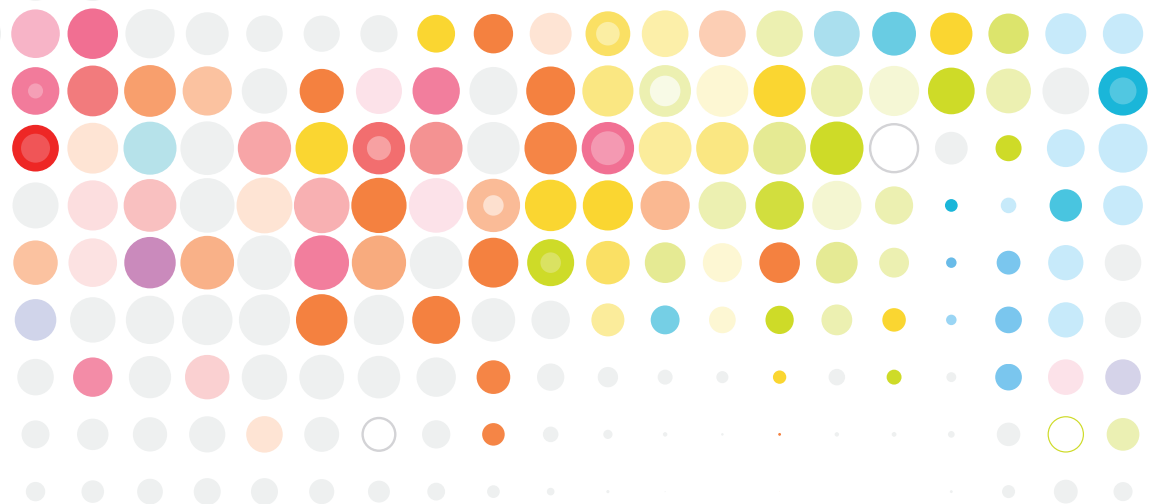


YOUTH MINISTRY

Games & Icebreakers





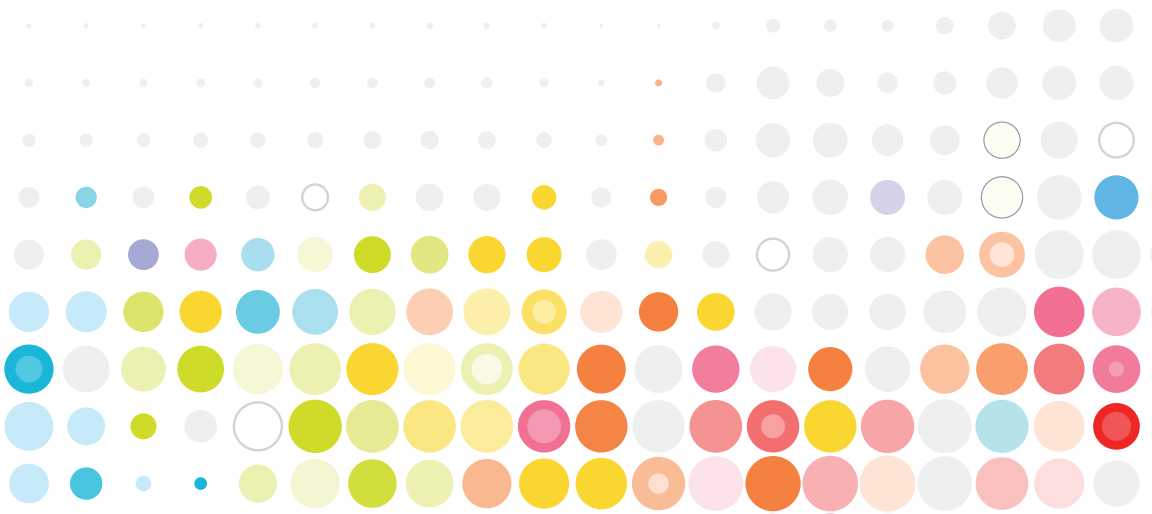
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Contents

INTRODUCTION

ACTIVITIES

- 7 Bucket List Event
- 9 Build Your Own City
- 11 Partner Drawing
- 12 Advent Peace Flags
- 14 It's All About Me
- 15 Catch the Coins
- 16 Make Your Own Animal
- 17 Superhero
- 18 Jell-O Sculpting
- 19 Improv Case Studies
- 20 "Because..."
- 21 Tic-Tac-Gross
- 22 Paper Airplane
- 23 Hide & Search
- 25 Backward
- 26 Car & Driver
- 28 Will It Popsicle?
- 30 Sit Down If...

QUESTIONS, QUIZZES, AND DISCUSSIONS

- 32 Before & After Quiz
- 35 My Favorite Way We Celebrate
- 36 Music Video

37	20 Questions (Zoom Edition)
38	Virtual Time Capsule
39	Transformers
40	Pick Your Dream Team
41	Filling Questions
42	Viral Video
43	Seeing the World as Jesus Does
44	"I Have Been Given"
45	Opposite Day
46	Thankful Bible Search
47	"You Ate What?" Thanksgiving Quiz
48	Give It Away
50	One Single Doughnut Hunger Exploration
51	Face in the Mirror
53	15 Killer Icebreaker Questions for Sunday School
55	Christmas Quiz

GAMES

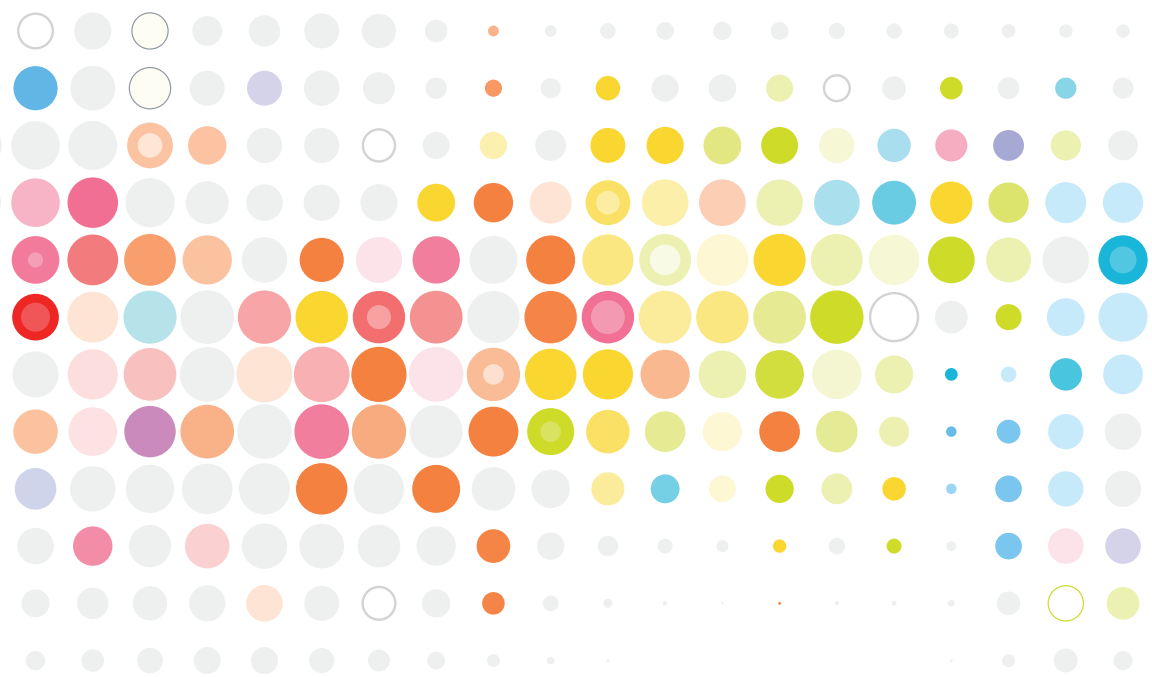
59	Zoom Jenga
60	Scatter Ball
63	Candy Crush Live
64	Whisper Challenge
65	"Who Am I?"
66	Minefield (A Game About Doubts)
69	Steal the Turkey Leg
70	The Imitation Game
72	Red & Black Team-Building Game
75	Ultimate Ninja
77	Hoarding Team-Building Game
80	Crowd Skee-Ball
82	Full-Contact Christmas Musical Chairs
84	Crowd Charades

Introduction

Thank you for downloading this eBook of *51 Amazing Youth Ministry Games and Icebreakers*. This resource is a compilation—the activities were submitted by youth ministry veterans as part of other resources available from Young People’s Ministries and Discipleship Ministries. Some activities may seem familiar with a twist, and some may be completely new to you. Enjoy finding new favorites for your youth ministry!

Young People’s Ministries exists to support and challenge you as a ministry leader in your discipleship efforts. Helping to form disciples must be foundational to the ministry with young people that you lead, and we are sure that process can be fun and meaningful with tools like this one. An evolving collection of resources, articles, podcasts, and more items that will help you form world-transforming disciples of Jesus is available at:
<http://umcyoungpeople.org>.

Young People’s Ministries is part of Discipleship Ministries, which challenges and supports leaders for every generation of the church for more effective discipleship. We encourage you to visit <http://umcdiscipleship.org> for a variety of worship planning resources, practical guides on intentional discipleship, and materials cultivated from a wide variety of contexts to come alongside you as a church leader in support of your efforts.



Activities



01

Bucket List Event

Cindy Klick

Each of us—youth or adult—has a secret list of “want-to-dos.” Perhaps they remain undone because we struggle to fit them into a packed school-year calendar, or we are waiting to enjoy them even more with some of our best buddies! Enter Bucket List Week during any extended school break.

Build anticipation by placing a bucket, pens, and paper in a prominent place in your youth ministry space a month in advance of making any decisions. Consider it a suggestion box, where youth can write down their dream activities. Suggestions get taken as long as the bucket is available. We have done this several times in our youth ministry, and we always get creative suggestions.

One of the most creative “bucket-list items” we recently received was “to play Rock, Paper, Scissors with a real rock, paper, and scissors!” We’re going to do it—why not? When you’ve received the ideas, include students in the final decision-making process about which activities to select. Perhaps your youth leadership team or other interested teens can meet with staff and volunteers to determine priorities and set a schedule for the activities chosen. Some activities will obviously take more planning than others. Consider transportation availability, cost of each activity, variety of offerings, adult supervision, space for students to invite friends, and the opportunity to sneak in a little Christian education amidst abundant fellowship! Figure out how many bucket list activities you can fit into one week and go for it!

Our first (in what is becoming an annual program) Bucket List Week was a “Happy New Year” event that included visits to cookie and Boba shops; a post-holiday movie and white elephant gift exchange; an art museum visit; dining out for lunch and dinner; assembling and delivering care packages for senior citizens in the congregation and shelter pets at the Humane Society; ceramics painting; a leadership workshop; doing an escape room; fort-building with cardboard and duct tape; Nailed It-style baking challenges; and several favorite youth-group games at church (outside as weather permits). Our list of suggestions was long, and we couldn’t fit them all into one week. We already have a foundation for our next Bucket List Week or for standalone activities year-round. It’s obvious our students love baking, drama, movies, shopping, sports, puzzles, games, and surprises.

Doing this BUCKET LIST activity with your group will help give you a pulse on the interests of your students and what they consider fun and meaningful. Let the adventures begin!

02

Build Your Own City

Alejandra Salemi

For this icebreaker, we will be helping the students recognize the importance of belonging and community. It is often much easier to build spaces that cater to the masses or that allow for only some people to be comfortable, while others are lacking. In this activity, the youth will be expected to take all of the group's needs into consideration and build a community that is good for all of its members. This can be an interesting way to explore how the Trinity is the perfect example of what beloved community looks like.

SET UP:

Split the youth group into smaller teams of 3–5 people. This will work best if you make the teams as diverse as possible and split up any youth who always like to work together or who are really good friends. Encourage them to try this activity without their friend, then they can return and discuss what they did afterward. You will also need a couple of cans of Play-Doh, or you can use any material that allows the youth to “build” a city (such as Legos, building blocks, figurines, and so on).

INSTRUCTIONS:

Tell the youth that they have been hired by the city to help plan and build a new community. They have an unlimited budget and will be able to construct the new community however they like. However, they are allowed to build only (x) number of buildings (one less than the number of students in the team; if it is a team of five, the team

can choose four buildings). The teams need to make sure there is something everyone likes in this new community so that everyone feels that they belong, and their needs are being met. Take the next ten minutes to build the new communities; share the results afterward.

If you are meeting online, invite students to build with whatever they have or can draw on a piece of paper. They can still collaborate on those structures in a breakout group or through group text/chat.

Once students have finished, ask them to share their communities and the reasoning behind them. If you want to go further, ask them how the community might protect against different forms of injustice or be open to them because of the decisions they made.

03 Partner Drawing

Kaye Wolfinger

Some activities just won't work in virtual meeting spaces, but this one is as good online as it is in person. With a few tweaks, you can make your next videoconference more engaging as students experience this fun activity.

IN-PERSON:

- Have students pair up, and sit back-to-back, looking in two different directions.
- One person will have a writing utensil and a piece of paper while the other will have a simple drawing. (It is fun for everyone to have the same drawing.)
- Give everyone a set amount of time to describe the picture to their partner.
- When time is up, everyone can share, then trade places so everyone gets to draw.

ONLINE:

- Email or text a drawing to one student and have that person describe the drawing to the whole group.
- If you are using a platform that does breakout rooms (like Zoom), you can automatically split students into pairs and have one person visit a link to a drawing you put in the chat function, then describe the drawing.
- Bring students back together if they are in breakout rooms and share the results of the drawings!

04

Advent Peace Flags

Jay Campbell

The first Sunday of Advent focuses on peace. For this activity, youth will be invited to make an individual flag and/or contribute to a group peace flag. You may give youth individual pieces of paper or construction paper, or you may use a large piece of butcher paper for the whole group.

If you'd like a whole lesson that includes this activity, check it out at www.UMCyoungpeople.org/lead/worship-series/are-we-there-yet-peace.

Take a moment to ask students what “peace” means in their world. What would peace look like at school, online, at home, or in other places?

Tell students that they are going to create a prayer for peace. Invite them to write and/or draw their prayers for peace on a piece of paper. These can be prayers for peace in their homes, in their communities, in their online worlds (we know social media is seldom a peaceful place), and in and around the world. They may write or draw prayers for more peace in our schools, neighborhoods, and local and federal governments to create policies built on peace.

If you have chosen to do a group flag, attach all the peace prayers together to create your group flag and hang it up in your small-group space as you discuss.

Invite youth to talk about what they wrote and drew.

(CONTINUED)

Close your time in group prayer, asking for prayer requests and also asking where youth would like to pray for more peace in our world.

You can find information about The Peace Flag Project at <http://thepeaceflagproject.org/workshops/how-to-make-peace-flags>.

05

It's All About Me

Jeremy Steele

It's not all about you, but for a second it is going to be. We need to get to know one another, so we are going to start by unloading some of the interesting and not-so-interesting details of who we are.

Give each person in the group four notecards or pieces of paper and ask them to write down the answers to the questions below. After they have finished writing, they hand the cards to the group leader who shuffles them and reads the answers. The group tries to guess which student the cards describe.

THE QUESTIONS:

- What is something that no one in the group knows about you?
- What is the most disgusting thing you have ever eaten?
- What is the longest you have ever been awake?
- Why did you come to this retreat/meeting/etc.?

06

Catch the Coins

Dave MaGee

Have fun using coins to play this hilarious game where students get to test their speed and dexterity as coins fly through the air. You can use this with any gathering, but it's a great introduction for a lesson about the parable of the lost coin.

Give each student one penny. Have them lift their arms up, bending their elbows so that their forearms are horizontal, and their hand is touching their shoulder. Ask them to make sure their palms are facing up. Now place the penny on top of their elbows, so the penny is facing the ceiling. Students are then going to quickly snap their arm downward, trying to catch the penny before it hits the ground. Students can try to do this as many tries as it takes.

If any students can do it easily, give them a second penny, have them stack the coins, and try again. If they keep succeeding, keep giving them more pennies to see how many they can catch.

07

Make Your Own Animal

Dave MaGee

Animals are fun all on their own, but this icebreaker takes that to a whole new level.

SUPPLIES:

- Old magazines with animal pictures (like *National Geographic*, *National Wildlife*, etc.)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Plain white paper

Start by giving each student a blank piece of paper and telling them that they are going to create a new animal. They may go through all the magazines looking for animal pictures and finding pieces they want. Then, they cut out parts of the animals they can use and tape together their new animals on the blank pages. After they have created their animals, they need to name them. For example, someone might create a duckraffe (a giraffe with a duck head).

When they have finished, ask them to share the animals, the names, and something they like about their creations. If you don't have enough time to get the magazines, let the students draw their animal creations on the paper or a whiteboard.

08

Superhero

Betsy Marvin

There's nothing quite like superpowers to get the conversation going. Take a moment ahead of time and write questions on a board or print them on a sheet of paper. Instruct the students that they will be answering the questions and designing their own superhero logo. Give them a pool of shared art supplies and blank paper to get started on their logo. After five minutes, go around the room and ask students to share their logo and answers to the questions.

THE QUESTIONS:

- What typical superpower would you most like to have?
- What typical superpower would you least like to have?
- What superpower have you never heard a fictional superhero having that you would like to have?
- What would you call yourself with this atypical superpower?

09

Jell-o Sculpting

Jeremy Steele

PREPARATION:

This activity requires a little prep time. The day before (or earlier if it makes sense), make Jell-O in three-gallon buckets and try to get the mixture as close to the top as possible. (Pro Tips: Buy the Jell-O tub rather than the box. Add 1.5–2 times as much Jell-O powder to your mixture, so that it is firmer—it holds up better in this large quantity. Follow the directions for letting it cool and congeal.)

Before starting, you should get several trays from the dining hall and tip the buckets upside down on the trays until you end up with one Jell-O tower on the tray. While you're in the dining hall, stash a couple of extra knives, forks, and spoons in your pocket.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Set your table up on the stage and ask for a couple of artistic volunteers. Once they are there, let them know they will be creating a sculpture for the rest of the group and then reveal their Jell-O medium. Give them one minute to create a simple shape (like a pyramid) and judge the sculpture based on accuracy.

Once that is complete, have them recruit a friend to help. The second challenge is to create another shape working as a team. This time, though, one person uses the utensils; the other must use his/her mouth.

10

Improv Case Studies

Scott Meier

Having students think through how they should act in certain situations can be facilitated by engaging their creativity. This activity will help students explore what it's like to act according to two realities: living as a follower of Jesus and living in the world.

Break your group into smaller groups of three or four people. Give each smaller group one of the examples below and ask the groups to come up with a brief skit, acting out first how to deal with the given situation as the world would deal with it, and then acting out how followers of Jesus should deal with the situation.

EXAMPLES:

(You can also come up with additional ones that better fit your context of ministry)

- Welcoming someone new to your school.
- Being pressured to break curfew.
- Observing someone being bullied.
- Being invited to a party where you know drinking and drugs will be involved.
- Seeing an elderly neighbor outside struggle to shovel snow on a winter day.

Come back together and share each group's two skits and discuss what might tempt someone to choose the world's actions rather than living as a follower of Jesus should.

11

“Because...”

Neal Bowes

In this icebreaker, students will compete to find the funniest “because” response to random “why” questions.

Read the following list of “why” questions and then pass out slips of paper and writing instruments to everybody. Invite each person to select one of the questions and write an answer that begins with “because.” Encourage students to be creative and even a little “out there.” An example of a creative response is “because a mouse ate all the peanut butter crackers.” Collect all the answers in a basket, and ask the following questions again, this time answering each one with a randomly selected slip of paper. The results could be something like, “Why is Thanos so angry? Because a mouse ate all the peanut butter crackers.”

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

- Why is Thanos so angry?
- Why did Elon Musk shoot a Tesla into space?
- Why does the iPhone X have a notch?
- Why did Meghan marry Harry?
- Why does Winnie the Pooh like honey so much?
- Why do we have to stand up when there is an asterisk (*) in the bulletin?
- Why do people get sunburned?
- Why does soda fizz so much?
- Why did Khloe name her daughter True?
- Why are zebras black and white?

12

Tik-Tac-Gross

Sharon Cook

Finding common ground is one of the best ways to begin relationships and get students talking. This icebreaker brings both in spades!

INSTRUCTIONS:

Either give, or have each youth draw their own, blank Tic-Tac-Toe board but tell them they are going to use it like a mini-Bingo card. They can write FREE in the center square. In the remaining eight squares, they write behaviors/traits that they think are unappealing. Then have the youth mingle, sharing their answers with one another. If they match with someone, they can put an X in that square. Can anyone get three in a row? Four corners? Cover their whole board?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- Without naming names, do you know anyone who does these activities?
- How do you relate to those people?

13

Paper Airplane

Jeremy Steele

Paper airplanes are universal fun and can be a great metaphor when talking about how our appearances don't always reflect our abilities and how small changes can make a big difference. Before you meet, take a moment to check out www.foldnfly.com for instructions on several different design options you can share with your class. You can even print out some templates.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Begin by pairing students up. Ask them to design and fold a couple of plane prototypes that they think will fly the fastest, highest, straightest, or farthest.

After the airplanes have been folded, ask the group to talk about which planes will go fastest, highest, straightest, and farthest. Then test the predictions.

After the first flight, bring your pairs together and make modifications to the airplane to make it fly faster, higher, or straighter.

DEBRIEF:

- Could you tell how the plane was going to fly based on its design?
- How did your modifications affect the outcomes?
- Think about your life. How does this activity describe you right now?

14

Hide & Search

Dave MaGee

Jesus' parents lost him on their way back from Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52). This activity will help students explore the story by enacting the seeking and finding element.

Ideally, this activity would happen in a space larger than a classroom to allow for movement.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Tell the students: "We are going to play a game like 'Hide and Seek.' We'll call it 'Hide and Search' in honor of our lesson. We will need one volunteer to be blindfolded. That person is the searcher. We'll also need one volunteer to be the one being searched for. The rest of you are the crowd."

Take the searcher away from the group space and blindfold him/her. Have the person being sought find a hiding space (must be accessible to someone blindfolded). Bring in the searcher after the person being sought has hidden. The one being sought will call out to the searcher to try to help him/her, but the crowd will also call out to try to confuse the searcher. The activity is done when the person is found by the searcher. Play more than once if time allows.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- Ask the searcher: How difficult was it to find the person who was hiding?
- Ask the person hiding: What made it difficult to call out to the searcher?
- As the group: What might the distracting voices of the crowd represent in our lives?

FINAL WORD:

Our lives are filled with lots of people searching for different things, and there are lots of distractions. God desires for you to find God, but we must identify and remove distractions that keep us from God.

15

Backward

Jeremy Steele

Icebreakers usually either help us think differently about something or just get us talking. This one does both, as it challenges students to stretch their brains to do something they don't normally have to do. And all they need are paper and pencils!

One of the interesting things about mirrors is that they reverse whatever image they show you. That is why the word “ambulance” is written backward on their hoods... so people can read it in their rear-view mirror. We're going to take a moment to do some backward thinking/writing. Follow these steps to make some mirror-focused art.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Think of a word that describes you.
- Write it correctly.
- Using your correctly written version as a guide, write the same word in reverse and LARGE on the paper you have.
- Then, illustrate the letters in a way that depicts the meaning of the word. (For example, using the words “Let it Bloom” with the depiction of a flower)
- Ask youth to share their words and explain why it describes them.

16

Car & Driver

Sam Halverson

This team-building game takes the classic trust walk to the next level, helping students explore communication and trust when everyone is working with different abilities.

SUPPLIES:

- Blindfold for half the group
- Yarn long enough to go around two people (or, for a different and more careful experience, use toilet paper strips long enough to go around two people)
- Clear and flat playing space large enough for pairs to move around but with clear boundaries

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Start by having youth find a partner (or assign them into pairs).
- Once everyone is paired up, let the partners decide who will be the “car” and who will be the “driver.”
- Give out specific instructions to the cars and drivers. Instruct the “cars” to wear blindfolds and walk with their arms out (their “bumpers”). Instruct the “drivers” that they will drive with eyes open (of course) and will establish with the “car” how they will communicate a right turn, left turn, drive (forward), reverse, braking (slowing and stopping), and honking the horn. To make it extra fun, eliminate the ability to say words (or even make noise).

- Once partners have decided how to communicate, tie each pair together around their waists (car in front) with yarn or toilet paper (the seat belt).
- Tell the groups they are to spend a few minutes driving randomly around the room, staying within the boundaries you have set. Explain that they must stay together and not go so fast that the blindfolded person “crashes” or that the seat belt breaks.
- After a few minutes, have the pairs stop and tell them a pre-planned “route” you want them to take. This can be very specific (like following a meandering line on the floor) or can be a route of various points in the room where they must arrive at each one. Let the partners travel this route at their own pace.

After ten minutes, have everyone sit where they are and answer the following questions:

- How did you decide how you were going to communicate the directions? What were some of the choices?
- What helped this work? What made it difficult?
- How does trust fit into this activity? Who has to trust whom? How does trust go both ways?
- What happened that made some trust less?
- Why is trust so important in a real “car and driver” situation? Why do you suppose in reality that we trust cars and drivers (and many of them strangers) coming our direction at speeds as fast as sixty or seventy miles per hour?
- What helps you trust one another in our group?

17

Will It Popsicle?

Mike Rollins

There's just something about a good gross activity. Because of the incredible inspiration that came from the Good Mythical Morning episode "Will it Taco?," we created this brilliant evolution, replacing the taco with everyone's favorite frozen treat: the popsicle.

SUPPLIES:

- Flavored popsicles
- Crazy ingredients
- Table
- Trashcan
- Popsicle maker

PREPARATION:

Get a box or two of flavored popsicles and some crazy ingredients. We used M&M's, Cheetos, sriracha, chocolate syrup, caramel syrup, and mayonnaise. Make sure the ingredients are hidden, so you can reveal them one by one (in ascending order of grossness). Grab a table and put a trash can close by (for obvious reasons).

INSTRUCTIONS:

Invite two students up at a time. You will prepare a popsicle topped with the special ingredient in front of everyone. Then have the students take a bite. Ask them, "Will it popsicle?" They either give a thumbs up or a thumbs down. If they both decide, "It popsicles," then it popsicles. If they both decide, "It doesn't popsicle" or if they disagree, then it doesn't popsicle!

When we played, we brought a college student up as a tiebreaker. If the students didn't agree if the item would be a popsicle or not, the college student had to eat it. It took only a couple of popsicles until the youths made sure to disagree, so the college student had to eat every item we had. It also helped get the crowd involved and cheering for them to not agree.

If you want to take this game to the next level, buy some popsicle makers from Amazon and pre-make the popsicles. By doing this, you can make a pickle juice popsicle with M&Ms or a mayonnaise popsicle with Oreos. You know, the normal stuff.

18

Sit Down If...

Neal Bowes

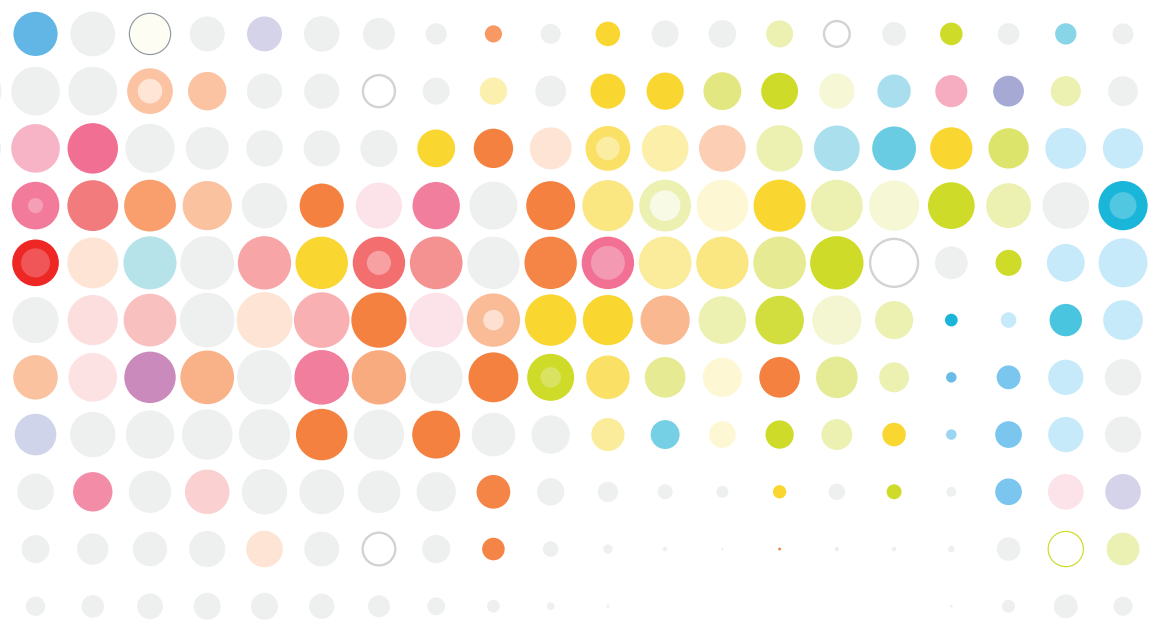
Christmas time is a crazy time for a youth worker. As the church kicks into high gear, and you strive to deliver quality programming that matches the importance of the holiday while trying to keep up with the demands of family preparations and plans, let us save you a little time with a no-prep icebreaker for your next meeting: Sit Down If!

WHAT TO DO:

“Sit Down If...” is simple. Everybody starts by standing, and they sit down if an item on your list describes them. Last one(s) standing win(s). Of course, you can come up with your own, but this would not be a no-prep icebreaker if we did not give you a list that worked for us, right?

“SIT DOWN IF” IDEAS:

- You don't like candy canes.
- You have ever received two of the same gift.
- You have never been Christmas caroling.
- You have ever worn an ugly Christmas sweater.
- Your parents have ever had to wake you up on Christmas morning.
- You like candied yams/sweet potatoes.
- You have ever received socks for a Christmas present.
- You have no idea what to get your mom for Christmas.
- You think the Bible says there were three wise men who visited Jesus.



Questions, Quizzes, and Discussions



19

Before & After Quiz

Chris Wilterdink

Use this activity as an icebreaker for virtual or in-person gatherings. You can choose whether to allow internet searches. These clues may require someone with pop-culture awareness for generations slightly older than your youth, along with some biblical knowledge.

Allow participants up to five minutes to figure out the answers to each of these “before and after” clues on the following pages. These can be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

The first part of the clue corresponds to the first part of the answer, and the second part of the clue to the second part of the answer. The multi-word answer always shares a word or series of words. For example:

The twelfth U.S. president who topped the pop charts with “Shake It Off” would be...Zachary Taylor Swift.

Once your youth get into the groove of answering these word plays, consider asking them to make some new ones using current popular culture and famous figures.

Best of luck!

ICEBREAKER QUIZ QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Q. Without Art, he created the “Graceland” album, while also getting a new nickname from Jesus...that rocked.

A. Paul Simon Peter

Q. Arguably the most famous student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry who purchased a plot of land used for burials using the money that had been paid to Judas.

A. Harry Potter’s Field

Q. The ice hockey goaltender who won the Olympic gold medal with Canada in 2002 and enjoyed a musical run because of the garment that Jacob gave him.

A. Curtis Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Q. Arthur’s kingdom’s salty pillars.

A. Camelot’s Wife (Lot’s Wife)

Q. ABBA song recorded in honor of Ahasuerus’s wife.

A. Dancing Queen Esther

Q. Folk trio behind “Puff the Magic Dragon” who would become a quartet if they jammed with Lazarus’s sisters.

A. Peter, Paul, and Mary and Martha

Q. The home of the Whopper, which fed Israel’s first male monarch.

A. Burger King Saul

Q. Symbol on the modern Israeli flag that feels “Under Pressure” with Freddie Mercury.

A. Star of David Bowie

Q. 2 Timothy 4 says that Jesus is coming back to judge this Robin Williams' film with the message "Carpe Diem."

A. The Quick and the Dead Poet's Society or The Living and the Dead Poet's Society

Q. Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling "jazz hands" their way through Exodus, Chapter 3, in order to live where God promised.

A. La La Land of Milk and Honey

Q. South African host of the Daily Show's boat that carries the Ten Commandments.

A. Trevor Noah's Ark of the Covenant

Q. Nature Valley Crunchy Oats 'N Honey snack enjoyed during a thirteen-year-old Jewish boy's rite of passage.

A. Granola Bar Mitzvah

Q. The Old Testament Prophet who starred in "21 Jump Street" and "SuperBad" and founded a charismatic Christian megachurch based in Australia.

A. Jonah Hillsong

Q. Chicago legend who dunked in the same place where Jesus was baptized.

A. Michael Jordan River

Q. Lead singer of the Four Seasons shaded by Psalm 23.

A. Frankie Valley of the Shadow of Death

20

My Favorite Way We Celebrate

Jeremy Steele

Independence Day (and its parallel in other cultures across the world) is a day filled with celebrations in families and municipalities. This icebreaker will help students share their favorite modes of celebration while also getting to know one another's personalities as they guess who wrote which celebration practice.

Begin by passing out a 3x5 card or a colorful sheet of paper and a pen to each student. Then explain they are going to share the favorite thing they or their family does to celebrate Independence Day. They need to write two sentences: one that names the practice and one that describes what they like about the practice. For example:

"My favorite way we celebrate is setting off fireworks. It's my favorite because I like fire!"

If you are not meeting in person, ask students to text them to you or PM you in the chat.

Once the students have finished, ask them to fold the papers and pass them to the leader. The leader should then mix up the papers, read each one out loud, and ask the students to decide which person wrote each statement. Once the person is revealed, ask that person to tell a story about the celebration.

21

Music Video

Kaye Wolfinger

The term “glory” falls into a category of church jargon that is confusing because of the varied ways the word is used in the current culture. This icebreaker will help students explore the word and reflect on how pop culture engages with their spirituality.

Explain to your students that you are going to think about the word “glory” and want them to think about what the word means and how other people might see “glory” as they watch the video. Then, show the music video Glory by John Legend and Common from the movie Selma (on YouTube; or play the song if you don’t have a video option).

ICEBREAKER DEBRIEF:

- What is the definition of the word “glory”? (You can have them Google this after they offer their own thoughts first.)
- Let’s talk about the chorus. What is the “glory” that is talked about here?
- How will that glory come? (Once the war is won)
- What other lyrics from the song appeal to you?
- What is the message of the song lyrics?

22

20 Questions (Zoom Edition)

Kaye Wolfinger

This new spin on an old game will allow you to spice up your virtual meetings with a little more fun, and it will build anticipation for your next time together!

Before your next videoconference, wrap a gift. (This could be a gift card or another item that you are willing to give away the next time you are together.)

Once everyone is on the call, take turns playing twenty questions. Each student gets a set number of questions to ask before the next person gets a turn. Once a student asks all the questions, that person is out. Whoever guesses what is in the wrapped gift wins the item. Change the discussion to make it appropriate for your game.

DISCUSSION:

- How did it feel when you were “out” and knew your chances of receiving the gift were over?
- Ask the second to the last player, “How did you feel when you were so close to winning?”
- While it is fun to receive tangible gifts, the gift God promises is not something we can see, touch, or even experience on this earth. How can we keep one another excited about this gift and share that joy with others?

23

Virtual Time Capsule

Austin Leeviraphan

Helping students consider what is important in their lives can help them discover priorities and celebrate the things they love. This icebreaker will spark some fun discussion by helping them do just that.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Divide people into teams of at least three and give them a large piece of paper and some markers. Have them draw or write twenty things they would want in a time capsule to show people in the future what was important to them and made them happy.

Once they have finished, invite groups to tape their papers on the wall and share with the total group what they wrote and why they wrote it. Keep the papers on the wall as a visual reminder throughout the lesson. When appropriate, you may be able to reference the papers as an illustration or application question.

24

Transformers

Jay Campbell

In this group exercise, youth will create their own Transformers. If they need examples, you can highlight the Power Rangers joining together to make their mega-machine, or the Transformer movies where cars transform into massive robots.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Youth may begin with whatever form they would like their Transformers to be and have them take any form and have any abilities. This can be a great way to introduce youth to Matthew 17:1-9 and get them engaged in talking about Jesus transforming into something that left the disciples overwhelmed with awe.

TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Have the youth use craft supplies to create 3D models of their Transformers!

25

Pick Your Dream Team

Jay Campbell

Playing up the creativity and allowing students to engage with what they are most passionate about will make this icebreaker rock!

INSTRUCTIONS:

Give students a piece of paper and invite them to create their dream team. Give them the freedom to choose what kind of team they would like. It could be a sports team, superhero team, musical team, group of actors for a movie, well-known business leaders, or others.

After a few minutes, invite youth to share what kind of teams they created and why they chose the people they did.

What qualities and characteristics did they consider when picking the people for their teams?

Since the youth will most likely choose the best and most qualified for whatever team they decide, this activity is a perfect transition into discussing 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 that pushes back on that bias.

26

Filling Questions

Betsy Marvin

This icebreaker is a fun take on the idea of “filling.” Assign one person to be the group’s timer and another as the interviewer. The interviewer will ask each student questions from the list below, and the student will have thirty seconds to answer as many questions as possible.

THE QUESTIONS:

- What is your favorite pie filling?
- What food can you eat until you are too full?
- How much money does it take to fill your car with gas?
- How full is your dirty laundry basket right now at home?
- When was the last time your phone storage was full?
- Do you like to have a full schedule on the weekends or an empty one?
- What is your favorite doughnut filling?
- How many balloons do you think it would take to fill this room?
- Have you ever tried to fill someone’s desk drawer with rice?

27

Viral Video

Betsy Marvin

Viral videos fill our newsfeeds and demand our attention multiple times a week. This icebreaker capitalizes on the viral video trend and asks students to consider why it's happening.

WHAT TO DO:

Search YouTube or another social media platform for current viral videos. Preview the videos for appropriate content, then choose one to share with your group.

SPIRITUAL QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever wondered what it would be like if Jesus returned during our generation?
- Would the video of his return go viral?

Trying to look at our world through the lens of the life of Jesus changes things. As students engage their minds and imaginations, this activity will help them change their perceptions and call them to action.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Ask students to sit in a circle. Give students a piece of paper and a pen and ask them to write down an issue that would break Jesus' heart. This could be an injustice in the world, a situation happening in school, or an issue the local community is facing. Give the group about five minutes to write these down.

Place individuals in the middle of the circle and have them share what they have written. If any answers are similar, place those students next to each other. For example, if two people list "bullying at school," place those students together.

Choosing one issue at a time (you can vote on which issue), share thoughts about that issue. What does the group think about the issue? How could they respond as Jesus would? What experiences with the issue do they have?

After a moment of sharing, enter into a time of prayer about that issue. Ask a couple of people to pray out loud.

Repeat for other issues as time allows.

29

“I Have Been Given”

Scott Meier

All we have is a gift from God, and those gifts are meant to be used to make a positive impact on our world. This activity will help students identify what they have as gifts from God and guide them to see how they can use their resources to give back.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Provide the students with paper and writing utensils. Have them write, “*I Have Been Given, So Too Shall I Give*” across the top of the page. Under the title, have them make two columns labeled “*Given*” and “*To Give*.”

In the “*Given*” column, have group members think of all the things they have been blessed with. These may be material things (like a car or a house) or gifts, talents, or abilities they have (like singing).

Then, in the “*To Give*” column, for each of the items in the “*Given*” column, have group members think of some way they can use that gift to bring glory to and benefit the kingdom of God. For example, they could use a car to deliver food to shut-ins or take a friend to school; they could use their musical ability in worship.

Have the group share their answers.

Ask youth to talk about their thoughts on everything from school dances to sunburn, using this throwback idea from elementary school.

Tell your group that for the next few minutes, it's "opposite day." This will be a fun way to learn about how we feel about certain topics. Going around the circle, give each person a topic. The youth should react by saying the opposite of what they think. If the members of your group don't know one another, have them introduce themselves first.

TOPIC SUGGESTIONS:

- School dances
- Snapchat
- Bluegrass music
- Gym class
- Two-week-old marshmallow peeps
- Hamsters
- "Just talking"
- Dry erase markers
- Clowns
- Sunburn
- The attic

31

Thankful Bible Search

Jeremy Steele

Make sure you have several students with access to a searchable Bible app; then break the group into teams to answer the questions below. After everyone has finished, ask each team to report back and vote as a group on which team's answer was best.

QUESTIONS:

- What is the strangest thing that someone gave thanks for in the Bible?
- What is the most loving thank-you offered in the Bible?
- What is something that someone has given thanks for in the Bible that you would not be thankful for?

32

“You Ate What?” Thanksgiving Questions

Jeremy Steele

Pair students up and ask them to answer these questions. Once they have finished interviewing one another, ask them to share the highlights with the group.

QUESTIONS:

- What is the strangest casserole you have ever eaten?
- What is the most unique thing you have ever added to a turkey sandwich?
- What is your least favorite type of pie?
- What is a family tradition around Thanksgiving that you wish was not a tradition?
- What is the weirdest thing you have ever had to eat on Thanksgiving?
- Do you keep everything separate on your plate, allow it to touch, or stir it all together?
- What is the strangest Thanksgiving tradition you have ever heard of from your friends or family?
- How long do you consider leftover turkey ok to eat?
- What is your favorite way to consume leftover turkey?
- Gravy or no gravy? If gravy, what kind?
- Cranberry sauce should: be sliced from the can, mashed up in a bowl, cooked with real cranberries.

Thinking through priorities is as important as it is difficult. This activity helps students think critically about their priorities by forcing a choice and offering a time for reflection.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Pass out paper and writing utensils to each student.
- Instruct the students to fold the sheet of paper into eight different sections.
- Think of the eight things most important to you. Write one of those things in each section.
- Once everything is written down, tear the paper into eight different pieces.
- Then tell the students, “You have to sacrifice one of the eight items you wrote down; you get to choose. Please place one slip of paper into the middle of the group” (on the ground or the table of whatever is the middle of your meeting space). Ask everyone to quickly share what they sacrificed and what made that less important than the other things.
- Continue having them put an additional slip of paper in the middle one at a time, asking them what they put in each time. Repeat this until each student is down to only three slips of paper remaining.
- Ask students to share what their final three items were.

(CONTINUED)

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- How difficult was it to sacrifice those five important items?
- Are there things in your life that you might be able to sacrifice that might bless others? (If students mention only material items, encourage them to think more abstractly, such as giving their time, their God-given gifts, and so on.)

34

One Single Doughnut Hunger Exploration

Betsy Marvin

This activity uses a single, regular-sized doughnut as the starting point to explore the issues of hunger. Prepare the room with a doughnut on a plate in the middle of a table. As you have the group ponder the questions below, pass the doughnut around having everyone take a piece to eat. Once that's done, move on to the icebreaker connector questions for the entire group to discuss together.

CONSIDER THIS:

- Have you ever been so hungry that you thought you were starving?
- How many people do you think one doughnut can feed?
- What if this is really all we had to eat today? How would you share this one doughnut?
- How does it feel to have to share one doughnut?

ICEBREAKER CONNECTOR (10 MINUTES):

- Have you ever thought about what it would be like to not know where your next meal would come from?
- Have you ever come in contact with a homeless person? What did you think?
- If you could eat only one thing for the rest of your life or had one last meal but it could be anything you wanted, what would you choose and why?

35

Face in the Mirror

Betsy Marvin

The people mistook Jesus for John the Baptist or Elijah in Mark 6:13–16 because of the incredible things he was doing. The miracles were making Jesus known, yet his real identity is more than the miracles: he is the Christ, the Son of God.

WHAT TO DO:

Hand out little hand mirrors or have students pull out their phones and turn the camera to selfie mode. Have them take a good look at themselves. Ask:

- What do you see?
- What are you known for?
- Does anyone ever think you are someone else?
How does that feel?

Give students time to think and then share. It might be helpful to have them share what they see in one another, more like an affirmation circle.

There are things we can see, the facts: eye color, hair color, shape, size, and so on. There are also things we can't see but make us who we are: personality, strengths, gifts, family, and character. Ask:

- Who are you known as?
- What about your church? If your church were to leave your community tomorrow, would it be missed? What do you think people would know about your church?

Take a group picture. As you look at the picture, talk about how the group could become known. Ask:

- How can we make an impact in the church and our community? What can we do?

36

15 Killer Icebreaker Questions for Sunday School

Jeremy Steele

Whoever decided that getting teenagers into a room to learn early on a Sunday morning clearly remembered nothing about their own adolescence. That means that we have to work extra hard to get students engaged and help them avoid the siren song being sung by the back of their eyelids. Sometimes all you need is a good icebreaker question to get their attention warmed up so they can stay engaged through the rest of Sunday school. Here are fifteen of my favorites.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the thing that bothers you most about the world right now?
2. Chocolate or Skittles?
3. What is something your parents do that you will never do when you are a parent?
4. What makes a teacher a good teacher?
5. What is your favorite thing to do late at night with your best friend?
6. What recent news story made you the maddest?
7. Snow in winter or beach in summer?
8. What is the weirdest thing you have ever read or heard from the Bible?
9. Where is the strangest place you have ever fallen asleep? Tell the story.

10. Describe your dream vacation.
11. Is the book better than the movie?
12. What caused you the most physical pain you have ever felt?
13. Name three issues worth devoting your life to.
14. The best YouTube video ever:
15. When was the longest you ever went without brushing your teeth?

Ready, Set, Quiz! We have the perfect opener for your Sunday school class this week. This is a Christmas Quiz that will test your group's knowledge of what of the Christmas story comes from the Bible and what comes from somewhere else. Need a lesson too? We've got your back: here are two quick Christmas discussion lessons.

15 QUIZ QUESTIONS:

Q. True or False – Christmas has always been celebrated on December 25.

A. False

Q. What mode of transportation did Mary and Joseph use to get to Bethlehem?

- a. Walking
 - b. Donkey
 - c. Joseph's Carpentry Wagon
 - d. None of the above (The Bible does not say.)
-

Q. True or False – When Mary became pregnant, she and Joseph were married.

A. False (See Matthew 1:18)

Q. True or False – When Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary were married.

A. False (See Luke 2:5)

(CONTINUED)

- Q. What was said when Joseph talked to the innkeeper?
- a. No room in the inn
 - b. There is a stable in the back
 - c. Both A and B
 - d. **None of the above (There is no conversation with an innkeeper in the Bible. See Luke 2:7)**
-

- Q. Where did the actual birth of Jesus take place?
- a. A barn
 - b. A cave
 - c. A manger
 - d. **Unknown (Not enough information. See Luke 2:7)**
-

- Q. In the Bible, what animals witnessed the birth of Jesus?
- a. Cows, sheep, and goats
 - b. Cows, donkeys, and sheep
 - c. Various barnyard animals
 - d. **None of the above (The Bible does not specify.)**
-

- Q. How many angels actually spoke to the shepherds?
- a. A “multitude”
 - b. **One (See Luke 2:9)**
 - c. Five
 - d. None of the above
-

- Q. The “Star in the East” was seen by whom?
- a. Three kings
 - b. Mary and Joseph
 - c. Shepherds
 - d. **None of the above (The wise men did, but they were not kings. See Matthew 2:2.)**

(CONTINUED)

- Q. A “heavenly host” is defined as what?
- a. An angel choir
 - b. **An angel army**
 - c. The angel at the gate of Heaven
 - d. The angel in charge of catering in Heaven
-

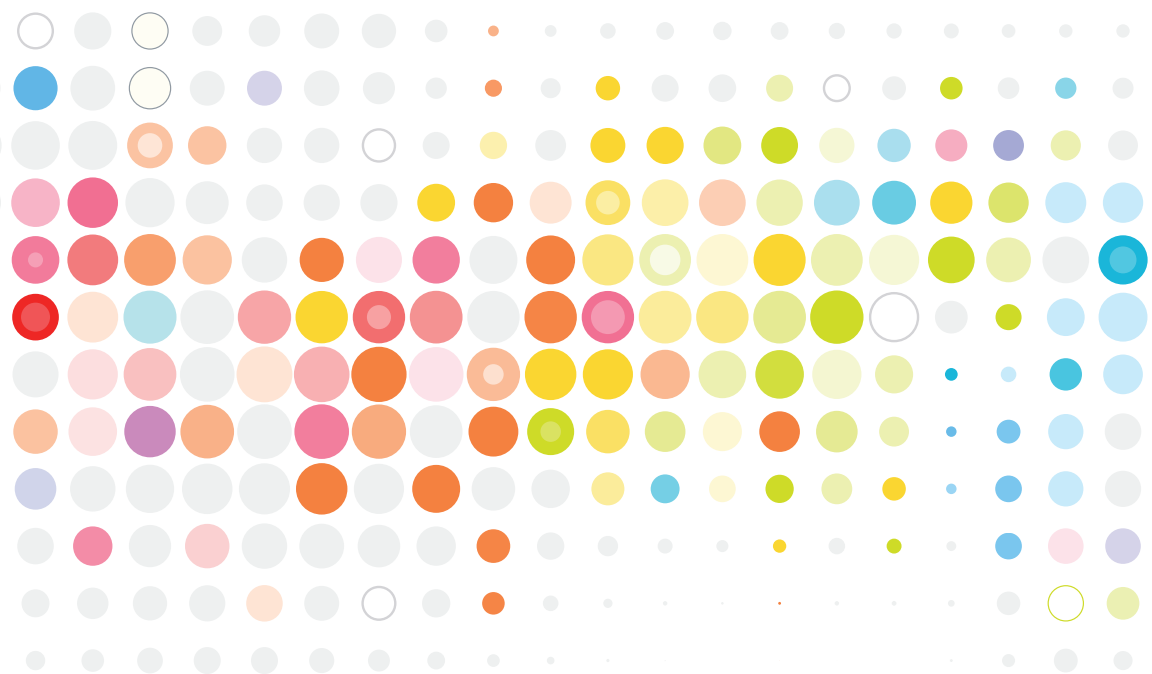
- Q. What did the angels say to the shepherds?
- a. “Glory to God in the highest, etc.” (See Luke 2:14)
 - b. “Alleluia”
 - c. “Unto us a child is born...”
 - d. “Get ready...”
-

- Q. What special thing do the angels tell the shepherds to look for?
- a. A star over Bethlehem
 - b. A baby that does not cry
 - c. A baby in a stable
 - d. **None of the above (See Luke 2:12)**
-

- Q. Who told Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem?
- a. An angel
 - b. **Caesar Augustus (See Luke 2:1-4)**
 - c. Herod
 - d. Mary’s Mother
-

- Q. Why did the Holy Family go to Egypt?
- a. To see the Sphinx
 - b. **A dream said to do it (See Matthew 2:13)**
 - c. To be taxed again
 - d. They did not go to Egypt
-

- Q. True or False – We know the exact number of wise men who came to see Jesus.
- A. False (No one knows. See Matthew 2:1.)



Games



Play a round of Jenga together on Zoom. You can find this game at any local department store or online. There are also extra-large, yard Jenga options that are fun. Set one or more Jenga games (more is always better) up in front of your camera and have students guide your finger in selecting which block to take out next.

There are a lot of options on www.jenga.com; there is even a winner's certificate you can download!

ICEBREAKER DEBRIEF:

- What lessons can you learn from Jenga?
- What are the key points to remember if you want to last to the end?
- How does this activity relate to Christ as a cornerstone?

Think dodgeball. Seriously, think about it. Unless you've had bad experiences. Then feel free to think about Thanksgiving or your favorite coffee joint (and maybe don't read any further). If you're still here, and you're thinking about dodgeball, remove the line down the middle and the teams on each side. Scatter ball is a democracy. Every human for themselves.

SOME DODGEBALL RULES ARE MAINTAINED:

- Goal: Be the last person standing.
- How? Get others "out" by throwing the ball and hitting them below the neck OR by catching their throw.
- Use softer "gatorskin" or "rhino skin" type dodgeballs, please! The extra cost is worth minimizing the potential for student/participant PTSD down the road!

UNIQUE QUIRKS OF SCATTER BALL:

- No teams!
- Boundary: The outside perimeter of a play area. Players may move anywhere within it.
- Running with a ball?
 - » You cannot run with the ball. (You also cannot bounce or dribble the ball.)
 - » A frisbee-style "two-step" slow-down rule can work here for those who can't control themselves—if you're running and catch a ball, you have up to two steps to slow to a stop.

- What happens when someone's "out?"
 - » Sit down in the exact spot you were standing at the exact moment you got "out" and stay there! You're stuck on that spot until the game ends or until you do something to get back into the game.
- Are you "out"?
 - » Don't fret. "Out" in scatter ball is similar to (many variants of) dodgeball in that it's not the end. Since you don't have teammates who could do something to return you to the game, you get to be your own teammate (see below).
 - » Reminder: You're sitting there in the exact spot you got "out" and not leaving it.
- You're also actively engaged, hoping for a ball to come to you. Here's your goal:
 - » Catch a ball thrown by someone who's "in." That person will then be "out," and you are back in.
 - » Throw a ball and hit someone who's "in" (hits still only count below the neck!) That person is now "out," and you are back in the game. That's it! Be safe out there!

SUMMARY/TLDR (TOO LONG, DIDN'T READ):

- Think dodgeball but no teams (moving around, throwing, and catching dodgeballs to victory).
- You cannot run with a ball or dribble/bounce a ball.
- If you get hit by a ball or throw a ball and it's caught, you are "out."
- If you get "out," sit down right where you are and stay in that spot until the round ends or you get back in.

- To get back in, throw a ball and hit someone below the neck OR catch a ball thrown by someone who is in.
- The last person standing wins.

OPTIONAL RULES:

- Number of Balls – Play with one dodgeball or play with fifteen. It's your choice.
- A "Reverse" Rule – If the emcee yells "Reverse," all who are "in" become "out," and vice-versa. This can keep players accountable to not stand around when they're "in." That's boring.

Candy Crush Live

Jeremy Steele

SUPPLIES:

- Bulk bags of candy
- Index cards or other paper for making cards
- Markers or printer
- Wall-safe tape

PREPERATION:

Separate your bags of candy into 3-4 types. Create cards with these types written/printed on them (16 cards for each type). Add a bit of wall-safe tape to the backs of each card.

In the room where you'll be playing, create two 4×4 or 5×5 grid game boards on the wall using tape. Fill each square on the grid with a random card. Set up a table on the other side of the room with the piles of separated candy.

HOW TO PLAY:

Recruit two students and one adult volunteer per board. One student will play Candy Crush, trying to get 2 or 3 matching candy cards adjacent to one another. They do this by swapping neighboring cards one pair at a time.

Once a match is made, the partner will then have to eat an equal amount of the type of candy cards that were touching, and when that person has swallowed the candy (verified by the adult volunteer), the adult will replace the empty holes with the remaining cards at random.

This is a timed game (set at your discretion). The team with the most candy eaten by the end wins.

41

Whisper Challenge

Chasity Opphile

In this challenge, one competitor wears earphones and plays music while the other contestant whispers a phrase to that person. The phrase will be selected from a stack of pre-printed phrases. The competitor wearing the earphones has to try to guess what the phrase is. They switch places as play continues and hilarity ensues.

After all of your students have had a chance to play, ask something like: “What made this challenge difficult?”

SAMPLE PHRASES:

- A zebra licked a DVD.
- Blue is greener than purple for sure.
- I am pretending to be a tomato.
- I scream, you scream; we all scream for ice cream.
- I stepped on a Corn Flake, now I’m a cereal killer.
- I love chubby little puppies.
- I’m addicted to YouTubers.
- I’m on a seafood diet. I see food, and I eat it.
- Life is like a box of chocolates.
- May the odds be ever in your favor.
- Never put a cat on your head.
- The banana has legs!
- The koala jumped over a turtle.

This is a classic icebreaker that helps get students engaged in investigation-style questions with one another. In this game, players need to guess the identity of the well-known person assigned to them. In advance of your session, prepare index cards or post-its with names written on them (suggestions below). If you have extra prep time, you could add a picture of the person clipped from a magazine or printed from a website.

Begin by taping a card with a name on it to everyone's back. Students then move around the room and ask one another yes or no questions about their person. “Am I fictional?” “Do I play sports?” “Have I been in a movie?” The game continues until everybody identifies their assigned person.

CELEBRITY SUGGESTIONS:

- Queen Elizabeth
- LeBron James
- Big Bird
- Oprah Winfrey
- Batman
- Tiger Woods
- Jimmy Fallon
- Scooby Doo
- Taylor Swift
- Simon Cowell
- Drake
- Tom Brady

43

Minefield (A Game About Doubts)

Jeremy Steele

Doubts are not something that disqualify you from being a Christian; in fact, one of the disciples had serious doubts and needed help resolving them in community. This fun activity will help students think through and process what it means to doubt and how they can deal with doubting.

SUPPLIES:

- Blindfold
- Chairs
- Other objects to set up a small obstacle course

PREPARATION:

Set up a small obstacle course made up of chairs and any other objects that you think would be safe and appropriate for your “minefield.”

PLAY THE GAME:

Say something like:

“Today, we are going to play a little game. I need one person who will volunteer to wear this blindfold and be led through a small obstacle course by the rest of the group.” (Choose a volunteer, have that person stand at the start of the obstacle course, and put on the blindfold.) Now explain that the other students will guide the volunteer through the course using only their voices—no touching allowed. Some of the students may choose to give incorrect instructions, while others give the correct ones. Once the volunteer has

made it through, remove the blindfold and ask: “What was helpful communication and what wasn’t? Was it easy to trust your guides? How did you choose what voices to listen to? What were some of your feelings—fear, safety, other?”

DISCUSS WITH THE GROUP:

- What did this activity have to do with the scripture about Thomas (John 20:19–31)?
 - Have you ever had a time when you were filled with doubt because of the circumstances or voices surrounding you?
 - How do you deal with that type of situation?
 - How do you continue to believe in and trust Jesus, even when you are surrounded by fear, anxiety, and doubts?
-

Say something like the following:

Thomas had a hard time trusting that Jesus was still alive because he was listening to his fear and doubt and allowing that noise to cloud and cover up the things that he already knew about Jesus. It wasn’t until Jesus showed up in person that Thomas was able to really believe and trust that what the other disciples had told him was true. The truth is, we all have doubts at some point in our lives, and we, unlike Thomas, have never met Jesus in the flesh. However, when the noises of fear and doubt start to drown out what we really know to be true about Jesus, we need to seek an encounter with Jesus to be able to believe all the things that he is.

(CONTINUED)

REFLECTION TIME:

Allow students some time in quiet reflection and prayer to consider the doubts that frequently hold them back from full belief in Jesus and encourage them to spend some time letting go of those doubts and trading them in for the truths of Jesus. This might be a good place for journals or paper and writing utensils for students who may like to write or draw their prayers.

44

Steal the Turkey Leg

Jeremy Steele

First, buy a 24" inflatable turkey leg. Then, use this turkey take on the classic youth group game "Steal the Bacon."

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Split your group into two teams and have the teams stand in straight lines facing each other.
- Assign each player a number starting with 1 so that there is one of each number on either team.
- Put the turkey leg between the lines of players.
- Call out one of the numbers.
- Each player with the called number attempts to grab the turkey leg and return to their spot without being tagged. If they accomplish this feat, their team gets a point. If they get tagged, the other team gets a point.

45

The Imitation Game

Jeremy Steele

Imitating people as if you are standing in a mirror is difficult because you have to pay close attention to even the smallest changes in body language and try to predict what they are going to do. This game helps students experience the act of actively imitating someone else to give them an experiential pathway into understanding what the Bible means when it calls us to imitate God in Ephesians 5:1-2.

Before you begin, pair students up and have them act like they are each other's mirror. One person should be the "real" person, and the other person should be the "mirror" who is trying to copy. Give them a minute or so to get used to the idea.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Once they have practiced, have students stand in a single file line facing front to back.
- When you say "go," the first person who is being the "real" person turns around and faces the person behind, who is the "mirror."
- The pair will mirror each other while they count slowly to five. Once they reach five, the "mirror" will become the "real" person and turn around to face the person behind. When that happens, the first "real" person goes to the back of the line.
- The new pair will continue counting at six and make the next swap at ten.

- This will continue until someone makes a big mistake, at which point the counting restarts at one, the “real” person goes to the back of the line, and the “mirror” becomes “real” and turns around.
- The goal is to have an unbroken chain of “mirrors” for as long as possible.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Read Ephesians 5:1-2

- How difficult was it to mirror someone like this?
- What made it easier or harder?
- What is difficult about imitating God?
- What can make it easier or harder?
- What could you change about this activity to make it easier (like choreograph movements ahead of time)? How does that relate to imitating God? (We can know some of God’s moves by studying the Bible.)

46

Red & Black Team-Building Game

Sam Halverson

Sometimes we end up competing against the people with whom we should be partnering. When this happens within a team, it can be devastating. This simple game helps students explore the urge to compete and how they can let go of that urge and partner together.

TO GET STARTED:

Divide your group into an even number of teams with 3–7 students each. (This is designed for two teams per game, but it's possible to play four teams against each other at once. If you have more than four teams, then have multiple games of two teams playing at the same time.) Make sure you have enough space for the teams to not be seen or heard by one another. A separate room for each team or far ends of a large field generally works best.

HOW TO PLAY:

Explain to the teams that you will play ten rounds. At the start of a round, each team must unanimously decide on a color they will “play”—red or black. Teams decide in secret what they will play and announce their choice by writing it on a piece of paper and handing it to the game facilitator. Teams will be awarded points in the following way:

- If both teams choose black, each team receives 300pts.
- If both teams choose red, each team loses 300pts.
- If one team plays red and the other team plays black, the team who played red gains 500pts and the team who played black loses 300pts.

Help the teams understand they have two choices:

- A team can play black and hope the other team plays black, too, resulting in each team getting 300pts each turn, or the team would lose 300pts, and the other team would get 500pts.
- A team can play red, either gaining 500pts and making the other team lose 300pts, or, if both teams choose red, both teams would lose 300pts.

The team with the most points after ten rounds wins.

WHAT TO KNOW:

In almost every situation, one of the groups decides to throw a wrench into the process and chooses red, hoping to make the other team lose points. This often ends in both teams eventually getting negative points. Either way, it means they do not reach the goal of “most points possible in ten rounds.” Teams most likely believe this is a competition, but in actuality, you will do the following.

AFTER TEN ROUNDS:

Have the teams come together. Show them the points of each team, and then add the two scores together. Explain that this is the final score.

TEAM-BUILDING DEBRIEF:

- How could you have scored more points?
- What stopped you from reaching the goal?
- Did you think you were competing against the other team? Why?
- What would it have taken to receive the most points possible?

- Why did that not work?
- Did anyone think of doing that?
- Did anyone suggest it?
- How is this like the way people live in the world today?
- How can we, as a group, learn from this and make the most out of who we are as a whole group?

The goal of Ultimate Ninja is to be the last ninja standing—to eliminate other players by slapping their hands. On a given turn, a player can attack or move in one fluid motion.

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Have players stand in a circle at arms-length.
2. Everyone says, “3, 2, 1...ULTIMATE NINJA!” with all players quickly holding a ninja pose.
3. Choose one player to begin play.
4. On a player’s turn, they may do one swift ninja attack—one motion that attempts to touch another player’s hand. Once making this motion, the player must freeze and hold the motion just made.
5. Any time a player is attacked, that person may dodge as a reaction by moving a hand or an arm, but the player cannot move their feet.
6. Immediately after the attacker moves, it is the next player’s turn (moving clockwise from the attacker), and the player can immediately do an attack.
7. When players get their hands struck, they must leave the circle, as they are eliminated.
8. Play continues until all but one ninja is eliminated.
9. Once the game is over, use the debrief questions below to talk about being anchored.

(CONTINUED)

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS:

- What did it feel like to have your feet anchored to the floor during our game?
- How did it help to have your feet anchored?
- Just as a boat is anchored, or our feet were anchored in the game, Jesus can be our anchor. What do you think that means? Read Hebrews 6:19.

48

Hoarding Team-Building Game

Sam Halverson

What happens when you combine hula hoops and a seemingly impossible task? A simple-yet-brilliant team-building game. As your students struggle with competing loyalties and a seemingly impossible goal, they will be forced to think outside the box as well as shift their focus from individual success to group success.

SUPPLIES:

- Plastic hoops (hula hoops) or pieces of rope or tubing formed in a circle—one for every two people.
- Lots and lots (and lots) of small, soft items. Stuffed animals work well (though aren't much help if wet). Brightly colored bean bags also work. They need not all be the same thing. Try to have at least seven items per person. More is always better here.
- A large space to run and spread out.

WHAT TO DO:

- Have individuals pair up with one other person.
- Lay out hula hoops (or similar-sized circles) on the ground or floor, allowing about twenty feet or more between each circle. These should be scattered and not all in a straight line.
- Ask pairs to stand with their circle.
- Set a pile of the soft items in the center of the playing space—not in anyone's circle.

- Tell students that they will be given ten minutes to collect all the soft items into their circle. They can take items out of someone else's circle but may not throw them. They may carry them or hand them off to get them back to their circle. Once again, the goal is to get all the soft items into their circle.
- Start the game and watch what happens.

THE KEY TO THE GAME:

While you have not stated this, it is helpful for you, the leader, to know that the circles can be moved. This is really the only way all groups can achieve the goal—to all lay the circles into one pile and to place all soft items into all the circles at once. This will most likely not happen right away, though (and if it does, then most likely someone has played before or has read these instructions). Watch the dynamics as people take from others to get ahead, as they try to protect what they have, and as some seem to just give up or hand all their soft items over to someone else.

AFTER TEN MINUTES:

Ask what has happened so far. Has anyone been successful? Why or why not? Is it possible to achieve the goal? How many couples could achieve the goal at once? What needs to happen for all the couples to reach the goal at one time?

Allow the participants another three or so minutes to try to achieve the goal but ask them to try to make it so all groups reach the goal at once. When time is up, discuss the questions on the following page.

POST-GAME REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What worked this last time?
- Why didn't you think of doing that earlier?

- What stood in the way of you recognizing the possibility of combining all the circles?
- How do we do that in the world?
- Why do we think that to “win” or “get something,” we have to take away from others?
- What would it take to see other possibilities?

Crowd Skee-Ball

Mike Rollins

Remember Skee-Ball? How about we take it to the next level so that you can play it with a room full of teens at camp? Basically, this is Skee-Ball but bigger and more epic.

SUPPLIES:

- Three 5-gallon buckets
- Three smaller buckets of the same color (like those used to build sandcastles)
- One smaller bucket (same as above) that is a yellow or gold color
- One large, brightly colored t-shirt
- Six tennis balls
- One six-foot or eight-foot table

HOW TO PLAY:

Set a table up so only one side of legs is standing to make a ramp. Select a volunteer who will be the ball roller. Then select several other students who will stand in the crowd with buckets of three different sizes: five-gallon bucket, 1,000 points; smaller bucket, 5,000 points; and golden bucket, 1,000,000 points!! Make sure you also have the person holding the golden bucket wear the large t-shirt to help them be seen. Once a student is given a bucket, that person's feet are now "glued" to the floor—they can't run around the room to try to catch a ball but can stretch to catch the ball.

(CONTINUED)

Once in place, the ball thrower will roll the balls one at a time off the ramp and (hopefully) into the buckets! Play as many rounds as you want or switch out contestants on the stage to see who can get the most points. This game can get pretty intense if you have the right people on the stage and the right person running the game!

50

Full-Contact Christmas Musical Chairs

Lee Barnes

This game is best played with LOUD alternative Christmas music like Lost and Found's *Christmas Album* or Relient K's *Deck the Halls, Bruise Your Hand*. Yes, it is old school, and that is why it rocks!

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide your group into two subgroups and make a circle of chairs for each group with one chair absent for the total number in the circle. Then the game is on.
2. Blast the music and have the groups rotate around the circles until the music stops. At that point, everyone tries to sit down. As they say in sports, "Let them play."
3. There will be one person left standing, and that person is out.
4. Then pull another chair...and so on.
5. Play until there are two players left in each of the circles, then combine the groups and play until there is a single winner.

VARIATIONS TO INCREASE THE FUN:

- Try playing with blindfolds...This takes the "full contact" to a whole other level.
- Instead of chairs, use a circle of candy canes (or other candy). Whoever doesn't pick one up is out.

- Turn the chairs facing the middle but keep the line on the outside so that they have to climb over the chair to get to it.
- When you divide into subgroups at the beginning, divide them by gender or by middle school and high school.
- Encourage your adult leaders to play the game.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

To finish the game or your lesson for the night, play “I Celebrate the Day” from *Deck the Halls, Bruise our Hand*. It is one of the BEST contemporary Christmas songs to get youth talking about what they believe about the Christ coming as a baby at Christmas.

This charades game combines all the fun of Christmas with everything you need in a great icebreaker, and there's little preparation required!

Divide your group into two teams and have them stand on either side of your projector. Pick a starting contestant from each team to stand at the front of the room with their backs to the screen. On your screen, behind the contestants, project a slide with an activity (come up with your own, or choose from the list provided below). The entire team—not the contestants—act out the activity together. Whichever contestant guesses it first wins a point for their team, and you move on to the next pair of players. Depending on time, five rounds might be adequate.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Building a Snowman
- Decorating the Christmas Tree
- Opening a Gift
- Singing Christmas Carols
- Sled Riding
- Waiting Under the Mistletoe
- Passing the Candlelight
- Wisemen Bringing Gifts