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14 Back to School Games for Youth Ministry

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Bounce or Get Bounced

Object: The object of this game is for two students to go head to head and see who gets bounced out of the circle first!

Supplies: 30-45 foot rope, 2 blown up Inner tubes, stopwatch, *Optional – You can use water guns and spray the students as they are bouncing their opponents!

Preparation:

Spread the rope out to form a giant circle

Have two volunteers enter the circle with the inner tubes around their waists. On go, each player will attempt to bump the other player outside of the circle. Once a player steps out, the game is over. Depending on size of the room (or if you are playing outdoors), you could have more than one game going at a time. Play several rounds to allow all students to participate. To make the game a little more intense, you can time the students by giving them only 1-2 minutes to win.

Break It Down

Scripture: Psalm 73:26 (NIV)

Main Point: Even though we may feel that we've failed at something, God is our strength. God is our prize. No one is perfect, and everyone messes up. But God always looks at us with love and grace. Sometimes we are hard on ourselves because we get disappointed by the losses that happen in our lives. We all need to realize that each and every one of us will have losses in life, but we also will have victories. That's what God wants us to focus on! God wants us to continue to keep our eyes focused on Him even if we feel like we have failed Him. Satan wants us to keep our eyes focused on our failures. No matter what happens in our lives, we need to remember that God is always our strength. All we have to do is call on Him, and He embraces us and never lets us go!

Have you ever been hard on yourself because of something you did wrong? Have you ever been hard on someone else because of something they did wrong? How do you think God feels when we are hard on someone else for their failures?

Cray Cray Relay

Object: Divide each of your students into teams.

Supplies: 2 kiddie pools, 2 old pairs of scrubs, 2 goggles, 2 pairs of flippers, 2 hats, water guns, 2 toothbrushes, 2 twin size sheets, 2 pairs of long socks, water buckets, water hose, 2 typed or written lists with supplies checklist (1. Scrubs, 2. Flipper, 3. Flipper, 4. Hat, 5. Toothbrush, 6. Twin Size Sheet 7. Goggles 8. Sock, 9. Sock)

Preparation:

Have 2 kiddie pools that are spread out and filled with water. Place 1 set of each supplies item in the pools.

Explain to the students the object of this relay is for each player to run down to their kiddie pool and find one item on their list and bring it back to their line. Each team must continue this until they have all of their items. Once they have all their items, they must dress one of their teammates with all the items. Once the student is dressed, he/she will lay down in the center of the twin bed sheet. Two other teammates will grab each end of the sheet and carry their teammate over to the kiddie pool and set him/her into the pool.

*Optional - Give leaders a water hose, water guns, and water buckets to pour onto the students as they attempt this Cray Cray Relay!

Break It Down

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

Main Point: Just like the Cray Cray Relay we have to follow God's instructions for us so that we can walk the path that He has set out for us! If we didn't have instructions or advice that was given to us, we wouldn't know how to do life the way God wants us to. He gives us His word so that we may be encouraged even when we feel tired, weak, and even confused, because let's face it, life can get CRAY CRAY sometimes.

Is it always easy to trust God? Explain? Why is it important for us to stay in His word?

Drip Drop Gone Wrong

Object: Have students sit in a circle and explain that this game will be played like Duck Duck Goose, except the person that is "it" has to grab a mystery cup with mystery ingredients in it (make sure an adult hands the students the cups).

Supplies: Foam cups, ketchup, mustard, flour, milk, water, pickles, sauerkraut, sardines (any other gross thing you can think of), Shampoo, Conditioner, mud pit

Preparation:

This game should be played outside and you should inform your students to wear old clothes that they don't care getting dirty and a swimsuit underneath their clothes, also bring a towel. Also inform student's parents that their child will be getting messy!

Have your students sit in a circle around a mud pit and choose one student to be "it" first. Explain to the students that this game will be played like Duck Duck Goose but the person who is it will have a mystery cup given to them and they have to go around the circle and say, "Drip drop gone, drip drop gone." To tag someone, the player will say, "Drip drop gone WRONG," and dump the contents of the mystery cup on that person's head. Then they will get up and chase the other person and if they tag that person before they get to their spot than they have to sit in the mud pit in the middle of the circle.

If a student should end up in the mud pit they can only get out of the mud pit if someone replaces them by getting tagged or if the person that is it says they can get out of the mud!

Allow students to play until all of the mystery cups are used up. After the game, line up your students and hose them down to wash the mystery gunk out of their hair!

Break It Down

Scripture: Romans 6:23 (NIV)

Main Point: After this game, we were covered in disgusting stuff and smelled gross. That's how sin is in our lives. When God sent Christ to die for us, He died for all of our sins. Because of sin in this life we will continually have struggles, but our life with Christ is eternal. We have been forgiven of the stink in our lives, and we will be given everlasting life with God. We have a God that loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for us and to forgive us even though our choices can stink and we don't deserve to be forgiven.

If you have never asked God to forgive your sins and come into your life, now is the time! God loves you regardless of the stink in your life. You can never be good enough for God, but by simply asking Him to come into your life, you are saved!

Flat On Your Face

Object: Students will see who has the mad skills of catching the ball.

Supplies: 1 tennis ball or small ball per group

Preparation:

Have students start the game off by dividing students in groups of 6 or less.

Have students start by forming a circle within their small group and tell them to start their circle close together.

Give a ball to one student in each group to start the game. Explain that they will be tossing the ball to the player next to them underhand not overhand.

After everyone in the group has caught the ball, they each have to take a step backwards and repeat the process. If one of them drops the ball then that person has to put one hand behind their back. If they drop it again, they have to take a knee and only use one hand. If they drop it again, they have to sit on their behind. If they drop it again, they have to lie on their stomach.

Break It Down

Scripture: Psalm 145:14 (NIV)

Main Point: It doesn't matter who you are or how much money you have. It doesn't matter if you have the biggest house or nicest car. It doesn't matter if you have one million friends or one friend. Each of us, eventually, will fall. We all have sinned. We all have messed up one way or another. But here's the really cool thing, GOD LOVES YOU! This game got harder and more challenging as it went on, and that's how life can be, too. God loves us completely and unconditionally regardless of how big we think our mess up is. He always lifts us up.

Have you ever had a time in your life where you felt like you were flat on your face? How did God bring you through that time? How can you lift others up that may be going through something like that?

Flip & Flop

Object: The object of this game is to knock down all of the opposing team's cups first!

Supplies: Blue & Red plastic cups, water guns, water buckets, kiddie pool (or a trash can) filled with water, orange cones

Preparation:

Divide the students into two teams (team red & team blue). Put orange cones or markers a few feet in front of the cups so that the other team has to work to get the other team's cups knocked down.

Have the cups flipped upside down and spread out behind the team's markers before starting the game. Explain to the students the object of the game is to attempt to knock down all of the other team's cups with water guns or water buckets.

The first team to knock all of the other team's cups down wins!

Break It Down

Scripture: Proverbs 24:17 (NIV)

Main Point: Sometimes when we see our "enemies" fall, we catch ourselves thinking, "Well they deserved that." God tells us not to have that attitude. God doesn't want us to rejoice when our so called "enemies" are suffering. It's not always easy to turn the other cheek but God calls us to represent His forgiveness and grace. We are in a constant battle with our flesh when it comes to revenge, and we feel like we receive justice when those that have wronged us get punished by their wrongdoings. The bible says that God will fight the battles for us. We simply need to pray for those that persecute us and that wrong us. If God is for us than who can ever be against us?

Is it always easy to forgive those that wrong you? Explain. Have you ever prayed for an "enemy" before? Why or why not?

Letter, Number or Shape

Object: Students will be divided into multiple teams (number of teams and size of teams will vary with the size of your group) and will be given specific instructions. If a team does not follow the instructions exactly, they will get sprayed with the water hose.

Supplies: Water hose, open field, popsicles. Have students wear swimsuits & bring towels

Preparation:

Divide Students into their teams and tell them that they have to obey the directions given or their team will get sprayed with the water hose.

The goal is to see which team has the best listening ears to listen and obey instructions.

The leader will say a letter, number, or shape and each team has to try to form that letter, number, or shape with their team's bodies.

The last team to complete this task gets sprayed with the water hose!!!

The team that wins the challenge receives popsicles!

Break It Down

Scripture: John 14:24 (NIV)

Main Point: Sometimes it's hard to obey what people tell us to do. When we were toddlers we learned what "yes" and "no" meant from our parents. As we grow older, we must continue to obey our parents and to love others around us. Because we are His children, God calls each of us to rise up to a higher standard. Not only does God want us to love and obey Him, He also wants us to teach others to do the same. He doesn't want us to obey Him because we have to. He wants us to obey him because we love him and desire to do His will. And just like in the game we played, if we don't listen and obey, we don't receive the prize.

Is it easy or hard to listen and obey God? Explain? Is it always an easy thing to love those around us? What are ways that you can show love to those around you, whether it be a family member, friend, or even a complete stranger?

Light in the Darkness

Object: Students have to protect their light necklace and let it shine from the darkness

Supplies: One light up necklace per every three students

Preparation:

Pass out one light up necklace for every three students. Explain to the students that each student with a light up necklace is the light and all the other students are darkness.

Ideally, this game works best in a dark room. If a light student gets tagged by a darkness student they have to hand over their light to a leader and then they turn to the darkness and have to try and tag another light!

Explain to the students that the last person to keep their light wins the game!

Break It Down

Scripture: Psalm 18:28 (NIV)

Main Point: In this world we are the light in the darkness. We have to be in a continual relationship with Christ so that we can continue to stand up against the darkness of this world. It's easy for us to get sucked into the temporary treasures of this world, but God doesn't want us to become distracted by those things. He wants us to stand out in a crowded world. He wants us to be bold and to be strong in our faith. At school it is sometimes hard to stand up for what we believe in—especially when others around us might not feel the same way we do. Sometimes it's easier for us to simply blend in and go with what everyone else is doing. But God calls us to be leaders in our faith. God doesn't want us to cover our light; He wants us to let our light shine bright for Him and His kingdom!

Have you ever felt uncomfortable about standing up for what you believe in? Have you ever hidden your light? How can we stand up for what we believe in?

Mission Impossible

Object: Divide students into two teams and inform them that this might be mission impossible!

Supplies: 1 baseball bat, 1st-3rd bases & home plate, medium/large bouncy ball

Preparation:

Explain to students that this game is a bit tricky, and they need to get ready!

This game will be played like baseball with some exceptions: Instead of a baseball, they will use a medium/large bouncy ball. And instead of hitting the ball with a bat, they will hit the ball with their hand, but must first put their forehead on a bat and spin around 10 times before coming to the plate.

If someone from the other team catches the ball or gets the ball they have to tag the batter with the ball. The ball can also be thrown, but it has to be underhand not overhand.

The team with the most points wins!!

Break It Down

Scripture: Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

Main Point: Even though we might be in a situation that may feel impossible to get through, God makes it possible! God commands us to be full of courage and strength. Some of us may think, “Why does He command us to be full of courage and strength?” He is our Heavenly Father, and He has our back! He loves us and he has a future and a hope for each one of us. Some of us have been in situations where we felt scared, but God tells us to not be terrified because He has already stepped in the gaps for us. He is the one who makes us strong. Without God we are nothing, but with Him we can accomplish mission impossible without fear! He makes it possible! Knowing that God is with us wherever we go is an amazing feeling! We know that He is with us always and forever!

Do you sometimes doubt the power of God? Why do you think so many people—including Christians—seem to doubt God?

Noodle Race

Object: Teams compete in a noodle racing relay!

Supplies: 2-4 swimming noodles per team, 1 small kiddie pool, 1 small toy boat per team.

Preparation:

Cut each of the swimming noodles in half long ways.

Divide students into two teams. Each team will have two or more noodles that they must link together to create a long channel that the toy boat must travel down.

Have teams form a line with each player on the team holding onto a part of one of the noodles. On go, the toy boat will be at the top, and a Leader will pour water so the boat can float down the series of noodles. If the boat falls off, the team must start all over again. The team with the boat that successfully makes it down the noodles to the finish line (kiddie pool) first wins the game!

Tell the teams that when they are done, they have to make up a fun chant and yell it out as loud as they can to show that their boat has completed the Noodle Race!

Hint Have students in the teams line up from tallest to shortest and have the tallest people hold up the noodle higher and the shorter students hold the noodle lower making a slide for their boat (or object).

*Optional - If you don't mind getting your students a little more wet, have leaders grab water guns & water balloons and shoot & throw at the boats as they try to reach the finish line!

Break It Down

Scripture: Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

Main Point: Have you ever felt like there was something you were supposed to do and the task felt impossible? Have you ever felt like the task at hand was way bigger than you? It says in Philippians that through God, we can do everything! We simply have to trust in Him. God always prepares the way for us. We simply need to try! When playing this game it could get frustrating when the boat would fall off the swimming noodle. But you kept trying, and you finally accomplished the goal of getting the boat to the finish line. Sometimes we simply have to keep trying and know that we can do all things through Christ!

What difficult task are you going to try this week? What has God asked you to do? Are you doing those things? Why or Why not

Slip and Slide Slippery Contest

Object: The object of this game is to have everyone line up and take turns trying to see who has the slip and slide slippery mad skills!

Supplies: 100 foot thick tarp (smaller if you have a limited budget or limited space), baby shampoo (the more shampoo the BETTER!), sand bags, inner tubes, water hose

Preparation:

Spread the 100 foot slip and slide outside and put the sand bags on the sides of the tarp holding it on the ground. Have a few leaders spread the baby shampoo all over the tarp and have a leader spray the tarp with water right before the students start with the water hose. Leader with the water hose may also spray the students so that they are wet and ready to go!

Explain to the students that they may use the inner tube or slide on their stomachs. Students need to use extra caution so that no one gets hurt.

Break It Down

Scripture: Psalm 121:3 (NIV)

Main Point: Sometimes, we get ourselves into slippery messes where we don't have as much control over how and where we're moving. In Psalms 121:3 it tells us that God won't let us out of His sight. He knows where we are all of the time. God never falls asleep on us, He is always watching. We all tend to worry about the problems and the struggles in our lives, but God promises us that He is ALWAYS with us. Sometimes our friends might be going through some tough stuff and we don't know what to say to them, but here's one thing that you can say confidently because it's true: God is with you! He has His eyes on you! He loves you!

Have you ever had a friend come to you with a problem in their life and you didn't know what to say? What can you say to them now that you know Psalm 121:3?

Star Trek Mission

Object: Teams compete in a friendly competition by following the captain's leadership.

Supplies: 1 Large Hula Hoop (SHIP) per team, Large area for students to run, skip, etc.

*Optional: if played outside – water guns & water Balloons

Preparation:

Spread the Hula Hoops (SHIPS) side by side with enough space in between for each team to have room to stand outside of their Hula Hoop.

Divide into teams by putting 5-10 students per team with 1 student standing in the middle of the Hula Hoop (SHIP).

Explain to the students that the person in the middle of the Hula Hoop is "Captain" and the students on that team have to have at least one hand on the Hula Hoop at ALL times during the game, or their team will lose a point.

The goal for each team is to safely get to the other side by following the "Captain" and the "Captain" is responsible for making sure the entire team is holding on to the Hula Hoop (SHIP) at all times. On go, a Leader will yell out a specific way to move (skip, hop on one foot, spin, gallop, etc.—the stranger the moves, the more fun the game will be). After a few seconds, the Leader will yell out a different way to move. When the leader yells, "ATTACK" each team must let go of their ship and put one or both of their feet inside the Hula Hoop, depending on the size of each team.

- First Team to reach the finish line gets bonus points, you can have students repeat this process until they get tired of it! They have a blast with it!

- *Optional* If you don't mind getting your students a little wet then have leaders grab water guns & water balloons and shoot & throw at the Ships as they try to reach the finish line!

Break It Down

Scripture: Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

Main Point: As we go through life, it helps to have wise and Godly people around us to support us. We should spur each other on and encourage one another to make us stronger and better. We also should be an encouragement to those supporting us. God wants us to help each other become better for His kingdom and His namesake.

What are you doing to help better those around you? Who are you surrounding yourself with?

Triangle Tug of War

Object: The object of this game is to have a triangle shaped rope and a marker in the middle of the triangle, the team that gets their corner furthest from the marker wins!

Supplies: Large rope tied together to form a large triangle, three separate ropes of equal length tied to the three corners of the triangle, painters tape or marker to form an X in the middle of the triangle

Preparation:

Spread the rope out on the ground and form a triangle with the rope, tie each separate rope to the three corners then put your X marker in the middle of the triangle.

Divide your students into 3 teams and explain to the students the goal of this unique tug of war game is to pull as hard as they can on their corner of the triangle and pull the other teams closest to the X marker in the middle of the triangle.

You can give your teams time limits and time them to make the game more intense. You can do this several times until your students get tired! You can even switch up the teams by age, gender, birthdate, favorite kind of pizza, etc!

Break It Down

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NIV)

Main Point: A triangle has three points, and God uses the number 3 in Ecclesiastes 4:12 to relay a very important point. It says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." If you were to grab one single hair you could easily pull it out of your head and if you were to grab two hairs it would be a little more difficult but if you were to braid your hair with three pieces of hair it would be even more difficult to pull. Basically what God is saying is we need each other! Just like when you were pulling on your corner of the triangle you needed your team to help pull because you would most likely fail at the given task if you were by yourself. We need each other for encouragement, prayer, and fellowship! Maybe you or someone you know tries to do everything alone. Being by yourself isn't the best thing for you! God created more than one person because He knew that we needed those people in our lives for friendships and encouragement!

Are you paying attention to those around you who need friendship? Are you making an effort to reach out to people for help, prayer, and encouragement? Are you praying, helping, and encouraging others? Why or Why not?

Ultimate Color Water Balloon Fight

Object: The object of this game is to divide the students into two teams and see which team hits more of the opposing team's targets!

Supplies: Red & Blue Balloons, blue food coloring, red food coloring, Water, Cardboard (or poster board) Targets

Preparation:

Divide your students into two teams (Red team & Blue team) *Make sure your students are wearing old clothes that they don't mind messing up! They also need to bring a towel!*

Fill the water balloons with water and a drop or two of the same color food coloring as the color of the balloon.

Make 4 Cardboard (or poster board) targets per team. Give the teams their targets and allow them to choose where they want to put their targets.

Explain to the students the goal of this game is to attempt to hit the opposing team's targets, the team that hits the most targets wins the game!

Explain to the students that they are allowed to attempt to block their team's target and even sacrifice themselves to save their targets!

Break It Down

Scripture: John 16:33 (NIV) (Christ overcame the world!)

Main Point: Christ promises us that we will have trouble in this world. He not only promised us that we would have trouble, He also promised us that He will never leave us or forsake us. That means we don't have to worry about our temporary problems here on earth because Christ overcame the world! He sacrificed Himself and died a sinner's death, yet He was perfect without sin. Just like you may have tried to sacrifice yourself for your target, Christ took our punishment on His shoulders so that we may live eternally with Him in Heaven! Not many of us could actually sacrifice our comforts in life for someone else.

How can you reach out to others to tell them about Christ's sacrifice? Is it easy or hard to talk to others about God and His precious Son Jesus? Explain?

Water Extravaganza Relay

Object: The object of this game is to divide students into two teams and play Red Light, Green Light. The big difference is that students are going to get soaked!

Supplies: Water Hose, water guns, water buckets, 2 small kiddie pools, orange cones

Preparation:

Divide the students into two teams and explain that they will be playing a relay version of the red light, green light game. Teams have to stand in a line by their cone and have to remain standing until everyone on their team has completed the relay. When the entire team has completed the relay, they should sit down.

One player from each team will play against each other and listen to the instructions of the leader. If they move on the wrong instruction, they will get soaked!

The team that has the least amount of people soaked wins the entire challenge!

Break It Down

Scripture: Proverbs 1:5 (NIV) (Listen to the teachings!)

Main Point: Each of us is in a constant state of learning. We are learning how to love others; we are learning how to treat others; and we all make a choice whether or not to follow what the word of God says. God says in Proverbs that a wise person will listen and add to their learning. By listening, we receive guidance and discernment. You may have experienced a time when you thought you knew more than your parent's did about something, and you ended up getting hurt because you chose not to listen. God doesn't want you to get hurt. He doesn't want you to hang out with the wrong crowd, and He doesn't want you to have to learn the hard way. Each of us is given the freedom of choice to obey our parents, teachers, and—most importantly—God. Some of us make wrong choices because of peer pressure or even because we just want things our way. But if you want to be wise, God tells you to open your ears and LISTEN!

How can you be a better listener to your parents? As you get ready to go back to school, how can you be a better listener to your teachers?

Whipped Cream Musical Plates

Object: Students will play a game similar to musical chairs except it will be done with paper plates and whipped cream.

Supplies: Paper Plates, Whipped Cream, Music, an awesome prize for the winner like a \$10 gift card to Amazon, Starbucks, etc.

Preparation:

This game is best played outside or inside with a large tarp.

Explain to students that they will be playing the game musical chairs except instead of chairs they will be sitting on plates of whipped cream. Because some students will have no desire to sit on whipped cream, tell them about the awesome prize they will get if they win.

Last person on a plate wins the game!

Break It Down

Scripture: James 1:19 (NIV)

Main Point: Have you ever had something happen that made you really angry? Before we get angry, God wants us to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. In the Bible, God shows us several people who quickly became angry. If they had been slow to speak and slow to become angry, they wouldn't have experienced the trouble that they went through. If someone makes us mad and we speak out of anger, we sometimes say and do things that we don't really mean. We let our anger control us, and we hurt those around us.

When was the last time that you just sat and listened to someone? This week make it your goal to spend more time listening and less time talking to others. Be good listeners. After all, God gave us two ears and one mouth.