

- When ordering pizza. Figure out the total number of people you are feeding. Multiply that by 2.5 and then divide that number by 8. That is how many large pizzas you should order but maybe add an extra box or two. Pepperoni and Cheese pizzas are the biggest hits!
- See if someone at your church owns a restaurant and would be able to cater at a discounted price.
- Since you are ordering in bulk, ask the place you are considering getting food from if they will give you a bulk discount.
- Ask local businesses to sponsor your event. For example, your local Chick Fil A may provide a free meal for everyone. They also may give you free give-away prizes.
- Ask for your tax-exempt number from your church. Larger purchases like food can save you a decent amount.
- Many pizza places and other catering businesses have paper plates, utensils, and napkins that they are willing to throw in for free. Just ask!

### Registration

As you prepare for more details for the event, open registration about three months before the event. If possible, the best way to have registration and sign-ups for events is online. Having student information already easily accessible through your phone or able to print a spreadsheet will save you a lot of time and energy. You will be able to search for t-shirt sizes, contact information, and track event fees if there is a charge for the event.

Taking payments online is amazing. You will not have to handle cash or checks. When taking payments online, you will incur credit card fees of some sort. Although they may be a nominal fee, you can often pass those costs onto the person registering.

Your church may already have a registration process in place, but (again) the best way to do registration is to do it online. Below are some options, but Planning Center is one of the best options because it allows you to do so much more than register. It can help you with assigning rooms, organizing payments, etc.

- Planning.center/registrations (Starting at \$14/month)
- Wufoo.com (Free to \$29.99/month)
- Typeform.com (Free to \$29/month)
- Eventbrite.com (Free for free events or a small fee plus a smaller percentage of each ticket)
- Google forms (Free, but there is no way to collect money online through Google Forms)

### Example of Registration Form

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Students Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Food Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Any other medical related items we should be made aware of: \_\_\_\_\_

If you could choose one person to be in your host home, who would you want? (We will do our best to put them in your cabin): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*\*See Example Documents Section for an Example Registration Form\*\**

### Creating Energy for the Event

One thing to always remember in youth ministry: you cannot over-promote an event. Students and parents have so much happening and so many things calling their attention. Most groups only have students for a couple of hours a week, and if you are lucky enough to get their attention on social media, you have a couple of seconds of attention there. Here are some ideas to create energy and get more attention to your event.

### Promote, Promote, Promote

From the moment you have a date, location, cost, and a name for your event, blast that information everywhere. Put it on your youth group's social media, have your adult leaders post it on their social media, and have key youth that are influencers promote it on their social media. Make a graphic for the event and pass it around to everyone.

Bring it up at every youth meeting until the day students can't sign up anymore. Make sure you announce it and hype the announcement with new details every time. Talk about the worship one week, the speaker the next week, the fun activity another, the awesome shirts at another, etc. The more you are talking about it, the better.

### **Incentives**

Offer incentives for students to commit to deadlines that have been given by giving out challengers or discounts. For example, You can offer the lowest price for the retreat within the first week of registration going live. Call it "early-bird pricing." After that first week is over, the price goes up by \$20. They would pay a discounted rate for registering early. The closer you get to your official cutoff date, raise the price by another \$20.

*\*\*Check the Example Documents Section for the Tier Pricing sheet for an example of how this has been done for a summer camp and how it was communicated via email. \*\**

The key is to make your early bird price the real amount per-person that you need to cover your costs. That way, if every person registered for your event signs up during early bird pricing, you will be fine financially. Every registration after your early bird price is extra money to make your event better. If your budget does not allow you to offer pricing advantages for deadlines, then offer advantages that don't cost you anything or very little. For example, People who register in the first three days are called "VIP," and they can skip the line at every meal, choose where they want to sit on the bus to the event, choose where they want to sleep before anyone else, or can choose the worship songs for the weekend. You can also add incentives by giving a very inexpensive gift, like an extra dessert one night or a free energy drink during your event.

Bonus Tip: Ask a local business for a gift card or other free things that you can give to a lucky winner who registers for your event.

### **Stand Alone Event or Build Up with Midweek?**

Remember, you generally discussed this in chapter one. The question you started with was: "When it comes to our theme, is this a stand-alone event, or can there be more to it?" Here are some more details for each option to help you think through, and plan accordingly:

- Option 1: Do we want to build our midweek service right before the event as a "starter" to the event?
  - For the students that are going, all they're going to be talking about and thinking about at the midweek service before your event is your event!
  - Leverage this and build a night that is an on-ramp to your event
    - Introduce one to two of the new worship songs you'll be doing at the event - either live, as background music, YouTube videos, etc.
    - Ask your guest speaker if they can record a short video letting your students know how pumped they are to be with them at your event and how they are expecting God to do great things in them
- Option 2: Do we want to look at building a longer midweek series that leads up to our event, with the event closing the series out?
  - The benefit to this is that you can continue to push your event (depending on registration deadlines) through your (however many weeks) series leading up to the event.
  - The number of weeks depends on what you want. It can be three weeks or more depending on your theme
  - Like option 1, use this time as a long on-ramp to your event
    - We recommend introducing any new worship song(s) for the event closer to the event, so they don't become old too quickly
  - Something to think about is the students that consistently attend your midweek service but are not able to attend your event. This does not take this option out of the picture. Again, just something to keep in mind if you develop this
- Option 3: Do we want to continue our event theme in our midweek services after the event?
  - This can be one week or more (more if you use your event to start a series)
  - This can help your students ease off the event/retreat high a little slower
  - It can also help bring students that weren't able to attend "in" to the event theme
    - Via recap/highlight video, live student and volunteer testimonies, using the new worship songs, reviewing the main points of the event messages, playing one of the well-liked games, etc
- Option 4: Do we want to use our midweek service(s) leading up to the event AND after the event?
  - Take everything from the above options and go for it!

*If you choose to build up to your event, keep the students that aren't able to attend in mind. For them, option 4 can be very beneficial as it helps them have a part in and be a part of what God is doing!*

## Reaching Out for Rec/Mission Opportunity

Have your host venue suggest volunteer opportunities that are local or that can be done at the facility. There may be serving opportunities right where your group is staying. For example, their facility may have project needs, such as organizational or painting projects. Another idea is to see what local charities or places that your church donates or partners with locally. You can build on that connection. Depending on the season this is placed around, your group can also get connected with nursing homes that may have specific holiday events that require help.

### Create Your Fall Through the Cracks Checklist

Sometimes we just need a checklist to make sure we have everything in place. When you are about three months out, there is quite a bit to check on but still have leeway to change if needed. Here are a few things to run through your mind when you have time to check in on at least three months before your event.

- Have I prayed recently for the event and the students attending (the most important)?
- Have I communicated with the venue about any deadlines or needed information?
- Have I created and communicated student sign up/deadlines and cost?
- Have I made graphics and promotional/marketing material?
- Have I started researching and considering a broad schedule of the event?
- Do I have all my transportation needs covered?
- Are students registering?
- Are there any odd dietary or medical needs that I need to let someone else know about?
- Have I made/handed out liability forms for students as they register? (Some venues require liability forms being notarized.)
- Do I have enough host homes for all the groups?
- Have I considered gas and the cost to drive?
- Have I thought through activity and game supplies?
- Have I determined what I may be handing out to the students (shirts, journals, etc.)?
- Have I recruited enough leaders?
- Have I communicated with the leaders about their responsibilities and roles?
- Am I continuing to promote the event?
- Have I made a plan for all mealtimes and snack opportunities?
- Do I have enough paper goods for each part of the retreat weekend?

*\*\*This document can also be found in the Example Documents Section\*\**

### Create a Prayer Guide for the Month Leading up to Event

Feel free to create your prayer guide, but here are prayer prompts for your prayer team to be praying over the event. Change and edit according to your context.

1. Pray for protection as the speaker travels, stays in good health, has strength and endurance for the weekend, and for protection for their family and loved ones while away. (John 10:10, 17:15)
2. Pray that everything the students do will honor the Lord. (Colossians 3:23-24)
3. Pray for the small group leader's hearts and minds to be fully yielded to the Lord, so they speak His words with boldness and in His love. (Acts 4:29-32)
4. Pray that as the speaker would humble themselves, prays and seeks the Lord's face, that they would be in tune with the Lord, that they be sensitive to His guidance, empowered by His Holy Spirit, enabled to follow the Lord in obedience to bring forth messages with boldness, power, and passion in such a way that the Lord will be glorified and lives will be saved, renewed and transformed. (Ephesians 6:19-20)
5. Pray that God's light and His love will permeate these families and their host homes so that the students experience the love of the Lord and the fruit of His Spirit in such a profound way that it leaves a lasting impression; that it is sealed on their minds and in their hearts. (Gal 5:22-23, Eph 4:30)
6. Pray that all volunteers work in harmony with one another; that they exemplify God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in the midst of all the parents, students, small group leaders, and other volunteers. (Ephesians 5:1-2)
7. Pray for the band's voices to remain strong; no technical difficulties; they reflect God's passion and energy, and their music will bring joy to the students. (Psalm 23)
8. Pray for the small group leaders to have ears open to listen to the students, to not shrink back from topics that may be unpopular or difficult to talk about, that they would have discernment and wisdom in all their responses. (James 1:5)
9. Pray that the speaker would spend time with the Lord and seek Him continually in their life. (Matthew 6:33, 1 Chronicles 16:11, Psalm 27:8)
10. Pray for the band as they travel, remain in good health, have strength and endurance for the weekend, and for protection for their family and loved ones while away. (John 10:10, 17:15)

11. Pray for all the behind-the-scenes logistics for the event run smoothly.
12. Pray that the students will invite many of their friends to the event, but that they have understanding hearts if they can't all be together in the same host home. May they put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Colossians 3:14)  
Pray that the band's hearts are focused on the Lord, leading all to worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:20-24)
13. Pray that the small group leaders would invest in the lives of the students and that they would be an example of Jesus to them in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Tim 4:12)
14. Praise the Lord for those serving food for their servant hearts and their willingness to give of their time and talents. (1 Peter 4:7-11)
15. As the band leads in worship, pray that they lead the students to worship the Lord for who He is and to give thanks to Him and praise His Holy Name. (Psalm 63:1-5)
16. Pray that this is a time of unity among the students. (Ephesians 4:1-3)
17. Pray for the salvation of all students; that they may become a new creation in Jesus. (John 1:12)
18. Pray that the speaker would bring God's Word earnestly and with Christ's authority. (2 Corinthians 2:17)
19. Pray that through their living testimony, God will use these host families to spread the knowledge of Christ-like a fragrant aroma. (2 Cor 2:14,15)
20. Pray for the small group leaders as they travel, remain in good health, have strength and endurance for the weekend, and for protection for their family and loved ones while away. (John 10:10, 17:15)
21. Pray for the protection of students, leaders, and all those involved in recreation and the service project.
22. Pray that while the students are in the host homes, they will show respect toward the families and be responsible; that the students will receive rest, relaxation, nourishment, times of fun and laughter, peace and acceptance, and growth in God's Word. (Acts 2:46-47, Acts 12:12, Titus 3:1)
23. As the band leads in worship, pray that all distractions be removed so that students will be prepared to hear the gospel and be challenged by the messages. (2 Samuel 22:1-4)
24. Pray for the strength and protection of those who will be preparing the food each night.
25. Praise the Lord for the venue/host/ group's willingness to open their homes this weekend.
26. Pray that students will come alongside one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, and love one another.
27. Pray that all team members will work in harmony when preparing the food and during setup and clean up. (Ephesians 4:1-6)
28. Pray that the students have repentant hearts. (Psalm 51)
29. Pray for the students to have good health, strength, and endurance for the weekend. (Hebrews 12:1)
30. Pray for the students to seek the Lord; to develop a heart for God, His Word, and His ways; that they learn what it means to abide in Him. (James 4:7-8)
31. Pray for students that they would exchange their desire to be noticed and appreciated for the desire that God and God alone would shine gloriously through their beings, that their hearts' cry becomes, "I must decrease so that He might increase." (John 3:30)

*\*\*This Document can also be found in the Example Documents Section\*\**

### **Create Broad Schedule for Event**

Your schedule will have to be adjusted depending on the purpose of the trip, where you are staying, and the budget. Make sure you allow adequate travel and transition time for activities. In an unfamiliar location, you may not be aware of distances between places. Share your schedule with your Food/Beverage Leader so they will know in advance when and what expectations there may be for them and what time constraints they may have. For example, you may be serving at an organization and then come back for lunch. They may need to find transportation or adjust their meal plan to have something simple and get it ready in the Crock-Pot early before you leave for the activities that morning.

Once you have a schedule, you can print it in student journals with expectations and rules so that everyone knows when and where to be. Another option is to print the schedule and make name badges with lanyards for students. (You can make custom event badges and lanyards at [smartypass.com](http://smartypass.com) or [ticketprinting.com](http://ticketprinting.com)). Make sure your schedule is completed (at the latest) a month before to be able to share it with leaders, parents, etc. You may want to include Drop-Off and Pick-Up information for parents on the packing list when you send it out, so you will need to have those details figured out.

*\*\*See Example Documents Section for Schedule Examples\*\**

# chapter six

## ONE MONTH LEADING UP TO YOUR EVENT

One month can feel like both a large amount of time and a small amount of time. This is where your logistics and your people begin to get onto the same page. The month leading up to the event is where your final details will be selected. This is also an important month to ensure that your parents, volunteers, and students have the answers they need to enjoy the event!

There are quite a few things which will need to happen this month for your event to go as successfully as you have planned. You've put in the effort for the last several months, and this time will help your event achieve the quality you have been anticipating. Keep in mind that one thing not on this list is fires. Any experience minister or event planner will tell you that fires will occur. If you have the following ten things planned and focused, then fires become more manageable and less chaotic.

You can do this, and this guide is here to help you during this lead-up month.

### I. Create Detailed Schedule for Event

You have had a general calendar for your event for the last several months, and you've based a lot of your details and research around this general piece. You know the specifics now, so it's time to create your specific schedule. In the wedding business, this is where you start consolidating your vendors into one piece for the big day. Your event is no different, and these pieces will come together masterfully if you build the right schedule.

Here are four DIFFERENT views of the same schedule, which are worth making.

- *Your View-Master View*

This view is likely going to be multiple pages, and this should include all the details for the weekend. This is a document you will keep on your person, and it will serve as your quick reference for everything. Most of these details and times you will likely have committed to memory from looking at it so much...but having a printed version is always helpful.

This document includes arrival times for speakers, band, tech team, small group leaders, students, and volunteers. This document also includes little details and things that need to be present for each piece. If you are holding a meeting before rec time to explain the games, you likely need some of those game pieces to show as an example. Write that down on your schedule, so you come prepared. The heart of this Master View is so that your brain can focus on people, not details during your event. Let your pre-work do the heavy lifting for you.

- *Student View-Simple View*

This view is the most basic version of the schedule possible. It will still hold service times and mealtimes, as well as lights out. Students don't need details, and even though they will ask you for a million details, they won't need them.

I hear from students all the time, "When do we eat lunch? What are we having? Will there be soda?" There is one question they need answering there, when. The other details don't need to be on their schedule, BUT they will be on your master schedule. If you spend time answering every question a student asks, you will likely miss something else you needed to see. I'm not telling you to ignore students, but your Simple View schedule will answer all of their pertinent questions for the event. If it's not on the schedule, then they will likely find out when the time comes! This helps build anticipation and excitement!

- *Leader View-Enlightened View*

This is about halfway between your Master View and your Simple View. Leaders need to know what's going on, but they certainly don't need all of the details. Your leaders don't need to know when speakers or the band are arriving, but they do need to know what time doors open. \*\*You can decide whether or not to include what meals are being eaten on this schedule, I prefer to not.\*\* The more information you put on this schedule, the more information your students will undoubtedly know.

I'm not saying your leaders are bad, but students will be more likely to snatch a schedule out of their leader's hands than your hands. You want your leaders to feel as prepared to lead as possible. One way to imagine this is through the lens of a naval fleet. Your leaders are commanding their own ship. You have entrusted them with the ability to get their crew to your destination. You are guiding the entire fleet, though. They don't need to know every decision you make, but they should be extremely aware of anything that will disrupt or affect their path.

- *Production View-Detailed View*

This final view is for your personalities (speaker and band) as well as your tech team. If people are going to be involved in the service elements, then they need to see this view. This view will not include the details of recreation time, but it will have a start and stop time for recreation. This view will highlight mealtime options unless these individuals have a separate arrangement made for food.

This view also includes particular elements of the service. Detailed View will hold the time of your pre-service meeting when everyone should arrive, when soundcheck happens, and when doors plan to open. You need to try and stick to this schedule above everything else, and if you have to shift time somewhere, keep the fluidity with things not involving your services. As much fun as recreation, free time, and service opportunities are the services, and small groups are the focus of your weekend.

Once you've created these four views, you are ready to keep moving forward with your monthly tasks.

## II. Follow Up with Speaker

It's likely been a bit since you've contacted your speaker, so just check in to see how they are doing and if there is anything they need from you in particular. You are not trying to micro-manage your speaker, but a good speaker will already be well prepared for your event this far out. The goal of this conversation is to connect with them, confirm they feel ready, and check if other things need to be arranged.

Below is a small list of things you should likely cover with them during this chat.

### A. Get Small Group Questions

My prayer for you is that your speaker is not writing their sermons a few days before your event. One way to ensure this is to ask for them to write small group questions based on their sermons ahead of time. This is not a complicated ask, and this is incredibly easy to cover in your speaker contract. This ensures they are prepared, and it allows you to distribute these questions to your small group leaders ahead of time.

### B. Make Sure They Feel Good About Sermon Direction

Like we said in chapter one, your speaker will make or break your theme from the pulpit. If you are going to build a theme for the weekend, you must make sure your speaker is feeling prepared to hit a home run. This is a great time to ask them for a roadmap on where they plan on going for each session. Once again, we hope your speaker is prepared enough to answer these questions! If they are not, ask them if you can chat again in a week or so to get more clarity. You are paying them to speak; therefore, it's not something you should be afraid to put your foot down on.

### C. Talk Through Special Elements in Services

Some events will call for special elements to be added to the service. This can include anything from a special moment during an invitation to a walk-in experience. Below are some common special elements we have seen work effectively during services.

- i. Invitations

- ii. Lord's Supper

- iii. Prayer Experiences

- iv. Different Walk-In Experiences

- Challenging your students to walk into the service in silence can create an expectation for Worship, which they might not be used to.

- v. Object Lesson Takeaways from the Sermon

- One of our authors carries a key around his neck, which he received in 7th grade from an

object lesson. If the speaker chooses to do this, see if it's in the budget to pass something out to each attendee.

#### **D. Ask About Needs or Allergies for Food/Housing**

Your speaker shouldn't be worried about what they are going to eat, especially if they have allergies. We are quick to remember our students' needs, but be sure to take care of your personalities as well. Also, be sure to let the speaker know where they are staying or if you are renting a car for them. Depending on your context, there will not be a variety of options, but it will endear your speaker to you if you take these little things into account.

### **III. Parent Meetings**

"Student Ministry is Parent Ministry." I'm not sure who said this quote, but I've heard it passed around the youth ministry world for years. You need to have a parent meeting for as many parents as possible. This will cover brief details about the weekend, and it allows curious parents to feel a bit of safety for the weekend. This is a great place to pass out the Simple View of the schedule.

Do make sure you cover enough details of this meeting to make it worth your parents' time but also understand most of this information is going to make its way back to your students. If you have a surprise planned for the students, this may not be the best time to unveil the surprise. If parents are concerned, then this can be a great time to chat with them one-on-one after the meeting.

The parent meeting best fits about three weeks out from the event around your usual programming. If you do Sunday night church or small groups, it is a great idea to host this while their students are in small groups. This allows them to simply stay at the church rather than making a separate trip for your meeting. The parent meeting is also a wonderful time to try and get final payments, allergy information, and medical release forms ahead of time. The less you have to do on registration day, the better!

### **IV. Leader Meetings**

The leader meeting can happen at a variety of times, but we've found this meeting to be most effective on the day of the event. You simply ask your leaders to arrive about 2 hours before the event begins, and you cover some of the finer details of your information. This should not be the first time you communicate details to them. You should make your leader packet, including the Enlightened View of the Schedule as well as Small Group questions about two weeks out from the event. Then email that packet out to all of your leaders for them to start looking over the packet.

When they arrive for the meeting, ensure they have all the information they need. Also, make sure they get YOUR cell phone number for emergencies. Remember that when you affirm them as a small group leader, they will now carry your name and reputation. This is a powerful meeting to ensure these leaders are on the same page as you, plus with their early arrival, they are ready to help with registration!

### **V. Volunteer/Host Home Meetings**

This meeting is for your people who will not in constant contact with your students but will still play a critical role in your event. This meeting is best held about two weeks out from your event. This lets your host homes and volunteers know you are prepared, and it gives them time to prepare properly.

If there is one piece of advice we can pass along about this meeting, it is details. There will never be enough details you could give this group of people. This is a wonderful time to go over specifics of meals, travel, sleeping expectations, cell phone usage within the host homes. You want to empower this group of people to help carry your vision for the weekend, while also understanding the importance of uniformity. As many surprises as you anticipate might come, this is the group to let know about them.

It seems like you will just be having meetings all month, but once again: your details and your people need to be on the same page for your event to succeed. This is the focus of your month, and the more you keep your eye on that goal, the better each meeting, email, and phone call will feel!

### **VI. Small-Group Lists**

Your lists are determined by when your last day to register is. If you have the ability for students to sign up the day of, then this task can move a bit lower down the list. If your deadline to register is two weeks out from the event, then this

task should happen the day after the end of the registration. This is a large task, no matter what size your student ministry/event is.

Survey results would tell you that a student's small group for the event is more impactful than the speaker, food, recreation, or free time options. If students can be with the right group, then the event has even more of a chance to make a lasting impact. A good idea is to start with the most complicated group/grade first and then move on from there. I've been a part of Small Group making parties, which lasted for 10 hours, and we were incredibly thankful at hour 8 that we spent the first few hours handling the complicated things. Try and lock these down as close to the event as possible, and once you have made the lists make sure you check daily to add/remove students.

The largest piece of advice we can offer about making these lists is to keep them private as long as possible. Students will always find a reason to struggle against the list, even if you granted them both of their friend requests. Eliminate worry and hassle of these conversations by keeping this information close to you and your team for as long as possible.

## VII. Confirm Meals

If you have started making your decisions about meals, be sure to follow up and pay your vendors for these meals. Do your best to try and spread out the variety of meals during your event. This is also a time to make sure host homes know if they are responsible for certain meals. If the host homes are responsible for meals, you will want to make sure they know what else you are eating over the weekend.

Some good catering options include:

- Barbeque
- Pizza
- Burgers/Hotdogs
- Tacos/Nacho Bar
- Pasta

**\*\*CRITICAL TIP\*\*** You will want to follow up with each of your vendors 4-6 hours before you will be picking up/receiving the food. Go ahead and set reminders on your phone for each vendor that you need to contact right now. That way, during the middle of the event, your reminder will tell you to call Dominoes rather than just trying to remember.

This phone call ensures that they are ready and thinking about your order, and it also helps you from having to scramble because the order wasn't ready in time. The last thing you want to deal with is 100 hangry students because you forgot to call and make sure the shift manager was preparing to make 32 pizzas.

## VIII. Start Planning Services

We'll talk about this heavily in the next chapter, but you want to begin preparing your services as soon as possible. Getting these laid out a month out from your event will give you great vision as to where your services are going during the event. An unplanned service is not only felt by your students, but it creates unnecessary stress on you as the event leader.

You have the time this month to crush the layout of these services, so check out the next chapter for helpful hints in building this part of your event.

## IX. Start a Prayer Guide

In our last chapter, we gave an example of a month-long prayer guide that you might have started already. We just want to emphasize this point again. A good speaker will help carry your event, and a good band will help rock your event. You could have the right leaders, host homes, and even students for a hopefully successful event. If you ignore prayer for your event, then you are ignoring God's role in this event. Creating a prayer guide will do a few things for your event and ministry:

- **Creates Anticipation**
  - When you use a prayer guide starting a week or two weeks out from your event, it helps students understand what is coming. It keeps the event at the forefront of their minds as you continue to post this guide everywhere.
- **Shows Spiritual Preparation**
  - Your students and leaders will see your attention to details for recreation, small groups, and service projects. Let students and families see your spiritual preparation as well. We preach the importance of prayer, and this is a powerful moment to live out an example of it.
- **Invites God to Be in the Details**

- o The difference between good and great events is details. The difference between great events and Holy events is God's presence. You are not putting on a concert or show. This is a chance for students to encounter the presence of God, and we must pray accordingly.

*\*\*See Example Documents Section for an Example Prayer Guide. Feel Free to Shorten this Guide if that fits your context better\*\**

## **X. Planning Security for the Event**

This is the last thing you need to work on for this section, but it is highly important. Your church may have protocol for safety within the church, but be sure to think about this before you have your event. How many security guards do you need to have on campus? For most, it would be one person patrolling the hallways, but when you invite these students in for the event, you take responsibility for them.

If a parent hears that you have thought of this detail, their trust in you soars because you will show them how much you care for their student overall. It is not overkill to protect people, and we need to make sure we are keeping our students safe.

A helpful place to have volunteers might be traffic directors after the event to help people get out of the parking lot quickly. Perhaps you have one or two dads roaming the halls during the services to keep an eye out for suspicious behavior. You know your community and church the best, so make sure you take a moment to prepare accordingly.

It seems like a lot to prepare for, but you have a whole month to do this! Your dedication to preparation today will drastically influence the success of your event a month from now. With that in mind, let's talk about services!

# chapter seven

## PLANNING SERVICES

Spiritual impact is the reason you do Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. For that reason, your services and small groups are the most crucial components of the weekend. In this chapter, we will look at designing services that invite the presence of God and create an environment for lives to be transformed by Jesus.

### **Where Should I Begin?**

At the risk of sounding repetitive, prayer is vital to invite God into the process of planning. This is especially true of services because you are designing a space for God to move in students' lives. As you embark on this part of the planning process, carve out some time for you and your team to pray before you start.

### **Does Everything Align with the Theme?**

As you begin putting together each element of the service from worship sets to messages times to other creative elements, ask yourself one guiding question: does this align with the theme of the weekend? One of the greatest mistakes we make in the creative process is trying to communicate too many things. Your theme gives you the singular message you want everyone to walk away with at the end of the weekend, so make every decision in light of it.

### **Is Your Speaker Clear on Your Theme?**

Schedule a call with your speaker to get with them on the details of the weekend. During the conversation, make sure they are clear on the theme. Ask your speaker if there is anything you can do to clarify what the theme means and what the target is for the weekend. Your speaker is the person most responsible for landing the theme during Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend, so clarity and communication are key.

### **What Should the Message Length Be?**

While you talk with your speaker, ask about their normal message length. Most experienced speakers have an idea of how long they can meaningfully engage students. Even so, you know your students and their attention span, so you may give your speaker some helpful advice on how long your students have engaged with other speakers in the past. Ultimately, you want to leave space for the Holy Spirit to move, so your allotted message times are more of a guideline than written in stone.

### **What Should I Do About Worship Sets?**

Again, you know your students and their level of engagement in worship. Try using this weekend to push them beyond the boundaries of a normal student worship service. You may try more songs than a typical Wednesday night or Sunday morning. If you normally do 3 songs, try for 4. If you normally do 4, try for 5. The goal is to use the weekend to more deeply engage your students in worship.

A couple of helpful tips here:

- If your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend includes a morning session, you may consider going shorter on worship times in the morning.
- Don't plan so many worship songs on the front end of your services that your speaker doesn't have adequate time.
- Think about the worship moment after the messages during the evening sessions. After hearing the Word of God, your students may be ready to respond in deep personal worship. You may leave these times a little more open-ended and encourage your band to choose songs that can go beyond the "click-track."

### **Should I Use a Game?**

Games can be a great way to warm up a crowd and engage your younger students or students who don't have a history of coming to worship services. Choose something the whole crowd can engage in. Even if it is just a handful of

volunteers, have everyone engage through cheering as if they were on the stage as well. Even your games should point to the theme of the weekend.

### **Should I Use Other Elements?**

Videos, testimonies, interviews, and other elements can be an impactful addition to your worship services. Your theme can be communicated in more than messages and worship songs. Sometimes another well-placed service element can drive home the theme in a powerful way. With other elements, a good rule is to shoot for no more than 5-7 minutes. Also, be fully aware of the "cheese factor." If the message of a service element is good, but the delivery is cheesy, steer clear of using it.

### **Do I Need service Tech Sheets?**

A resounding YES! Take the time to write out the service plans minute by minute, including all service elements, songs, message times, lighting cues, sound cues, etc. Planning Center is a really helpful tool for this kind of planning and distribution to everyone involved in the services. During the weekend, you will want to keep these handy and run a "tech meeting" before each worship service to make sure everyone is on the same page. Remember, God can certainly move to change what is written on the tech sheet, but that shouldn't keep you from praying beforehand about the content of each service and sending the plan to everyone involved.

*\*\*See Example Documents Section for Service Tech Sheet Example\*\**

### **How Can I Help the Service Run Smoothly?**

As you think through your services, keep in mind the transitions between each component of the service. Stay away from awkward transitions, long pauses, or difficult set-up and tear down during service. You don't want any reason for your students to disengage. You might consider having a "service producer" who can manage the service to keep things running smoothly. Also, consider playing all videos and going through all slides immediately before the service to make sure that whatever appears on the screen is ready to go.

### **Do I Need an Emcee?**

Some of this has already been discussed, but here is the reality: Someone needs to help warm the crowd, do a welcome, give announcements, and help with transitions through the weekend. This could be the Student Pastor or members of the team. You could also rotate this responsibility in each service. The key is that whoever serves in this capacity should bring a lot of energy to the services while also being sensitive to moments of worship.

### **How Can I Have an Effective Response Time During a Service?**

If Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend is all about life-change, then your response time must be one of the best-executed parts of your weekend. Get with your speaker ahead of time and talk through the kind of response that you would like to see in your services. Answer questions like, which services will have a response time, where will students go if they want to respond in service, who will they go to talk to, etc. For a student to stand up and move at the conclusion of a message in response to the Gospel or another spiritual response, the response time has to be crystal clear.

### **How Can I Equip Leaders to be Ready for the Response Time?**

Consider utilizing your small group leaders as decision counselors during Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. You can send them information on what decision counseling looks like before the event, but you will still want to meet with them and talk it through during the weekend. Bring all your leaders together for a brief pre-service meeting to talk with them about how the response time will work. If they know exactly what is going to happen, they will be empowered to take action. Show them where you want them to stand to receive students who are responding. If they see a student responding, encourage them to not wait for someone else to engage the student, but immediately to walk toward the student, say an encouraging word, and walk to the side to have a conversation.

### **What Materials Should I Use for the Response?**

Give each of your leaders a response card outlining the different decisions that your speaker will lead students to make. Make sure your leaders get that filled out during their counseling time with the student so that you and your team can follow up afterward. Have these response cards ready to go one month out so that your leaders can see them ahead of time. You may also give your leaders a new believer's guide that they can encourage your students to walk through, such as YM 360's "New: First Steps for New Christ Followers."

*\*\*See Example Documents Section for a Response Card Example\*\**

### **How Much Time Should I Plan for Response Time?**

If you have a response time during a service, be sure to put enough time at the end of the service to keep everyone in the worship service room while others are being counseled. Otherwise, you will dismiss the service while students are being counseled, cutting short this important conversation.

**How Should I End the Service?**

You may also need to make announcements at the conclusion of the service. When it comes to announcements, only include "need to know" information. Another powerful way to end service is by giving each student an object to remind them of the truth they have just heard. Nothing extravagant, just a small reminder to reinforce the content and theme of your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend.

# chapter eight

## WEEK BEFORE YOUR EVENT

You have done a great job staying on top of everything and working through what feels like (because it is) hundreds of details. Right now (as in after finishing this sentence), take one minute and throw a spontaneous praise party-go!

.....

Those 60 dots represent the 60 seconds you just took to express gratitude. Before moving on, use the space above the dots to write a word or two describing what your thankful for at this point in planning your event.

You are one week out, and this is your time to check, and re-check, several elements one more time. In addition to going all NASA on your details, many people are counting on you to confirm existing, and give additional details!

### Event Venue Details:

*You have most likely received at least one confirmation from the venue as it relates to using their facility if you are going off-site. In this stage, we encourage you to have an intern, support assistant, or parent that is administratively gifted, compare your confirmation email to your information, or call to confirm everything. Create a checklist for them to use. Unless this person has assisted all along, explain that it is not their responsibility to make any decisions if an issue comes up. Rather, write down or email any discrepancies to you or the person you have in place.*

### Weekend Schedule at Venue

- Confirm initial arrival and final departure times
- Confirm all rooms/spaces you are planning on using (and when)
  - Meeting spaces, cafeteria, sleeping rooms, activity rooms, outside spaces
- Confirm Meal Times and Menu
  - Confirm menu and your numbers for each meal (if they are providing)
  - Remind the venue of any food allergies within your group

### “Did We Think of This” Checklist

Remember the checklist you created three months ago when your brain wasn't scattered? Here are elements you want to ensure are in place and ready to go:

- Hospital Runs
  - Who will be available and responsible to take any student that needs medical attention (short of needing to call an ambulance)
- Fall-Through-The-Cracks Checklist you created
  - Now is a great time to go through that to ensure you nailed it!
- Meals
  - Confirm your meals before you leave and on the way back are in place (if applicable)
- Continued Energy for Event
  - How are we continuing to be excited about our event this week?
    - Social Media countdowns
    - Social Media teasers
- Confirm your rooming lists are set including adult leaders/chaperones
- Have the weekend schedule ready and sent to your leaders in advance
  - Ensure you have a contingency plan (plan b) for inclement weather, etc.
- Small Groups
  - Confirm outlines have been sent to leaders

- o If you haven't by now, send your group leaders the names of students in their group so they can be praying for them
- Token
  - o By now, you should have created a token/item (your choice if you want to do this) to give to students at the end of your event to help them remember what God did in them
  - o Ensure tokens are ready or final prep is scheduled this week or on-site of the event
- Game supplies
  - o Confirm all supplies are purchased, OR money is available to purchase closer to the event site (if needed)
- Create a "Master Digital File and Binder" for you and your assistant director, or your event director
  - o Master View Schedule
  - o Master Room List
  - o Master Small Groups List
  - o Master Transportation List (if transporting students)
    - This will ensure you have everyone going to, and coming home from your event - check your list twice ;)
  - o Registration forms with emergency information *\*This needs to go with anyone that goes to the hospital*
    - These can be scanned digital files; however, we recommend to always have the original form that is signed by the parent/guardian to go to the hospital as well
    - Keep copies of the original forms at the event center
- Honorariums/Payments
  - o Ensure checks have been sent OR are ready to go with you for speakers, band, etc
  - o \*Additional idea - stalk their Facebook page to see if they have a spouse/kids. Try to give the speaker something for their family as well (gift card, etc.) with a note that says something like, "Thank you for letting us borrow your husband/wife or mom/dad for the weekend!" This kind gesture goes a long way in ensuring your group is happy.
- Gift Baskets - It is important to take care of your guests throughout the weekend
  - o Confirm gift baskets that include snacks and drinks for rooms of guests (speaker, band, etc.) are ready to go

### Final Communication to Personalities (Band, Speaker, Emcee)

You may feel like you've over-communicated to everyone by now...that's ok! Use this final opportunity to "Jimmy Falon" them. While including details again, make sure to say things like, "we are so excited to have you with us, this is going to be the best weekend ever!", etc.

- Finalize any travel details
  - o Flight info | hotel info | rideshare info (if applicable) | transportation person's cell number (if picking up)
- Venue Address
- Host's contact info (if different from transportation person)
  - o Give their full name and cell number
- Ask if anything else is needed as they may want to include something they didn't think of before...be over accommodating!
- Ensure your host is ready for the band, speaker, etc.
  - o Make sure they are given all the details they need.
    - Airport/hotel pickup or meet them in the lobby of the retreat site, etc.
    - Does your host have petty cash in case they need to provide something (food, forgotten item, etc.)
    - Make sure your host is relational and able to make last-minute decisions if needed

### Final Communication To Volunteers

- Volunteer Times and Assignments
  - o Arrival time to the church before departure to help with check-in elements (if providing transportation)
  - o Arrival time at the venue to help with check-in (if students are responsible for their transportation)
  - o Ensure your volunteers know where they will be helping OR hold a volunteer orientation after your mid-week service before your event to discuss details
- Room list
  - o This helps your volunteers be on the lookout for students as they arrive
  - o Room leads can welcome students when they drop their sleeping elements off and ensure everyone is accounted for
- Small group list
  - o Encourage your volunteers to be praying for each student in their group!
- Items to bring
  - o This should have already been communicated however it is nice to get a reminder
- Weekend schedule
  - o General times are good for now...OR you can send as detailed as you'd like

## Final Communication To Parents

For the most part, parents love consistent communication when it comes to their offspring. One final email blast gives them more reason to send them with you! Elements to include are:

- Intro
  - Example: Hello (Youth Group name or event name) Parents! We are excited to have your student(s) with us this coming weekend. Because we value you and your student(s), following are some reminders and information that is very important as it relates to (event name). Please read through everything, so we know you know!
- Drop off time at (your church OR venue)
  - Include when their student(s) will eat (before they arrive, at your church, on the way, or at the venue and if their student will need money)
- **THIS** → Student and Volunteer Medication Check-in and Drop Off Location
  - Everyone (student, volunteer, and staff) must check their prescribed and over-the-counter medication in to the event nurse upon event check-in
  - The event nurse will record the student's full name, name of the medication(s), and frequency taken
  - In the event your student(s) forget to go to the nurse to take their medication, the nurse will contact your student's room leader so they can bring the student to the nurse
- Venue Details
  - Name, address, and phone number of venue
- Event Emergency Contact (if a parent needs to get in touch with you or their student(s))
  - This can be the venue's number, your number or a designated volunteer's number that is aware of their responsibility
- Pick up location and time for the end of your event
  - What time students will be available for pick up and what time they need to be picked up by
  - Give your parents a deadline - for example, "Students will be available for pickup by 6:30 pm and need to be picked up by 7:00 pm."
  - All medication will need to be checked out with the event nurse by 7:00 pm
- Student "Need to Bring/Not to Bring" Packing List
  - To Bring Ideas: Different clothes and shoes for different elements (swimming, mud pit, snow sledding/tubing, etc., if applicable), towels (swimming and showers), toiletries, equipment to bring (if applicable)
  - Not To Bring Ideas: Weapons including guns (real or airsoft, blowdart, knives (pocket or camping),

## Schedule an Afternoon to Retreat Yourself

Because you've planned well and worked hard, there appears to be a lot left in the tank. Reality check - there probably isn't. Your spouse & kids (if your spouse doesn't work with you, and if applicable), church, leaders and youth students deserve the best you...so scheduling this with your team, and even for your team, is imperative! Remember what you've probably preached and taught your team: "Jesus withdrew often" (Luke 5:16).

We can't serve until we are filled up in the Spirit. You've got a big weekend coming, and God needs you to be your best.

- Schedule time to intentionally be with Jesus for a while, reading His Word and praying
- That night, schedule dinner with your spouse and kids (again, if applicable)
- Then go home and rest!
- Option 2 - if the event/retreat center is close, schedule time to go there and be with Jesus for a while
  - THIS IS FOR YOU...not to pray for your volunteers, students, etc. That's already being done throughout the planning!

## Writing Thank You Cards

The best time to do this is BEFORE your event unless you are seriously organized and not moving on to the next big thing after your event is done. Pray over each card as you write it, thanking God for them BEFORE anything happens. Then when you return from your event, they are already in envelopes and addressed, ready to be sent out!

- Your Spouse
  - Thank him/her for being them, spending more time with the kids while you were busy, and/or for being the best life-partner for you
- Your Pastor
  - Thank him/her for praying for your event, and for letting you invest an entire weekend in the students outside of the church
- Volunteers (can get help from an assistant, etc. - just make sure you sign them)
  - Thank them for taking time away from work, their family, etc. and investing in the students of your church
- Guest speaker, worship team, emcee
  - Thank them for taking time away from work, their family, etc. and investing in the students of your church
- Other church(es) you partnered with (if applicable)

- o Thank them for helping to show what the family of God is like to your students (it's bigger than just our church!)
- Venue
  - o We recommend saving this one for after to mention something specific that you noticed. A few options to include:
    - Overall experience
    - Point of contact (employee that went above and beyond or was consistently good to work with)
    - Kitchen staff/cooks
    - Groundskeepers (if the place was clean throughout)

By now, if you *feel* like you have communicated too much to everyone, you most-likely have communicated well. Keep going; we're cheering you on!

# chapter nine

## DURING THE EVENT

You're here. Or...there, at the start of your event. You're more than likely standing in your church's lobby or youth room ready to go. Maybe you can see the light...don't walk into it! How you handle the several hours of said event before the end of the tunnel will determine a few important things. Some of those are:

- Your student's continued faith journey
- Where your group goes from the event
- Your leader's trust in you to do more (both your volunteers AND your pastor)
- Your student's parent's trust in you with their kids

So let's break it down (go ahead and bust a "break it down" noise, even better if you're around someone that has no idea what's going on ;-)

### I. Event Check-in (Registration)

*There are a few opportunities throughout this process to show your church, pastor, and parents that you care about your students. This is one of them! Having clear direction, signage, and people in place for this part speaks volumes to others and helps you and your team set the right tone for the event.*

#### A. Volunteer Check-In

You have handed out assignments and times to arrive (earlier than the students). When your volunteers arrive, check them in and have a short team talk that reinforces the purpose and heart of your event. Tie it to the church's mission! Then, have everyone get to their stations ready to check-in and invest in students!

- Designate and mark a check-in area/table for all volunteers and communicate where this is before the event

#### B. Student Check-In

Your team is set and in place. Designate and mark the initial check-in area/table for all students! Ensure your student stations are well staffed! Here are a few suggested stations to help ensure everything gets off to a great start:

- Station 1 - Event Check-in
  - o Ensure the student is pre-registered.
    - If not, register the student (if you accept walk-ons, if not, have a clear plan in place to inform the student and parent that they are unable to attend the event)
    - Ensure all medical/insurance and emergency contact info is correct
  - o Bag/Luggage Check (there are a couple of ways to do this)
    - Have bag checkers at this station with wands to safely check luggage for items not allowed, then the students take their bags with them through the rest of check-in and to the transportation, OR
    - Tag the bags with the appropriate color tape (so it can be delivered to the correct room upon arrival at the venue)
      - Have bag checkers on hand to safely check luggage for items not allowed and then take to transportation
  - o Room assignments
    - You can do this; however, you choose, but one idea is:
      - Have students assigned to leaders and rooms that are color-coded
        - o Upon check-in, give them a color matching bracelet
        - o Leaders have matching bracelets and the venue rooms have color matching signs on the doors

- o When you have your event orientation at the venue, have the leaders assigned to different areas
- Station 2 - Medical Check-in
  - o All medication needs to be checked in with the event nurse.
  - o Every student and parent needs to verbally answer the question, “do you have any prescribed or over the counter medication with you or in your bags?”.
    - If no, they can proceed to whatever the next step is (orientation room, food, transportation, etc.)
    - If yes, the nurse needs to log all medication, the frequency it’s needed and complete whatever the rest of their system is
- Station 3-Event Supplies
  - o If you are doing t-shirts, this can be a time to pass those out.
    - We also suggest giving those to small group leaders if you plan on the students wearing their event t-shirt on the last day. If you hand a shirt to a student, they will likely wear it earlier than intended.
  - o Event Booklets
    - If you have a booklet you are passing out for students to take notes in, this is a great station to do that.
  - o Schedules
    - We highly recommend laminating a copy of the Simplified View of the schedule and putting this on a nametag size piece of paper. Get lanyards for these schedules so that students can wear them around for the weekend. You can also use the other side of this piece to make name tags.
      - If you do name tags, be sure to have sharpies at this station for students to write their names.

### C. Prayer By Your Pastor

*Throughout the year, it is imperative that you look for opportunities to tie in your youth group/ministry to the bigger picture...the church as a whole! If you plan ahead, this is a stellar opportunity to invite your Sr/Lead Pastor to pray for and over your students before you leave (if you’re meeting at the event venue, you can have your pastor on video welcoming and praying for your students to kick everything off).*

*Why? Brian Houston, the Global Pastor of a little known church in Australia, stated in an insta post, “The part you play is not greater than what you’re part of.” When we realize and work from the position of being part of something bigger than our ministry, it can help lateral movement within our church. One day, your students will move on to the young adult and/or overall ministry of the church!*

Again, show off your desire to take care of your students up front!

### II. Green Room

*Place your personality hosts (speaker, band) in charge of your green room. This is a great opportunity to show your guests (and families if applicable) that they are thought of and have a place to go throughout the event if needed. Elements to ensure are in place and given attention include:*

- Green Room Pass
  - o This should be different or in addition to your “all-access” pass. Your Green Room is for your guests and you to rest, recharge, and get ready for the next element. Not everyone that has an all-access pass needs access to the green room
- Snacks
  - o Bottled Water - have chilled and room temperature water available as different people prefer either (a singer might not want chilled water right before going on stage, but maybe they do!)
  - o Think of snacks that don’t create an issue when you’re around others (Oreos are not a great idea as they fill your grill with dark elements that attack the person your talking to ;-)
  - o Mints and gum
- Bathroom
  - o New toothbrushes and enough travel size toothpaste tubes for everyone so they don’t have to share (can you give us a Jimmy Falon “ehhh”!)
  - o Mouthwash with dixie cups
  - o Floss and toothpicks
- Enough outlets for everyone to charge their devices
  - o Have a few different chargers people can use in case they don’t have theirs!
  - o Room Temperature
- SO GOOD to pay attention to this...the last thing you want is people having to wear coats or wearing their bathing suit to the green room. That’s weird.

### III. What Happens During Worship

*The opening worship time is going to be filled with excitement and anticipation, as well as some mixed feelings and thoughts. That is because you have spent time praying, and the Holy Spirit is already at work! This is a great opportunity to tackle different thoughts and feelings students have during times of worship.*

*If you are using a guest band, ensure they are aware of and ready to play some songs that are familiar to your group. They are here to minister and serve your group! If you used the weeks leading up to your event to introduce a new song or two, make sure they use those songs.*

*For your first service, use this time to generate excitement with a couple of upbeat songs (or go straight into a song you know your students really worship to). Either way, after the first song or two, get up on stage and tackle some of the different thoughts students have. Exhort and encourage them to press in! Keep some things in mind to help your environment:*

- Volunteers actively engage in worship
  - Talk with your volunteers before service begins and let them know they help set the atmosphere as well. Jump around, clap, raise their hands...whatever you believe for your students, use your volunteers to help lead the way
  - *At the same time, explain that you don't force students to do anything! If a student isn't engaging, it might be a good time to see what's going on and pray for them (\*see the last bullet point below in this section)*
- Volunteers placed strategically around the room
  - Students are going to go to the bathroom and may think they can wander around.
  - Some students, for some reason, think worship time is a chance to "pray and minister" to other students. While this can be a good thing, at the right time, it can also be distracting. Train your volunteers to step in when needed, especially when it's a female student praying for a male student or male to female!
- Security in the hallway
  - This helps keep track of students and ensures a safe environment
  - External doors need to be monitored as well as students trying to just hang out during worship
- \*Volunteers readily available to minister or pray with students
  - It is imperative that your volunteers pay attention to who they are ministering to
  - Drill it in their heads that male volunteers pray with, and minister to male students and female volunteers pray with and minister to female students during worship times
  - If this time of ministry runs through the remainder of worship, have them help the student transition back into service for the message
    - Have a ministry card or form available for the volunteer to fill out so they can go back to the student afterward, or pass it off to their small group leader, etc.

#### **IV. Late Night Activity**

*Students have dozens of preferences when it comes to the word "activity." When you plan these, have a clear goal in mind (team building, pure fun, strategy, relationship building). Depending on the size of your group, there are different ways to handle these late-night moments. A few ideas are:*

##### **A. Large Game for everyone**

- Human Foosball (search it!) - Can set up a tournament, have two to three fields depending on room or field size
  - Use your small groups as teams or put two groups together depending on size
- Tank or Tube Wars - use your small groups as teams
- Leader Hunt
  - Different leaders are different points, and they go hide around the venue grounds
  - After explaining the rules and boundaries, give leaders 20 minutes to hide
  - Release the students for a specific amount of time
  - Have security strategically placed to ensure no one goes wandering off
- There are plenty of sites that list large group games...have fun!

##### **B. Have different environments to meet different student's likings**

- Gaming room with Xbox, PS, Switch, Atari, etc. stations ready to go
- Coffee and table game room with a couple of Keurigs and games for students to check out (some of us strongly recommend "Tenzies" and "Happy Salmon")
- Dodgeball is always a throw down good time
- Laser Tag (this could also be a whole group game)
  - Search Laser Tag rental or Mobile Laser Tag and set up a course in the gym or rec area of the venue!
  - Research cost to purchase your equipment and use part of your youth budget AND event budget to purchase
- Silent Rave/Party
  - Search "Silent Rave (or party) Equipment"...we promise a good time!
  - Use black lights and glow elements to increase the atmosphere
  - MAKE SURE you have your video crew capture some of these moments ;- ) as it is hysterical listening to

people sing along when there is no music playing (if you've never seen this, everyone participating wears headphones and are all listening to the same thing!)

## V. Visiting Host-Homes or Small Groups

This is an incredibly special opportunity if you have a chance to make visits to your different small groups. Most highlights from the weekends come from moments within your host homes and small groups. If you have a team, be sure to divide up the host homes and do your best to make an appearance at as many as you can.

If you can have girl leaders visit girl's host homes and small groups, that is always preferred. It is also a good practice to text the small group leader or host home to let them know you are coming, and when you are about 5 minutes out. This allows you to feel like a welcomed guest rather than an extra burden.

The last piece of advice here is to do your best not to run the small group. You've empowered your leaders to lead, so let them do just that!!

## VI. When to Arrive the Next Morning

*You want to take care of everyone AND create times for the speaker/band to be around your students in settings other than the stage!*

### A. Breakfast for Personalities and Tech

- Schedule your personalities and tech to have breakfast 30 minutes before students are scheduled so they can move around, or sit at a table with students!

### B. Treat for Your Volunteers

- A snack sack can go a long way here...
  - These can be put together by parents or your office team ahead of time
  - Use the same elements you have in the green room (gum/mints, snack, \$5 Coffee Shop gift card)
- Leader Devo led by your guest speaker for your volunteers
  - Have your guest speaker eat first so they can speak into your team while they eat

## VII. Morning Services

*Morning service is a great way to get the day going. It can also be a drag due to being tired from the previous night's activities. Keep in mind:*

- *High energy is a must - that doesn't mean you need 30-45 minutes of straight loudness, but a 30-45 minute Devo may not connect as well in this time either*
- *This can be scheduled, OR it can be more of a game-time decision of what to do*
  - *Some high energy worship*
  - *The guest speaker takes 10 minutes to recap an important thought from the night before and dive into it a little more*
  - *Creative elements such as a planned drama or creative element that uses students*

### A. Mid Day Small Groups?

*Touchpoints throughout the event can help create sustainability within your students!*

- Depending on the rest of your schedule, 30-60 minutes will be a good amount of time
- Use this time to generate some dialogue about the previous night's service
- Either create some questions after the service for your leaders to use or have your guest speaker send some ideas ahead of time to use
- To wrap up, encourage students to get in groups of two to three and pray for each other
  - Events are great to encourage things like this to reinforce what you already teach and give an opportunity to do so

### B. Location For Groups

- This depends on how you have your groups set up for the event as a whole - but here are some options
  - Location of the groups choice - set some boundaries but let each group decide where they want to meet
  - Set and name designated locations and assign each group to one of them
  - Set and name designated locations, then hold a quick challenge (think "the first one to bring me a \_\_\_\_\_ and their group gets dismissed first" type element)
  - If your groups are assigned by sleeping rooms, they can use those if they fit this element

## VIII. Afternoon Activity

### A. Recreation or Mission Opportunity

- Recreation
  - This can look similar to last night's activity elements
  - This can be free time to enjoy and take advantage of activity elements the venue offers
  - This can be a scheduled element such as lake activities, snowboarding/skiing or something more

native to the area of the venue

- Mission Opportunity

*YES! Few things encourage students to live out their faith more than a missions trip or opportunity. Here are some ideas for planning*

- o Talk with the venue in advance and ask if they are aware of any opportunities in the area
- o If they say "we have plenty to do around here," that is up to you. It may be hard to justify the registration cost if you do something on site. Then again, you could negotiate the price if this is an option you are interested in
- o Call some of the local churches to see if there is anything you could do (cleaning, moving, etc.)
- o Small groups could do different things if there are multiple options in the area (soup kitchen, park cleaning, etc.)

## B. Free Time Pros and Cons

*Free time can be a great time if it's done right. It can also turn into a call or email from a parent after the event that sounds something like "I'm just wondering why my kid had four hours of free time and didn't do much when I paid \_\_\_\_\_ for the weekend." Naturally, there can be students that don't want to do anything...but being intentional with free time is a better way to go.*

- Pros

- o Naptime! Rest for volunteers and students can be a good thing
  - If you give the ok for students/volunteers to go back to their rooms to rest, ensure there is always a volunteer in the room when students are in there
    - o AND, make sure volunteers know that if there is only one other student, they need to close the room for safety reasons
- o Relational Build Time
  - Students are pretty natural at finding something to do with others. Having time for them to hang where they want and do whatever within your event can be a good thing!

- Cons

- o Isolated and wandering students
  - Free time can mean that a student may not have anything to do or nobody else to connect with. This could disrupt their experience at your event
- o Too long
  - After a while, students can get bored or lost the point of the event if too much time passes without any organized element
  - You certainly don't want this reported to parents as they paid good money
  - If there aren't enough elements for students to choose from, or try out, a maximum of two hours of free time would be best

## IX. Meals for the Day

*Depending on the size of your group, mealtimes can be all together or in shifts (middle school and then high school, or whatever you choose). Here is a general meal list you want to think through and potentially offer:*

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Snacks available
- Dinner
- Late night snack bar

Here are a few ideas to mix things up for different meal times:

- Pancakes and Pajamas (or Flannels and Flapjacks)
  - o This needs to be well advertised so that pajamas are appropriate ;-)
  - o This option could start half an hour earlier to allow time for getting ready for the rest of the day OR
  - o This could be the breakfast time on the final day of your event before you leave
- Boxed lunch for small group picnics
  - o Work with the venue to separate lunches into groups that match your small group numbers
  - o A leader could pick up the lunches and have them wherever their group will meet, or everyone picks their lunch up then goes to their small group meeting place together
- Bonfires with hotdogs and smores
  - o This could be one bonfire with everyone OR
  - o Multiple bonfires that have a few small groups together OR
  - o A bonfire per small group

*Supplies could be ready to go at the bonfire(s), or supplies can be picked up by each group!*

## X. Evening Service

For years, evening services have this stereotype as it relates to elements that make up said service. And.....that's ok! It

works. At the same time, mixing some things up or adding different elements works too. You know your group and what is needed in this season! Here is your basic order of service:

- Worship Sound Check
- A/V Run Through
- Special Element Run Through (Drama, etc.)
- Pre-Service Prayer
- Open Doors
  - Music Up
  - Video Elements on screen
- Countdown Video or Element
- Ice Breaker/Game
  - Not necessary, depending on which evening service this is or your preference. Sometimes it's good to just get into it and leave the fun to other times of your event!
- Worship Songs 1 & 2
- Video-based on the theme of the event
- Worship Songs 3 & 4
- Exhort/Pray Out
- Bumper Video or Drama/Special
- Message
- Alter/Response Time
- Closing Worship Song
- Announcements and Dismiss

*However you structure your services, think about how you can utilize your leaders and volunteers to oversee or run different elements of your service. You may or may not do this during your midweek service. This might be a great time to believe in your team and set them up for success! A few elements that can be set up ahead of time are:*

- Ice Breaker/Game
- Closing prayer
- Announcements and Dismiss

## **XI. Announcements and Public Thank You's**

Remember that light you saw at the end of the tunnel at the event check-in? You are that much closer...but few things can taint a great event more than over-looking gratitude. Plan this carefully!

### **A. Thank Personalities**

- Band
- Speaker(s)

*Think about what would stand out to your guests. If they are single, a pair of Jordan's or designer bag might be it. If they are married/have kids, something for their family would be a good move. A Bed & Breakfast stay, something local from where they live...be creative! Here are other people/positions you want to make sure to get thanked. Don't just point them out - bring them up on stage:*

- Production Team
- Small-Group Leaders
- Volunteers
  - Security
  - Food help
- Hosts
- Thank The Venue

## **XIII. Helping Production Reset the Room**

Ask students for help in doing this. You can assign small groups or sleeping rooms different times to help. There are some things they can't help with, but develop a list prior to your event and update it as you go along.

- Straighten chairs
- Pick up all trash
- Straighten and clean up stage
- Vacuum if needed
- Game or Activity Prep

*At the end of your event, have students and volunteers assist with a final reset to leave everything better than you found it!*

## **XIV. Where do I need Security Throughout the Event**

*Everywhere! Really though, just about everywhere. (It helps if you introduce your security team to your group up front, indicating that they are here to help everyone has a fun and safe time).*

#### A. Ratio of Leaders to Students

Check with your church leadership (HR, Executive Pastor) to see if there is an expected ratio in place. If not, research what other churches similar to yours has in place. If you can't find any solid system in place, work with your church leadership to set ratios that your church feels good about. A baseline to work from is having two adults with, or around a student(s) at all times

#### B. Child Protection Policies

- A sleeping room should have at least 1 adult at all times when students are present. This helps with theft, inappropriate activity and more
  - If there is only one student in a sleeping room to:
    - Take a nap - the adult should see if there is another adult OR another student that can be in the room with them. There should never be one adult and one student in a sleeping room alone. If there isn't anyone else, the leader and student need to go do something else
    - Grab something - the adult leader should prop the door open while waiting for the student to grab whatever it is they need, encouraging them to move along. This keeps the leader and student from being in the room alone (adapt to your venue layout)
- Have an available incident report for anything that happens. The more you document, the better it will be for everyone, should something be brought up post-event.

#### C. Looking at Traffic Concerns

*Depending on the venue, it is possible there will be other groups there with you. Use your security personnel to help with both people and vehicle traffic flow should there need to use/cross driving areas*

- Scout this ahead of time and purchase light-up wands and reflective vests for them to use at night (the light-up wands could come in handy for other directional needs as well!)
- If your event is more in town, and walking between venue buildings happens often, your plan needs to involve more people
  - In this case, budgeting to cover a small per-person stipend for this type of help may be necessary

#### D. Having an Officer Float

- Student safety is your top priority. Again, for the most part, students won't care. But it speaks to parents in a big way!
- A floating officer comes in handy when your group is all together for large elements, as well as during free time where she/he roams around and is available for anything that comes up.

#### E. 5 Tips for Creating a Safe Environment

1. Meet with the venue staff OR request contact information from a previous group that stayed there
  - a. Nobody knows the venue better than the venue. Ask them what they've learned and are aware of.
  - b. Ask another group that has stayed there what they learned or wish they knew before being there
2. Invite another pastor/ministry leader from your church staff to review your plan
  - a. A fresh set of eyes can fill in the gaps, bring good questions to the table, and confirm your plan in place
3. Hold morning and night meetings with your team
  - a. Review your security plan
  - b. Ask your team to bring up anything they noticed the night before or during the day that could be improved
  - c. Ensure everyone is on the same page for sleeping rooms and other potentially unsafe areas
4. You and your immediate team stick to your plan!
  - a. Seriously - if you don't follow what you put in place, your team will not pay as much attention to what you put in place either
  - b. Be willing to make the tough calls, especially when it holds a team member/volunteer accountable
5. Be willing to improvise!
  - a. The above does not read "be willing to brush under the rug." At the same time, your plan will probably not be perfect or ready for "that" scenario.
  - b. If you can improvise on the spot, do it
  - c. If you're unsure, pull a couple of trusted volunteers (start with your spouse if applicable, then a couple of volunteers) to talk through the issue that came up
  - d. If you are still unsure, call your executive or lead pastor. This isn't a sign of weakness, but strength!

**And now, the light at the end of the tunnel...of your event. You're killing it, on to the next big thing!**

# chapter ten

## FOLLOWING UP FROM THE EVENT

For many, follow up after Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend is the crucial missing ingredient for maximizing impact. After the event is over and you have taken a well-deserved nap, it is time to finish strong. This chapter will outline some final steps that will help students grow spiritually, and future events happen more effectively. We will cover some practical follow up practices every ministry can utilize for lasting impact long after the final session of Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend is over.

### How Should I Follow Up on Spiritual Decisions?

The student ministry's responsibility is not just to lead students to make a spiritual decision, but to walk alongside them as they grow. There are several decisions your students could make during the weekend, but the most crucial for immediate follow up are those who make first-time decisions to follow Jesus. Here are a few thoughts on how to follow up:

- **Following Up with Students.** Contact students who have decided to follow Jesus as soon as possible. A good rule of thumb is 24-48 hours within the end of the event. As a brand-new believer in Jesus, these students need to know they are loved and supported by your student ministry immediately. When you reach out to the student, encourage them to take next steps for spiritual growth, such as joining a small group or getting baptized. Make sure they have a copy of a new believer's guide, such as YM360's "New."
- **Following Up with Parents.** As with all things, keep parents in the loop on what is happening spiritually in the life of their student. Encourage students to tell their parents about all God is doing in their lives. Follow up with parents to tell them how excited the church is about their student's decision and clearly explain the next steps. Parents of guests especially need to know you will communicate with them and not keep them in the dark.
- **Following Up with Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend Leaders.** There will be times when the decision a student makes is a little unclear. In moments like these, it can be very helpful to reach out to you Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend leaders and ask for a little more background on a student's spiritual condition.
- **Involve Weekly Small Group Leaders into the Follow Up Process.** Invite your student ministry's weekly small group leaders to also reach out to students who have made a decision. Discipleship happens best in community, so make sure your leaders are doing everything possible to invite new believers into small groups to get connected for growth.

### How Can I Keep Students Who Have Made Decisions From Falling Through the Cracks?

It can be surprisingly easy to let students fall through the cracks of follow up, so you may need to implement a simple system to help you manage the process. Consider starting a tracking sheet for each student who made a decision at Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Include their name, spiritual decision type, # of contacts, and follow up steps.

For example:

Johnny Doe | Salvation | 2 contacts (last on March 3) | Get Connected to Small Group

This kind of tool can keep you and your team from losing sight of those students who have made spiritual decisions, especially those who met Jesus at Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Remember, the Bible teaches us that new believers are like spiritual babies, so make sure you are doing everything possible to care for them!

## How Can I Follow Up After the Event to Make Improvements for our Next Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend?

Immediately following Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend, everyone's minds are fresh with ideas and critical feedback to make the event even better in the future. Take advantage of this by developing a quick and easy survey to get this feedback from your leadership. Send this survey to key volunteer groups that you want feedback from. This could include:

- **Host Homes** – Get feedback on communication, small group leaders, group size, suggestions for the future, schedule, willingness to host in the future, etc.
- **Small Group Leaders** – Get feedback on host homes, curriculum, services, communication, schedule, suggestions for the future, willingness to lead in the future, etc.
- **Event Volunteers (tech, meals, rec...)** – Get feedback on logistics, resources, ways to improve for the future, willingness to serve in the future, etc.

There are two great ways to survey these groups: 1) Provide a paper survey at the beginning of the weekend, ask them to fill it out over the weekend, and get it back during the final session. 2) Send an online survey immediately following the event, asking for their feedback. The best way to avoid blind spots in your planning for next year is by getting valuable feedback from this year.

*\*\*See Example Documents Section for Survey examples for Host Homes, Small Group Leaders, and Event Volunteers\*\**

## How Can I Retain Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend Leaders for the Future?

Believe it or not, the best time to begin recruiting your Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend leaders for next year starts at the end of the event this year. It all begins with two words: Thank You. Extending a heartfelt thank you to each leader shows them how much you value their participation in the weekend. Write each leader a personal note of thanks. It can be time-consuming, but it is well worth the investment! Remember, these men and women made the event happen... They deserve your thanks. You might even consider providing a small gift to each leader that they can pick up at the conclusion of the event. Keep a running list of everyone who participated in Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend (including those behind the scenes) and make sure they are personally thanked.

## How Can I Show Gratitude to the Personalities Who Led?

Giving a check to the band or speaker at the end of the weekend should not be the only way you show gratitude. Follow up with a personal note and share a story of spiritual impact from the weekend. Help them to see how their investment made a difference in the lives of students. You may also consider asking them for critical feedback since they have seen several events and have a lot of experience.

## How Can I Keep the Momentum Going After Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend?

While you cannot manufacture a "spiritual high" among your students, you can keep the momentum from Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend rolling in your student ministry. Consider following up from the event with a single or series of mid-week services that continue to unpack the ideas from the theme. Utilize student testimonies as a way to encourage others. Above all, **don't forget to celebrate** the changed lives from Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Share the stories with your students so they will be encouraged by all God is doing in the Student Ministry.

## What is the Most Important Thing I Can Do as a Leader Following Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend?

As we have said from the first chapter to the last, prayer is the essential task of leadership. Take the time to thank God in prayer for all He did during Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend. Ask for His continued movement among your students in a noticeable way. Remember, it was God who made the weekend happen, not any resources or logistics. Just as the weekend was in His hands, so is the future of your student ministry. Continue to daily surrender your students, your ministry, and your church to Him. Then watch Him do an Ephesians 3:20-21 kind of work:

**Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**



# conclusion

God did it. We hope this truth never falls far from our hearts and minds. We must remember this truth no matter the intentionality of the blueprint, the details within the plans, or the hearts of the authors. God did a great work through the event, and He used you to accomplish it.

We hope this resource was insightful, helpful, and most of all, replicable. We surveyed the country looking for people who had experience in putting on events like this, and we embraced the heart of the Church. We were not meant to work alone in this world. This blueprint was designed by youth workers for youth workers.

Do you want to know our favorite part about this resource? A blueprint is not a one-time use. Contractors will use the same blueprints to build an entire neighborhood, and we hope this blueprint helps you in all of your future retreats and events. You will undoubtedly modify, rework, and reshape the ideas bound within these sentences. We encourage you to do this because we truly believe that what you do matters. Here at YM360, we believe in providing high-quality resources and life-changing events which allow youth leaders to lead students in growing a meaningful relationship with Jesus. Lead well, Love more, and Serve gracefully. Thank you for reading, and enjoy your next event!



# **youth ministry blueprints**

EXAMPLE DOCUMENTS SECTION

# Registration Form

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

## Parent Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Emergency Contact

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Known Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Two Students Your Student Would Prefer to Room With:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend Rules

1. We want everyone to have a positive Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend experience!
2. No pranks of any kind anytime.
  - a. That's pranks to people in your group.
  - b. That also applies to other houses in your neighborhoods-no wandering out late at night!
3. Listen and respect all Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend leaders. (small group leaders, host home parents, staff, etc.)
4. Be respectful of all house rules your host home family practices.
5. No cell phones out during worship and during small group times.
6. Leaders will take up cell phones after evening small groups and give them back to you before breakfast. This is to promote conversation and getting a little rest.
7. Be on time. Follow the schedule.
8. If you need to use the restroom during a service, please go to the back of the room and down the stairs in the lobby and use bathrooms in back of Fellowship Hall. (Don't go out doors by stage.)
9. If you are leaving early and/or coming back later, please make sure your leader knows when you are being picked up.
10. Be competitive but also good sports during our recreation competitions!
11. Students are discouraged from driving during normal times of the weekend-leaders and host homes will take care of transportation.
12. No drugs, alcohol, e-cigs, weapons, or pornographic material allowed.

# Small Group Leader Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

T-shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Please List Any Allergies You Have (Specifically Pet):

\_\_\_\_\_

Your School and Year (If Applicable):

\_\_\_\_\_

In What Ministries Are You Currently Involved:

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you want to be a DNow Leader:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your current relationship with Jesus:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your involvement with alcohol/drugs:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Can You Transport Students During the Weekend:

\_\_\_\_\_

If so, How many:

\_\_\_\_\_

What Is Your Email Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Any final thoughts or concerns which should be addressed:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Host Home Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Membership at the Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students You Can Host In Your Home (Please provide a preferred number and a maximum):

\_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students You Can Transport for the Weekend:

\_\_\_\_\_

Any Pets in the Home:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Any Questions or Concerns We Should Be Aware of:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Example Menu Document

1st Day - Lunch - PB& J Sandwiches			
2 jars pb		\$12.00	6lb lunch meat \$40.00
2 jars jelly		\$6.00	
3 loaves of bread	\$2.00 per loaf	\$6.00	2 slices of bread per person
8 bags chips	\$2.00 per bag	\$10.00	will also be used for lunch 2 and 3
chocolate candies			left over from christmas party
1st Dinner - Chili			
5 crockpots of chili			donated by moms
5lb block cheddar cheese from Sams		\$13.00	I will shred at home. Used for potatoes also
4 bags of fritos	\$2.50 a bag	\$10.00	
2 sour cream	\$4 each	\$8.00	Used for potaoes also
2nd Day Breakfast			
2 mini cinnamon rolls	\$6.39 a pack of 32	\$13.00	at Sams
bananas		\$10.00	whatever is on sale. 3 lbs for \$1 at Sams
2nd Lunch - Hot Dogs			
60 hot dogs		\$11.00	30 ct at Sams for \$5.26
8 packs of buns	\$1 per 8 pack	\$8.00	64 buns
mustard		\$2.00	
ketchup		\$4.00	
left over chili			
chips from above			
donated cookies			
2nd Dinner - Spaghetti			
5 lb ground beef	\$3 per lb	\$15.00	
2 spaghetti sauce jars from sams	5.98 each	\$12.00	
6 packs of noodles	\$1.50 each	\$9.00	
5 french bread	\$1 each	\$5.00	
2 - 4 pack butter		\$4.00	4 sticks for bread. 4 for potatoes
donated brownies			
3rd Day Breakfast - Pancakes			
3 gallons milk	\$3.50 each	\$10.50	
2 jars syrup	\$2 each	\$4.00	
left over fruit if any			
Smiths provide rest for pancakes?			
3rd Lunch - Baked Potatoes			
potatoes	50 lbs bag at Sams	\$18.57	butter, sour cream and cheese for toppings
any left over sweets			
Drinks			
1 box of tea bags		\$4.00	
5 Lemonade mixes	\$3 each	\$15.00	
2 jugs Apple juice	\$3 each	\$6.00	
donated coffee			
bag of sugar		\$2.00	
TOTAL		\$218.07	

ADDITIONAL: Make sure to pack crockpots, a few packs of tin foil, 2 large pots, a few cookie trays, frying pan for pancakes, ute  
 What cleaning supplies do you need to bring? Garbage bags, dish soap?

## Tier Pricing Example

# FUSE CAMP PRICES GO UP!

June 1st the price of camp goes up to \$255

**FUSE 2017 SUMMER CAMP**

**2017 FUSE CAMP**  
BEST WEEK EVER

EARLY BIRD	REGULAR	LATE
<del>\$215</del>	\$235	\$255
BEFORE MARCH 21	MARCH 26 - MAY 31	JUNE 1 - JULY 2

TO LOCK IN YOUR PRICE GET YOUR \$50 DEPOSIT IN AT REGISTRATION.

**EARLY BIRD VIP BONUS**  
THE FIRST 5 PEOPLE TO REGISTER ON MARCH 7TH WILL GET SOME ADDED BONUSES! THE FIRST FIVE GET TO:

- CHOOSE YOUR CAR/SEAT/SEAT MATE TO CAMP
- CHOOSE YOUR SMALL GROUP LEADER
- CHOOSE YOUR BUNK BED
- SKIP IN LINE FOR MEALS EVERY DAY

PARTIAL SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE.

*Register For Camp*

# Fall Through the Cracks Checklist

*This is a Starting Point. Feel free to add your event specific items!*

- Have I prayed recently for the event and the students attending (the most important)
- Have I communicated with the venue about any deadlines or needed information?
- Have I created and communicated student sign up/deadlines and cost?
- Have I made graphics and promotional/marketing material?
- Have I started researching and considering broad schedule of event?
- Do I have all my transportation needs covered
- Are students registering?
- Are there any odd dietary or medical needs that I need to let someone else know about
- Have I made/handed out liability forms for students as they register? (Some venues require liability forms being notarized.)
- Do I have enough host homes for all the groups?
- Have I considered gas and the cost to drive?
- Have I thought through activity and game supplies?
- Have I determined what I may be handing out to the students (shirts, journals, etc.)?
- Have I recruited enough leaders?
- Have I communicated with the leaders about their responsibilities and roles?
- Am I continuing to promote the event?
- Have I made a plan for all meal times and snack opportunities?
- Do I have enough paper goods for each part of the retreat weekend?

# Month Long Prayer Guide

1. Pray for protection as the speaker travels, stays in good health, has strength and endurance for the weekend, and for protection for their family and loved ones while away. (John 10:10, 17:15)
2. Pray that everything the students do will honor the Lord. (Colossians 3:23-24)
3. Pray for the small group leader's hearts and minds to be fully yielded to the Lord so they speak His words with boldness and in His love. (Acts 4:29-32)
4. Pray that as the speaker would humble themselves, prays and seeks the Lord's face, that they would be in tune with the Lord, that they be sensitive to His guidance, empowered by His Holy Spirit, enabled to follow the Lord in obedience to bring forth messages with boldness, power, and passion in such a way that the Lord will be glorified and lives will be saved, renewed and transformed. (Ephesians 6:19-20)
5. Pray that God's light and His love will permeate these families and their host homes so that the students experience the love of the Lord and the fruit of His Spirit in such a profound way that it leaves a lasting impression; that it is sealed on their minds and in their hearts. (Gal 5:22-23, Eph 4:30)
6. Pray that all volunteers work in harmony with one another; that they exemplify God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in the midst of all the parents, students, small group leaders, and other volunteers. (Ephesians 5:1-2)
7. Pray for the band's voices to remain strong; no technical difficulties; they reflect God's passion and energy; and their music will bring joy to the students. (Psalm 23)
8. Pray for the small group leaders to have ears open to listen to the students, to not shrink back from topics that may be unpopular or difficult to talk about, that they would have discernment and wisdom in all their responses. (James 1:5)
9. Pray that the speaker would spend time with the Lord and seek Him continually in their life. (Matthew 6:33, 1 Chronicles 16:11, Psalm 27:8)
10. Pray for the band as they travel, remain in good health, have strength and endurance for the weekend, and for protection for their family and loved ones while away. (John 10:10, 17:15)
11. Pray for all the behind-the-scenes logistics for the event run smoothly.
12. Pray that the students will invite many of their friends to the event, but that they have understanding hearts if they can't all be together in the same host home. May they put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Colossians 3:14) Pray that the bands hearts are focused on the Lord, leading all to worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:20-24)
13. Pray that the small group leaders would invest in the lives of the students and that they would be an example of Jesus to them in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Tim 4:12)
14. Praise the Lord for those serving food for their servant hearts and their willingness to give of their time and talents. (1 Peter 4:7-11)
15. As the band leads in worship, pray that they lead the students to worship the Lord for who He is and to give thanks to Him and praise His Holy Name. (Psalm 63:1-5)
16. Pray that this be a time of unity among the students. (Ephesians 4:1-3)
17. Pray for the salvation of all students; that they may become a new creation in Jesus. (John 1:12)
18. Pray that the speaker would bring God's Word earnestly and with Christ's authority. (2 Corinthians 2:17)
19. Pray that through their living testimony God will use these host families to spread the knowledge of Christ like a fragrant aroma. (2 Cor 2:14,15)
20. Pray for the small group leaders as they travel, remain in good health, have strength and endurance for the weekend, and for protection for their family and loved ones while away. (John 10:10, 17:15)
21. Pray for the protection of students, leaders and all those involved in recreation and the service project.
22. Pray that while the students are in the host homes, they will show respect toward the families and be responsible; that the students will receive rest, relaxation, nourishment, times of fun and laughter, peace and acceptance, and growth in God's Word. (Acts 2:46-47, Acts 12:12, Titus 3:1)
23. As the band leads in worship, pray that all distractions be removed so that students will be prepared to hear the gospel and be challenged by the messages. (2 Samuel 22:1-4)

24. Pray for strength and protection of those who will be preparing the food each night.
25. Praise the Lord for the venue/host/ group's willingness to open their homes this weekend.
26. Pray that students will come alongside one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, and love one another.
27. Pray that all team members will work in harmony when preparing the food and during setup and clean up. (Ephesians 4:1-6)
28. Pray that the students have repentant hearts. (Psalm 51)
29. Pray for the students to have good health, strength and endurance for the weekend. (Hebrews 12:1)
30. Pray for the students seek the Lord; to develop a heart for God, His Word, and His ways; that they learn what it means to abide in Him. (James 4:7-8)
31. Pray for students that they would exchange their desire to be noticed and appreciated for the desire that God and God alone would shine gloriously through their beings, that their hearts' cry become, "I must decrease, so that He might increase." (John 3:30)

## 9 Day Prayer Guide

### **Day 1-Thursday January 17-PREPARE**

Lord, today we pray you would begin to prepare our hearts to receive you at DNow.  
*EZRA 7:10*

### **Day 2-Friday January 18-OUTREACH**

Lord, we pray that those who don't know you would begin a relationship with you at DNow.  
*EPHESIANS 2:4-6*

### **Day 3-Saturday January 19- WORSHIP**

Lord, we pray that each time we worship at DNow we can enter into your presence.  
*REVELATION 4:7-8 OR HEBREWS 12:28-29*

### **Day 4-Sunday January 20-SPEAKER**

Lord, we pray for our speaker, and would you fill them with the message that you need us to hear at DNow.  
*1 CORINTHIANS 2:3-5*

### **Day 5-Monday January 21-SMALL GROUPS**

Lord, we pray for each small group time to be effective in helping us unpack and apply the truths we hear at DNow.  
*ROMANS 15:4*

### **Day 6-Tuesday January 22- RECREATION**

Lord, we pray we could honor you through competition by utilizing the gifts and talents you have blessed us with while making your name great.  
*ROMANS 12:6-8*

### **Day 7-Wednesday January 23- HOST HOMES**

Lord, we pray for our time in host homes to provide growth in our Christian friendships and community.  
*1 CORINTHIANS 1:10*

### **Day 8-Thursday January 24- THANKFULNESS**

Lord, today we are thankful for you allowing us to have events like DNow, and we are thankful for how you will use this event.  
*JAMES 1:17*

### **Day 9-Friday January 25-ANTICIPATION**

Lord, we pray today would be a day we look back to and see how you used DNow to change the trajectory of our impact for your Kingdom.  
*PSALM 118:24*

# Schedule Examples

## Example 1

### DAY 1 - DATE

8:00 LEAVE CHURCH  
8:35 ARRIVE @ LOCATION  
9:30 RULES, OVERVIEW AND INDOOR GAMES  
11:15 SOLO DEVO 1  
12:00 LUNCH  
1:00 FIELD GAMES 1  
4:00 FREE TIME  
5:30 DINNER  
6:30 SESSION 1 (WORSHIP, MESSAGE, & SMALL GROUPS)  
8:30 LATE NIGHT SNACK  
9:30 LATE NIGHT GAME  
11:30 LIGHTS OUT

### DAY 2 - DATE

8:30 BREAKFAST  
9:30 SOLO DEVO 2  
10:00 SESSION 2 (WORSHIP, MESSAGE, & SMALL GROUPS)  
11:15 GAME  
12:30 LUNCH  
1:35 FIELD GAMES  
3:30 FREE TIME  
5:00 SOLO DEVO 3  
5:30 DINNER  
6:15 SESSION 3 (WORSHIP, MESSAGE, & SMALL GROUPS)  
7:30 PREPARE FOR CAPTURE THE FLAG  
8:00 CAPTURE THE FLAG  
11:15 CLEAN UP  
11:50 COUNTDOWN  
1:00 LIGHTS OUT

### DAY 3 - DATE

8:30 BREAKFAST  
9:00 SOLO DEVO 4  
9:30 SESSION 4 (WORSHIP, MESSAGE, & SMALL GROUPS)  
10:15 PRAY  
10:30 DEPART LOCATION==  
11:05 ARRIVE @CHURCH

## EXAMPLE 2

### Friday

5:45 PM / Check-in Begins  
6:30 PM / Session 1 (Game, Worship, Message)  
8:00 PM / Free Time Activities  
9:30 PM / Dismiss/Snacks  
10:00 PM / Small Groups  
12:00 AM / Lights Out

## **Saturday**

7:00 AM / Wake Up & Devo

8:45 AM / Doors Open

9:00 AM / Session 2 (Game, Worship, Message)

10:45 AM / Small Groups

11:45 AM / Lunch

12:45 PM / Breakout Session

1:55 PM / Serve The City

4:00 PM / Free Time

5:00 PM / Dinner

5:30 PM / Session 3 (Game, Worship, Message)

7:15 PM / Activity (snacks, dodgeball, laser tag, etc.)

10:00 PM / Small Groups

12:00 AM / Lights Out

## **Sunday**

7:00 AM/ Wake up & Devo & Pack up

8:45 AM/ Doors open

9:00 AM/ Session 4 (Game, Worship, Message)

10:00 AM/ Pray

10:30 AM/Depart

# TECH SHEET – EXAMPLE 1 (MORNING SERVICE)

<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>LIGHTING</b>	<b>SOUND</b>	<b>SCREEN</b>
9:25AM	Doors Open	Lighting up as students are entering	Upbeat music playing	Countdown Clock set on side screens at 5 minutes
9:30AM	<b>"Your Morning R&amp;R" Morning Show</b>	Lights as appropriate	Team Mics	Camp Logo
9:40AM	<b>Video recap from yesterday</b>	Lights Black	Music/Sound from Video	Video
9:48AM	Band Worship- 3 songs	Concert style	Music/Sound from Band	Screen showing words to songs as band plays them
9:58AM	Stephen - Message	Stage Lighting/ House lights up for message	Stephen's Mic	Screen showing camp logo/ Stephen's slides as needed
10:28AM	Robbie dismisses/closing instructions	Stage lighting up/ swinging lights as students exit	Robbie's Mic	Side Screens showing Camp Logo

# TECH SHEET – EXAMPLE 2 (EVENING SERVICE)

<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>LIGHTING</b>	<b>SOUND</b>	<b>SCREEN</b>
6:55PM	Doors Open	House Lights at Half // Stage Lighting	Upbeat music playing	Countdown Clock set on side screens at 5 minutes
7:00PM	Band Worship – 1 song	Concert Lighting	Music/Sound from Band	Words to songs as band plays them
7:05PM	GAME	Stage Lighting Up/House Lights Dim	Clay's Mic + 1 Handheld	Camp Logo
7:13PM	Band Worship Set- 2 songs	Concert style	Music/sound from band	Screen showing words to songs as band plays them
7:23PM	Stephen's – Message	Stage Lighting/ House Lights up for message	Stephen's Mic	Side Screens showing camp logo/Stephen's slides as needed
8:05PM	Response Time/Invitation/ Band plays 3-4 songs for closing worship	Stage Lighting as appropriate – House lights dimmed	Stephen's Mic and Band Sound	Screen black/ Screen showing words as band plays them
8:25PM	<b>VIDEO</b> <b>"HOW DO WE GROW"</b>	Lights Black	Music/Sound from Video	Screen showing video
8:28PM	Robbie prays/dismiss	Stage lighting up/ swinging lights as students exit	Robbie's Mic.	Side Screens showing Camp Logo

# Response Card Example

## Decision Card

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the Decision Below: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Counseling: \_\_\_\_\_

## Decision Card

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the Decision Below: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Counseling: \_\_\_\_\_

## Host Home Survey

*These questions could easily be placed in a Google Form or Survey Monkey for a free online version as well!*

1. Name?
2. Grade and Gender Hosted?
3. How would you rate your overall Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend Experience?
4. What was your favorite part of the event?
5. Did you feel adequately prepared for the event? If not, what can we do better to help you?
6. If you could change or improve one thing about the host home experience, what would it be?
7. Do you have any thoughts or knowledge we should know about from the weekend?
8. Final thoughts?
9. Would you be willing to volunteer again for our Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend next year?

## Small Group Leader Survey

*These questions could easily be placed in a Google Form or Survey Monkey for a free online version as well!*

1. Name?
2. Grade and Gender You Led?
3. How would you rate your overall Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend Experience?
4. What was your favorite part of the event?
5. How did you feel about the speaker/band/services?
6. Did you feel adequately prepared for role? If not, what can we do better to help you?
7. If you could change or improve one thing about your leadership experience, what would it be?
8. Do you have any thoughts or knowledge we should know about from the weekend?
9. Final thoughts?
10. Would you be willing to volunteer again for our Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend next year?

## Event Volunteer Survey

*These questions could easily be placed in a Google Form or Survey Monkey for a free online version as well!*

1. Name?
2. Position Volunteered For?
3. How would you rate your overall Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend Experience?
4. How much of the event were you able to be involved in?
5. What was your favorite part of the event?
6. Did you feel adequately prepared for role? If not, what can we do better to help you?
7. If you could change or improve one thing about your volunteer experience, what would it be?
8. Do you have any thoughts or knowledge we should know about from the weekend?
9. Final thoughts?
10. Would you be willing to volunteer again for our Disciple Now/Retreat Weekend next year?

Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends can be ministry launching events with a profound impact on the rest of your calendar year. This impact comes from not only a ministry perspective but also from a planning perspective. Our team consulted youth pastors from across the country and worked alongside veteran youth pastors to bring you the one-stop-shop for disciple now and retreat weekends.

Youth Ministry Blueprints: Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends was designed with youth pastors in mind. When an architect draws up the blueprints for a home, they use them throughout the entire building process. This book is a consulting piece from the moment you pick a weekend for your event to following up afterward. Youth Ministry Blueprints: Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends not only brings you answers to common questions but also provides templates and samples for most of your event needs. When your next disciple now or weekend retreat comes, look no further than Youth Ministry Blueprints: Disciple Now and Retreat Weekends.

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