

# ACTIVATORS Rules and Guiding Principles

## THEME

- Themes should unify all event activities and help participants remember the activities, discussions, and lessons of the event.
- Themes should be tied to scripture. The theme itself doesn't necessarily need to be obviously biblical, but its relationship to the Bible should be made explicit during the event.
- When choosing a theme, be sure you know where you want the event to end up.
  - The relevance of the theme should be obvious by the end of the event.
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## WORSHIP

- Youthquake worship services should be designed to maximize youth participation.
- Ideally, these worship services should be similar, but not identical to, Sunday morning worship at home churches.
- It is good to show youth both
  - that the structure of the weekly worship at their home churches is entirely adequate
  - and that they can use new elements (songs, prayers, activities, etc.) to worship God in ways that are especially meaningful and relevant for them in the context of the youthquake.
- Avoid the temptation of poking fun at more traditional services at home churches.
  - The goal should not be to replace, but to add to, those worship experiences.
- Prayers in worship services should always use first person plural language.
  - Even though one person is speaking, the entire group is praying—not simply overhearing one person's prayer.
  - Cameroon Prayer
- Don't confuse somber and serious.
  - Worship is serious,
  - but it doesn't have to be somber.
- Worship at youthquakes should always be joyful.

## KEYNOTE

- Youthquake keynotes are talks or presentations designed to expand upon, explain, and communicate the event theme.
- Keynote is an important, but seldom the most important, part of a youthquake.
- Fellowship and interpersonal interaction are more important than keynote presentations at youth events.
- The best keynote presentations support, build upon, explain, and celebrate the experience of community and fellowship which characterizes most youth events.
- All keynote presentations for a given event are best understood as a single unit—like 1 sermon with 4 points.
- Each keynote presentation should be able to be summarized in a single sentence.
- Each keynote presentation should be related to the overall theme, but need not be a complete exposition of the entire theme.
- Keynote presentations should be concise and brief.
  - No youth event keynote presentation should ever last more than 15 minutes.
  - Too short is better than too long.
  - Longer presentations hamper the ability of participants to remember and discuss them.
- Humor and repetition are valuable parts of keynote presentations.

## “CATECHISMS”

- Each Youthquake keynote presentation ends with a “catechism” question and answer.
- These questions and answers are intended to help participants remember the main idea of each keynote presentation and the ways in which the various presentations support a single theme.
  - They are “handles” that participants can use to hang onto the event theme and
  - a “skeleton” that holds the whole weekend together.
- Small Group sessions normally include review of the event catechism and a way to reinforce the main ideas related to the event theme.

## SMALL GROUPS

- The primary value of Small Groups at youth ministry events is to give participants opportunities to meet and get to know each other.
- Small Groups are also ideal for reinforcing the event theme through discussion and group activities.
- In general, no single Small Group activity should last more than 15 or 20 minutes.
- Small Group sessions should always be flexible.
  - Good discussions or activities should never be cut short simply for the sake of "staying on schedule."
- Small Group Leaders should invite discussion and make it easy for all group members to participate in the group activities.
  - Participation is more important than ensuring that youth or adults can give the "right" answers to specific questions.

## SMALL GROUP ART PROJECT

- Small Group sessions often include some sort of art project (like a "sheet project").
- The primary purpose of these activities is to encourage and enable group members to think creatively and deal with biblical texts and event themes in a non-linear, "right-brained" way.
- Many youth are more likely to engage in meaningful Bible Study and theological discussion when they are working to represent particular ideas and stories in some vaguely artistic way.
- The process of working together on an art project is much more important than the finished product.
- Nevertheless, youth work hard on these projects and are often reluctant simply to leave them when the event ends.
  - It is always appropriate to use the completed projects in some way in the culmination of the event (e.g. "prayer shawls" for each participant, communion table covers for each church represented at the event, etc.).
- In order to emphasize the community nature of the group project, it is best to avoid simply having each group member work alone on a project that he or she takes home.
- Better to arrange for each group member or each church to take home some part of the group's joint effort.

## RECREATION

- Recreation activities at youth events give participants opportunities to participate in non-competitive, non-threatening activities.
- They serve to break down the walls that many young people (and adults) erect when they find themselves in unfamiliar situations.
- Energizers during large group sessions help participants use up nervous energy and prepare to be full participants in music and keynote.
- Teach every energizer every time; never assume that “everybody knows this one.”

## MUSIC

- At youth events, music serves as a valuable way to teach biblical and theological concepts, to encourage group participation, to celebrate the fellowship of the gathered community, and to worship God.
- Teach every song every time; never assume that “everybody knows this one.”
- While songs used in group singing should be biblically-based and related to the event theme, songs used in dances and recreation should be familiar to participants.
- Insistence on exclusively "Christian" music teaches young people that the church doesn't have much to do with their day-to-day lives, that lots of the music they thought they liked is somehow inappropriate, and that Christians are called to separate ourselves from the rest of the world.
  - As disciples of the Word who "became flesh and dwelt among us," Christians have no basis for drawing distinct lines between the "sacred" and the "secular."
- If it has a good beat and no words that would embarrass your Mom, use it.