

Family Ideas

for Ministry with Young Teens

H E L P

Heads-up | Easy | Low-Cost | Purposeful

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Carole Goodwin

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saint mary's press

For my parents

The publishing team included Marilyn Kielbasa, development editor; Mary Duerson, copy editor; Barbara Bartelson, production editor; Hollace Storkel, typesetter; Cindi Ramm, art director; Kenneth Hey, cover and logo designer; cover images, PhotoDisc Inc.; produced by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

The development consultants for the HELP (Heads-up, Easy, Low-Cost, and Purposeful) series included the following people:

Sarah Bush, Pewee Valley, Kentucky	Jo Joy, Temple, Texas
Jeanne Fairbanks, Tipp City, Ohio	Kevin Kozlowski, New Carlisle, Ohio
Carole Goodwin, Louisville, Kentucky	Jennifer MacArthur, Cincinnati, Ohio
Joe Grant, Louisville, Kentucky	David Nissen, Cincinnati, Ohio
Maryann Hakowski, Belleville, Illinois	Ruthie Nonnenkamp, Prospect, Kentucky

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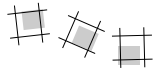
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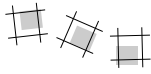
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Introduction

Family Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens is one of seven books in the HELP series—a collection of **H**eads-up, **E**asy, **L**ow-Cost, and **P**urposeful activities for young adolescents. These strategies are designed to be used as part of a comprehensive youth ministry program for grades six to eight. The strategies can stand alone or complement a religious education curriculum.

The other books in the HELP series are as follows:

- ☉ *Community-Building Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens* (available in 2001)
- ☉ *Hands-on Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens* (available in 2001)
- ☉ *Holiday and Seasonal Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Justice and Service Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Prayer Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*
- ☉ *Retreat Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens* (available in 2001)

These books are helpful resources for anyone who works with young adolescents in a church or school setting. They can provide a strong foundation for a year-round, total youth ministry program whose goal is to evangelize young adolescents and support them in their faith journey.

Overview of This Book

Family Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens may be used by a coordinator of youth ministry, a director of religious education, catechists, teachers, family ministers, a parish youth ministry team, or any adult who works with young teens. Ownership of the book includes permission to duplicate any part of it for use with program participants.

The book's strategies are divided into three categories:

- ☉ activities for gathered families
- ☉ activities for families at home
- ☉ activities for teen groups or classes

Included are ways to foster communication between young teens and parents, to engage young teens and their families in service, to build community among families with young teens, and to attend to the spiritual needs of young adolescents. Note that in activities that involve parents, you may, of course, include guardians, sponsors, or any adult family members who are attending your program with the teens.

Format of the Strategies

Each strategy begins with a brief overview of its purpose. The next element is a suggested time for the activity. This is flexible and takes into account several variables, such as the size of the group, the comfort level of the participants, and whether you want to include a break. Use the suggested time as a starting point and modify it according to your circumstances. It is a good idea to include time for a break within the longer strategies.

Next is a description of the size of the group that the strategy was written for. Most of the strategies work with a range of group sizes.

In some strategies a section on special considerations follows the one on group size. It includes things such as notices about remote preparation requirements and cautions to pay special attention to a particular developmental issue of early adolescence.

A complete checklist of materials needed is the next part of the presentation of every strategy. A detailed description of the strategy's procedure is then provided, followed by alternative approaches. The alternatives may be helpful in adapting the strategy to the needs of the families in your group.

Frequently included is a list of scriptural passages that may be used with the strategy for reflection or prayer. The list is not exhaustive; a Bible concordance will provide additional citations if you want to add a more substantial scriptural component to a strategy.

The final element in each strategy offers space for keeping notes about how you might want to use the strategy in the future or change it to fit the needs of your group.

Programming Ideas

The strategies in this book can be used in a variety of ways. Consider the following suggestions:

- ☉ The program coordinator, catechists, teachers, family minister, and coordinator of youth ministry may collaborate to plan youth meetings and

special activities that use strategies from this and other books in the HELP series.

- ☉ The strategies in this book may be used anytime during the year. Some activities might best be presented in the summer months, when most young adolescents and their families are less busy and may be open to a variety of activities. Youth ministers may use those strategies as part of a strong summer program for young teens.
- ☉ School leaders can use ideas from this book to create faith-sharing nights for students in grades six to eight, and their parents.
- ☉ Many of the strategies from other books in the HELP series can be adapted for use with multigenerational groups.

Standard Materials

Many of the items in the materials checklists are common to several strategies in the series. To save time consider gathering frequently used materials in convenient bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Some recommendations for how to organize such bins follow.

Supply Bin

The following items frequently appear in materials checklists:

- ☉ Bibles, at least one for every two participants
- ☉ masking tape
- ☉ cellophane tape
- ☉ washable and permanent markers (thick and thin)
- ☉ pens or pencils
- ☉ self-stick notes
- ☉ scissors
- ☉ newsprint
- ☉ blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- ☉ postcards
- ☉ notepaper
- ☉ envelopes
- ☉ baskets
- ☉ candles and matches
- ☉ items to create a prayer space (e.g., a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl of water, and a vase for flowers)

Craft Bin

Many of the strategies use craft activities to involve the young people. Consider collecting the following supplies in a separate bin:

- ☉ construction paper
- ☉ yarn and string, in assorted colors

- ⊗ poster board
- ⊗ glue and glue sticks
- ⊗ fabric paints
- ⊗ glitter and confetti
- ⊗ used greeting cards
- ⊗ beads
- ⊗ modeling clay
- ⊗ paintbrushes and paints
- ⊗ crayons
- ⊗ used magazines and newspapers
- ⊗ hole punches
- ⊗ scissors
- ⊗ stickers of various kinds
- ⊗ index cards
- ⊗ gift wrap and ribbon

Music Bin

Young people often find deep and profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set an appropriate mood for a prayer or activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or CDs in a music bin and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- ⊗ *Fun gathering music that is neither current nor popular with young teens.* Ideas are well-known classics (e.g., *Overture to William Tell*, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, and *1812 Overture*), songs from musical theater productions, children's songs, and Christmas songs for use any time of the year.
- ⊗ *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music, such as the kind that is available in the adult alternative, or New Age, section of music stores.* Labels that specialize in this type of music include Windham Hill and Narada.
- ⊗ *Popular songs with powerful messages.* If you are not well versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- ⊗ *The music of contemporary Christian artists.* Most young teens are familiar with Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, and Steven Curtis Chapman. Also include the work of Catholic musicians, such as David W. Kauffman, Steve Angrisano, Bruce Deaton, Sarah Hart, Jesse Manibusan, and Jessica Alles.

Other Helpful Resources

In addition to the seven books in the HELP series, the following resources can be useful in your ministry with young adolescents. All the books in the following list are published by Saint Mary's Press and can be obtained by calling or writing us at the phone number and address listed in the "Your Comments or Suggestions" section at the end of this introduction.

The Catholic Youth Bible, edited by Brian Singer-Towns (2000). The most youth-friendly Bible for Catholic teens available. The scriptural text is accompanied by hundreds of articles to help young people pray, study, and live the Scriptures.

Faith Works for Junior High: Scripture- and Tradition-Based Sessions for Faith Formation, by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart (1993). A series of twelve active meeting plans on various topics related to the Scriptures and church life.

Guided Meditations for Junior High: Good Judgment, Gifts, Obedience, Inner Blindness, by Jane E. Ayer (1997). Four guided meditations for young teens, available on audiocassette or compact disc. A leader's guide includes the script and programmatic options. Other volumes in this series, called *A Quiet Place Apart*, will also work with young teens.

Looking Past the Sky: Prayers by Young Teens, edited by Marilyn Kielbasa (1999). A collection of 274 prayers by and for young adolescents in grades six to eight.

One-Day Retreats for Junior High Youth, by Geri Braden-Whartenby and Joan Finn Connelly (1997). Six retreats that each fit into a school day or an afternoon or evening program. Each retreat contains a variety of icebreakers, prayers, group exercises, affirmations, and guided meditations.

Prayers with Pizzazz for Junior High Teens, by Judi Lanciotti (1996). A variety of creative prayer experiences that grab young teens' attention. The prayers are useful in many different settings, such as classes, meetings, prayer services, and retreats.

ScriptureWalk Junior High: Bible Themes, by Maryann Hakowski (1999). Eight 90-minute sessions to help bring youth and the Bible together. Each session applies biblical themes to the life issues that concern young teens.

Catechism Connection for Teens collection, by Lisa Calderone-Stewart and Ed Kunzman (1999).

That First Kiss and Other Stories

My Wish List and Other Stories

Better Than Natural and Other Stories

Straight from the Heart and Other Stories

Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories

The five books in this collection contain short, engaging stories for teens on the joys and struggles of adolescent life, each story with a reflection connecting it to a Catholic Christian belief. Each book's faith connections reflect teachings from a different part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Connections to the Discovering Program

The Discovering Program, published by Saint Mary's Press, is a religious education program for young people in grades six to eight. It consists of fourteen six-session

minicourses. Each session is 1 hour long and based on the principles of active learning.

The strategies in the HELP series cover themes that are loosely connected to those explored by the Discovering Program, and can be used as part of a total youth ministry program in which the Discovering curriculum is the central catechetical component. However, no strategy in the series presumes that the participants have taken a particular course in the Discovering Program, or requires that they do so. The appendices at the end of this book list the connections between the HELP strategies and the Discovering courses.

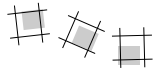
Your Comments or Suggestions

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the strategies in the HELP series. We are also interested in new youth ministry strategies for use with young teens. If you have a comment or suggestion, please write the series editor, Marilyn Kielbasa, at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320; call the editor at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; or e-mail the editor at mkielbasa@smp.org. Your ideas will help improve future editions of these books.

Part A

Strategies for Gathered Families

The following strategies are designed for a gathering of families. Invite the young teens and their families to meet at the same place and time to enjoy the activities together. The strategies are designed for the parents *and* the youth.



Dare to Share

OVERVIEW

This strategy invites the families to play a game that can help them gain knowledge about their family members, and identify events, values, and practices that are special to their family.

Suggested Time

30 to 45 minutes

Group Size

This strategy can be done with two to ten family teams of two to three people each.

Special Considerations

Young people whose family members are not present, or other unattached participants, can be assigned the role of game helper. You will need a game director, a judge, a bell ringer, a timekeeper, and a spotlight holder.

Materials Needed

- ☀ 3-by-5-inch index cards, one for each person
- ☀ pens or pencils
- ☀ newsprint and a marker
- ☀ stick-on name tags, one for each person
- ☀ colored markers
- ☀ a coin

PROCEDURE

- ☀ a lectern or a music stand
- ☀ a handbell
- ☀ a flashlight
- ☀ a stopwatch, or a watch or clock with a second hand
- ☀ strips of colored ribbon, approximately 3-by-5 inches, one for each family

Preparation. Before the meeting make an award for every family by writing, "We dare to share!" on a wide strip of ribbon, about 3-by-5 inches. Place a lectern or a music stand at the front of the room. In front of that arrange two facing rows of three chairs each. And beyond those chairs place a table and chairs facing the front of the room for a judge, a timekeeper, a bell ringer, and a spotlight holder.

Finally, write the following questions on a piece of newsprint and post it where everyone can see it easily:

1. Who is your best friend?
2. What is your favorite food?
3. What is the most fun you have had on a family vacation or outing?
4. What is an important Christmas tradition that your family enjoys?
5. How does your family celebrate birthdays?
6. What is one way your family prays together?
7. If your parents won \$30,000 in a lottery, what would they most likely do with the money?
8. What topic or issue does your family most often argue about?
9. What is the favorite leisure time activity of the teenager or teenagers in your family?
10. What is the favorite leisure time activity of your parent whose birthday is closest to yours?

1. As the participants arrive, invite any unattached teens or extra participants to be game helpers. You will need a game director, a timekeeper, a bell ringer, a judge, and a spotlight holder. Explain their tasks to them, as described below. You may want to recruit another adult to do this briefing because you will need to greet and instruct families as soon as they arrive (see below).

2. Also as people arrive, separate family members and caution them not to talk to one another. Give everyone a 3-by-5-inch index card and a pen or pencil. Invite them to write their name at the top of their card, list the numbers 1 to 10 down the left-hand side, and write the answer to each posted question by its corresponding number.

3. Distribute blank stick-on name tags and colored markers and tell the participants to write the last name of their teen participant in large letters on their name tag and to put it on so that all the other participants can see it easily.

4. While the families are making their name tags, instruct the judge to collect the index cards and stack the cards from each family in a separate pile. (For example, the cards that belong to the Anderson family should be stacked together.) Explain to the judge that his or her role during the game will be to check the responses when a family spokesperson answers the questions.

5. Assemble the large group of families to form an audience for the game. Tell them to sit beyond the judge's table, facing the front of the room. Encourage them to cheer and applaud when correct responses are given and to moan when incorrect responses are given.

Have the game director invite two families to come forward and sit in the two facing rows of chairs, one family on each side. Then tell the game director to flip a coin to determine which family may begin. Have that family choose a spokesperson and invite her or him to come to the lectern or music stand and prepare to answer the posted questions.

Explain to everyone that teenage spokespeople are to answer the questions as they think their parent or parents answered, and adult spokespeople are to answer the questions as they think their child or children answered. For example, when the game director asks Mrs. Anderson, "How did your child answer the question, Who is your best friend?" and Mrs. Anderson gives the answer that is on her child's card, as determined by the judge, she is correct, the bell ringer rings the bell, and the Anderson family gains a point. She may continue answering questions, up to five correct responses. If the answer is incorrect or if she takes longer than 10 seconds to answer, then Mrs. Anderson sits down and the other team's spokesperson comes to the lectern or music stand. The game director resumes the questioning with the question that was missed. Throughout the game the spotlight holder's task is to shine a flashlight on the spokesperson, and the timekeeper's role is to monitor the time and signal when 10 seconds have passed.

After both teams have had a chance to answer five questions, tally their points. If one team has a higher score, urge the audience to cheer the winners, and invite the two teams to rejoin the audience. If the score is tied, have the game director continue with the unused questions on the posted list. If the tie is not broken by the end of the list, thank the families, have them rejoin the audience, and continue the game with new players.

6. After all the families have competed, give a "We dare to share!" award to every family and declare that everyone is a winner when they learn to communicate better and when they dare to share.

7. Invite everyone to stand in a circle and close with the following prayer or one you create:



O God, bless these families who are gathered here before you. All the parents want your protection to cover their children like the wings of a mother hen, shielding them from all harm. All the young people want your love to shine through their parents as a model for Christian living. We ask that you grant this protection and this sign of love. May our lives be graced by your presence. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to love and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ⊙ Instruct the participants to write each answer on a separate large card or piece of poster board instead of writing all their answers on one 3-by-5-inch card. Tell them to hold up the corresponding card after each question that their family spokesperson answers. This eliminates the role of judge and might make the game more interactive.
- ⊙ Instead of using the 3-by-5-inch index cards, have the spokesperson escorted out of the room. Then let the remaining family member or members answer the questions verbally. Bring the spokesperson back into the room to answer the questions as he or she thinks the other people in the family answered them.
- ⊙ Invite the families to brainstorm a list of more questions and have a tournament. You may want to conduct the tournament at another time and finish it with a potluck.

SCRIPTURAL CONNECTIONS

- ⊙ Deut. 4:9–10 (Teach God’s decrees to your children and your children’s children.)
- ⊙ Prov. 23:22–25 (Children should listen to their parents.)
- ⊙ Eph. 6:1–4 (Children must honor their parents, and parents must train their children.)
- ⊙ Col. 3:21 (Parents should not nag, lest their children lose heart.)

NOTES

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.

