

# RETREAT GUIDE

## Planning for success: month-by-month guide

In any endeavor of life, failure to plan is planning to fail. This is especially true when it comes to a group retreat. The timeline for retreat promotion and registration may be several months. Below is a sample timeline:

**Four months:** Church establishes a "Camp Coordinator." The coordinator will want to ask for volunteers to be responsible for the areas of finances, registration, promotion, program, site selection, food, etc. There is truth to the sentence: Many hands make light work. Leaders need to remember when asking people to serve that the benefit to serving is the personal relationships that develop within the church.

**Three months:** Retreat centers website such as Tall Oaks has a promotional kit on line for their groups to use for newsletter articles and bulletin inserts. Coordinator needs to publish dates early so families can schedule their vacations around the retreat. The youth coordinator needs to host a meeting with parents to provide financial



cial deadlines and early bird discounts, camp schedule, travel details, etc. and provide time for parents to ask questions. A youth coordinator needs to be sure that financial guidelines are clear and offer incentives to register early. Leaders need to promote retreats on social media such as facebook and twitter. Promotion needs to be unpredictable and colorful!

**Two months:** On a Sunday morning or in Sunday school class, have past attendees share their personal testimonies concerning retreat experience from previous year. This will increase the possibility of donations of scholarship money. Pictures are worth a million words. The promotion leader may ask past attendees to email pictures of the previous retreat or camp to the coordinator to organize a power point slide presentation for viewing before, during or after the service. The coordinator needs to make a special effort to personally invite students or adults. This can make all the

difference in their decision to come.

**One month:** The registration leader may organize a "Retreat/Camp Sunday" including a church member who is a notary on hand to finalize registrations. The leader may also organize a pancake breakfast or a baked potato luncheon on that day to provide awareness for others to pray for the students who are to attend camp.

**One Week After:** Ask students to share about their experience at camp. Fellow members and parents will be much more willing the following year to support you in your efforts when seeing students' lives changed and enthusiasm!



**COURTNEY LORENZ**  
Director of Marketing and Media Development, Midwest Christian Retreats

### viewpoint

#### Targeting the "Media" Generation

When asked what do I do in Midwest Christian Retreats, I respond with "I am in media development". The question that follows 99.9 percent of the time is "What is media development?" To me, that should't even be a question. But I have grown up in a social media world and most of the time I forget that social media isn't part of everyone's vocabulary.

Social media has grown rapidly in the past few years. I can't remember a time when I wasn't on a computer of some sort. And now, we have so many options to tap into the social media world. It is hard (for me) to believe that there is still a percent of people who don't even know what social media is.

With social media growing, many event planners have been taking advantage of what it has to offer their target audiences. Especially when it comes to targeting the younger generation. Social media is a great way to connect on their level and make it a

■ Please see SOCIAL MEDIA next page

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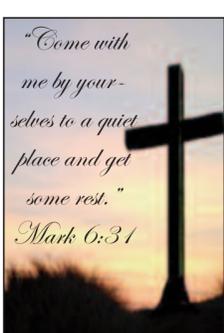
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## THINGS TOO HECTIC? RETREAT!

Today so many of us live our lives at a frantic pace in multiple arenas. We scramble from one responsibility to the other, worried, worn and weakened by the demands of daily living. In the midst of our earthly busyness and struggle, we yearn for the quiet in

the eye of the storm.

"Come to me all you who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest." Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28 are an invitation we long to answer and yet the demands of daily living do not make it easy. With a



thousand voices competing for our attention, we as Christians know we need the calming influence of the Prince of Peace. Yet it can be challenging to create moments when we can focus solely on Christ and center ourselves in Him.

One of the most effective methods of centering and re-focusing is the retreat experience. While there are a

variety of retreat styles, each is an intentionally carved-out time for the soul with its Creator. There are individual retreats for those seeking guidance or healing, rest or renewal. There are group retreats to learn, reflect, plan, or strengthen relationships. Christian retreats, however designed, have at their core the opportunity to

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## Retreats effective reaching teens with Gospel

by **Maddie Quick**

Sports teams, homework, piano lessons, chores, and tests... The list of pressures that teens face seems to grow longer by the day, while the fillers of "down time," like video games and media, keep most teens plugged in constantly! It is hard to find a student who knows how to slow down and rest. Youth retreats are crucial events for a pastor or ministry leader to plan, because they force students to stop, unplug from technology and their active lives, and rest. A weekend away gives students important time to step away from their everyday demands, and focus on Christ. A great retreat center has activities and amenities that draw students in and encourage them to sign up, but the real heart of a youth retreat comes during wor-

ship sessions, small-group time, Bible studies and one-on-one conversations that a weekend away calls for. Seasonal retreats bring about high points in a student's busy schedule. Retreating and refocusing, students tune into the word of God in a way that is hard for them to do when surrounded by so many daily distractions. It is amazing how much a student can soak in during just one weekend away from the norm.

Believe it or not, planning a youth retreat is simple and fun! Retreat coordinators make it their goal to handle the details, while the youth pastors and ministry sponsors get quality time with the students. One of the best parts of my job as a Retreat Coordinator is getting to serve and minister to the group leaders and pastors through helping them plan their youth retreat from the first phone call until their departure home.

God uses youth retreats in a big way and these opportunities are a great outreach tool. Students who may be too scared to step through the doors of a church can dive into a youth group for the first time while playing laser tag with friends from back home. The benefits go on and on! I would recommend all youth pastors plan and participate in a yearly or seasonal youth retreat, regardless of how many students are in their youth group. It is amazing to see all that God can do in a weekend!

Maddie Quick is Guest Services Specialist at Sky Ranch. maddieq@skyranch.org

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**SOCIAL MEDIA**  
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more personal interaction.

As an event planner, there are a few things to remember when using social media as a marketing tool.

Seek out your target audience. You have to go to them. Social media is a great tool to find new and existing audiences. Today, the younger generation doesn't tend to seek out opportunities for retreats. If you seek them out and build a relationship with them, they are more likely to respond. In return, they may even invite their friends to the event as well.

Social media can keep your event alive even after it is over. You can use a blog to post a wrap up of all the key highlights of your event. You can even add links to the presentations or downloadable documents. On your social media sites like Facebook, you can post photos from your event. Social media allows you to create a place for people to discuss what went on at the event with others who attended.

Make sure you listen to what people are saying about your event. You want to keep track of what people liked and what people didn't like. That way, as you are planning your next event, you know what to change.

Another great tool with social media is online surveys. Facebook has a place for polls. These are easy and fun ways to get quick responses or feedback from the people who attended your event. Be prepared for negative comments. People will always have opinions about your event. Make sure you respond to their concerns. You will also get a lot of positive feedback. You can use the positive feedback as a way to promote your next event.

Excerpt from Courtney Lorenz's Blog at www.midwestchristianretreats.org.

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## Planning a men's retreat

by **Rev. Jacob Hove**

Planning a men's retreat can seem like a daunting task, especially if it's your first time. I've found, however, that if you work with other men, and try not to be too ambitious, you can create something quite meaningful. When planning the beginning of your retreat, remember that it's an important time because it sets the tone.

Throughout the weekend, a nice balance between small- and full-group activities is essential. It can be helpful to have a few meetings of the same small group throughout the weekend so that men can build some closer relationships. In large groups, storytelling, singing, and chanting can be very pro-

found if safety is established and guys can let go and get into it. Campfires are a good story-telling with a meaningful story who can lead a discussion) or you run the risk of extroverts dominating in ways that are unproductive.

Other activities you might consider for the retreat include action-oriented ones such as hiking and playing team sports. Following these, you might want to discuss the issue of competition among men. Quieter workshops might include journaling, goal-setting, or discussions related to being a father, husband or son. Retreats are also good times to reflect on the men's programming at your church, or to plan a men-oriented

worship service at your congregation.

I always prefer to have a cook who is not participating in the program so all of the participants can concentrate on the workshops and activities. Then again, cooking together can also be good programming as long as it doesn't take the whole time or adversely affect the group unity by continually pulling some guys away. I prefer to find a retreat center or camp with nice indoor space as well as a good outdoor environment.

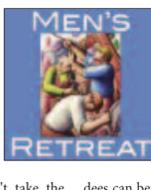
If you have guys younger than 30, it's important to be very intentional about making sure they feel included. It's common for older, more experienced participants to steer the pro-

grams or discussions toward mid-life issues; just remember that younger men have different struggles, and they're probably looking to older men for guidance and wisdom. Share your wisdom!

Father/son attendees can be very powerful, unless they start to dominate with their fierce, unexamined issues and turn the retreat into a therapy group. Young sons can be both very welcome and a distraction, depending on many factors, so they are really a wild card.

Leave some time at the end of the retreat to evaluate the whole thing and set in motion a planning team for the next one. Don't be discouraged if only a few come to the first one; some guys need to hear good reports before they'll take the step of committing a whole weekend. So if you've had a good experience, sing it from the mountaintop when you get back to your congregation.

Reprinted from REACH: Religious Education Action Clearing House.



**RETREAT**  
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focus our attention on God and rest in Him.

In retreat, we fast from the pressures and noise of everyday life. We become aware of the peace and beauty of nature around us. We are freed from the superficial. Released from our everyday to-do lists we can simply be and experience the reality of God's love in "the deep hush of the whole soul". In stillness apart from the storms of life, we are renewed in spirit. Our minds are opened to new understandings. Our souls are refreshed and refilled for the journey yet ahead.

In a military context, retreat is an acknowledgement of defeat, a turning back before the enemy and losing ground. In a spiritual context, a retreat is a time of pushing the "pause" button of life in order to regroup and allow God to renew us so that we may continue on in victory.

What did Jesus do in preparation for his earthly ministry? Retreat. (Matthew 4)

What did Jesus do when the demands on Him became a strain? Retreat. (Matthew 14)

What did He advise his disciples to do when stressed out in ministry? Retreat. (Mark 6)

What did He do the night before his

arrest and crucifixion? Retreat. (Matthew 26)

If you or your church group want to develop strong Christian relationships, to grow spiritually as disciples, to seek God's will for your life or your church -- or simply to rest and meditate in His presence -- there is no better way than to retreat!

And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile." (Mark 6:31)

Brenda O'Dell is director at Lake Doniphan Conference & Retreat Center. Email: lakedoniphan@yahoo.com

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