

Running a Youth Fellowship

Youth Fellowships for many years have been at the core of church based youth work. Traditionally the group would comprise of church attending young people who would meet together after church on Sunday evening. While this is still true many groups have had to change somewhat to cope with the diverse nature of young people and their declining attendance at church. No two youth fellowships are the same although most do focus on work with *churched* young people.

This short document will suggest ideas for running a youth fellowship and may be successful for groups of 6-8 and above.

The practical running of a Y-F will depend on 3 broad areas:

-Programme -What topics, games, activities and issues etc. you look at.

-Structure -How the group is run, who are leaders, management etc.

-Format -The layout of each night. Worship, talks, prayer etc.

Programme:

This will be influenced by your vision and the young people you are aiming it at. If your young people are mainly Christians then your programme may be orientated towards discipleship. If they are mainly non-Christians then it may be orientated towards evangelism. Also it is worth remembering that a new, young or spiritually immature group will appreciate a more activity-based programme and less time spent on teaching/talks. As the group matures, spend less time on activities and more on 'deeper' issues.

Group activities and games are important for the group to get to know each other and should always be used at least periodically in the programme.

Remember that there should be a large slice of fun in the programme, this is not school!

Think about tackling issues that your young people identify with. This can be done through either asking them in groups or giving them a questionnaire (See sample questionnaire).

Some one-word ideas for talks /themes for a programme are set out below.

Issues: hurt, loneliness, fear, violence, morality, media, prejudice, homosexuality, exams, abortion, inner beauty, careers, poverty, honesty, drugs, failure, success, justice, alcohol, other religions, independence, parties, sexism, materialism, sexuality...

Discipleship: How to evangelise, faith, why we believe what we do, opportunities, quiet times, truth, prayer, giving, temptation, dealing with difficult questions, judging others, love, church, life of Christ, perseverance, heaven, potential, guidance, worship, discipline, holiness, compassion...

Bible Stories: What books, characters and incidents would be of interest to them? Are there things they may not of heard of before? (2 Kings 2:23.24 - Elisha curses youths for calling him a baldhead and 42 of them get mauled by bears!) Would the boys relate to a God who is tough as well as merciful? Would the girls relate to the story of Esther, Martha or Ruth? Would a young Christian relate to Timothy? Examples include the parables, Jonah, Nehemiah, the early church, the old testament, David, Moses, Paul, the disciples and of course a few more!

Relationships: Young peoples lives revolve around relationships and so time spend on the topic is a must. -Friendship, opposite sex, parents, principles, sex, God, respect, marriage, divorce, how to be a friend, being honest with yourself...

Evangelism: How to become a Christian, church, testimonies, God's plan for us, what it means to be a Christian.

Structures:

Simply those elements that need to be put in place to enable the work to be accomplished -the foundation of your youth work ministry.

They include; **leadership roles & responsibilities, format, evaluations, location, relationship to the church, process and administration.**

Leadership: How many leaders do you have? Are they committed? Are both sexes represented? What are their roles? Who is in overall charge?

A leadership structure is essential not only for your leaders to work well together but for the Y-F to run well. Even if there are only 2/3 of you it is still important to write down as a group the responsibilities each of you will undertake, when you meet and so on.

Format: An essential part of the structure. Ensures that the ingredients of your vision are included each Y-F night. See below.

Evaluations: It is important that time is allocated (with meetings or whenever) for a review of the work, however brief.

Location: Will you always meet in the same place? Does the church know? Who is responsible? Do you need notes/permission slips for taking them away on social nights out?

Relationship to the church: What does your rector and church leadership think of this group? Reaffirm your relationship with the church and as a church ministry. Communicate this to the rest of the youth fellowship.

Process: This is a series of steps indicating where your young people are now with God and where you would like them to be. For example, if you are concentrating on evangelism and then after a while discover most of the young people have become Christians then your process should allow you to switch to more discipleship based work.

Format:

Essentially a guide to what you are going to do each night. It can be quite flexible (the worship can be 10-30mins) but also rigid in that it ensures certain parts of your vision (such as prayer) are not left out.

Two sample formats are shown below. One for a more spiritually mature group and one for a less mature group.

More mature

8:00 Prayer & welcome
8:05 Announcements
8:10 Worship time
8:30 Prayer groups

Less Mature

8:00 Prayer & welcome
8:05 Ice-breaker game
8:20 Worship time
8:30 Small group activity

8:45 Talk

9:00 Close with tea & coffee

8:50 Talk

9:00 Close with tea & coffee

Usually as a group grows more spiritually mature, the less time it needs in ice-breaker/Get-to-know-you games and the 'deeper' the format can be.

You know the group best and therefore it is up to you to prayerfully consider how best a format might encourage a group to grow.

Sample forms:

Following this should be some sample forms that may be of benefit to you when programming and preparing for the year ahead.

1 sample programme with topics for a previous Youth Fellowship

1 blank programme form to fill in -dates to be included can be all the nights that you meet regularly (ie Sunday's) and any special nights out or weekends away. The location is where the group will be (ie. in church or a home or 10-pin bowling). The 'topic' will be what you are looking at that night or what the group will be doing (ie. Third world issues or Bowling night). 'Taken by' refers to the person mainly responsible for organising the topic. 'Leader in charge' is the person responsible for *everything* that night!

1 Sample youth questionnaire

Some games and activities

Sample Youth Fellowship Programme

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Responsibility:</u>
10th Sept	Back to school Party!	-All Leaders
17th Sept	'Body Building' -Building up your Y-F and the church	-Sharon
25th Sept	'Long Distance Running' -Running the race of Christianity	-Graeme
1st Oct	'The Sinai Revelation' -The 10 Commandments	-Paul
8th Oct	'Treasures in the Darkness' -Finding Jesus in hard times	-Pamela
15th Oct	'Cheers Big Ears' -Drink and Drugs	-Sharon
22nd Oct	'The Stumbling stone' -The hard sayings of Jesus	-Paul
29th Oct	All Saints Eve Party.	-All Leaders
12th Nov	'Only the Lonely' -God and loneliness	Graeme
19th Nov	'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' -Being a friend to others	-
Pamela		
26th Nov	'Life's a Beach' -Can Christians enjoy themselves?	-Graeme
3rd Dec	Christmas Presentation Practice	-All Leaders
10th Dec	Christmas Presentation Practice	-All Leaders
17th Dec	Christmas Presentation to Church followed by party	-All Leaders
7th Jan	'The 7 Pillars of Wisdom' -Proverbs	-Paul
14th Jan	'Phoarr!' -A Biblical view on sex and relationships	-Sharon
21st Jan	'Love is Blindness' -Principles in relationships	-Pamela
28th Jan	'Schooldays' -How to be an effective Christian at school	-Graeme
4th Feb	'Top 40' -How to get the right priorities for your life	-Paul
11th Feb	Valentines night	-All Leaders
18th Feb	'Money Makes the World go Round' -Materialism	-Pamela
25th Feb	'Tongue Lashing' -How to control what we say to others	-Paul
4th Mar	'Grill a Christian'-Hard questions to a panel of Christians	-All Leaders
11th Mar	'Gotta Have Faith' -What do we believe?	-Sharon
18th Mar	'When Christians are Easy Pray' -How to pray effectively	-Pamela
25th Mar	'Liberty and Justice for All' -World poverty/Global issues	-Sharon
1st Apr	'No fear' -How to overcome fear and worry	-Paul
8th Apr	'The Cup of Suffering' -Christ on the Cross	-Sharon
15th Apr	Easter -No Youth Fellowship	-Pamela
22nd Apr	'The Prowler' -The Devil & Spiritual warfare	-Paul
29th Apr	'Go into all the world' -How to reach others	-Graeme
6th May	Pre- exam B-B-Q	-All Leaders
13th May	'E = mc ² ' -Exams	-Pamela
20th May	'Where to now?' -How to uncover God's guidance	-Graeme
27th May	'Women of Faith' -Examples of God using women in the Bible	-Paul
3rd June	'Men of Faith' -Examples of God using men in the Bible	-Graeme
10th June	'Multi-media Madness' -The media world and its dangers	-Sharon
17th June	'Gimme Temptation' -How to withstand temptation	-Paul
24th June	Summer Madness Preparation	-All Leaders
29th June- -3rd July	Youth Fellowship away to Summer Madness	-All Leaders

Some Activities!

Paper activities: -Use loads of old newspaper(& cello tape) and get them to build things, say a structure that can hold the most weight, or the highest free-standing structure or the best looking etc.

-Have a race were a team member is totally covered in paper and has to be guided round an obstacle course by their team shouting from on end of the room.

-Use cardboard (Play resource warehouse has loads) for poster backdrops or for a game where the teams have to use the cardboard (and anything else you decide!) to make a car/spaceship etc. for 2 people and from which you use them for another game where balloons tied to the 'crafts' have to be burst by the other teams.

Straw games: Use a large box (500) of bendy straws with to get them to build another structure as in the paper activity or give each team an egg, cello tape and the straws and get to build something to protect the egg as it is dropped from a height.

Indoor Olympics: You could get the kids to design their own Olympic flag and have them do 10 or so Olympic events through the buildings that the teams have to rotate round. They can score points either on their own or against other teams. You can make up any old rounds but here is a sample. 1)Memory game -objects hidden under a blanket. 2)darts 3)Paper aeroplane throw 4)Basketball shooting 5)Quiz rounds 6)Pillow fight on crates 7)Football accuracy 8)Toss the straw the furthest 9)Golf putting 10)Tug of war 11)Video observation clips 12)Bouncing a football into a bucket 13)Video game round.

Video Camera Stuff: If it is not too wet and they could go outside for a bit then the 'Video Dares' game is a cracker. You will need 1 camcorder per team and a leader to operate. Basically you score points for each dare they complete. The harder the dare the more points. Dares can be things like 'Interviewing a local person on a topical subject', '4 of your team in a police car', '6 in a phone box', 'Asking for something in a shop in a foreign accent'.

-If you can only get one camcorder then you could get teams to perform a scene from a movie or a famous ad. Showing the end results later is obviously a must.

Games for Halls: 'Shark infested custard' Teams have to race across length of halls without touching floor. Either on 2 planks with 3 crates or else chairs with one extra chair per team. 'Ferryman' -teams have to cross floor on an old blanket being pulled by the ferryman via rope on the other side.

Relay games: 'Dizzy sticks'-run up to a brush stick and spin round

'Feed face' -run up to a bag of food, pick out something (unseen) and then run back and eat it before the next person goes

'Head balancing balloons' -pairs go up and back with a balloon between heads

'Wheelbarrow munch' -Pairs go up as wheelbarrows that have to eat of plates on the way.

'Back-to-back race' -up and back with arms linked

'Great chicken race' -An obstacle course for pairs, one person on piggy back who directs blindfolded carrier with an egg in mouth.

Team games: 'Crab football' -Football but everyone has to have hands and feet on floor like crabs.

'Human netball' -The opposite net is someone from their own team

'3 legged football' -A football game with everyone tied in pairs at the ankles.

'Circle of death' Boys have stay inside a circle and the girls have to pull them out, the boys cannot fend of girls' only hold on to each other.

'Balloon stamp' -Everyone has a balloon tied to their ankle and has to run around stamping on everyone else's. If your balloon is burst you are out. Last person in is the winner.

Exhibition games: Can be done just for a laugh or during a table quiz or evening 'show'

'Chubby bunnies' -marshmallows in people's mouths while they say 'chubby bunnies' until someone is sick!

'Drink a can of coke the fastest' or V8 vegetable juice to be cruel!

'Eating 2 crackers and whistling'

'Marshmallow or egg drop' -In pairs, the girl (on a chair)cracks and egg and tries to drop it into a cup in a boy's mouth, same for mallows except they are dropped into mouth after dipped in honey.

'Russian omelette' -6 eggs, 4 boiled and 2 raw. 6 vols. who get the eggs smashed against foreheads.

'Simon says' -Simon says 'do this', 'do that'

'Gargle Game' -Have a group of people with a cup of water each (can be a representative from a team if doing team games). The first person gargles the first line/verse from a well-known song and the others have to follow. Alternatively this could be a series of song titles given, a person gargles and the others have to guess the name of the song.

Reliance/Trust games: 'Knee sit' -everyone in a circle tries to sit on each other's knees.

'Water feet' -6-8 people with shoes off try to balance a basin of water with feet as they lie in a circle on ground

'Team roll' -Everyone lies face down on ground in a line and last person rolls over the rest followed by the rest.

'Torpedo run' -Everyone lies down shoulder to shoulder with feet facing the opposite direction. There should be a line of hands in the air and someone can be passed along this with 2 people to help catch them.

'Skin the snake' -People in a line with right hand under legs, holding on to left hand of person behind. Without letting go the last person must make his or her way to front until everyone has done so.

'Jailbreak' -Tie teams together and get them to accomplish certain tasks around local town/village without getting caught by 'spotter leaders'. Tasks could include getting things from shops.

'Faith-fall' -Partners have to fall backwards (not too far!) into the others arms. Alternatively get one person to fall backwards of a table/chair into the arms of 6 catchers. Another version is to get teams of 6-9 standing in a small circle; one person goes in the middle, closes their eyes and falls backwards. The people around them pass the person in the middle around the circle.

'Faith rise' -Partners have to sit down with their backs to each other and link arms. They must then get up of the ground without touching it with their hands. Another version is to do this in teams.

'4-way support' -Challenge teams of 4 to raise themselves of the ground for 10 seconds, only touching the ground with their hands. The way to do this is to get each team member to arrange a 'lattice' with their legs as they are seated on the floor.

'Blindfold obstacle course' -Create a simple obstacle course in the hall/room. Split into teams and blindfold one member in each team. The rest of the teams have to stay at one end of the room and shout instructions to the blindfolded person to navigate them around the room.

'Knee sit' -Everyone has to stand in a tight circle and then attempt to sit on the person's knee behind them so that everyone is supported.

Get-to-know-you games

'Signature Bingo' -Make up a sheet of about 15-20 squares. In each put some sort of characteristic/achievement such as 'Has been to France' or 'Has children' or 'Is afraid of spiders'. Leave space in each square for a signature. Everyone then goes around the room getting signatures to fill the spaces (no more than 2-3 of the same person) and the first person to finish is the winner.

'Magical handshakes' -Secretly give a proportion of the people in the room some chocolate or another goodie. Instruct them to give this to the 5th or 6th (or whatever you want) person that introduces themselves to them. Tell this to everyone but not who has the goodie.

'Yes/No Game' -Give people a paper cup with 5-8 dried peas or sweets in each. They have to go around the room and ask questions of people. If them get the other person to answer a question 'Yes, No, Don't know' or pause too long then they get to take a pea/sweet.