

Teens Cycle Two-Shift Ten

Summer Camp or Summer Surge

Primary Objective

Recruiting students to attend an evangelistic activity like summer camp.

Secondary Objective

Promoting camp or other activity to unchurched students and families.

How This Can Help You Reach Teens

There are many great reasons to take kids to summer camp, but the greatest reason is to share the good news of Jesus Christ with students who may have never heard the news before. Church camp is uniquely designed to help foster spiritual conversations with students. Research shows that students that attend Christian camps are not only more likely to place their faith in Jesus, but are also more likely to remain in church as adults. A church of any size can engage with camps, whether you provide your own or tap into a variety of opportunities supplied by Christian ministries and organizations.

Even if your church does not participate in a camp during the summer, this season of the year lends itself to some of the best ministry and outreach opportunities of the entire year. Teens are looking for summer activities, and churches are well positioned to provide activities that can be leveraged for Gospel sharing opportunities. Let's look at camps specifically with the understanding that the ideas and principles can be applied to a large variety of teen activities. If you are not sure what they would like to do, get some teens together to brainstorm and plan.

So, how do we get our churches to camp? And how do we make sure there are unchurched students on the bus?

Suggested Strategy

Here is a five-step plan to get teens to participate in summer activities like Christian camps:

1. Pray.

Invite everyone in your church to start praying with you as soon as you feel God leading you to take students to camp. Call your pastor, your prayer warrior, and the little ole lady who loves you and share your desire to take your church to camp this summer. Get your church leadership interested and praying early in the process. Make sure you ask them to pray that unchurched students would come to your camp and that, through their experience at camp, come to a relationship with Christ. Pray specifically!

2. Pick the Fit.

At this point, it would be easy for me to say, “Visit us online at www.superwow.com to register for SuperWow, Merge, or Impact and let the good times roll.” However, you must pick a camp that is the right fit for your group. Choose a camp that has a good reputation, shares your values, meets your group's needs, and fits the church's budget. Consider the speaker, location, date, cost, length, worship leader, and theme. Call us at the Georgia Baptist Student Group and Faith Development office, and we will gladly help you walk through the process to find the right camp.

3. Promote.

Promote camp in living color and through many methods. As soon as you set the date, send everyone in your church a “Save the Date” invitation, and I do mean *everyone*. Remember, you must promote camp beyond your youth room and your church walls to attract unchurched students. When everyone in your church sees the date, many will start praying, mamas will mark their calendars, and some adult Sunday School classes will start talking about it the following Sunday. Some of those adult classes will provide scholarships for the unchurched students.

Make your promotion church-wide and then go beyond the church walls. Solicit your church kids for the names of unchurched students that they would like to attend camp. Using those names, plan with your students to pray for those friends and invite them to join you at camp. Inviting unchurched kids may mean you need to help them find the financial resources to attend camp.

4. Plan It Out.

Camp takes a lot of planning. There will be forms to fill out, crazy deadlines to meet, housing lists to complete, and much more that needs to be taken care of promptly. I recommend sitting down with someone on your adult leadership team very early to make a to-do list of everything that needs to be done to take your church to camp and be sure to attach a deadline to each task.

You may choose a camp where all you need to do is recruit students, fill out some forms, load the church van, and go to summer camp. That camp may take care of housing, food, and all activities from sun up until way beyond sunset. Other camps require a little more on your part, like filling afternoon breaks, planning group

devotions, and/or providing the meals for your group during camp. At the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, we have several camp options to choose from, including camps with “one call, that’s all” option, which takes care of everything except travel arrangements.

Please give us an opportunity to walk with you through the camp process even if you choose a camp outside of the GBMB. We want to serve you as you serve young people.

5. Over Communicate.

A great camp experience starts before the actual camp starts. Make sure parents, pastors, deacons, chaperones, and campers have all the information they need in a timely manner. Here is a tip for most youth pastors that I know: Take whatever you consider timely and back it up a couple of months. Don’t wait until the Friday before you leave for camp on Monday to tell parents that their kid will need five days’ worth of yellow shirts for camp.

When we pray, pick the fit, plan, promote, and over communicate, we build trust; and as the level of trust grows, so does the level of support you will receive from your leadership, pastor, parents, and students. Your own spouse will get on board when she or he trusts the vision, understands the plan, and knows the details. Trust me, I know.

Summer camp is a game changer. It is an avenue for amazing life change. I grew up attending church camp, and I was not surprised when Steve Parr and Tom Crites’ research showed that teenagers who attend summer church camp are more likely to stay in church after high school than students who did not attend camp; and the more camps they attend, the higher the likelihood. After more than 25 years of taking churches to summer camp, I am always blessed when I hear a former student say, “I remember what God began in my life at camp.”

Ideas

- Promote your summer camp in the basketball or baseball program at the local high school.
- Give a t-shirt or hat to every student that signs up for camp when they pay their deposit to help promote camp outside the walls of the church. Include on the t-shirt a registration web-site.
- Invite the camp speaker to your church for a rally in the spring.
- Take “goody bags” to 100 students your youth group would like to invite to attend camp.
- Take your youth leadership team on an overnight trip to prayer walk the camp and explain your vision for camp while they are on the campus.

Low Cost Ideas

- Prepare a meal for your camp leaders, share your vision for camp, and spend time praying together!
- Make a goal to have a student or leader invite one unchurched student to camp each week.

Looking Ahead

Preview: (11) (Re) Launch Groups and Cross the Gap Gatherings

Plan: (12) Student Outreach Event

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