

PRE-CONFERENCE STUDY GUIDE

Dear Montreat Youth Conference Participant Leader:

We are glad that your group will be joining us this summer as we explore our theme. Enclosed is a pre-conference session to be used prior to arrival in Montreat. If you are not accompanying the group to Montreat this summer, please give this to an adult leader who will be coming with the group.

Being part of the Montreat Youth Conference requires prior preparation, planning, packing, and prayer. To help you prepare your group for Montreat, we offer this session designed to:

- (1) help participants become better acquainted with others in the group,
- (2) establish a group covenant,
- (3) acquaint participants with the goals of the conference,
- (4) finalize any details about the trip.

We strongly encourage your group to take time for this hour and a half Pre-conference Session.

We look forward to seeing you in Montreat!
This summer's Youth Conference Planning Teams

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION

Preparation:

1. Name tags
2. Tape
3. Markers
4. Newsprint/chalk board
5. Cards/paper for expectations
6. Role Play Cards
7. Newsprint with goals
8. (optional) Paper with numbers

I. Group Building (15 minutes)

A. Name Tags - Provide name tags for each participant.

B. Circle within a Circle - Divide the group in half. Make two circles with half the group in an inner circle facing out and the other half in an outer circle facing in. Persons in both circles should sit face to face. Select one of the open-ended statements below. Each member of the pair should respond. Invite the outer circle to move one chair to the right to a new partner. Give the new pairs another open ended statement. Continue until the time is up or the group is ready to move. If you have an extra person, either include the leader of the group in the circle for a partner or rotate one person in/one person out on each turn.

1. One little known fact about me is.....
2. The longest I have ever been away from home is.....
3. One thing I will always remember about a retreat/youth event is.....
4. One thing I have always heard about Montreat is....
5. One thing I am really looking forward to about Montreat is....
6. I first heard of Montreat.....
7. One thing I like about traveling is....
8. One thing I really dislike about traveling is....

9. The farthest trip I have ever been on is.....
10. The most unusual gift I have ever received is...

II. Preparing A Covenant (15 minutes or more)

A. Explain to the group that we are creating a COVENANT. Webster defines COVENANT as "a binding and solemn agreement made by two or more individuals, parties, etc. to do or keep from doing something." In other words, a covenant is a promise to relate to one another in a particular way. Whenever individuals relate to each other, travel together, eat together, share living areas, and attend events together, each person has certain expectations of others. Covenants help us to know the common and agreed upon ways we will relate to each other. Our process is to establish a covenant that will determine how we will relate to one another during our time at Montreat.

B. You may need to work together as a group or divide into small groups.

C. On large newsprint paper, write the following at the top: "To create and maintain an atmosphere of family and community, we agree to:"

Invite each person to respond to each of the following statements:

1. One thing I expect or need from this group while at Montreat is.....
2. One thing I can offer to this group while at Montreat is.....
3. One thing I can offer to God while at Montreat is.....

Write responses on the newsprint and check with group to see if everyone can live with each statement.

Invite everyone to review what is written on the sheet and then to sign their name on the sheet as their commitment to this covenant.

D. Distribute the following statements to your group:

1. No walking in the middle of the road.
2. Observe the curfew each night.
3. No use of illegal drugs or alcohol.
4. No hitchhiking or accepting rides from strangers.
5. No bringing skateboards, rollerblades, "super-soakers", laser pointers, or water balloons.
6. Respect the property of others.
7. Keep audio devices in your room at low volume.
8. No climbing the mountains alone or before sunrise or after dark.
9. Participate fully in the conference activities.
10. Be responsible in our expressions of care, concern, and intimacy.
11. Respect the decisions of the conference leadership.
12. Especially care for & respect property in Montreat.
13. Respect every individual's racial-ethnic background.

Explain to the group that we will be living together with other conference participants and with Montreat residents for one week. There are certain expectations that Montreat has of us. Each person who comes to Montreat is asked to agree to these expectations. Invite each person to read aloud each expectation. After each expectation, discuss: How can agreeing to this expectation make living together at Montreat easier?

Mention to the group that at the close of the session they will receive a MONTREAT YOUTH CONFERENCE COVENANT, which they and their parents will need to sign. This will be turned in to the Planning Team of the conference upon their arrival at Montreat as a commitment to live as a community of the church and Jesus Christ while in Montreat. (Note: we suggest that you bring the newsprint sheets with you to Montreat and hang them up in your residence as a reminder of your group's covenant together). DO NOT FORGET to make a photocopy of signed covenants for your records before, during, and after the conference, noting that these ALSO SERVE AS MEDICAL RELEASE FORMS.

III. Living the Covenant (25 minutes)

Keeping in mind the covenant, which the group has created, invite the group to role-play the situations below with the following question in mind: How could you react to or respond to each situation responsibly?

1. Your roommate is planning to stay out after the curfew.
2. A member of your group skips the morning theme presentation.
3. The two people behind you are talking throughout worship and you cannot concentrate.
4. In your Small Group, some do not participate.
5. You discover that someone in your group has alcohol.
6. \$10 is missing and your roommate thinks someone from another group has taken it.
7. You can't sleep because the person next door is playing the radio too loudly.
8. A group is planning to sneak out after 2 AM.

IV. Examining the Conference Theme Statement (20 minutes)

A. On a sheet of newsprint write the conference theme statement which can be found on our website. Go to: <http://www.montreat.org/attend/youth-young-adults/> and select your conference. On your conference's web page, the first paragraph will be the theme statement.

Ask each person to read the statement silently.

B. Give each person paper and pencil. Ask each person to identify one or two areas from the theme statement that are personally interesting.

C. Ask each person to share his or her area of interest.

D. Take note of the similarities and differences.

E. Discuss how this theme might help you to grow in your faith.

V. Finalize Details (10 minutes)

Take care of any travel, financial, or housing details you may have. Answer questions.

VI. Closing (5 minutes)

Close with a group prayer. Join hands in the group and allow individuals to pray out loud in the group. Suggest to the participants that the prayers be ones of petition that God will help them experience and reach the goal(s) they identified above. After each petition, the whole group should respond, "This we pray, in Jesus' name". Example: "God, I want to know how to follow you more in my everyday life."
