

# **Voices: Encouragement for busy youth ministers**

June 8, 2022

Summer 2022 finally has arrived. For myself and my fellow youth ministers, this means preparing for youth camps, going to those youth camps, acting as a sponsor for children's camp, and working with the children's minister as they prepare and execute Vacation Bible School.

Sprinkle in a youth movie trip here, a youth lunch gathering there, topped off with laser tag, bowling and the occasional minigolf, and the youth minister's summer already is stacked up to be an adventure.

While much of the world eagerly anticipates the summertime with bated breath, for youth ministry, the summer can become the busiest and craziest time of the year. For most of us, the summer is already booked.

## **Getting ready for summer**

In anticipation of summer 2023, my wife and I already are planning when camps and Vacation Bible School will be, so we can manage that one week of vacation in the midst of next year's busyness.

This year, I constantly am looking at our youth calendar for what event comes next. I know I did this to myself, too. After all, I am the one who made the youth summer calendar with the youth committee.

This last semester, I jokingly said on more than one occasion: "Whoever says 'youth ministry is an easy job' needs to organize a youth Christmas party, then we can talk," or: "Whoever says, 'youth ministry is such a chill job' needs to take students to camp or to Main Event or to the next mission

project.”

While this may be arrogant boasting about what my job entails, many youth ministers will know the struggles I am mentioning. The things that seem easy are sometimes the hardest to organize.

## **Summer is here**

Now, summer is here, and with it all the joys and sorrows, highs and lows, ups and downs of a season, along with all the planning and doing. I am prone to say in this season, “Youth ministry is not an easy job.”

For that youth minister out there struggling to send final checks to youth camp, while also bussing a vanload of students off to see that summer blockbuster hit, you are not alone.

For the youth pastor wrapped up in decorating the church for VBS, while packing for kids’ camp, you are not alone.

For the youth leaders and volunteers who might be dreading leaving their families for a week to sponsor youth students at camp, you are not alone.

## **Where I find encouragement**

Even though I mention all the stresses, anxieties, and ministry aches and pains that go with the busy summers, I am reminded of why I participate in this God-given ministry in the first place.

As I write, I am looking at a photo strip with four pictures of my youth students and me taken in a photo booth during our last trip to the arcade. As I see their smiles and their joy in that one moment, my spirit is lifted and encouraged for this summer.

These students are the reason I am still hanging on through the craziness of the summer. They are my encouragers, even when they do not admonish me directly with their words. They are my source of joy, even when we are having a horrible, no good, rotten day or week. They are my challengers, because they drive me to be a better follower of Christ each day.

## Encouraging you

Student ministers, I know not every situation, every summer or every ministry is going to be perfect. Things will not always be as simple as what you learned in seminary. I now know how simple those days really were.

Your ministries will have highs and lows, just as every minister will face. If you are like me, your summer is about to be another adventure through craziness and constant going and going that will test you to the very limits of your insanity. You are not alone. We all are running in the same race.

As you go through this season—once more unto the breach, dear friends—remind yourself why you participate in ministry in the first place—the love of Jesus Christ that drives us to keep persevering, keep hoping and keep loving.

As I gear up for camp, VBS, another camp, and then the next thing and the next thing, my students have been my reminder of why I do what I do. May your students and your summertime ministries be that joy for you, as well.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2a).

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