

CATALYST COLLECTIVE

YOUTH MINISTRY ON A BUDGET

JUNE 2019 // PREPARED BY AARON ALBA

PUTTING YOUR FAITH TO ACTION IS THE [MOST INEXPENSIVE] THING YOU CAN DO

1 Caring is FREE

"Games are cool. Youth is cool. But if we aren't putting our faith to action, then "it" is meaningless. Putting your faith to action is the [most inexpensive] thing you can do." Wise words from my fellow youth pastor friend William at Principe De Paz in Austin, Texas. With that and before anything, it is good to remember that more money does not mean more Jesus. Sometimes we can look at other youth groups or churches with bigger budgets and think "Why don't we have that?". "Oh if only our kids could have some crazy explosion, then they would hear this message more, or participate in worship more." That is simply not true. Being there for each student individually in buying them lunch, going to their games, their recitals, and their concerts... THAT takes no money virtually, just effort. So before you are looking to fix anything or be sympathized with about low budget, really challenge yourself and your team to be putting your faith and our calling of "doing life with ___" (insert student's name here) into action. It will make ripples that you cannot imagine.

So youth group on a budget? Or should I say just youth group? Haha! I have been an official youth pastor for a short period of time, following about 5 years of varied youth ministry, and am already realizing how all of those "really cool Instagram" youth groups are having fireworks and pyrotechnics being used for their sermon illustrations: Money. I am by no means speaking down or negatively about churches that are blessed financially. Some churches do and others do not have a ton of it. And. That. Is. OK. I have spoken to a few trusted youth pastors I know about how they "make it work" to help you out. I aim this short guide from me to be a resource for you for, well, resources. Hopefully this can help you and/or encourage you; especially for these coming months of the summer grind.

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IMAGINE

2 Basics of BUILDING a Budget on a Budget + Fundraising

Speaking of doing this all on a budget, and regardless of amount of money, you need to budget, budget, budget! Maybe you are hearing haunting echoes of Dave Ramsey's words in the back of your head right now... and well good! You have a certain amount of money to work with, so make it work for you. Look at the basic building blocks of your youth ministry. For my own, I realized that it was a carved out time for communal games, pizza, and camp or other outings. These are the things that I need to be the top priority when I am looking at a year of planning. These initial steps for you would be some simple things you may have already done like: Talk to your pastor, see how much money is allocated to the youth, if any at all. Then, look at those top priorities of yours, and divide your dollar amount out to each of those categories.

Following your main buckets of divvying out, then consider left over buckets that are still important. These buckets could include: Administration (Postage, pens, paper clips, and printing aren't free), Curriculum & Discipleship Resources (You don't want to write everything yourself.), Production Supplies (This includes everything it takes to make a great program every week.), Events (This includes camps, retreats, outings, mission trips, and special days.), Environment (You'll want to change up your space a few times to keep it fresh), Leader Training & Appreciation (People who don't feel equipped and valued won't stick around), Marketing (Everyone loves a free t-shirt), Care (Sending birthday cards, eating with students, and showing up at games costs money), Honorariums (You need people to cover for you when you take a vacation), and Personal Development (Subscriptions, books, and coaching for yourself). (<https://tinyurl.com/y6tkspja>)

Here is a good base template for youth budgeting:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/l7tmaejy1tw0d7i/Budget%20and%20Expense%20Tracker%20%28betteryouthministry.com%29.xlsx?dl=0>

Here is an additional online budget builder from Dave Ramsey himself:


https://www.everydollar.com/app/sign-up/daveramsey?ictid=0D8832667&_ga=2.45385380.1448700628.1558723392-1627786729.1558723392



A [GIFT OR] DISCOUNT IS ... SO THAT THE GIVER CAN HONOR THE RECIPIENT

With that budget, you still might need an extra kick or jolt to upstart the money that you will be organizing. I will list a few of my go-to fundraisers, that I have been or currently am a part of, then will give some more links of longer lists to pull from. The first one is from my good friend Dans "Jordan" Sindac, Student Pastor at Life Church Cedar Park. I reached out to him and asked his thoughts on this fundraiser he built up and he returned with a wealth of wisdom. Jordan, myself, and most us could agree that we struggle with asking for help. Jordan recognized that the issue of not asking for help is, most of the time, an issue of pride. We think we have to do it ourselves, and that is simply not the case. He also sees the best in those around in the community whether individuals or organizations. He said, "Most people do not wake up and say I am going to be selfish today", but we may not live up to our potential of giving because we do not offer opportunities to do just that. More people would help if they knew how to, Christian or not. It is our role as community leaders to give businesses that opportunity to help.

So Jordan reached out to countless businesses in the area and expressed the need for many students to go to camp and asked if these businesses could donate a gift card, a dinner, or an oil change, etc. So many businesses reached back out and said YES, actually going above and beyond. After collecting a good list of prizes, Jordan gave out tickets to students who then sold each ticket to neighbors and friends. At the end of the month the students and leaders reconvened, and Jordan did a live drawing of names until all prizes were given out. It was amazing. So many students will be going to camp because of this fundraiser now. And all because God gave Jordan the wisdom of "a [gift or] discount is not just so that the individual can benefit from it, but so that the giver can honor the recipient."



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An easy DIY one I am currently doing is the number wall. Getting a cork board or peg board and putting up envelopes numbered 1 to 100. This is shown in a similar way in the picture to the right. Those each represent a dollar amount in which whoever grabs each specific envelope pledges and returns it to you. If you get that entire board returned, then you have north of \$5,000. My church cleared out nearly a quarter of the envelopes within two hours of announcing the board. I was blown away, and IT IS STILL GOING.

A good list of ideas:

<https://www.capitalbusiness.net/resources/20-fundraising-ideas-for-churches-and-youth-groups/>

A shorter, well rounded list of fundraisers:

<https://www.dipjar.com/blog/youth-group-fundraising-ideas>



3 Some RAD Games

"You got games on your phone?" or "Can we just play Fortnite tonight?" We have all probably heard something along these lines from our students. How do we play a game that will keep the students attention without shooting someone out of a literal cannon? Well, there are tons of games that take little expenses, and are a HIT among students. I will highlight a few here.

The Cereal Game

"So you get an empty cereal box, start out with the whole box. Get 5 guys and 5 girls and they have to bend down and pick it up with their mouth, can't use their hands at all. Their knees, elbows, hands can't touch the ground. If they do, they're out. And after both groups go (we usually have all the guys go then girls) take some scissors and cut some of the box to where it is shorter and shorter and you may even get to where it's a flat piece but it's fun" - Cameron Holland, youth pastor in Austin, Texas.



THERE ARE TONS OF GAMES THAT TAKE LITTLE EXPENSES, AND ARE A HIT AMONG STUDENTS.

Psychology

This game has taken my youth group by storm. So the way it works is your group sends one student out of the room. The rest of the group decides that they are one specific person. An example could be the entire group is collectively "Darth Vader". The entire group agrees on a person everyone in the group will know, then invite the student that is outside back into the room with everyone else. Then the "mystery" student stands in the middle of the circle and asks each student individually yes or no questions to try and guess who the character/person the group chose was. It is much like if 21 questions and Guess Who? had a really nifty child. The game ends whenever the student from outside guesses correctly, or you feel like the students are need to move on. Be aware: students who do not get to be "it" get mad because it's a blast!

Human Battleship

There are many different ways to play this game, but the way that my youth group did this recently seemed to be great. So much of a hit that my students got so into it and competitive that they declined to play after youth was over. It will definitely be brought back in time! With your group, maybe remind the students that "it is not that big of a deal" regarding winning or losing, and you should be fine. But other than that for set up, you need chairs, blankets and/or sheets, and any sort of ball. Set up a row of chairs in the middle of the room and lay blankets or sheets over the chairs so you cannot see through to the other side. The students then split up into two teams. Each team picks one "player". That player stays standing at the back end of each side. The rest of the students lay down on the ground and act as the ships. The "ships" and the "player" each take turns throwing the ball over to the other side. If you are hit, then you are out. The trick is that the "player" standing can give a sort-of blind direction to the students lying down, but only with simple few-word instructions. If your students are truly bad at throwing, do not be afraid to change up the rules! Have fun with it.



 A photograph of a blue Battleship board with a grid of letters (A-I) and numbers (1-7). A play button icon is overlaid on the board, and a blue arrow points from the bottom right of the board towards the right.

Human Battleship

4 CO-Leaders

This one might seem simple, but how much are you investing into your leaders? That might seem like an afterthought when you are working yourself, or are exhausted from how much is on your plate. You should spend just as much time if not more time with your leaders than your students. Your "budget" needs to account for that. Maybe it needs to be from your own budget, but still, just like attending your students' events, spend time investing into your leaders. Take them out to lunch, check in on them, and meet with them intentionally.

Another student pastor friend of mine, Emilio in San Marcos, Texas, said to me once, "If you are used to 20 kids most nights, then what would you do if God sent you 200? Exactly, you would not be ready." The way you get ready is do the little things correctly, and build up your team of leaders. Even in your budget, write in ways to build up your team with resources for teaching, small group-ing, or just dinner and gifts! I spent years as a small group leader, and then every Christmas and co-work time I remember getting cards, money, and meals out of the blue. This type of leadership is the type I try my best to emulate. It leaves a true mark of investment and love.



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the churches down
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YOUR TEAM

The final piece of this list comes after internally looking into yourself, looking at the needs of your youth and leaders, and addressing each. Now, it is time to venture out. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. No seriously, stop and go read it right now...

Welcome back! We are one body made up of many parts. That means that the churches down the road from you are a part of YOUR TEAM, and not your competition. I could write at great lengths about community and building up your city with your city, and soon I will. But to get right to the heart and quickly, your students and those other students share similar issues. Your church and their church share similar struggles. You and those other leaders hurt and strive the same. Why not utilize that co-laboring and SUCCEED together.

I am extremely blessed to be a part of and have helped start a network of youth pastors that we have dubbed our "Superhero Support Group" here in Austin, Texas. We meet up weekly, break bread, share our struggles, and plan together. We cross over worship nights, camps, one-offs/ events. It saves time, stress, and money. But most importantly it helps remind us that this grind is so worth it, and what we do is so much bigger than ourselves and our churches. So bury that hatchet, that pride, that hesitation, and reach out and leverage relationships to build up your youth, yes, but the entire community. You are a superhero, so go find your support group. Don't forget that we are meant, called, and equipped to build up His kingdom with others. Now go do.

We here at Catalyst Collective love and appreciate each one of you. If you would like to reach out to us to stay connected, to get involved, or to get resources, do not hesitate to email or call.

**IF ONE PART SUFFERS,
EVERY PART SUFFERS WITH
IT; IF ONE PART IS
HONORED, EVERY PART
REJOICES WITH IT.**