

## **Group Activity**

### **PREPARATIONS**

The suggestions below will often have instructions for you (the youth pastor or group leader), but this event is *not* intended to be a “solo flight!” Divide up the sections and responsibilities among the other adult youth sponsors in your group, so that everyone shares in the leadership. You will also see below references to “student leaders”; this means those youth in your group who have been chosen as leaders, or whom you believe to be leaders.

If you know of other churches in the area that will also be participating in FUEL Week, make plans to do this Group Activity together. You can either go to a “public location” such as a park or the beach, or else invite them to your church. Be sure to settle on the details and make the invitation far in advance, so that the other groups will have opportunity to make the necessary arrangements.

Do not limit your consideration to just your own denomination or church group! FUEL Week was conceived and implemented by leadership from the Church of God (Anderson), Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Christian Church, Free Methodist Church, Salvation Army, and the Wesleyan Church. Find out if the local congregations of some of these other church groups are planning on participating in FUEL Week, and invite them to join you for this activity. Your time together may lead to an ongoing relationship that would serve as a powerful, practical witness to the unity that comes from holiness. If you can cross ethnic and social lines with other congregations, your witness to unity will be even more powerful.

If you have access to an outdoor fire pit, and weather permits, gather the kindling necessary to build a bonfire there. Make sure that the surrounding area is free of combustibles. Depending on the intended size of the fire, you may wish to have a responsible adult light the kindling beforehand, so that it is fully burning by the time your group meets. Do not leave the fire unattended, and be sure it is completely extinguished when you are through by soaking it with water and exposing all the embers.

If going outdoors is not possible, or if you want a more intimate setting, utilize a fireplace at your church or at someone’s home. Again, make sure that the kindling is set up and the fire is going beforehand. If you do not have any good way to build a fire, have a large metal bowl, a lit candle, and a bucket of water ready for the activity.

### **EMBODYING HOLINESS TOGETHER**

This activity will seek to provide closure for the week and give opportunity for your students to make some commitments and decisions. You may wish to set a contemplative mood. You can have the students enter or assemble silently, with worship music playing in the background—either recorded music or perhaps someone playing the guitar.

If there seems to be a lot of rowdiness in the group, begin with a time of centering prayer.

Select one or two of your group's favorite worship songs. Start by singing them *a cappella* or with minimal accompaniment.

## REFLECTING

After these moments of worship, say, **Throughout this past week, we have looked at the story of Paul and have seen the transforming grace that reoriented his life: first, toward reaching out to those needing the Good News that he had found, and then to the discipling of those new believers into maturity and lives of holiness. As the week draws to a close, we need to examine what we have learned. Some changes have taken place within us, and we have discovered other things that still need to change.**

Take a few minutes to share with the rest of the group your own personal reflections on the week. In what ways did the Holy Spirit speak to you? What things in your life will be changing as a result of this experience? Hearing what's going on inside of *you* may be a catalyst for others to share.

Next, share about some of the good things you noticed taking place in the lives and the relationships of your youth during FUEL Week. What have your youth done in the past, and what have you seen them do recently, that indicates holy living? Perhaps they treated some newcomers with openness and kindness. Maybe they have been consistent at joining their friends for prayer at the altar in church. Holiness is sometimes dominated by thinking about what *not* to do; find some ways, in *this* moment, to offer your youth some positive and genuine praise for the indicators of holiness that you already see in them.

Now, invite your students to share what *they* have experienced during FUEL Week. Was there one particular event, activity, or devotion that really spoke to them? Did they feel as if they received some answers to prayer that they had been waiting on for a long time? Are there specific issues that God has convicted them about? You may want to specifically ask some of the student leaders in your group beforehand if they would think about sharing during this time. Again, this may be an impetus for others to share.

## TRANSFORMING

Read Acts 9:1 – 22 (or whatever portion you feel will make the point) aloud. Say, **Paul was on the way to Damascus when he had an encounter with Jesus Christ. He still went to Damascus after his encounter, but instead of taking Christians as prisoners, he sought to bring freedom to people by letting them know that Jesus was the Christ.**

Say, **Just as Paul continued on to his destination, so you will have to go on with your lives. School is still in session. Your friends will still be there. You still live with the**

**same people. But there can be something *different* in the midst of everything that's the same.**

Point out that in the Bible, fire had several different purposes that usually carried symbolic meanings. Sometimes fire was used to consume or destroy, to get rid of contagious or contaminated articles, or even to punish sin. Sometimes fire was used to dedicate or purify, to devote the spoils of war to the Lord, or to refine gold or silver and increase its value. The Old Testament concept of sacrifice actually had elements of *both* ideas; animals were offered as representatives of the guilt of God's people and destroyed by fire, yet they were considered an offering, a "pleasing aroma" to the Lord (Leviticus 8:21).

Enlist someone to pass out small slips of paper and writing utensils. Say, **When the fire of the Holy Spirit fills us, it refines some things in our lives, but it destroys others. God has been speaking to some of you this week.** At this point, some soft background music (guitar or prerecorded) would be good.

Say, **I want you to think about your home and family life. What things does God want to change there? Do you have a problem with respect? Obedience? Lying? Setting a good example for your younger brothers or sisters? Whether it's something you need to pursue or something you need to give up, write it down.** Give students some time to write down their thoughts.

Say, **I want you to think about your school and your friendships. What things does God want you to change there? Your efforts in class? Your language? Your attitude? The way you treat others? Whether it's something you need to pursue or something you need to give up, write it down.** Give students some time to write down their thoughts.

Say, **I want you to think about this youth group and this church. What things does God want to change here? Our commitment to worship? Our commitment to one another? The way we treat people? The way we treat God? Whether it's something you need to pursue or something you need to give up, write it down.** Give students some time to write down their thoughts.

## **COMMITTING**

After everyone has had a chance to write down their thoughts, say, **In the New Testament, God brought people together. Filled with the Holy Spirit, living lives of total passion and dedication to God, the people experienced *unity*. They were not divided; they were whole. They had the same purpose, the same passion, the same desire to give all to God and live their whole lives for him.** Ask students to toss their papers into the fire in unison.

If building a fire was not possible, have students light their papers from the candle and throw them in the bucket together. Beware of smoke detectors nearby (that would *definitely* ruin the mood!), and be prepared to extinguish the flames with the bucket of water before the bowl gets too hot.

Another option would be to tell students that you (and/or other adult youth sponsors whom the youth trust) will commit to pray about the issues they have written down. Tell them that they don't have to put their names on the papers unless they want to, but whether or not there is a name, you will be praying specifically for each need. Assure them that no one else will see their requests. Instead of throwing the requests into the fire, pass around a container to collect them, or have the adult youth sponsors collect them.

**Say, If you left behind an old habit here, you don't have to take it home with you. Leave it here, consumed by the Holy Spirit's fire. If you made a commitment to do something new, you have entrusted that to the power of God. Go and do it with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

## **DESIRING**

Ask everyone to bow their heads. Say, **We're going to close now by praying together. I will start the prayer, and then as the Spirit leads you, I want you to speak out loud a single word or phrase of prayer that expresses your desire for holiness right now, the thing you most need to live a holy life. Maybe you'll just say "patience," or you'll say "love," or "power over temptation." After everyone has had a chance to pray, I will close.**

You may want to ask some of the student leaders in your group beforehand to share some "prayer words" during this time; it will help others to understand the process. You could start the prayer by saying, **Father God, your Word calls us to live holy lives. You have spoken to many during these past few days. Sometimes you said, 'This needs to stop.' Sometimes you said, 'I want you to go in a different direction.' But we can't make these changes on our own. Tonight, we speak the things we need most from you in our lives. Lord, I speak the thing that I need most right now.** At this point, state the word or phrase that best expresses your own desire for holiness. Close out the prayer after everyone has had a chance to share.

## **CLOSING**

You can dismiss things quietly, with the background music still playing, and continue the contemplative mood. However, this may be difficult if some students have to wait around for a ride home, or if you are outdoors.

Especially if other youth groups are present, an opportunity for fellowship would be good. If you did not do any games or other activities before the service, arrange to have

food and beverages now, but make it a surprise, if possible. Announce that you will now celebrate together the new things that God is doing.

Many commitments, offered with the best of intentions, fall by the wayside because of lack of follow-up. Take the time to support all that has been done during FUEL Week, and the decisions that have been made. Send a postcard to students who made decisions, letting them know that you are still praying for them. If your youth group has regular small group times, schedule some feedback there in the future so that students can talk about their victories and struggles with holiness. Or, schedule a special feedback session later on for everyone. If other youth groups were involved in this activity with you, don't let the fellowship end! Plan, promote, and participate in future activities with them.

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Church of God*