

CREATIVE RESOURCES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

**Creative Activities
for Small Youth Groups**

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Introduction

Youth Ministry Today: Its Growth and Development

For the past twenty years, Catholic youth ministry has been in the process of critically re-examining its philosophy, goals, and principles. In part, this re-examination grew out of the perceived and felt needs of young people who will be the adults of the twenty-first century. In the early seventies—before youth ministry, as we know it, existed—those who worked with young people saw a need to experiment with new styles and forms of ministry with young people. Many parishes, schools, and dioceses began to develop youth ministries on the solid foundation of relational ministry and on the unique social and developmental needs of young people. Heretofore they had relied on the unquestioned process of presenting organizational, programmatic approaches such as weekly or biweekly classes, sports programs, or rarely, weekend or overnight retreats.

The new processes and approaches planted and tended during those years produced a renewed ministry with young people based on experience and insight. Leaders in the field of youth ministry discovered that ministry with young people must be a multifaceted, comprehensive, and coordinated effort. They rediscovered the age-old truth of Jesus' ministry: all ministry is rooted in relationships. Through the leaders' outreach and relationship building, young people began to experience the warmth of an accepting community, which is vital for the development of a comprehensive youth ministry. As relationships grew, a sense of belonging and participation also grew. The experience of acceptance, belonging, and participation opened young people so that they were able to reveal the needs and the concerns that preoccupied them. Programs developed around these needs and concerns: service projects, retreats, new forms of catechesis, peer ministry, prayer groups, celebrations of the sacraments. With these rediscovered opportunities for ministry, youth ministers were in a position to help young people grow personally and spiritually and find their place in the faith community as active Catholic Christians with a mission.

As the style of youth ministry changed, the traditional ministry to young people by the community evolved into a fourfold approach. Youth ministry was conceived not only in terms of responding *to* the unique social and developmental needs of young people but also in terms of adults' sharing a common ministry *with* young people, *by*

young people (especially involving their peers), and *for* young people (adults interpreting young people's legitimate concerns and acting as advocates for them). This fourfold understanding—to, with, by, and for—changed the style and broadened the scope of youth ministry.

In 1975 and 1976, hundreds of youth leaders from across the country consulted for fifteen months and concretized the aims and philosophy of youth ministry in a document called *A Vision of Youth Ministry*. It has served to guide the church's mission to young people ever since. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* affirmed the growth that had taken place and challenged the whole church to renew itself.

The document clearly places youth ministry within the framework of the mission and ministry of the church. It defines youth ministry as the “response of the Christian community to the needs of young people, and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community.”¹ This reciprocal relationship helps the community to view youth ministry as part of the entire ministry of the community, not separate from it—a problem often encountered when a ministry with young people is perceived as a club or an organization set apart from the mainstream of church life. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* makes clear that an effective ministry with young people incorporates them into the life of the community, where they can share their gifts and talents with the whole community. If young people are to have positive experiences of church life, they must have opportunities to be involved in the whole life of the community. Such opportunities for this type of interaction are at the heart of youth ministry, not on the periphery. By being involved in the church life with adults, young people gain a view of what it means to be an adult Catholic Christian. This is a special gift of adults to young people.

The categories of youth ministry as outlined in *A Vision of Youth Ministry* closely parallel the fundamental ministries of the church: word, worship and celebrating, creating community, and service and healing.² The seven categories of youth ministry describe the forms that this ministry should take. It is a common framework for a holistic ministry with young people. Briefly, the seven components of youth ministry are as follows:³

Word: proclaiming the Good News that leads young people to faith in Jesus (evangelization) and deepening a young person's faith in Jesus and applying that faith to their everyday life (catechesis)

Worship: celebrating relationships in community and with the Lord through a variety of worship experiences, personal prayer, and spiritual development

Creating community: building relationships with young people and creating a healthy environment for growth, in which young people can experience acceptance, belonging, and participation

Guidance and healing: responding to young people's need for spiritual, moral, and personal counseling; vocational guidance; and reconciliation with self, others (peers and family), and God

Justice and service: educating young people to the demands of justice and the social problems of our world, responding to young people who suffer injustice, and motivating young people for service on behalf of others

Enablement: calling forth adults and young people to become ministers and providing them with the understanding and skills needed for effective ministry

Advocacy: working on behalf of young people, interpreting their concerns and needs, and standing up for them in the Christian, and larger, community

Youth ministry has experienced a renewal within the U.S. Catholic church. A renewed ministry with young people brings a need for new and better resources to assist leaders. Before turning to the resources found in this book, let's examine the place of creative social and learning strategies within youth ministry.

Creative Strategies for Youth Ministry

We have already seen the primacy of relationships in youth ministry. However, as relationships grow and programs are created, strategies are needed to accomplish youth ministry's tasks. The strategies in this book are aids. Their aim is to provide you with a variety of activities you can use in any number of programs. Some of these strategies are primarily suited for one or another component of youth ministry. However, most are adaptable to any number of components. All these strategies foster a particular type of learning—experiential learning. To understand its contribution to your youth ministry, let's examine experiential learning.

Experiential Learning

We have often heard it said that we learn from experience. This is true to an extent. But so much of our own life experience goes by without us ever learning from it. If young people's life experiences are to be sources of learning and growth, then young people must reflect upon and assimilate them. This often goes undone because no one takes time to help them reflect upon those experiences and learn from them. In addition to life experience, there is a second source of experiential learning: structured experiences. Experiences we develop that engage young people in the learning process and enable them to reflect are a rich resource for learning.

The structured experiences found in the Creative Resources series—communication games, learning strategies, simulations, projects, case studies, planning ideas, crowd-breakers, mixers, games, special events, and skits—are potential learning experiences for young people.

Creative Gaming

Creative games can serve many purposes in youth ministry. They can acquaint people with one another, build trust, encourage spontaneity, mix and blend groups, and help people release energy. At the same time, they can be fun and learning experiences. Through creative games we discover an opportunity to play *with* instead of *against* one another, thus allowing us to play as a unit and reach a common goal. This type of play lets us learn from and laugh at our mistakes, instead of hiding them away in embarrassment. Creative games enhance the growth of a group and create a feeling of accomplishment among the participants, while providing an enjoyable experience for them.

Cooperative Versus Competitive Games

For many years, competition-winning has been the name of the game in our society. All our organized sports are competitive, sometimes violently so. We encourage good sportsmanship and working together as a team, but the goal is always “Beat the other team, as badly and as hard as possible.” It sometimes appears that the biggest and the best players actively compete while the meek and the mild people take their places in the stands, cheering for the physical prowess of those who are “better” than they. Competition can foster an “I am a winner” or “I am a loser” self-concept in people.

Many young people suffer from a poor self-concept. “I am too short to play basketball,” “I am too heavy to run track,” or “They only like me because I can make fifteen points a game” are statements we often hear from young people. “Winners” and “losers” alike may be scarred by such stereotyped images of themselves. How many adults do we know who still hold on to their childhood dream of being a pitcher in a World Series game or a quarterback in the Super Bowl? Those dreams will most likely never come true for them because they “just aren’t good enough.” At least that is what they believe after numerous “failures” on the field at the hands of those who are a little faster, can jump a little higher, or are more agile. Just as many adults do, many young people dream of someday “making it” and harbor an image of themselves as inadequate.

There are appropriate times and places for competitive games of basketball or volleyball, but these games may not be suitable for a break at a retreat. They may be inconsistent with the message and the values we are trying to communicate to young people.

Competitive sports can, and often do, alienate some people who might otherwise participate in group activities. Competitive games are difficult for some people and are often segregating. We see boys playing on one field and girls playing on the other. Sexism in recreation can be a divisive factor in the broad set of values we try to communicate.

For the most part, the games in this book are cooperative in character.

Principles for Cooperative Gaming

1. Games are an effective educational tool. The primary purpose of games and play is to have fun. However, we do learn during play. We learn what is and what is not acceptable behavior, for example. When young people take part in a sport, they also watch the spectators. Their observations may tell them that certain language or actions are appropriate or that others are inappropriate and may even warrant penalties. In cooperative sports, young people learn how to work as a unit, how to cooperate with one another to achieve a desired goal.

Creative sports teach us new and exciting things about ourselves and others. We learn the advantages of working together instead of trying always to win. We learn the place of healthy competition by working together. Putting competition in its proper perspective becomes an insightful experience. Cooperative games teach us skills and encourage leadership, and they enable us to grow while learning.

2. Games are an extension of the values we communicate. In cooperative gaming, we remove the element of competition and replace it with the value of working together. If caring and sharing are values we are trying to communicate to young people, then a cooperative game allows those values to be lived out even in play. There is no competing, no trying out for teams, no choosing of captains; no one is left out. No one is more important than anyone else because everyone is a vital part of the unit.

If we are trying to build community with young people but encourage competitive sports during recreation time, we contradict ourselves immediately. Cooperative games are an extension of our values: we respect each person, we work together, we have fun, and no one gets hurt.

3. Cooperative games build community and help us minister to one another. Cooperative games build a sense of community among participants. By working together and tapping one another’s gifts and strengths, people discover new relationships.

Ministry happens during playtime: We encourage one another, work together, laugh, struggle, and ultimately succeed *together*. Often, the people who are ministered to during cooperative sports are those who have been left to sit in the stands before because “they weren’t good enough to play.” The “stars” are also ministered to because they don’t feel the pressure of having to produce “points.” They can play, cooperate, enjoy, be encouraged, and struggle along with the group.

4. Cooperative games encourage leadership. In cooperative play, no one is *appointed* leader because he or she is stronger, bigger, or brighter. Leadership is granted by the group, at the pace of the group, and when the need is recognized by the members. Leadership emerges by consensus, and it often develops nonverbally. Cooperative recreation encourages leadership and allows it to grow and be fostered by the group members. There is perhaps nothing more exciting to

watch than the dynamics of interaction in cooperative games as young people try to conquer the obstacle at hand—and experience delight in their accomplishment. Cooperative play opens up the exciting possibilities of working as a unit, getting along, and complementing one another, as well as having fun.

5. Cooperative gaming allows the development of skills. Many people playing cooperative games have a difficult time until someone says, “I don’t feel we are listening to one another. If we talk one at a time and listen, we will be able to figure this out more quickly.” As the group discovers more effective means of communicating, it develops a sense of problem solving and decision-making, skills that are important to growth.

6. Cooperative games allow everyone to feel a sense of importance and accomplishment. Cooperative games allow everyone to play and work together. People are not left out because they are too short, too fat, too slow, or the “wrong” sex. Everyone is given the opportunity to feel accepted and needed instead of fearing rejection or the pressure of having to prove something to the group. *Everyone* is included in the activity. Everyone is an important part of the group and is needed by all because of the variety of experiences, personal strengths, gifts, and talents each person brings.

Guidelines for Creative Gaming

1. Always encourage and affirm the participants during games.
2. Model the Christian behavior you are expecting or hoping for from the participants.
3. Avoid games that are sexist, that is, games that assume and promote sexual stereotypes or that use sexist language.
4. Play games that challenge participants to grow, but do not choose games that frustrate the players by their difficulty.
5. Be prepared—have all equipment on hand.
6. Play only games that you personally have “field-tested.”
7. Play games that help create a relaxing, comfortable atmosphere; that build community; and that avoid liable risk of bodily harm.
8. Avoid games that misuse things (such as food), waste or harm natural resources, or damage clothing, carpeting, and so on.
9. Clearly explain the object and the rules of a game before beginning (except, of course, in games that require an element of surprise).

Notes

1. United States Catholic Conference (USCC), *A Vision of Youth Ministry* (Washington, DC: USCC, Department of Education, 1976), p. 4.
2. For a contemporary description of the fundamental ministries of the church, see James Dunning, “About Ministry: Sharing Our Gifts,” *PACE* 8 (1977) and *PACE* 9 (1978).
3. USCC, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, p. 7.

PART 1

Learning Activities



Introduction

Although all of life’s experiences can be learning experiences, some experiences or activities set out to teach. The activities in this section do just that, but not in a monotonous, wordy sort of way. These activities set out to teach in an involving, enjoyable, creative way. Some of the activities serve to introduce an idea or to get your group’s creative juices going. They lure the participants into thinking of new options, putting items or letters together in new and creative ways, encouraging new combinations of participants, opening up new discoveries about one another.

These learning activities can be used as icebreakers, reviews, and eye-openers or for closing a meeting. The activities can be bent, stretched, warmed, cooled, recycled, renewed, recast, and replayed. These learning activities are all yours; take them and run.

Where Do I Stand?

This learning strategy works with almost any topic. You will need six large pieces of colored poster board. The colors of the poster board and their positions on the floor should look like this:



Think of a number of hypothetical situations that involve making value choices. For example:

- A baby is born with a serious birth defect that would make him or her unable to live without constant care in an institution. Should the child be allowed to die?
- A woman is a prisoner in a concentration camp. Her husband and children are waiting for her in a nearby neutral country. The only possible way she can be freed from this prison is to become pregnant because pregnant women are automatically released. Should she have sex with another man so that she can become pregnant?

Read aloud a situation. Tell the young people to decide what they think and to stand on one of the colored squares indicating their decision. Explain that the blue square at one end represents total disagreement and the black square at the other represents total agreement. The other colors represent a continuum between these two extremes. Point out that none of the squares stand for a neutral position. After everyone has chosen a place to stand, ask each person to share why she or he feels this way. During the discussion, tell the young people that they may move to a different square. If everyone agrees, the entire group will be standing on one of the squares. This is all right, but it is not your goal. The goal is first of all to allow the young people the opportunity to think through some of their values and to see them in relation to the values of others.

Read aloud another situation and proceed as before.

The A-Team

A-Team stands for “Answer Team.” This problem-solving exercise stimulates discussion. Before you begin, write a number of problems or questions (like those that follow) on slips of paper and place them in a bowl. Then have the participants divide into A-Teams, which should be no larger than three or four.

Have each team draw a question from the bowl and go somewhere to work on a solution or an answer. Allow approximately ten minutes for this. When the teams return, have each team read its problem or question and share its response. The rest of the group can

decide whether they agree with the answer. If there is disagreement, have the group discuss the issue.

1. I don't get it. If Christianity is true, why are there so many religions that call themselves Christian? I mean, what is the difference between Baptists, Catholics, and so on?
2. If you ask me, the Christian religion makes you a doormat, always loving and turning the other cheek.
3. What if I lived like hell for eighty years and then became a Christian on my deathbed? Would Pope John Paul II and I go to the same place?
4. Your father says this to you: “Your mother and I do not believe in all this Jesus stuff, and we think you spend too much time in church. So we want you to stay away from church for a while.”
5. If God is a god, then why can't we see him or her or it? Why don't you prove that God exists? Go ahead . . . prove it to me.
6. The Bible has some nice little stories in it, but everyone knows it is full of contradictions, errors, and myths. How can you believe it?
7. I know a bunch of people that go to your church, and they are supposed to be Christians. But I also know what they do during the week and at parties that I attend. They are phonies. If Christianity is so great, why are there so many phonies?
8. My little brother died of leukemia, and I prayed like crazy. Don't tell me there is a God who loves us. Why didn't God help my brother?
9. Look, I know I am overweight, and even though it hurts me to say it, I'm ugly. I started coming to your church because I thought the kids in your youth group would treat me differently than the kids do at school. Wrong! They ignore me and make fun of me just like everyone else.
10. My parents make me go to church. I like the youth program, but the Mass is a drag. Our priest's homilies are irrelevant and boring, and Mass doesn't relate to me at all.
11. I have always been told that kids who smoke grass and drink really don't enjoy it. I haven't done any of those things partly because I believed that and partly because I didn't think it was a Christian thing to do. At least, I thought that until a few weeks ago. I tried pot and drinking, and it was great. I never had so much fun in my life. How can something so good be bad? Did the people who told me these things were bad lie?

Dear Abby

This activity is a simple yet effective way to give young people the opportunity to minister to one another. It can also provide you with insight into the concerns and problems of individuals in your group.

Give each person paper and a pencil. Instruct the young people to write a “Dear Abby” letter. Direct them to think of an unresolved problem and explain it in letter form to a newspaper columnist like

Abby. Ask them to sign the letter “Confused,” “Frustrated,” or any other pseudonym.

After everyone has finished, collect the papers and redistribute them so that everyone has someone else’s letter. Have each person become Abby and write a helpful answer on the same sheet of paper. Allow plenty of time for this. When the answers are completed, collect the papers once again and read them to the group. Discuss each letter and response and ask the group whether the advice given was helpful. Also ask the group for other solutions to the problems. Young people are often able to give sincere, sensible, and practical help to one another.

Ad Values

Give each person in the group a selection of magazines with plenty of advertisements in them and a list of values like the one below. Have the young people look through the magazines and match the ads with the values on their list. When they see an ad that appeals to a certain value, have them make a mark beside that value. Here is a sample list:

- wealth, luxury, greed
- security (having no worries)
- sexual or physical attractiveness
- intelligence
- conformity (joining the crowd)
- freedom (doing what you want—no responsibility)
- justice, human rights (showing concern for others)
- power, strength
- responsibility
- ego, pride
- status (being looked up to)
- escape
- humility, self-sacrifice
- self-control
- ease, comfort

After everyone has finished, discuss the results. This exercise can sensitize young people to ads. What conclusions can they make about the values that most advertisements present or appeal to? Do these values bring out the best or the worst in people? Do many ads appeal to Christian values?

The Gossip Game

The Scriptures have a great deal to say about the consequences of idle gossip. The following game demonstrates the consequences of spreading rumors.

Three young people leave the room while a fourth person copies (as best as she or he can) onto poster board a picture that she or he is

shown. One of the three persons outside comes in and draws the same drawing, using the first person’s drawing as the guide, rather than the original. The next person comes in and draws her or his drawing from the second person’s, and so on.

The last person’s drawing is then compared with the original, which, of course, will hardly resemble the original. Everyone along the line changes the drawing a little, usually omitting or adding what she or he considers important. This game is entertaining as well as revealing and can be followed with a discussion about gossip and communication.

Madison Avenue

To combine fun with learning, get a video camera with sound that can photograph indoors. Divide your group into teams and have them develop a sixty-second commercial to sell Christianity to the world. Make certain that everyone is involved. You might want to encourage them to do a takeoff on a well-known TV commercial, adapting it to Christianity. Within a week or two, view the commercials. The young people will love seeing themselves on film. Then discuss the feasibility of presenting an accurate picture of Christianity in sixty seconds.

A Penny for Your Thoughts

This effective activity gets young people into discussions. Ask each of them to bring twenty pennies and a nickel to the next discussion (topical or general sharing of ideas). Have them sit in a circle around a basket or a bowl. Pose a question and ask each person in the circle to toss in a penny for his or her thoughts on the subject and to share one sentence on it with the group. Explain that if someone wants to interject more than just a sentence, he or she is really putting in his or her two-cents-worth and must put in two cents. Also tell them that if a person cannot think of anything to say, he or she may “four-feit” by throwing in a nickel and taking a penny. Only one four-feit per person is allowed.

When the discussion is over, the money collected can go to a worthy cause.

Paraphrasing the Love Chapter

This activity gives young people the opportunity to put some of their own thoughts into the Christian Testament’s chapter on love—1 Corinthians, chapter 13. By doing an exercise such as this with this or any portion of the Scriptures, young people are forced to think through the meaning and application of the passage. Distribute copies of a passage such as the following. Omit key words or phrases but keep the basic idea. Ask the young people to fill in the blanks

with whatever they think fits best. Afterward, compare their versions with the original message. Let each person read her or his version to the entire group.

Fill in the blanks as you see fit in this passage from 1 Corinthians, chapter 13.

If I have all the ability to talk about _____, but have no love, then I am nothing but a big mouth. If I have all the power to _____, but have no love, then my life is a waste of time. If I understand everything about _____, but have no love, then I might as well sit in a gutter. If I give away everything that I have, but have no love, then _____. Love is patient, love is kind, love is _____. Love never _____.

The Poor Person's Holy Land Tour

Because this activity requires movement from location to location, it is great for a small youth group. Announce that you are going to take the group on a tour of the Holy Land and then escort them to places that resemble biblical locations (select places that are within walking or driving distance). For example, take them to the tallest building in town and lead a Bible study there about Satan tempting Jesus to jump from the high mountain. The options are endless: a mountainside for the Sermon on the Mount, a garden for the Garden of Gethsemane, an upstairs room for the Last Supper, an old boiler room for the story of the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, a country road for the story of Paul's experience on the road to Damascus. Using nature as a visual aid is worth a thousand words.

This tour does not have to be done in one day. Remember that you are not limited to meet in one particular place. Anytime you are preparing a lesson from the Scriptures, consider taking the group to a location that can enhance the study.

For example, if you are studying one of Paul's letters from prison, arrange to have your group locked in a jail cell for the study or arrange a guided tour of a jail, a prison, or a juvenile detention facility. It is a sobering experience for most young people, and the scriptural passages suddenly spring to life.

A Progressive Prayer Service

Here is an interesting way to involve young people in prayer. It can be done in a church, in a home, or on a retreat. The possibilities of this activity are unlimited. It works just like a progressive dinner.

A prayer service has a variety of elements. By participating in each element separately and in a different location, you provide a

good opportunity to teach young people what worship is. Acts 2:42 and Col. 3:16 provide a good scriptural base. Here is one way to do it.

1. *Community:* Begin with some kind of group interaction or sharing that provides a chance for the young people to get to know one another better. Create a celebrative but not rowdy mood.

2. *Spiritual songs:* At the next location, have someone lead the group in a variety of well-known hymns.

3. *Prayer:* Move to a location that provides a good atmosphere for prayer. If weather permits, a garden would be nice, as Jesus chose a garden for prayer. Have the young people offer prayer requests and thanksgivings.

4. *Scriptural reading:* At the next location, have several young people read a lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Testament. Use a good translation, such as the New American Bible or the New Jerusalem Bible.

5. *Teaching:* The next stop can be for the homily. If you prefer, substitute a dialog homily or a film.

Other ingredients, such as the offering, can be incorporated into these stops or additional stops could be added. Design your own progressive paralyturgy, and your group will never forget it.

Sharing Cubes

Make a pair of large dice out of foam rubber or cardboard. On each side of each cube, write an instruction for sharing. Here are some samples:

- Describe your week.
- Share a frustration.
- Share a prayer request.
- Compliment someone.

Have each person roll a die on the floor. Then have him or her share his or her idea briefly, according to the instruction that turns up. If you have more than eight to ten people in your group, break into smaller groups and give each group one of the dice.

Thanksgiving Exchange

This is a good discussion starter for Thanksgiving or for any time when you want to teach a lesson about gratitude. This exercise helps young people realize that they often take for granted many things for which they should be thankful. It works best with a group whose members know one another fairly well. Begin by having each person share one or two things for which she or he is thankful.

Then have each person write her or his name on the top of a sheet of paper. Collect the sheets and redistribute them so that everyone has a sheet with someone else's name on it. Now have each person write on that sheet what she or he would be thankful for if she or he were the person whose name is on that sheet. The player can list as many things as she or he wants.

Following this, pass the sheets back to the person whose name is on the sheet and discuss the following questions:

- What things are written on your sheet that you have not thanked God for lately?
- What things are written on your sheet that you had not ever thought about thanking God for?
- Is anything written on your sheet that you disagree with or that you do not think you should be thankful for?

Theological Fictionary

If the young people in your group sometimes get stumped trying to figure out the meanings of big theological words, here is a game that will whittle those words down to size.

Make a list of words often used or heard in or around church, such as *liturgy*, *Eucharist*, *reconciliation*, and *spirituality*. Write the definition of each on an index card. Take one word at a time and have each person come up with a definition for that word and write it on an index card. If a person is not sure, ask him or her to make up a definition that sounds good. Collect the cards and mix in the correct definition that you wrote out. Read aloud the cards. The object is to guess the correct definition. Announce the scoring as follows:

- five points for a correct definition
- five points for getting agreement on a “phony” definition

As the game progresses, rotate so that each person has a chance to be the first guesser, thus improving the chance that someone will go along with a given definition. The person with the most points is the winner of the game. You will be surprised at the ingenuity of the players in coming up with wild, new theological definitions.

Shopping Spree

For a creative look at money and how people spend it, try this simple simulation with your group. Buy or make several million dollars in play money. Then divide it into random amounts (from \$3,000 to \$450,000). Place each stack of money in a plain envelope. Pass out the envelopes to your group.

Set up a table or a bulletin board with a wide assortment of full-page advertisements for cars, mansions, computers, gifts, vacations, food, savings accounts, and Christian relief efforts. Put a price tag on each. Give the young people order blanks to buy any items they wish, as long as they can pay for it themselves or can pool their play money to buy it. Give the young people ten minutes to shop and five minutes to fill in their order blanks.

Gather and review all the order blanks. You might list on a chalkboard everything that was ordered. Discuss the values expressed, the participants' feelings about the unequal distribution of the cash and their responsibility to care for others.

American Bandstand

For an effective program about rock music, conduct an American Bandstand activity. Bring in a selection of popular rock records and have the young people vote for the ones they like best, according to certain criteria. This activity can help young people be more sensitive to what they hear. You might find it worthwhile to copy the lyrics so that your group will be able to follow along while listening. Before the young people rate the songs, discuss each of the following three criteria so that they know what each one means:

1. *Lyrics*: What is the message of the song? Does it support or contradict Christian values and the Word of God?
2. *The artist*: What is he or she like as a person? Is the artist a good role model for you? Does he or she avoid behavior that contradicts Christian values?
3. *Overall effect of the song*: Does this song make you feel more positive or more negative about your faith or about life? Does it strengthen you as a Christian, weaken you, or have no effect on you either way?

After the participants have rated all the songs, take your results and come up with your own youth group's Top 10 or Top 5.

Unity

This exercise can help your group understand the concept of unity. Begin by reading Eph. 4:1–16. Discuss with the group members what they think unity means for us today.

Then pass out enough Tinker Toys so that every member of the group has plenty to work with. Ask each person to take his or her Tinker Toys to a place where he or she can work alone to construct something that represents him or her. After they have done this, have everyone return and describe their creation to the rest of the group, explaining the symbolism of their construction, if it is not evident.

Next have the young people pair off. Instruct each pair to try to connect its two Tinker Toy creations into one. After each pair has joined objects, have the pairs get together with other pairs, and continue to join all the objects together until finally they have one big creation. Further discussion may develop. You might want to keep the big Tinker Toy creation on display for a period of time as a reminder to the group of their unity in Christ.

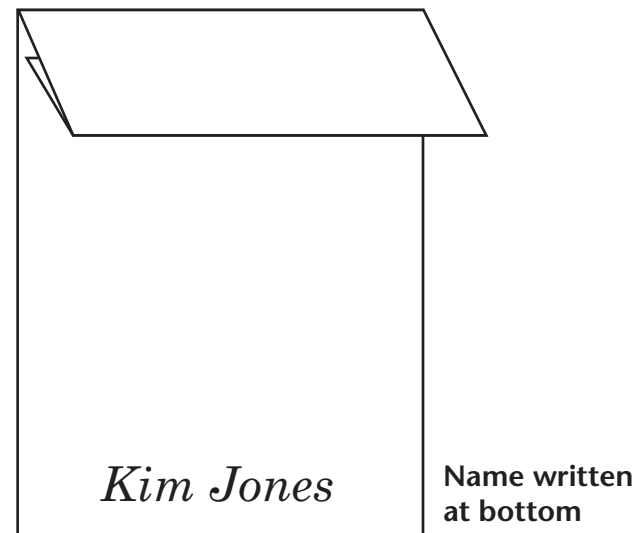
What Others Think of Me

This community-building exercise allows young people to affirm one another and to provide one another with constructive advice. This activity should be used with young people who know one another quite well.

Give each person a slip of paper, approximately three-by-eight inches. Have the young people write their name at the bottom and a

one-word self-description at the top. Then have them fold the paper down from the top twice. The paper should look like this:

Top folded down twice
to conceal the word
written there



Have the young people exchange their papers twice so that no one knows for sure who has whose paper. Direct each person to leave the paper folded and write immediately below the edge of the fold a one-word description of the person named at the bottom. Urge the young people to be honest, constructive, and helpful. (Tell them that if they do not know the person, they can leave the paper blank.) After they have written on the paper, have them fold it to conceal the word they wrote and exchange the papers again. Repeat the process until the papers are full of one-word descriptions of the person named at the bottom.

Finally, tell the group that when the papers are completed, they are to be returned to the person whose name is at the bottom. Give the young people a few minutes to look their papers over and to compare their self-image with how others think of them. Discussion can follow, with young people sharing their feelings about the exercise and what their response to it will be.