

# Leaving

This is another session based around a time when youth leaders move on – in our case a couple who had been significant in the youthwork. (Another similar session can be found in the Talks section under ‘Change’).

In this, we also got everyone together (writing by letter, email, text etc) at the church a week previously to have a group photo, to write messages to those leaving. An idea of 2 of our youth workers was to get a polaroid camera (deliberately old skool!) and have a pic of everyone in the youth work, who then signed the bottom of the Polaroid. Those we didn’t get on the Saturday were ‘got’ on the following Sunday discreetly!

Of course you could do this with a phone or camera and print them off too but if you miss anyone it’s difficult to get them printed quickly unless you bring your printer and there’s something nice about an old skool little printed photo!

## START

With worship songs, chosen by the people / person leaving. Get young people involved in the worship. We chose a few songs they were comfortable playing.

## : NOTE :

*If you’re thinking of ending an event or a regular session that you have run in your youth ministry, consider some of these ideas below.*

**THINK – Because people in the group and leaders will have suffered loss, check it out with people before and see if you think this would cause any issues. If so, don’t do the funeral idea as it simply may be too painful or sensitive.**

- *Have a short memorial service for the end of the event.*
- *Get the youth workers to dress up in black with shirt and tie if possible.*
- *Have a burial of the ‘event’ with a mockup coffin – if you have space and the safety inclination, you could even have a burning of the coffin.*
- *Maybe have tributes to your ‘fallen comrade.’*
- *A speech or two.*
- *Maybe have some flowers scattered around the room (without being wasteful in any way).*
- *End it by having some quiche and drinks served in green crockery. (This last idea is a friendly mocking of church culture)*

If you don’t decide to do this idea, then an alternative is to have a leaving party, or just be completely ironic by having a welcome party. The other thing is that if the person leaving is for example going to work at a company (or another church) then consider setting up the room to mimic the place they are going to work – with a banner, titles, work cards, getting people to dress up in the ‘uniform’ of the place the leaver is going to!

## REMIX

Sadly, some youth leaders who once left the church like Cliff Richard. So we remixed a Cliff song, 'Summer Holiday' and wrote new words. We put a backing track to this and sung this (to give you an idea for your group). Another person liked The Proclaimers, so we remixed one of their songs and changed the words to be about the youth leader...

Here's the remixed song plus guitar chords for the couple (The F's), just to give some ideas..

## GET FACTS

Unknown ones, about other youth workers, young people etc. Bizarre stuff that people would be unlikely to know.. some of our were, 'I wet myself up the Eiffel Tower' and 'My toothbrush is blue' or 'My first album I bought was S Club 7' and 'I've met The Simpsons' etc.

Then the people leaving have to guess which young person wrote it. When the guess is made the young person the fact is about stands up, to see if the guess was correct. According to the scores, we gave prizes..

Under 5 answers correct – they had to stay at the church another 7 years

6-10 answers – they got an unattractive lampshade

10-15 answers – a pen and pencil combo

16-20 answers – a signed photo of the pastor

Over 20 answers – a Cadburys cream egg each or something similar

## A VIDEO COMPILATION

We also put together a compilation of photos, video and images from into a 5 minute video presentation about what one couple had been involved in during their time as youth leaders.

If not, get together a load of the photos and get a large bit of paper and stick them on – going through all the photos and the memories associated with them. Get young people to help too.

## THE SIMSPONS

There's got to be a clip that relates to the people leaving so use one of them. We actually used the Simpsons clip of when Ned Flanders tries to baptise Lisa, Bart and Maggie. We used The Simpsons titles, then Photoshopped them to be copy the Simpsons font but using the family name of those leaving. We also did a remix of the opening music to The Simpsons but using the name of the family leaving, instead of 'The Simpsons'

## TESTIMONIES and MEMORIES

Of those leaving. This was done by 2 youth leaders in 2 different slots as it's obviously quite emotional and we felt it would be unfair to put this on any of the young people

## PRESENTATION

Of the photos and memories taken of and by the young people and youth leaders. Then the couple gave a speech, so you may want to give space for this. We half-jokingly suggested getting a box of tissues for this bit. We didn't. We should have!

## THE TALKY BIT

We had 2 talky bits. The main one is from Acts 13.

Acts 13 – This is when Paul and Barnabas are sent to be apostles to the Gentiles. Here's the important verses..

"In the church at Antioch there were these prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (also called Niger), Lucien (from the city of Cyrene), Manaen (who had grown up with Herod, the ruler) and Saul. They were all worshipping the Lord and gave up eating for a certain time (fasting). During this time the Holy Spirit said to them, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to do a work for which I have chosen them.' So after they had given up eating and prayed, they laid hands on Barnabas and Paul and sent them out."

## SPIRITUAL PEOPLE SEEKING GOD TOGETHER

Read Ephesians 2.20-22

We are a Holy people, called by God and clothed in his holiness and power. We have the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We are all people of God and all have different gifts and skills given by God. However, we know that some people seem to be closer to God than others. It's worth connecting with these kinds of people, those who'll bring you on and support you in your journey of faith.

We find Saul and Barnabas as part of a group seeking God's face through prayer, worship and fasting. If we are standing in unity with our spiritual brothers and sisters, in the place of true worship before God we can expect to hear God speak to us. This is what happened here to the early apostles.

The group was made up of people with different gifts, from different areas and with different levels of understanding but they were equal and united in their humility before God. If we want to seek God's voice and will for our lives we've got to be in this place. Sometimes if we're not God will bring us there. God has brought me down so it's just me and him many times. Notice the power in fasting together at the same time and then worshipping God. Maybe this is something you and the youth workers, young people could do on a regular basis.

## THE CALL OF GOD

Read Ephesians 1.3-6 and verse 11

Ephesians makes it clear that before time, God chose us to be part of his team. You may not be the spiritual equivalent of Harry Kane or Lionel Messi, but if you're a Christian, you were chosen by Jesus before time even began. That in itself should make you feel valuable and special.

But it also tells you that God chose you for a purpose. In you, he put gifts strengths and talents in a unique combo that no-one else possesses. He chose you for this time, in the place where you are. God knew this and he had Jesus pick you out!

In Acts 13.2, we see the Holy Spirit call Saul and Barnabas to do a special work for God. So part of our life's mission is to find out God's will for our life. God has a unique purpose and plan for your life, using the gifts and desires that are in you thru the Spirit of God. You may be a skater, so use skating as your mission field. Maybe you're good at helping behind the scenes. Do that. Work hard to learn what God wants for you, do it, grow in it, get around Godly, Spirit-filled, faith-driven people who'll help you grow. (Read Ephesians 1.17)

Relate this call of God to the people who are leaving.

## SENDING

In verse 3 of Acts 13 we see that the group sent Saul and Barnabas. This is the Biblical model. If we want to be the most effective apostles and missionaries we possibly can, we need to be in a church and be sent by the church, maybe even anointed by oil.

Why? Because this is the New Testament model. We also see apostles reporting back to churches, to be accountable and to encourage. To gain prayer and financial support. That is why missionaries do things the way they do. If we are stepping out in faith, we need to be sure that God has called us (check the call with your church, leaders, the Bible, have you got peace of mind?). We need to be supported financially (usually, although we may need to or God may well call us to simply step out in faith), we need to be supported in prayer and know we have friends standing with us, there for us.

This leads into the prayer..

## PRAYER and LAYING ON OF HANDS

As we feel like our youth service is a valid church (part of the church) we laid hands on the couple leaving to pray for them, lay hands on them and send them in the eyes of God, as was Biblical in the New Testament. For this, all the young people stood in a circle around the couple and prayed out loud and in their hearts.

If you are allowed and have time, it may be cool to have Communion together.

## AT THE END

Real important just to judge the moment. Be funny, sit back and be available. Follow up young people. Let them deal with it in their way. Just be sensitive to the Spirit. Peace.