



KICK OFF EVENT – CARNIVAL

This is a lesson for a first gathering of the year, with a fun, carnival theme.

Enhancer of Joy

Community

Lesson Developed by

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Tips to Prepare

- Two weeks out send a mailing out to all families of high school students in your system inviting them and friends to this event. If possible personalize a note on the flyer or card invite.
- Recruit and train adult and youth leaders who are stakeholders in this ministry, orient them to your vision statement, safe conduct policy, and the particulars of this event.
- Create an “Info About Me” sheet to capture updated information of each participant, on the back print the year’s schedule or highlights

Materials Checklist

- Nametags
 - Markers
 - “Info About Me” Sheets
 - Youth Group Schedule
 - Snacks and Drinks
 - Games/prizes
 - Rentals (if applicable)
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Setting the Atmosphere

- Create a bright inclusive outdoor space.
 - Utilize your budget to have any rentals or create games for visual impact. Bright signs and decorations (balloons, streamers) are a great idea!
 - Have a playlist playing fun music anytime people aren't talking.
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Scripture Focus

Romans 12:4-5

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

Purpose

This event serves as a dynamic kick off to the program year, highlighting relationship ministry and the scope and breadth of the year ahead. The event involves both structured games and general carnival time so that you can ensure everyone participates but is not overly scheduled.

Objectives

In this session, youth will have the opportunity to spend time with youth and adult leaders in small group and one-on-one conversation. Youth will see the goofy, fun side of youth group while hearing about the breadth of the program.

Further Study

Make sure you know where you're going for the year. Even if your full calendar of events is not written, have a vision or mission statement ready to work through with the group. What are the values you want to uphold as a group? What do you want each person to leave knowing? Keep this relatively short and make sure it authentically reflects your theology!

Consider perusing Pinterest for carnival ideas.

Use the games suggested, play your own, or check this site for even more ideas
<https://youthgroupgames.com.au/top-ten-lists/>

Introduction for Leaders

Key Theological Aspects

This session is an introduction to the youth group and is based on Romans 12:4-5. This is the beginning of forming community and talking about how all members are vital parts of the whole and have a role to play in contributing towards the vision for you year.

Gather

Gather [5 minutes]

Greeting One Another:



- Each participant should be personally greeted as they enter the space.
- Utilize your youth and adult leaders to make sure this happens and help each person get a name tag.
- Consider having leaders wear a matching shirt or old service trip t-shirts so they are recognizable. You want each person to feel known in the space and as though they belong.

Opening Prayer:

“Dear God. We are grateful to gather to kick-off a year together. We know that you are at the center of all we do so we ask that you be a part of today, help us to get to know one another and remind us that we all belong here, just the way we are. In your son’s name we pray. Amen.”

Introduction:

Gather the group in a circle and introduce yourself and leaders. Depending on the size of the entire group, everyone might say their name.

Engage

Engage [30 minutes]

Activity 1: Group Games (5-10 minutes)

As a large group work through a few group games. These serve as fun, all-inclusive ways to be silly together. Have each team do introductions and choose a team name!

Possible games include:

Freeze Tag

Service Trip Dress Up Relay – Split the group into two teams (making sure leaders are evenly split), then have half of each team stand on the other side of your lawn or relay area. In front of one half of each team is a pile of supplies needed for a service trip (XL t-shirt, back pack, water bottle, paint brush, hat, safety goggles, gloves). At “Go” the first member puts on one item, runs across to their waiting team members who then puts the item on and runs back to switch with the next member, who adds an item. Ultimately everyone should take a turn running across the field getting more and more dressed for the relay.

Words with Friends – Have single letters printed on a full sheet of recycled paper. Randomly hand out a letter (or two) to each participant. At “Go” instruct the group to spell a 5-letter word. See who can get into a word with friends. Then call out a 6-letter word, or a word that features someone in everyone grade, or a word with at least one leader in it. Keep going until energy for this game runs out.

Activity 2: Carnival Games (15-20 minutes)

Bring the group back together and then turn them loose on the carnival games. Use the games and activities you have made or rented to keep your group engaged. Some ideas include: dunk tank, ring toss, beanbag toss, face painting, musical chairs, bouncy house. Have your leaders posted at each station to run the game and help to engage participants. Use miscellaneous items as prizes where appropriate (party favors, candy, past retreat or service shirts, stickers, water bottles, etc.).

Reflect

Reflect [20 minutes]

Activity 3: Vision for the Year

- Bring the group back together and have them sit for a few minutes.
- Talk about the vision for the year, the retreats and trips that are planned, and highlight ways for young people to get involved in other aspects of the church (worship, confirmation, bible study, service opportunities).
- If there are specific requirements for participation in the group and/or retreats or trips (parents’ meeting, sign-up deadlines) outline them there.
- Use the Romans 12 scripture to highlight that belonging in youth group means coming just the way you are, that you are a single group made of many diverse members.
- Make sure to give time to other leaders, especially student leaders, to share their experience and hopes for the year. If seniors or a small group of teens are leaders, work with them ahead of this event to shape their vision and time – they might want to do an activity or skit to share their vision for the year with the underclassmen.

Activity 4: Info About Me Sheets

Have the veteran participants partner up with someone newer and take an “Info About Me” sheet and pen to fill it out. They should share with each other some of their interests and background as they complete the sheet then turn it over so the veteran can talk through the



year schedule/highlights with the new person.

This is a great opportunity for leaders to float and spend time with two participants as a time, emphasizing the relational aspect of the ministry and answer any questions about upcoming events.

Send Forth

Debrief [5 minutes]

- Close by bringing the group back together. Revisit your mission/vision statement and the Romans scripture - make sure participants leave knowing they belong just the way they are - no expectations, requirements, achievements necessary.
- Have a student leader close in prayer (ask them and help them prepare ahead of time).