

Planning Our Youth Ministry Calendar

I love Google Maps.

When you load the homepage the default view is zoomed way out showing you the whole United States. Type in an address and it zooms in quickly to show you a specific region. Click "street view" and BAM! you're looking at things as if you were literally walking through the neighborhood by foot. Kinda creepy since Google is secretly stalking us, but kinda awesome at the same time. And a great example to how we typically plan our youth ministry calendar.

We first take a look at the big picture of our ministry, then zoom in on the season ahead, and finally get a street view all of the way down to the current teaching series and events. Let me explain in a bit more detail:

THE BIG PICTURE

It is a wise idea to get away for the day and get a big picture of your ministry. Take a break from the pace of ministry and the distractions of email, voicemail and the persistent nagging of Google+ and wrestle with an overview of your youth group. Summer is the perfect time for this! Now for some this is a simple task because they live in the world of ideas and vision – for others it will be challenging to stick your head up over it all and get a glimpse of the whole.

Key questions to ask yourself at this big picture stage:

- Where you think God wants to take students in the next year?
- What worked well last year, and will it work again?
- What annual events would be effective again this year?
- What needs to get the axe?
- Have I blocked out my week of vacation?
- Where are we strong and where are we weak?
- Is there a good balance of God's eternal purposes for our ministry (evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, worship)?

Paint in broad strokes what your youth ministry year will look like at this point. Lots of prayer – ask God for discernment. Use pencil.

THE SEASON AHEAD

You've now got an idea of the big picture of your youth ministry – now it is time to specially plan the next season. There are lots of ways you can do this – right now I like to divide the year into 3 unequal parts – Fall, Winter-Spring and Summer. This is the time to start to really firm up specific teaching topics, series and events. You probably already locked up some bigger things like summer camp, trips and retreat locations, but now is the time to make final decisions.

Key questions to ask yourself at this season stage:

- What needs to be cut?
- Am I keeping this program to satisfy a parent/vocal students or because it is what is best for our ministry?
- Where do I have momentum naturally and where is it lacking?
- What are the teaching topics for this season?
- Who is the best person to teach?
- Has my spouse seen this before I go public?

What looked good in the big picture view might be too much now that you're zoomed in a bit closer. You are still flexible enough at this point for an eraser. Use the eraser now if needed, but definitely not on your vacation time.

CURRENT SERIES/EVENTS

The closest we zoom in for planning is the current month. You've planned everything from a year out, you've firmed up much of those plans in your season overview, now it is time to lock everything down and walk into what you've planned.

Key questions to ask yourself at this season stage:

- What adjustments do I need to make based on circumstances that have come up since we planned the year/season?

- Am I balanced and healthy with this calendar?
- What can we do make our youth ministry even better next year?

I'm in the thick of planning our Fall planning right now! May God bless you as you serve students and plan your youth ministry calendar, too.

JG

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