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Benefits of a Single-Digit Youth Group

Fewer Than Ten Teens: The Good Stuff

Single-digit youth groups have some true advantages. When I formed the youth group I currently work with, we combined youth from four nearby churches. There were only four youth, two of whom were brothers; the other two were girls who were best friends. Having so few didn't bother us, because we were a new youth group and could do things together. The benefits of being a youth group outweighed our concerns about being few in number. Here are some of the discoveries we have made:

Never Too Small to Start

Youth in churches with few teenagers can still participate in a youth group. Some congregations may not have had a youth group for a long time, if ever, so they may greet the potential birth of a group with excitement and hope. Pastors and volunteers in churches with few youth can build a new youth program. When starting a new group where there has not been a youth group in recent years, leaders have a huge advantage in sculpting the group. They'll have little history, if any, with a youth group, so they won't get the "we've always done it this other way" responses. Also, the youth may be happy to have a place to belong and may develop great loyalty to their group. They can be taught the values of making commitments and the discipline of coming to meet with the group every time, regardless of what activity is on the schedule. They'll begin to come because they want to be there and don't want to miss anything.

Influential Faith-Filled Relationships

Youth and adults can benefit from creating strong relationships within the faith. Having access to youth in an organized setting requires only an hour or two a week. However, the time with them through the years can have immense influence. And for some teens, youth group may be the only place they receive affirmation and encouragement. (See Greg's Story.)



14 Collage: It's All About Me!

Youth: 1+

Time: 45–60 minutes

Supplies: Any printed material that can be cut up, such as magazines; scissors for each person; glue sticks, one piece of large, heavy paper per person; thin markers

Prep: Gather supplies, cover the work space with paper or plastic.

Youth and adults alike will enjoy this project. As you might have guessed by the title, individuals will be creating a collage that expresses who they are, what they like or enjoy, and their thoughts and opinions. Tell the youth that they may use their creativity to overlap cutouts, add words, or make borders. The only restriction is to keep the collage appropriate for youth group, avoiding inappropriate words or photos.

When the youth are finished, give each person an opportunity to tell the others about his or her collage, so that everyone may learn something new about the teen. Display the collages on a wall or door and either leave them up for a while or save them to make a group collage later. If you would like temporary wall space, use rolling dividers on which you can post the group's

work. When other groups use the room, you can store the divider against the wall with the youths' work hidden.

Youth: 1+

Time: Depends on project

Supplies: Depends on project

Prep: Talk with the pastor or other church staff about the work that needs to be done and pick a project. Schedule a time to do the work.

15 Service Project in Your Church

We usually think about going somewhere else to do service projects, forgetting that our churches often need volunteers to do work on the building or yard. Try to match the skills and interests of the youth with the jobs that need to be done. You may suggest jobs they hadn't thought of.

One of my favorite church service projects is to wash the toys in the nursery so that the children will have clean toys to chew on. Other ideas include

- having a toy drive for low-income children or a shelter
- deep-cleaning the pews or chairs in the sanctuary
- deep-cleaning the kitchen
- painting
- moving furniture
- taking out the recycling if it doesn't get picked up by a service
- pulling weeds or planting flowers in the flower beds