

Congregational Time:

Congregational time can be one of the best moments for youth at the Gathering. It is a time to come back to their home group and debrief their day. It is a time for them to share moments and feelings they may have not felt safe to share somewhere else. Hold this time with your group as sacred. We have provided for you a guideline if you so choose to use it as a way to bring together the days events based off of their small group time. Please read through this material so you will have an idea of what type of topics will be covered. Use what you want, but feel free to alter a bit from the material to make it personal to your own unique group.

Session One: God Wants You.

Start off by reading the scripture they read in small group again. Isaiah 42: 10-13

While reading have the youth close their eyes. After reading the scripture, have them keep their eyes closed and offer this imagery to them:

Imagine our world. Imagine a snapshot of every person on this planet; lifting their hands and head to the sky in praise of God. All things cease except for this. Everyone from all nations, places, and backgrounds are praising. What would that feel like? What would that look like? How would you respond to others if everything else faded away except for the feeling of exaltation? How would we view others?

Imagine seeing God break through the sky shouting in what sounds like victory because he won! He pushed aside the in-differences and the labels we give each other to keep one another away.

Have them open their eyes and then ask these questions:

Who are the enemies?

Have the group freely share what they think to get an idea of where your youth are at in their views. This can help lead you onto what is best for the group later.

Only if they are having a hard time thinking of ideas lift up these:

Could enemies be what take us away from God? For example: Busy schedules that take us away from prayer or time with family. Obsessing over the way we look or measure up. Technology: Do we spend too much time playing video games, Facebook, You Tube, and not enough time being proactive in building face-to-face relationships....

What do they think about those?

Spend time thinking with your group about ways they can build a relationship with each other by putting God in the center and allowing the more “trivial” things to subside.

God’s Truth or Dare:

At the end of each section there will be a truth or dare component playing off of sleepover games we used to share with friends in our adolescence. However in this truth or dare the youth will hear a statement of truth about God and relationships and will be given a dare to try and do the following day relating to what they just discussed.

Here is session one’s Truth or Dare:

Truth: Think of each person you see tomorrow as a baby. We all entered this world the same, it was circumstances that made us different. We all are children; joyful, happy scared, wounded, desiring love and acceptance.

Dare: Share an aspect of your faith with a person tomorrow who you at first considered, “different.” Share with someone who you wouldn’t naturally approach.

Session Two: Empowered to Revolt.

In this time we will discuss how God drives us to do things in our lives that our bigger than we are. “Bigger than we are,” can be putting together a project that helps others, speaking up for those who have no voice, going after a dream while putting other things aside...etc. God helps this by bringing people in our lives as a reflection of his love for us to help us see purpose, beauty, and strength we might have forgotten was there.

In light of what the youth have been hearing so far at the gathering, here are some questions to pose to them:

How many times are we asked to do something that is “bigger” than us? We know this “bigger” thing is the right thing to do even if it is hard or takes a long time. How has God provided in those times?

When and how did God help you overcome?

Practice: Often other people see more in us then we see in ourselves. These people are a reflection of God’s love in our lives. Ask the group to think of a person or group who have helped them see more of themselves. Invite them to share. From those experiences, “how might God be calling them?”

Activity: Provide the youth with some stationary and encourage them to write to the person they value. Encourage them to give them that letter.

Truth: God is with us always, but it is hard for us to always accept that because we live in a world that is fallen and we don't understand everything that happens. God calls for our attention through others and relationships.

Dare: Be God's love and encouragement for someone else tomorrow.

Session 3: Inspired to Revolt

Reread the scripture, Judges 4:1-16 with the youth.

Discussion:

Spend sometime asking the youth if this scripture was hard to follow. Do they often have a hard time reading scripture? Like we do when we have read Shakespeare we need to remember to put ourselves in the time that scripture was written. What did the world look like then? Have they experienced reading scripture with a friend and getting a different idea of what the scripture was saying? How do they relate the scripture that was written centuries ago to their own life?

It seems that throughout a lot of the Old Testament there are stories of Revolt. People and God were often trying to change things. Discuss as a group areas in your specific church community they believe need to change. How can the youth rise up as leaders? Do they feel like they are part of the community? Why or why not? What aspects of their church community are important to them? How can their change extend out into the wider community beyond their church walls?

If there is time have each youth share a time they remember when they saw a person creating change for the betterment of another person or the community. How did that affect them?

Truth: God often calls us out of a place of comfort to speak truth or to act in truth. At times that may not be the popular thing. Sometimes doing God's will isn't easy. However, when you find yourself in the position of doing on behalf of God, you often deep down feel a sense of peace. That peace is God's hand and the Holy Spirit guiding you.

Dare: Think of areas in your own life where you know you need to be an inspired leader for others to create a change for the greater good.

Session 4: Created to Revolt

The man named Jesus:

Introduce your youth to one of Luther's ideas called "Theology of the Cross," The idea that God is found where you least expect him. For example: Laying in a stable at his birth, hanging on a cross to die, and sitting at a table with prostitutes and thieves.

What does this concept, finding God where you least expect too mean to them? Where in their life have they experienced that? (Share a life experience of yours so they more fully understand.)

How can we be like Jesus in our day-to-day surroundings?

- Speaking hard truth when it is needed
- Going along with the “unpopular” thing/person.
- Remaining quiet and patient when we could be loud and angry.
- Humbling ourselves to benefit another.

Have you ever thought of Jesus to be Revolutionary? What would the news look like if our revolting were more like Jesus?

Truth: Jesus was a man who saw the heart of people. Despite cultural labels and social standing, he gave each person the benefit of the doubt and the gift of God’s Grace.

Dare: Work to break down walls that inhibit true relationships with others whether it is race, social standing, gender, or sexuality. Find commonalities in everyone and learn to celebrate our differences instead of condemning them. Start with your own youth group.

Session 5: Challenged to Revolt

Have the group alternately read 1 John 4: 7-21. Discuss what they think when hearing those verses.

Clearly a great revolution is to love especially when it is hard to do so. One of the greatest things we can do as Christians is to love and practice forgiveness. First discuss as a group where our world can practice showing love and forgiveness. Secondly discuss where love and forgiveness can happen in their own lives.

Activity:

Have them take time quietly to write down people in their lives who they wish to forgive. Have some sort of vessel, whether being a jar or a box that you can close. Invite each youth to put that paper in the vessel. Have the whole group stand around the vessel. Depending on the size of the group have each person place their hands on the vessel together or stand around the vessel and say a prayer of forgiveness. Forgiveness is often hard to do alone, but with the strength and love from God and our friends we can find the courage. After the prayer remain together and have the group share their love for one another. You could go around in a circle or whatever your preference.

A powerful practice after a retreat is to close by blessing each other on the forehead with the sign of the cross. While remaining in a circle have each youth turn to the person on their right and bless them. Remind each other that we are children of God called to bring forth love and change.

May you go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.