

Retreat Planner: From Every Perspective

by Brenda Seefeldt

Introduction

Where is the Wild Frontier?

It's a lifestyle.

Years ago a select few, those who had dreams and courage, those who wanted more, left the comforts of the known East to enter the frontier of the West. They risked much for a fuller life.

There is a place for those believers who have dreams and courage. For those who want more out of their lives. For those who are drawn to leave the comforts of the known. This is the Wild Frontier. It is a place where believers realize they can live beyond human limits. That through our God, all things really are possible. That this life to the full that Jesus offered in John 10:10 is really ours to live.

One vital place to encourage those courageous dreamers is on retreats. While *retreating* away from the real world, visions and dreams are planted and watered.

Retreats also provide headlining memories. Providing memories is one of the most important priorities a youth ministry should have. As the youth grows and faces complexities in his/her life, he/she can look back on these memories and know that at those times God was real. Memories are also a gauge for growth. Retreats provide wonderful opportunities for such memories.

All information in this planner is taken from a meeting with a youth pastor, a retreat speaker (me!), and a camp director. They sat down and thought of every known detail that may need to be taken care of. All three viewpoints were considered as they cooperated in the making of this *Retreat Planner*.

Wild Frontier hopes that this is another resource that helps you as you challenge your youth to live out on the Wild Frontier.

What to do immediately After the Decision to Have a Retreat is Made

1. Pray.

2. Set date.

Make sure to check your church calendar to make sure your date does not conflict with another church outing or use of the church van.

You will also need to check with the school calendar for every school your youth go to. You would hate to plan a retreat the weekend before mid-terms which would eliminate all those youth who need to have that weekend to cram.

Schools within the school district tend to have the same calendar for all the schools. But it wouldn't hurt to get a school calendar from every school your youth are involved in. These are available at the beginning of the school year. Enlist your parents to collect these for you.

The retreat plan included here is for a full three-day weekend retreat. Once you look at all or some other time combination. It is more important that you plan a retreat that meets as many schedules as possible so this can be something the majority of your group will do together. The impact of this retreat will be felt by all anyway whether they attend or not. Of course, you want as many to attend as can.

In light of that, it is also important to get these dates on as many people's schedules as early as possible. Getting it on the family schedule first will help families to continue to keep that weekend open for the retreat.

3. Reserve retreat center.

Ask yourself these questions. Do you want a retreat center near the church or one that requires a long drive? Do the facilities the retreat center offers matter? Do you want basic sleeping arrangements or the recreational works? Do you want to fix your own meals or have the retreat center provide the meals?

As to finding a retreat center that meets your needs, there are several places to start looking. One is on the internet but a lot of the smaller retreat centers (ones that may be more in your budget range) have not invested into an internet site. Another way is to ask the churches around your area. They can recommend the ones which they have used. You can also ask your denominational office for a list. Anyone who has a list of retreat centers for your area has a valuable resource. Maybe it is a resource you want to put together to bless the churches in your area.

Retreat centers usually book a year in advance, especially during prime retreat weekends. Those weekends tend to be February through May and October to November. Depending on when you are ready to schedule your retreat, this may limit your options.

You will need to plan which meals and how many meals you will need now. You will also need to come up with an estimated number of youth you expect. Once you book the retreat center, they will be sending you a contact asking you these questions and you will be contractually obligated (although many, many retreat centers will work with you closer to the date) for those numbers.

It is generally wiser to plan smaller and risk having the retreat full than overbook and lose money. When those late stragglers register late after your 50 million announcements and they will not be able to go because you are full, they won't be late next time. Especially after hearing all the stories of what they missed. A full retreat speaks well of the event and it is a way better alternative to pressuring and selling and trying to get every breathing body to go to prevent any loss of money.

Once you receive the contract, you will also be expected to put down a deposit to hold the date and the facilities.

3. Pick a theme.

What is your primary purpose? Use this retreat to teach the dream for the youth ministry God has placed on your heart. Hopefully through your weekly youth meetings you will have been building up to this retreat.

The generic retreat theme tends to be unity, community building, etc. That happens naturally in a retreat setting (especially during an unplanned thunderstorm). For your theme, dream bigger.

The theme doesn't even necessarily need to be spiritual growth. It could be a great time to do some brainstorming or strategizing with your group.

4. Schedule the speaker

There is no need to place more stress on you than necessary. Retreats, as great as they are, are also a heavy stressor. Schedule a speaker to take care of the spiritual part of the retreat. This frees you up spiritually as well as physically.

Finding the right speaker also can allow for what you've been preaching and praying for to hit home with your youth. Part of it is due to being away from the normal world and part is due to putting a different voice and different presentation to *your* message. It is very important to find a speaker to do just that and not someone who will take your group into a different direction. It may be a good direction, but it would not be a part of the foundation *you* are building with *your* youth. You need to clearly get across to the speaker the

different voice and presentation you are seeking to compliment what you have already been teaching.

Please, please, please pray before choosing a speaker. Check references. Make sure he/she will support your church's doctrines as well as what you've been teaching. Many have been burned by a speaker taking "spirit-led liberties" in teaching that have led to many unplanned and uncomfortable meetings with parents and elders.

You may already have a speaker in mind for this retreat, If you do not, your denominational headquarters or other youth pastors you know may recommend one. Wild Frontier is also a great resource in this area.

You should begin calculating your overall budget and estimate how much you want to spend on a speaker. Some speakers have set fees for retreats. Maybe even contracts. Other speakers are available for love honorariums--meaning they will accept what you can offer. Wild Frontier works that way.

You will also need to arrange sleeping arrangements for the speaker with the retreat center. Most prefer to have a private room. Check this now so you can arrange it with the retreat center and be able to budget for it.

At this point, the speaker will only need to know the date, location, estimated size of the group and the theme you want him/her to teach on. Be clear in relaying this theme to him/her so he/she can begin preparing with the same expectations you have. Do not be intimidated to question the speaker and doublecheck with the speaker about your expectations. There is this underlying thought that speakers know how to handle anything because they are used to going into such situations. The reality is that this is not true. We are desperate for any information that will help us do a better job of connecting with a strange group (the group is strange to us--and some are stranger than the others!).

Of course, you may be planning such a retreat (like leadership training) where an outside speaker would completely throw off the dynamics of what you are wanting to accomplish. You know what you want to accomplish and hopefully you will know when you are taking on too much responsibility.

5. If you are also scheduling a music group or drama group, do so at this time much like how you handle the speaker.

4 to 6 months Before

1. Pray.

2. Reserve music people.

As said earlier, one of the natural outcomes of a retreat is unity and community. One way that happens is through singing. When the group is singing together, it creates a secure environment. It is a group activity which involves everyone yet no one sticks out. Plus through singing, they are reinforcing what they have been learning.

Plan for more than just songs though. Worship is different. Worship allows the youth to use their mouths to confess Jesus.

You already know your musical talents or limitations. You may be enough. You may be bringing your regular worship band. Or you may want to bring another worship band from outside your church to this special weekend. Even if it is your own group, they would appreciate knowing now that you would like them to be a part of that weekend so they can keep their schedule clear.

If you are getting someone from outside your group to do music, also arrange for him/her or them to be with the group a few weeks before the retreat to start teaching some of the songs as well as for all to become familiar with each other.

3. Ask adults to help.

I am assuming you are not too crazy and will not be the only adult going on this retreat. A good ratio of adults to youth would be 1 adult for every 5 youth. That gives you good coverage and interaction with every youth. If your youth ministry volunteer staff is short of that ratio, I'm sure there are people in your congregation who wouldn't mind giving up a weekend to help such a vital part to the church. That would be the youth ministry. Asking adults four to six weeks out to come and help out will only increase their likelihood of saying yes.

4. Write your budget.

The time has finally come to put all of your dreams down on paper and balance them out with what finances you have available.

Start with listing every possible thing you will need: snacks, game supplies, music stands, etc.

Also make a list of the intangible expenses you will have like: speaker honorarium, retreat center (lodging, food service, activity fees), and transportation (rental, gas, insurance).

After you have thought of every possible expense (down to the finest details--did you remember marshmallow sticks?) and compiled them on one list, go through the list to figure out what the church has which you can take and what you can get donated from church families. When you ask 4 to 6 months out, you will certainly get it as well as favor with that person. Make sure you

keep this list of who is giving what because certainly your memory will not hold out for that long as to who promised what.

What you have left over should be a complete and detailed list of all your expenses. What will the church be contributing to this retreat out of the budget? Then divide these numbers by the estimated number of youth you have been praying to come and told the retreat center you will be bringing. That should be your individual price. Hopefully it will be a reasonable number.

Do not be intimidated to absorb too much of the costs. Youth have discretionary money and will spend the amount of the retreat on fast food, clothes, cds, etc. without even thinking. But do be sensitive to families who have more than one child attending. That can really add up. Maybe you want to offer a pro-rated price for family members.

Of course, there will be a few who do not have such discretionary money. Arrangements can be made for those few. Other adults in your congregation who do not have teenagers may welcome the opportunity to bless some of these youth with this retreat opportunity. You could do a **Retreat Adoption**.

The **Retreat Adoption** can be publicized in your church bulletin, newsletter, webpage, etc., that a youth retreat is coming up and you are looking for adults to adopt a youth who is going on the retreat. The responsibilities of the adoption include: some sort of financial help towards the retreat, cards and notes before and throughout the retreat (you can bring them with you to give to the youth during the retreat) and prayer. Not only will the youth feel like an adult cares about him/her, the adult will get excited about your youth program.

It is also wise to have an early payment plan. Offer your bottom-line price to all those who register at such-and-such date. This gives you some budget money to start working with early. After that deadline has passed, make the next date ten days prior to the retreat at a slightly higher rate. (One that would be different enough that will make most everyone want to pay the earlier rate.) That extra money collected will not be budgeted in but can be used for the unaccounted for purchases. Set the final date registrations will be accepted also with the highest fee for the retreat. Hopefully this will encourage everyone to register early so you can have numbers to plan the last week's details with.

5. Write up your prayer plan.

You've already been praying. Now it is time to invite every warm body you know to join you in those prayers. Write up a prayer plan and personally give it to them.

Your prayer plan should include:

1. attendance you are believing for
2. safety for all who go
3. finances

4. spiritual goals - be specific

Type it up in a clean, prayable format. The more specific you are the more specific answers to prayer you will have.

6. Fundraising.

If the youth have to do fundraisers to fund the retreat, now is a good time to start. You will be raising funds as well as creating early excitement for the retreat.

7. Arrange transportation.

Transportation just does not happen--although we wish it would. Most likely you will need to reserve your church van or be on the look out to borrow as many vans as you need. Arranging for this now assures you of having the right amount of transportation for the retreat and the people you have to ask will appreciate being asked this early so they are inconvenienced that much less.

You will also need to find drivers and the same reasoning goes. Ask now. You must have mature drivers for many reasons with the biggest one being insurance policies. Check with your church insurance policy for the minimal age a driver can be. All insurance policies are different.

Also check if your insurance policy covers borrowed vans. You may need to get an extra insurance rider.

There is a good chance that one of your high school youth will have a soccer game or something which causes him/her to come to the retreat late and the youth has asked to drive up at that time. If this happens, take the car keys when he/she arrives to prevent anything. At that retreat you are responsible for his/her life and it doesn't matter if they have the independence of a car there or not. You will want to make this clear before the retreat. Also on the way home, do not allow anyone to ride in that car unless his/her friend has permission (in writing) which has been set up prior to arriving at the retreat center.

6 weeks Before

1. Pray.

2. Make up the retreat schedule. (Appendix A)

Appendix A is a sample standard retreat schedule and includes more information on how to set up a schedule. **This** schedule is for a three day retreat but it is becoming more and more common to have a two day retreat. **This** schedule can be adjusted for that or ask us for some further ideas.

The most important element to work in a schedule is the flow of energy. **It** is not wise to transition from capture the flag to personal quiet time. **That** drastic energy change is asking a lot of any teenager--or any adult.

3. Plan worship experiences. (**Appendix D**)

We've already planned in music for worship experiences but worship does not necessarily always have to happen with music. **Because** today's youth are such tactile/kinesthetic learners, these experiences may be their largest memory of the retreat, even over the teaching because it would be here that they got involved in their learning. **Appendix D** contains some ideas you are free to use. **You** can find more on the internet or in books. **Better** yet, use your creativity.

4. Plan activities and games. (**Appendix C**)

Activities and games are a large part of any retreat and require a large commitment to coordinate. **Do** yourself another favor and find a volunteer (usually called a program director) to have responsibility for this area.

So now that you have picked a friend of yours to be the program director, get together with him/her and plan your games. **Be** creative and try to have as many games and activities as possible to reflect the theme. **This** just reinforces yet again what is being taught.

Check with the retreat center to make sure you know what areas and facilities are available to you. **Are** there playing fields? **Is** there an indoor gym? **A** pool? **A** recreation hall? **Walking** trails? **Ropes** course?

Don't forget to plan games for rain. **You** can never count on the weather, especially six weeks out.

Put together a list of all the equipment, props, toys, etc., that your program director will need. **The** two of you can then divide that list up and start gathering the items. **It** becomes a smaller task if two people tackle it. **The** retreat center may have some of this available to you too.

We have included some of our favorite games. **There** are also plenty of books and websites. **Remember** to take the extra creativity to find games that fit the theme.

5. Start training the leaders who will be going on the retreat.

Now that you have adults coming, what do you want them to do? **They** will not have your knack for knowing what to do. **So** you need to start now to transfer to them your goals and expectations so they can faithfully do what you

expect of them. Your leaders need to know their purpose on this retreat--and it is more than helping with discipline. Give your youth leaders defined responsibilities and let them know what authority they have.

Some of the defined responsibilities may be:

1. Express with passion your goals for this retreat and what you hope to accomplish in the large picture.
2. Knowing the retreat rules forwards and backwards. Some sample of retreat rules are available (Appendix B). Our rules are written with a bit of humor to make them more acceptable but also clear enough that they can't be argued.
3. Have them sit among the youth during the weekend
4. If you are using small groups, what kind of leaders do you want them to be? What info will they be leading with?
5. Clear bedtime rules.
6. Give details with what to do in case of a medical emergency. Who will be in charge of first aid?
7. Give guidelines with what to do with emotional crises. Is any problem worth leaving a scheduled event to be dealt with?
8. Will you be allowing pranks?

If you are using prepared small group lessons, it would be a great idea to give those to the adults now so they have ample time to prepare and become familiar with the material. Also let them know what your expected outcome is of every small group time. This is a bit of work for you but well worth the time you put into it. Also check with the speaker. He/she may have these sessions already written up so they can apply the message in this form also.

As for bedtime rules, some groups allow their youth to stay up and talk as long as they are in bed. Other groups allow pranks to happen all night long. In my opinion, I believe that bedtime means bedtime and it is very important for the following reasons. If they do not get their sleep Friday night, they tend to be drowsy and grumpy around Saturday afternoon and become a hindrance to any plans, especially during messages or small group talks. If they do not get their sleep Saturday night, you will then be returning tired and grumpy kids to their parents. Even if their kids were touched on the retreat, their tired and grumpy attitude will ruin it for their parents.

It would be great if one of your adults was certified in some sort of first aid training. If not, designate someone and equip that person with as much motherly first aid as you can. Most retreat centers are equipped to take care of emergencies. But it is all those twisted ankles you need to be prepared for.

About pranks, some youth groups have traditions of pranking on retreats. Other youth groups just plan pranks into the retreat schedule. It is my opinion again that pranks in general should not be allowed for one good reason.

Pranks have a tendency to build until someone gets hurt physically, or at least emotionally. A no pranking rule spares all. Plus the execution of pranks can become so consuming that it distracts youth from the purpose of the retreat which is an experience with God.

9. Write and send the parent letter.

Write a letter to the parents to inform them of the retreat with all the pertinent details that will set a parent's mind at ease. Don't forget to include the price. Parents will appreciate being warned first and this early. This is especially true since they will most likely be the ones who will be paying the registration fee.

Your letter should include:

- dates, times, cost, etc.
- retreat location
- rules and discipline
- transportation information complete with who is driving
- what needs to be packed
- emergency number while at the retreat center
- registration/permission form and due date
- medical release form

Every state and every insurance company has a different medical release form so it is impossible here to give you what one should look like. Inquire with the authorities near you. However some of the information you will definitely need are:

- name, address, phone
- birthdate
- parent/guardian name
- emergency contact person and phone number
- any medical information
- signature and date

10. Promote the retreat.

Different arguments can be made as to when to start promoting the retreat. If you start too early with promotion, the excitement of the retreat may wear off. If you start too late, you will be dealing with youth registering up to the day of the retreat. You know your group, you decide.

You also know how to promote to your group to create the buzz. Do that with creativity.

Whatever you do to promote this retreat, the retreat center will want a final count two weeks prior to the weekend.

1 Month Before

1. Pray.

2. Gather all equipment.

Take out your list of everything you will need and double check with your program director. Now is the time to start gathering all that equipment, props, toys, etc. Go to all those people with who you had arranged with earlier to borrow equipment. Take your budget money and purchase what you need to purchase--and stay on budget.

Don't forget to check with the speaker to see if there is anything he/she will need.

3. Confirm with the retreat center.

Confirm with the retreat center any equipment you will need, VCR, TV, whiteboard, etc.

4. Put together your first aid kit.

The following items are what should be in your first aid kit:

band-aids

instant ice packs

hydrogen peroxide

rubbing alcohol

tweezers

aspirin and nonaspirin (for you and other adult leaders, youth need to have written permission to have this)

rubber/surgical gloves (not latex)

thermometer

antibiotic ointment or cream

antibacterial or antiseptic spray

bug bite cream or lotion

gauze and medical tape

sunblock

antibiotic handwash

ace bandage

safety pins

candied ginger

This first aid kit can be something you need to put together just once and have available for every outing you take your group on. But do remember

that if you take something out of the kit, replace it right away upon your return.

5. **Have** the music people join in youth meetings if they are not doing so already.

6. **Put** together retreat packets.

There are two kinds of packets that with a little time can add to your retreat lasting memories. **One** is a retreat packet that a youth will get upon arrival at the retreat center. **This** packet can include:

retreat schedule

note-taking paper

"Your Personal Quiet Time Notes" (Appendix F)

pen

rules for the retreat

small group information

any odd things that can "fun" the packet up (be creative)

Post-retreat packets are extra special. **These** are to be given out on the last day, maybe the last thing you do on the retreat, to serve as an encouragement to the youth as they go back into their real world. **Some** of this stuff could be put into the retreat packet but with the chaos and excitement of the actual retreat, the retreat packets tend to get lost.

The post-retreat packet may include:

Post Retreat Resolutions (Appendix E)

recommended reading material

recommended **Bible** reading to coincide with the theme and what was taught over the weekend

any retreat reminders (be creative)

addresses of adults to turn to when things start to go crazy again
special written or taped message from you

7. **Go** over retreat rules with the youth.

At a youth meeting or two, go over retreat rules with the youth *before* the retreat so they know exactly what you are expecting from them. **This** should be complete with the disciplinary action you will implement.

One of the best used and most popular forms of disciplinary action is once a rule is broken, the youth is to be sent home at that time from the retreat. **No** second chances. **This** should be effectively relayed to all the parents prior to leaving (the parent letter) as well as to the youth so the parents know what is expected of them. It is strict but it usually only takes one youth being sent home to set the standard for the rest of the retreat as well as future retreats.

8. **Call the speaker.**

Call the speaker to inform him/her about his/her responsibilities for the retreat as well as what God is doing among the youth ministry. Remember to not be intimidated. The speaker is coming to help you.

9. **Divide the registered group into small groups.**

Through prayer, hopefully you and your adult team will be able to divide the group into small groups so the maximum ministry can take place. Have these groups to be the same all weekend with the same leader so that trust and openness will be developed.

If you do this prior to leaving for the retreat, you will be prepared for the day of the retreat when your youth come asking to be switched to a different small group. Your response can be, "We've prayed over these decisions and put these small groups together days (or last week) ago." This gives you a firmness to stick to your decisions and a witness as to how God has led you in putting the groups together.

10. **Collect retreat money and registration forms and medical release forms.**

Place all forms into one file which will go with you on the retreat. Deposit all money collected. Keep accurate records. Submit to the church bookkeeper all the checks you need cut for the retreat.

11. **Send a reminder to everyone you have arranged to help with transportation.**

Day of the Retreat

1. **Pray.**

2. **Greet the speaker and other guests. Double check to make sure they are comfortable with the retreat plan. Give to them whatever materials you have for them.**

3. **Have your file of everyone's registration forms and medical releases packed with you. Also have all of your plans.**

4. **Have all the checks with you.**

5. **Have all the retreat and post retreat packets with you.**

6. Have the transportation ready.
7. If you have no-shows, you need to call the parents to let them know that their child is not with you for the weekend.
8. If someone shows up the day you are leaving and who is not previously registered and you decide to allow this person to attend, you must have a registration form and medical release form signed by his/her parent. Do not leave for the retreat without a registration form from everyone. A phone call approval will not do.
9. Leave on time.
10. As for everything else, it should have been taken care of by now so you can roll with the punches as you prepare to leave for the retreat. Having everything so prepared and delegated will allow you to be able to handle those last minute changes which will happen no matter how well you plan.
11. Enjoy this headlining weekend in your youths' lives.

sample schedule for a weekend Retreat

Friday

5:30 Leave the church for the retreat center

5:45 Actually leave the church

It is important for your integrity that you leave on time for the retreat. If you say you are leaving at 5:30, leave at 5:30 or as close to it as you can. On Sunday when you say you will arrive at 2:00, arrive at 2:00. Parents, the transporter of their children, will appreciate your consideration to their schedules.

7:00 Arrive at the retreat center, register, settle in

Allow time for them to explore. If you don't, they will during your first activity anyway. Curiosity will get the best of them.

7:30 Some sort of active, group-building activity(s)

Notice the high height of energy here. The energy comes as soon as they pour out of the vans. Capitulate on it.

9:00 Music/worship

There is still a lot of energy going on but this is a good transition to slow them down. Not that that is the only purpose for music and worship. Remember that worship does not necessarily have to be singing. See Appendix D.

9:25 Introduction of the speaker

Now that they have been transitioned to have a "front focus," introduce the speaker.

9:30 Melodrama/different learning point

A melodrama is a drama read by a narrator and the cast are volunteers picked to do whatever the narrator says. One contains lots of physical comedy. With creativity, a melodrama becomes a way for youth to invest in the message which comes at them from another learning point. There are books with melodrama skits available or you could write one of your own. You could also do a drama to introduce the message. Be creative to find another learning point to get the message across. For this retreat weekend, Wild Frontier has melodramas written up already that compliment the lessons.

9:45 Message

10:15 Small groups

The first small group should not only include notes from the topic but also get-to-know you stuff.

11:15 Grand and/or traditional adventure activity

Bring the energy back up again--wear them out before bedtime. Play a large game of "capture the flag" or other grand activity. Over time, this can become a tradition.

12:00 Prep for bedtime

12:30 Bedtime

Is bedtime really bedtime? That is up to you.

Saturday

7:30 Rise and shine

8:00 Breakfast

Eat all of the food before you--no matter how bad it is. Encourage your adults to do the same. Be an example here. Watch to see that the youth are eating full-meals. Pay particular close attention to those who have excuses as to why they are eating so little. It may be a warning sign to an eating disorder. If you have someone like that, an adult not eating a meal only enables someone who doesn't want to eat.

8:30 Quiet time

It is of utmost importance to attempt to give your youth some time of absolute quiet so they can be with just God and themselves. This so rarely happens in their lives that these quiet times are often very memorable because it is just them hearing God instead of it coming from someone else. Appendix F has a quiet time outline you can use.

9:00 Message

While the energy is still relatively low, have the speaker go again.

9:45 Music/worship

With the group having a "front focus," do worship but it is suggested that you build up the energy through it this time.

10:15 Small group

This time can include not only discussion on the lesson but preparation for the skit/talent show or strategy for upcoming activities or other kinds of group bonding.

10:45 Small group activity competitions

A high energy time again as well as bonding memories as they stay within their small groups.

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Large group activity

This could be a ropes course or boys against girls soccer. Be creative.

One of the better activities I have experienced is square dancing or line dancing. No teen square dances and a few teens will admit to liking country music. This puts everyone on an even level to learn and play together. It is a great bonding experience with lots of laughs.

2:00 Freetime

Freetime is important to a teen's sanity and clarity during a retreat. They appreciate the down time as well as unstructured time to stretch a bit physically as well as emotionally. Three hours is long enough to create the desire to get back together again but not too long that boredom creeps in and leads to trouble.

5:00 Dinner

5:30 Freetime

For some reason, most retreat centers serve dinner pretty early. This is probably because youth get hungry so fast and so often. A little freetime here gets your youth ready for a long and powerful evening.

6:30 Skit/talent show or some type of humor show

Humor brings a group together too. You could have each small group prepare a skit as a small group activity. It could be open to all no-limit creativity or you could give each group several objects, the theme and a Scripture and have them come up with their own skit containing all that. Or this could be announced prior to the retreat for the youth to have a showplace to show off their talents, including music, comedy, poetry, and art. Another idea is to have your leadership team put together some kind of comedy show which would be a surprise gift to your youth.

7:30 Music/worship

The group will be up again. Use music/worship to help transition again as well as give everyone a chance to worship using song.

8:00 Melodrama**8:15 Message****8:45 Commitment time/more worship**

Saturday nights are special on retreats. It takes about that long for the "real world" to fade away and the learning to catch to a point that the youth are ready to make a life-changing commitment.

9:15 Freetime

After the greatly emotional commitment time, this freetime becomes more of a time of pulling themselves back together again.

10:00 Campfire

This is time of reflection for the weekend. Somehow fire brings this out of us. There are many ways you can encourage this reflection: lighting candles and passing them around, hand out letters written by parents, adopted members, etc., which were written for the youth, throw something in the fire as a symbol, communion, etc. A little secret is that the smoke from the fire also makes youth sleepy.

11:30 Prep for bed**12:00 Bedtime**Sunday**7:30 Rise and shine****8:00 Breakfast****8:30 Quiet time****9:00 Music/worship****9:45 Message****10:15 Small groups**

This is a time to bring closure to the retreat and pass out the post retreat packets.

11:15 Write a retreat letter

Here is another sweet little idea to help extend the goals of this retreat. Give each of the youth a piece of paper and an envelope. Have them

go off by themselves and write a letter to themselves about how **G**od has touched them over the retreat. **H**ave them self-address the envelope.

You will then gather all the letters from everyone. **A** month after the retreat, mail the letters to everyone.

11:30 Pack and clean

No one likes this but make sure it is not you and your leadership team doing this.

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Leave

2:00 Home again on time

The Retreat Beatitudes

(an example of rules)

Blessed is the boy who remaineth in the boy's cabin, and also the boy who goeth not into the private rooms of the girl's cabin, for he shall live long and prosper. He shall also be allowed to remain here all weekend. But a curse is on those who find themselves in the wrong cabin; yea, both male and female shall remain in their appointed places.

Blessed are the young who are on time for meals and activities of the weekend for they shall not be called washers of dishes or sweepers of the floor.

Blessed are they who are called lovers of quiet, for they shall make many friends in the land. But a curse is on those who disturb others after the turning out of the lights at night.

Blessed are they who pick up any trash they see, for the advisors shall smile upon them. But woe to those who go about leaving candy wrappers on the ground, and trash among the shrubs, for surely the cat-o-ninetails shall be applied to their hind end. And yea, this is no vain threat, but rather a promise of exceeding great surety.

Blessed are they who remain in groups of three while out-of-doors this weekend, for they shall live to see their next birthday. But how terrible it will be for the one who goes off without two others. It is better if that person had never been born.

Blessed are they who join with a whole heart in the games, songs, lessons, meals, and all that pertaineth to the retreat; for surely they shall be called "those who know how to have fun". Their fame shall spread throughout the land. But a curse of boredom will rest on those who playeth not our silly games.

Blessed are they who remain within the laws of the land by not partaking of alcohol or illegal drugs, for they shall promptly be sent home. Refraining from smoking will also be highly favored.

Blessed are they who keep no food in the cabins which might attracts
R.O.U.S. (rodents of unusual size).

Blessed are they who refrain from any disturbances, such as spitteth balls on the
 bus, water guns, or shaving cream. Transgressors will be duly pelted with
 snowballs by the counselors.

Retreat Commandments

- I. Thy body shall not leaveth the retreat grounds or go in the off limits
 areas: (list the retreat center off limit areas)
- II. Thy body shall be in thy bed with thy lights out at the designated times.
- III. Remember the meeting times and keep them holy.
- IV. Honor thy leaders and thou shalt have a long retreat.
- V. Thou shalt not puff a weed nor space out on any pill nor drink any
 strong drink.
- VI. Thy body shall not be with the body of the opposite sex in the opposite
 sex's rooms.
- VII. Thou shalt not bring along any radios, walkmans, skateboards, etc.
- VIII. Thou shalt not throw anyone in the water or mess up the grounds
 and respect nature.
- IX. Thou shalt be okay.
- X. One commandment to spare for a specific situation.

Retreat Games

There are millions of games out there and they can be found in many, many websites and books. We have included here a few of our favorite retreat games which you are free to use. But again, these are only a few out of the millions of games out there. It will be worth your time to find those.

Squirt Gun Hunt

Participants: two volunteers and the rest of the group divided into two teams

Supplies needed: two blindfolds, one squirt gun

Instructions: Place the squirt gun on the floor in the middle of the play area. Blindfold each of the volunteers. Line up the rest of the group in their two teams on opposite lines of the squirt gun. Spin each volunteer and let the team direct him/her to the squirt gun. Upon finding the gun, he/she must still listen to the team to find his/her opponent. He/she must squirt the opponent to win.

Purpose: communication, listening

Hint, hint: Immediately after the game is done, take the squirt guns and lock them up somewhere to avoid future "surprises."

Skit Tag

Participants: Entire group

Supplies: None

Instructions: Divide the group into groups of 4 or 5. Give one group a Scripture and have them leave the room to prepare a short skit on that verse. When they're ready, have them come back and perform the skit for the group. Then have the second group perform the same skit until all groups have performed it. By the time the last group is done, it will have all kinds of new variations.

Purpose: communication, awareness of others

Pile of Whatever You Have Role Play

Participants: everyone divided into teams

Supplies needed: pile of whatever is lying around

Instructions: Divide the group into teams. Have each team designate a runner. At the mark, have them run to the table and grab 8 items. They are to run back to the group. The first to alphabetize what they have wins that

part. Then give them 10 minutes to put together a Biblical role play with all of their items. Have each group present to the group.

Purpose: team building

Name That Person

Participants: the whole group

Supplies: 3 x 5 cards and pencils

Instructions: Give each person a blank 3 x 5 card and have him write five little-known facts about him/herself and sign his name. Collect all the cards. Divide into teams. The game is played like "Name That Tune". The leader opens the bidding to one of the teams. The team states, "I can name that person in five clues" and so on until the bidding is over. Once as many of the clues were read that were bid for, the group can huddle together and decide who. Points for teams are given out as follows: 1 clue = 5 points; 2 clues = 4 points, etc. Proceed until every card is read. Total up the points.

Purpose: learn names

Name Teams

Participants: the whole group divided into two groups, can be boys and girls

Supplies: sheet to divide the two groups

Instructions: Have each person give their name. Then divide into the two teams. Place one team on each side of the sheet making sure the whole team is hidden on each side. One person from each side is to stand up. When the sheet comes down, there should be two youth standing, one for each team. The first one of the two to guess the correct name gets the point for the team.

Purpose: learn names

Freeze

Participants: Several volunteer actors (varies according to your group) and the rest of your group

Supplies: timer

Instructions: Have your volunteers come to the front of the room. Read one of the unfinished stories (some listed below or make up your own) to the group. Your actors are then to improvise and act out the story from where you left off. As they begin, set a timer for 5 minutes. At any time during their performance, someone in the audience may yell, "Freeze" and the actors must immediately freeze. The person who yelled should come quickly to the front and replace an actor, who then returns to his/her seat. Then the actors go

right on with the story until another person freezes them. And so on. If no one goes forward, from time to time you yell "Freeze" and call in replacements. When the timer goes off, the play ends no matter where it is.

Unfinished Story #1 - Jack has been working in the yard, helping his father. He's dirty and sweaty, and he just finished putting cow manure on some plants, so he doesn't smell too great. As he goes into the kitchen to get a drink, the doorbell rings. He glances out the window and sees a red Corvette parked in front of his house. He opens the door and...

Unfinished Story #2 - Lisa, Miranda and Annie are walking out of their neighborhood burger joint, their arms loaded with bags of burgers, fries, and cokes. Josh and Devon are just walking in the other side of the restaurant. They see the girls and decide to sneak up behind them. Then they yell, "Hey!" and Miranda drops her bag. Annie and Lisa spill their cokes all over themselves. The girls turn around and...

Purpose: loosening up the group, become familiar with each other, you could write an unfinished story that reflects your theme

Shaving Cream Hairdos

Participants: 3 boys, 3 girls

Supplies needed: 3 cans shaving cream, towels

Instructions: Pick three boy volunteers (the client) and three girl volunteers (the beautician). Each girl gets one can of shaving cream and a time limit to do the most creative hairdo with shaving cream on the boy. The audience then judges which hairdo is the best.

Purpose: group laughs

Blessing Envelopes

Participants: everyone

Supplies needed: 6x9 envelopes for everyone, lots of note-sized colored paper, colored markers

Instructions: In everyone's retreat packet, put a 6x9 envelope and lots of the note-sized paper. During the first night have everyone personally decorate their envelope and put their name on it. Hang all the envelopes in a prominent spot at the retreat center.

Give the instructions that over the weekend, all are to write little encouraging notes to everyone on the retreat and put them in the named envelopes. No one is allowed to look into the envelopes all weekend. They are to just drop off these encouraging notes and walk away (but oh the curiosity!) At the end of the retreat, give everyone their envelope and some time alone to read it.

Purpose: bless individuals in the group

Candy Project

Participants: Everyone as one team or divided into teams

Supplies: bags of candy, lots of tools and building stuff, poles, candle, matches, duct tape

Instructions: Suspend the bags of candy high in the air with some string. Make it high and out of reach. Have the group use the mix of tools and stuff to put together a means to get the candy down. If you are using groups, make sure each group has the same items. The solution is they need to put some poles together and place a candle on top and burn through the string. Make sure the pile of stuff has lots of red herrings. The hardest part of this game for you is to suspend the candy.

Purpose: working together, creativity

Active Worship Ideas

ABCs of Praise

Supplies: Scattergories die, whiteboard

Instructions: Use a die from Scattergories or randomly select letters from the alphabet. Whatever letter comes up, have teens call out God-praising words that begin with that letter and write on board.

Lead the group in prayer by having them praise God with these words.

Encourage them to practice this daily by picking a letter from a sign or billboard or in the class room.

What's Inside

Supplies: Bible, newsprint, markers, tape, index cards

Instructions: List the following words on a sheet of newsprint: understanding, gentle, cheerful, peacemaking, dependable, loving, thoughtful, helpful, persistent, faithful, tenderhearted, encouraging, patient, forgiving, kind, joyful, honest, and loyal. Label the paper, "What's Inside?"

Tape the "What's Inside" list to a wall. Give each person an index card and a marker. Have kids write on each card two words from the "What's Inside?" list that describe what they're like inside. Have them tape their cards to the front of their shirts and form a circle.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 139:13-16. Then, starting with the person on your right, have each student affirm the person on the right, using the two words he/she chose. Kids should say "Thanks, God, that (names) is (card) and (card)." Have kids continue around the circle until everyone has been affirmed.

Serving Others

Supplies: newsprint, tape, markers, and gift bows

Instructions: Tape three sheets of newsprint to the wall. Label the sheets "family," "friends," and "others." Give each person a marker. Have kids write on the newsprint ways they can serve these people in the coming week. Afterward have a volunteer read aloud the ideas on each sheet.

Then tape a bow on each person as you say, "You are a gift. Be a gift this week."

Band-aids

Supplies: pens, large adhesive bandages, overhead

Instructions: Have everyone stand. Say, "Here are five thought provokers. As I read each statement, sit down if it makes you feel better. Stand if it doesn't. Let the youth be quiet and ponder each thought.

"Life is not to be explained. It is to be lived."

"God doesn't give us answers. He gives us Himself as the answer and that is enough."

"Usually God doesn't get us out--He gets us through."

"It's not what happens to us--it's what happens in us that ultimately matters."

"Our trials are not to punish us but to perfect us."

Have all youth sit down. Give each person a pen and two large adhesive bandages. Have each person look at the person on his/her right and write a message of hope for that person on one of the bandages. Have each person place the bandage on the recipient's hand or cheek. Repeat to the left. Place the second bandage in the cross position.

Song Writing

Supplies: Bible, paper, pencils

Instructions: Read aloud 2 Peter 1:3-8. Then ask: How do God's gifts and promises affect our faith? How do we build on faith to grow spiritually? What are some benefits of growing spiritually?

Explain that the group is going to write a song about spiritual growth. Each verse will build on the previous one to show how people grow spiritually.

Divide into 8 groups: faith, faith to goodness, goodness to knowledge, knowledge to self control, self control to perseverance, perseverance to godliness, godliness to kindness, kindness to love. Each group will write a verse to describe not only how a person might grow from one stage to the next, but also why that attribute is spiritually important.

When groups have finished, let them sing their song to God. Then ask: What stage of the growth process do you think you're in? How might you work on growing spiritually?

Meeting Jesus

Supplies: Bibles, copy of "Silent Questions" handout, pens

Read John 4:5-42. Ask: What was Jesus trying to tell us about Himself by talking to the second-class immoral woman? What did Jesus mean when He said we should worship in "spirit and truth?" What do you think happened with the woman and the man she was living with following her encounter with Jesus? What was it about Jesus that impressed the townspeople so much?

How would you have felt if, instead of the woman, Jesus had met you at the well?

Explain that you are now going to have a time to meet Jesus. Ask everyone to spread out to their own corner. Give everyone a copy of "Silent Questions". Tell kids to use the questions on the handout to help them focus their time on meeting with Jesus.

Silent Questions: How would you feel if Jesus had met you at the well and asked you for a drink? Do you believe Jesus is present with you right now? Why or why not? What are three questions about your life that you would like Jesus to answer for you? What questions do you think Jesus would want to ask you? More than anything, what do you want Jesus to do for you? What do you think Jesus wants you to do for him?

Walk of Thanks

Supplies: None

Lead students outside for a walk. As you walk, invite students to take turns naming things they see that remind them of reasons to thank God.

Prayer as Incense

Supplies: Bibles, camp stove, saucepan, water, pancake syrup, salt, cinnamon, clove, basil, and other assorted fragrant spices. Before the activity combine 1 cup water and ½ cup of syrup into the saucepan. Set up the camping stove.

Instructions: Read Revelation 5:8 and Revelation 8:3-5. Incense is a symbol that represents our prayers to God. Heaven is filled with our prayers. They rise to God like a pleasant aroma.

Form groups and have each group select a spice. Have groups take turns sharing prayer requests for people they know. Once a prayer request is shared, have that person add ½ teaspoon of spice to the saucepan. Keep the flame low so it simmers, not boil.

Ask the group: Now that we've prayed, what do you think is happening in heaven? Why does praying for others please God? How does God want our hearts to be when we are praying? How is praying for others a way to worship God?

Post Retreat Resolutions

1. Write your parents a letter of affirmation.
2. Clean up your room for a week without being asked.
3. Clean the entire house while your parents are gone.
4. Carry your Bible in a visible spot in your bookbag and/or put the Bible on your desk for every class.
5. Wash your parent's car inside and out.
6. Mow the lawn without being asked.
7. Be on time to all of your classes--no tardies. Even after lunch. Let the teacher know that you are being your best because Jesus is making you the best.
8. Take care of your brothers and sisters for a night/weekend and give your parents a vacation.
9. Fix dinner for the whole family.
10. Set aside a night where you can visit with your parents uninterrupted.
11. Write notes to five of your friends who are not Christian. In that note, write about a teaching from Jesus personalized by you.
12. Plan a family picnic.
13. Plan a game night with your family.
14. Get the best possible grades you can and when report cards come out, write the teacher a note that this was done so God may be glorified.
15. Fast from Facebook or other social network for one week.
16. Tell (write) your stepparent(s) how great they are.
17. Put signs up welcoming your parents home.
18. Surprise your parents by getting a group of friends and putting on a dinner for parents.
19. Improve your grades one grade point.
20. Do your own homework assignments. Don't give it to someone to copy off of and don't you get answers from someone else.
21. The next three times your parents say "no" to something you want to do, don't argue or pout, just say; "oh, OK," and nothing else.

You will notice that many involve something around the family and school. That is because that is where "the rubber meets the road" for a teen's faith. Make up some more of your own.

YOUR PERSONAL QUIET TIME NOTES

Part 1: Listening to God

Begin by reading a passage of scripture. Read the passage prayerfully, asking God to speak to you as you read it.

Scripture _____

1. Did the passage say anything about an example to follow? If so, what?
2. Did the passage have a command to obey? If so, what?
3. Did the passage have an error to avoid? If so, what?
4. Did the passage have a sin to forsake? If so, what?
5. Did the passage have a promise to claim? If so, what?
6. Did the passage give you a new thought about God? If so, what?

Part 2: Talking to God

Spend time talking to God. Your conversation with God should cover the following areas in whatever words you want to use.

1. **Praise:** Praise is adoring God for who He is and showing love to God. Praise God for His character.

I praise God because He is:

2. **Confession:**

- a. **Ask** the **Lord** to make you aware of any sins which are hurting your relationship with **God**.
- b. **Confess** each sin individually to the **Lord**.
- c. **Agree** with **God** that the sin is wrong.
- d. **Express** your desire to avoid these sins in the future.
- e. **Claim** by faith **His** forgiveness.
- f. **Right** the wrong to whatever extent you can.
- g. **Accept** by faith that you are totally cleansed.

3. **Thanksgiving:** Thanksgiving is different than praise. Thanksgiving is thanking **God** for what **He** has done and expressing gratitude. **God** is to be *praised* for **His** character and *thanked* for **His** actions.

- a. **Express** your thankfulness for specific things.
- b. **Cultivate** a general attitude of thankfulness whatever the circumstance.

4. **Petition:** Prayer for yourself.

- a. **Pray** for spiritual growth.
- b. **Pray** for your material needs.
- c. **Share** with **God** the desires of your heart and trust **Him** to respond in the best way.

5. **Intercession:** Prayer for others.

- a. **Pray** for needs of other people. In your mind draw together **God** and the person in need. **God's** grace will meet the needs of that person.

Part 3: Meditation: Take a few moments to gather what you have learned and thought. **Be** quiet. **Listen** to your heart and what **God** is saying back to you. **You** can hear **Him** when you are quiet.

What did **God** say to you?

Part 4: Repitition: Do this again tomorrow!