

TOP 10 WAYS TO CREATE
A SUCCESSFUL FAITH
HAVEN YOUTH CAMP
EXPERIENCE



Youth retreats have the potential to change a student's life, or even eternity, but what is needed to make that happen? After 15 years of attending and leading youth retreats at Faith Haven I continue to hear the same story from our youth, "My life changed when I met Jesus for the first time at Faith Haven." For Youth Leaders wanting that to be the story for your youth, here are the top 10 things I've found that help create a successful youth retreat at Faith Haven Camp.

#1 IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS

If your camp is not about Jesus, you're missing the point. Youth want to know what God is like, so show them Jesus (Col. 1:19). All of the Bible points to Jesus (Luke 24:25-27), and youth need to know that Jesus alone is salvation (John 3:16).

MAKE IT FUN #3 As a Middle Schooler I came back to Faith Haven not because of the powerful worship or the fantastic messages, but because it was fun! Our Youth get 4 to 6 hours of "free time" packed with fun (9-square, dodgeball, crafts, etc...) in the middle of every day at their retreats. As a youth, this is where memories are made. As a Youth Leader, this is where relationship is built.

#4 Faith Haven Camp has facilities that are overflowing with opportunities to build

CREATE MEMORABLE MOMENTS

memorable moments. A chapel equipped for powerful times of prayer, two campfire rooms for meaningful worship, an open field for jumbo-sized games. And do I even need to mention the black inflatable raft in the lake? Every aspect of a retreat has the potential to be made memorable, so send your youth home with memories that last a lifetime.

#2 RELATIONSHIP! RELATIONSHIP! RELATIONSHIP!

I've fallen into the trap many times of over-programming a retreat, and while frantically trying to keep the program running I missed out on building relationships with the youth and my volunteer leaders. God is a relational God (1 Cor. 8:3), and YOU are the one who gets to show that in your example.

#5 TRAIN YOUR LEADERS #6 IT'S STILL ALL ABOUT JESUS

A successful retreat starts WAY before your retreat ever happens. Train your leaders with head knowledge (Bible), heart knowledge (Relationship), and hand knowledge (action). Jesus never called the trained; he trained the called.

I am often prone to try and over-emphasize the Bible, or the Holy Spirit, or spiritual gifts. These are all INCREDIBLY important, but they are all given to Christians to point us back to Jesus. Use your retreat to make Jesus famous among your youth. Make disciples that look like Jesus (Matt. 28:20).

#7 REMEMBER, IT'S A YOUTH RETREAT, NOT AN OLD MAN RETREAT

You are not planning a retreat based on what would be helpful for you! One of the biggest challenges for Youth Ministry Leaders is to be culturally relevant and age appropriate while remaining Biblically accurate. Youth culture is constantly changing which makes it a challenge to plan retreats that engage youth. Be like the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:16-34) and immerse yourself in the culture of your youth and plan the retreat to reach THEM. If your youth retreat strategy is the same as it was in 1990 you are not reaching your youth for Jesus.

#8 BUILD COMMUNITY THAT LASTS

Youth retreats are about creating God-moments that last. As you work on building the community among your youth and your leaders don't forget to think about how to translate that back home. Hold follow-up events, continue small groups, do whatever you can to build the CHURCH, not just build your camp.

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#9 DON'T WASTE YOUR YOUTHS' TIME

EVERYTHING that happens at your retreat should have intention. One of the most helpful tools for me in retreat planning is processing through WHY we do things, and HOW we can do them to the best of our ability. This includes major elements of a retreat like worship and teachings, but it also includes elements such as meal times, free time options, and bed-times.

#10 HAVE FUN!

You get the privilege of leading a youth retreat and helping youth fall madly in love with Jesus! What can be more fun than that?!?! The life of a follower of Jesus is the best possible life one could ask for (John 10:10), so live it boldly and passionately! Have fun living on mission for Jesus!

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