

# Midweek Meetings

rejuvenating team retreats



## Christian Retreats Network

*Your Partner in Effective Off-site Ministry*

Revitalizing Your Team  
Engaging Your Audience  
Location, Location, Location  
Meeting Room Snacks  
Room Setup



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A CRN Resource

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## A little about us...

The Christian Retreats Network began almost a decade ago with a full-service Christian conference center that was fanatically committed to offering the best possible Christian off-site event hosting at truly affordable rates. As a 50-year veteran in this ministry, Lake Williamson led the industry with a host of best practices, extraordinary service, and all-inclusive event packages that had strong appeal to event planners. In time, other Christian conference & retreat properties began to join with Lake Williamson to form the network. Each property became a champion of winning brand promises and combined their strengths to market their ministry services. The network concept thrived for all partners and was a great example of the power of collaboration.

The Christian Retreats Network is committed to being your partner in effective off-site ministry. We understand what it takes to execute a successful off-site event and look forward to providing you with the highest level of professional service in a Christ-centered atmosphere.



## Expertise When You Need It!

Would you like help planning activities for your next event? Contact our retreat planning team at 877-833-2272. We'd be glad to point you in the right direction, coach your planning team, and explain how to use our downloadable resources.

Our team includes the expertise of pastors, event planners, team building consultants, and all around fun people! Tell us about your event at: [info@christianretreatsnetwork.org](mailto:info@christianretreatsnetwork.org)

# Revitalizing Your Team



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An organization that lacks a collective vision will miss its full potential. Gifted people with passion working individually will accomplish some good, but when they pool their strengths, they can accomplish amazing things. Taking the leaders of your organization on a retreat eliminates distractions and allows them to focus on setting goals and objectives. Your church's facilities are nice, but going off-site can help your team's minds and hearts truly open up.

Stewardship of ministry funds is paramount, but taking your leadership on a retreat and expecting them to set up the meeting space, cook the meals and run the team building is not only time consuming, it's counterproductive. Your leaders' time is valuable and must be invested wisely. Leave the details up to your host facility and leave your leadership free to focus on the task at hand.

Speaking of that task, having clear objectives and developing manageable action points are essential to leaders feeling like their time was well spent and are invigorated to move forward.

*Here are some ideas of areas to cover at your retreat:*

## **Changing Lives**

Christian ministries are in the "business" of changing lives. The way that people perceive your organization is pivotal to your success. When people perceive that your community is approachable, inviting and friendly, they will feel the freedom to join you for worship and activities. A great exercise for your leadership retreat is to review surveys of members and potential members of your organization to understand how they feel about your ministry. If there's a perception problem, the solutions start with the leadership.

## **Go Confidently in the Direction of Your Dreams**

Every organization needs the financial support of its members to support the mission and fulfill the vision. When members get the impression that you are using your resources wisely, they will feel confident in giving abundantly. So it would be wise to spend time on your retreat getting down to the root of the confidence problem and create solutions together. The toughest part about this task is admitting that something you're doing is directly causing the lack of giving. Encouraging everyone to be open and honest and leaving blame and judgment at the door will foster productive conversations.

## **Event Planning**

It's no surprise that everyone's schedules are jam packed these days, so getting your events on people's calendars early is essential. Consider taking the time to map out your calendar for the next 24, if not 36 months. You will find that your events are better attended when people have plenty of notice and better executed when your coordinators have the proper time to plan. Another advantage is the ability to get the best rates and accommodations for your off-site events when you are able to book 12-18 months in advance.

# Venue Selection



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## Location, Location, Location

If you're not leaving your everyday work environment, then you aren't having a retreat. Getting away is vital to building excitement for your event, but where? Where's the middle ground between the office and the Ritz Carlton? Where is a location that's close enough to not kill you in transportation costs, but far enough away to create that feeling of a true retreat experience?

When comparing host facilities, keep in mind the additional costs. Are they giving you a package rate that includes the room usage, setup, AV equipment, recreation and food? Or are all of these items add-ons to the cost of lodging? Consider this, too: Is it really a retreat if you're going from the board room at the office to a board room at a hotel? If you are truly going to focus on building your team cohesion as a main aspect of this retreat, you're probably going to need a facility that focuses on being a "retreat location".

These types of facilities typically have team building programs in-house, and will provide you with greater opportunities for socialization, which you will find essential to the productivity and success of your retreat. The last thing you want is for people to run off with their smart phones, checking emails and making business calls during down time, because your location doesn't provide facilities to promote team bonding.

*Consider the following comparisons when determining the right fit for your event:*

### **Advantages of On-Site:**

- Home Turf – When you host your event at your home church, you can easily coordinate the resources that are on hand.
- Come & Go – Personal conflicts are less likely to prevent people from attending.
- Babysitting – It's much easier to coordinate someone to watch the kids for a day than it is for a weekend.

### **Advantages of Off-Site:**

- Neutral Territory – Some people have a real stigma about going to church or even attending a church event. Holding your event off-site creates a neutral territory that is more conducive for attracting guests.
- Focus & Attention – When people invest in an off-site retreat, they leave behind the stresses and commitments of daily life, leaving them open to fully engage in your program.
- Out of the ordinary – Shared experiences in a unique setting are the perfect groundwork for building community and creating memories.

## Neutral Turf

Teams can meet on short term objectives through the conventional weekly or monthly meetings. However, every so often, usually 1-3 times per year, a more intensive meeting is required to hammer out layered and detail intensive planning and budgeting.

For these meetings it is sometimes necessary and often helpful to conduct them on neutral turf. For a multi-campus organization or even different departments within a single organization, meeting on neutral turf helps to eliminate any resentment of always holding meetings at 'headquarters' or in the 'executive board room'. Neutral locations promote equality by eliminating the home field advantage and taking time out from titles to focus on the matters at hand—idea sharing and creative brainstorming.

Taking your meeting to neutral turf doesn't have to be expensive. Many leaders think off-site equals over-budget, but that's not the case! While taking your team off-site is likely more expensive than staying on-site, I think you'll agree that the benefits justify the investment.

# Meeting the Need



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## Why You Need a Meeting Space

You may be wondering why you even need a meeting space on a retreat. “Meeting” can be a scary word. After all, you are on a retreat, what do you want to go to meetings for? This is supposed to be a time to relax and bond with whom you came. But, the retreat center has provided you with a meeting space (complimentary at all 7 of our Christian Retreats Network properties) so you have to fill it somehow.

Just because it is called a meeting space, doesn't mean that you actually have to have a long, boring, serious meeting. Here's a list of fun ideas for using your meeting space:

**Bible study.** Find verses that address the topic/reason for your event and discuss them with the group. This is a good time to really dive deep into the meaning of the scripture. Getting everyone talking about why you are on a retreat can really increase the impact of it.

**Ice breaker.** Kick off your event with an activity that gets everyone acquainted and working together.

**Guest speaker.** If the event has a topic/theme, hire a professional speaker who can address it. Even though the planner may have ideas on the topic, having a stranger speak could address new views or explain the content in a more understandable way.

**Worship band.** Many worship bands travel the country performing for churches and groups. Getting one to come to your event can really give it some pop, and possibly interest more people in coming if they like the band. Better yet, if members of your group play, have them lead the group in some songs. One of the most fun ways to worship is through music. Turn it up, belt it out, and praise the Lord.

If you happen to have things about the church that do need discussed, this is a good time. Being away from the church and committees within, can give members some time to address what they really want out of the church. This could be group outings, Sunday school classes, volunteer work, or repairs on the church itself. We all know that times change, and churches must keep up. This doesn't have to be a formal meeting. Simply asking members what their church needs are and where they see it in 10 years can be a great starting point.

If the meeting space, and AV equipment in it, is complimentary, take advantage and make your retreat the best it can be.



# Meeting Room Setup



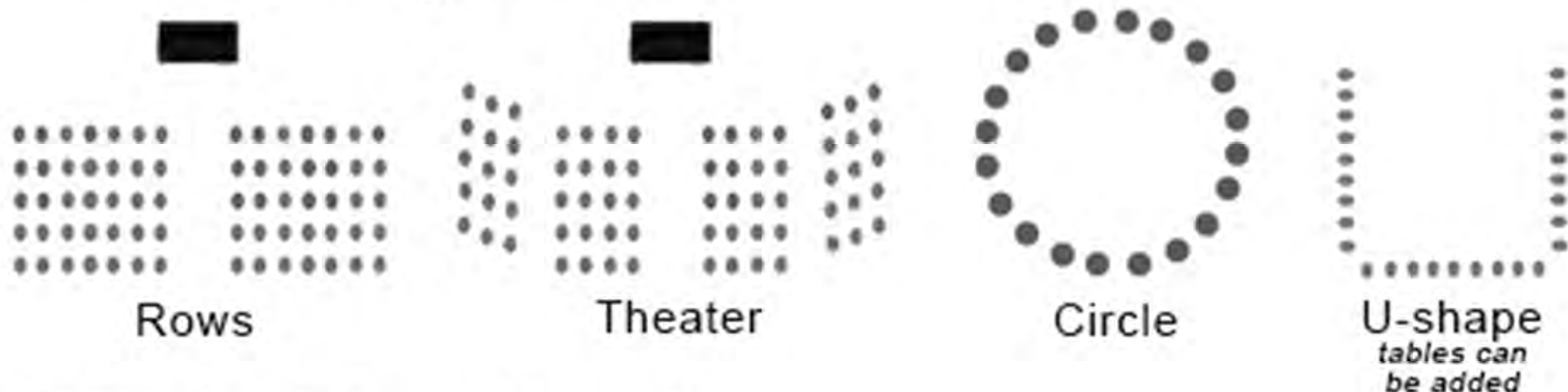
A CRN Resource

Now that you know what you are going to use your meeting space for, it's time to think about the setup. The best thing to do is find out as much information as you can before you get there.

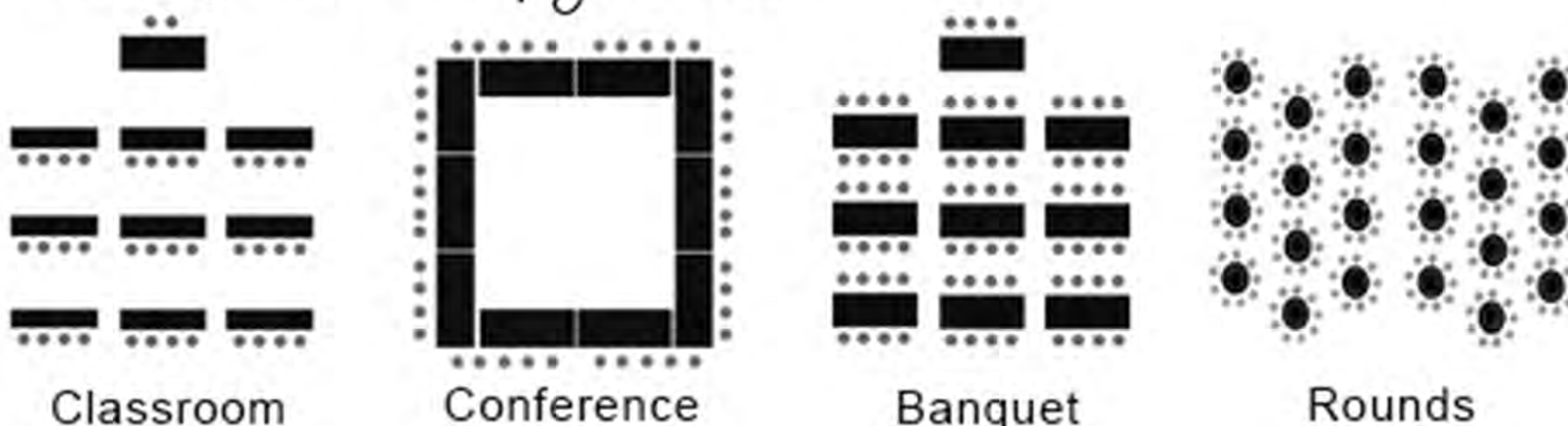
*Some key points to ask your on-site contact are:*

- **Room dimensions.** It is important to know how much space you will have. If you plan on doing an activity, make sure there is enough room for movement.
- **Max capacity.** Retreats are usually planned by a per person process. Room dimensions are great for knowing the space you have, but most places will give you an exact number of people allowed to occupy a room.
- **Restrooms.** You can guarantee that someone will need to use the restroom during your meeting time. Finding out where they are located beforehand means you can let all your attendees know too, so there are no interruptions during your meeting. Depending on the group, it may be necessary to check out handicap accessibility and family restrooms.
- **Stage.** For large groups listening to a speaker or band, it is best to have a stage so that everyone can see.
- **A/V equipment.** All of our properties provide complimentary A/V equipment with a meeting space. If you know what kind of equipment you need, on-site staff can make sure it is all set up for your arrival.
- **Ceiling height.** Depending on the activity or props, you may need a higher ceiling.
- **Flooring.** This may seem unimportant, but depending on the activity, you may need a certain type of flooring. If there's a possibility of a mess, you may want a room with tile instead of carpet.
- **Tables.** Make sure the room includes tables if you plan on writing or eating.
- **Possible seating arrangements** (see below). Round tables allow for conversations, but not looking at a speaker. Make a U-shape or circle for discussion. Rows and theater are good for listening to one person. Classroom is great if there is a possibility of writing.
- **Extras.** Some meeting spaces come with a kitchenette or breakout spaces.

## *Chair only configurations*



## *Table & Chair configurations*



# Engaging Your Audience



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## Is the Crowd Taking in What You are Trying to Share?

Have you ever sat through a sermon, a lecture, or even with a friend for a cup of coffee and wondered what in the world are they talking about? Both the speaker and the audience have a responsibility to engage with the conversation and each play a significant role in the other's ability to do so.

*Here's a few things to look for in keeping the audience engaged:*

- **Review carefully:** nothing is worse than having no clue what is going on because the seminar content is more advanced than the audience member's understanding. To the same end, leaving a seminar having learned nothing new is equally frustrating.
- **Check for understanding:** give the audience opportunities to show that they understand or if they are unclear. You can do some really fun activities here that will keep your audience attentive and involved, too. With a pit stop or two, you can determine if the audience is bored, split, or still not ready for advanced material.
- **Give the audience something to look forward to:** most people would never get on a plane if they didn't know where it was going. They will accept the journey but want to know where things are headed.

Somewhere along life's journey we have picked up this notion that "what's in it for me" is the ultimate litmus test. I find that most people are questioning attending an event as a whole with this kind of question, though some people are far too granular with this test... people ask, "should I even go to ABC retreat?" or "Will I get anything out of it?" People really start to question an event's worth or value if they have been before and felt like it didn't meet their expectations.

Most people think of hospitality as the elements that allow a person to feel comfortable or "at-home" when they're in another environment. These concepts should carry over into the teaching time as well. Allowing an audience to engage and be apart of the presentation... adapting constantly to the audience changes the way a message will be delivered and can still end up landing in the same place.

## Using Activity to Enhance Lessons

Not everyone can sit still for hours and be able to focus and retain everything that one person is droning on about. Add a little activity to your meetings to keep things fresh and listeners engaged.

**Let listeners talk.** You can do this by asking questions or making them defend sides on a topic. Have a group discussion-based lecture.

**Act it out.** Bible stories are perfect for performing. Youths especially will enjoy getting the chance to get up and move around. Putting them in the situation will help them better understand what is really happening and allow them to figure out their own decisions.

**Make it a game.** Adults and kids alike love games, so why not use it as a teaching moment. You could take the less active approach by doing trivia, writing, or memorization, or the more active approach by getting members moving around the room.

**Use props or visuals.** They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Instead of trying to describe something and making listeners visualize it in their minds, bring in something for them to actually look at.

The next time you are planning a bible study or other lesson, remember to consider your audience and just have fun with it.

*James 1:22 "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

## What's the Plan, Stan?

Now that you've decided on dates, found your venue and budgeted for your retreat, all that's left is to plan your agenda.

*The first thing you need to decide is what you want the outcome of your retreat to be.*

Deciding on your destination first will ultimately make creating the roadmap to get there a lot easier and more effective. The agenda for your retreat should be well-balanced to include plenty of time for reflection, brainstorming, and team-building, as well as entertainment, fun and rest. Don't feel like you have to do all of this alone either. If you're getting super stressed out about planning a rejuvenating retreat, you're totally missing the point. Ask your staff for their input on what they'd like to cover on the retreat. If your staff feels like a part of the planning process, they're more likely to be invested in the success of the retreat itself.

Whatever your agenda, 1 or 2 day retreat, be flexible. Rigidity in a staff retreat goes against everything the retreat is about. Allow plenty of time for meals, fun and opportunities to get up, move around and truly work on the bond that is going to help your staff feel like part of family. Be careful not to turn your retreat into just another staff meeting. Discussing business, especially coming up with creative ideas to improve your organization or the way you operate, is not off the table, but this is not the time nor the place to discuss anything too "heavy".

## Let's Go Team!

The joy of getting away is so important when it comes to planning ahead. As leaders or planners we need to get away and "Seek God" for His direction and purpose. A Group Leader recently stated: "Even the grass looks greener and the food is amazing when it comes to offsite retreats."

*Here are some important goals to set when you are offsite doing strategic planning.*



- Ask real questions about your purpose for the next event or year. These real questions will help you locate some direction for your staff. Questions have a way to determine insight for the leader or planner. Hard questions such as: Where do we go from here? Why are we doing it this way or should we do it another way? Also, how can we make this happen soon?
- Seek out some fresh ideas from your team. Ideas that will help bring new desire and purpose. There is nothing like a fresh start or fresh idea. Even seek God for his "Fresh Touch" on our lives and plans. God will always answer as we seek Him Matthew 6:33.
- Knock on the door for new opportunities. God has a way of giving us new opportunities. Maybe this new opportunity is a big surprise. Maybe it's something you have been praying for to happen. Allow yourself to dream a little and ask God for "New Strength".





## Healthy Snacks to Have at Your Next Meeting

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Every meeting needs a good presentation, engaging conversation, and snacks. Did I just say snacks? This may not be at the top of everyone's meeting agenda, but the right snacks can really make a difference. The last thing you want to be heard at your meeting is the growl of protesting stomachs.

Many places offer coffee and doughnuts or other pastries to help tide members over until the end of the meeting. However, these sugary snacks are just filling everyone with empty calories and are not actually satisfying. I mean, I love glazed doughnuts as much as the next person, but there are many healthier (and still tasty) options that will actually benefit those in the meeting. The main purpose of these meeting snacks is to keep members focused. We all know how distracting hunger can be, no matter how exciting the meeting. Making sure members are full and focused can greatly increase the effectiveness of your meeting and participation from members.

Some great alternatives to those sugary scoundrels are fruit and vegetable trays, cheese and nut platters, oatmeal muffins, and trail mix.

## Snack Options

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### Trays

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Fresh Vegetable Tray with Ranch Dip

Fresh Fruit Tray

Cheese & Cracker Tray

Deli Tray

### Afternoon Treats

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Fresh Baked Cookies

Brownies

Gourmet Dessert Bars

Assorted Mini Candy Bars

Premium Mixed Nuts

### Chips

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Potato Chips with French Onion or Ranch Dip

Tortilla Chips & Salsa

Tortilla Chips with Spinach & Artichoke Dip

Assorted Chip Flavors

### Beverages

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Coffee

Iced Tea

Lemonade

Hot Chocolate

Water

# Team Building is Biblical



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“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”—1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NIV)

The Barna Group reports only 41% of church attendees are satisfied with the “level of community and personal connectedness” they experience within their church. In other words, the majority of church attendees feel disconnected from their church.

The Apostle Paul compared Christ-followers to the human body. In the 1 Corinthians 12 he discusses how each and every part of the body contributes to the whole. Without the eye, the body is blind. Without the foot, the body is lame. In the same way the “Body of Christ,” is limited when members of that body remain detached from the whole.

A verse I frequently use with groups during team building sessions is Galatians 6:2, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (NIV). Only rarely can groups define what the “law of Christ” is. Jesus told us in John 13:34, “A new law I give you: Love one another.” So when we carry each other’s burdens we are, in fact, loving each other, and therefore fulfilling the law of Christ. Ultimately, developing teamwork in Christian groups is about loving each other by valuing a person enough to practice clear communication skills that promote respect, encouragement, and trust.

Early this year I had a minister bring his youth for a recreational event. Afterwards, he wrote to me about the experience. “The most enjoyable part was watching my students grow in their relationships to one another and learn what they can do together.” There was no mention of the activities or the challenge course itself. It was the growth he observed in his youth that stood out.

What is your church doing to help increase the level of community and personal connectedness in your congregation? Connectedness does not have to be big and organized. It can be as simple as a time for coffee and donuts on Sunday morning. Combine regular, casual interactions with annual church retreats and you can be sure to watch the unity of your church grow.



## The Law of Personal Growth

Scattered around the adventure challenge courses at Lake Williamson, you will find posters listing out what I call “The Law of Personal Growth.” As the law goes:

- **Each person is responsible for his or her own growth.**
- **No one can compel another individual to grow.**
- **Every moment is an opportunity for growth.**
- **What a person takes from the experience directly correlates to what the person gives to the experience.**

In explaining this law to participants, I often point out that my job (as a facilitator) is not to make them grow. My job is to give them opportunity to grow. What they do with that opportunity is entirely on them.

If you take a moment, there is a lot to mull over in this “law,” and, frankly, much of what it says runs contrary to societal norms. We live in a day and age where it is common to blame others for our unhappiness and misfortunes. We expect others to take responsibility for our success and well-being.

However, as much as we try to “shift the blame,” each of us is ultimately responsible for the kind of person we become. Growth is a choice. We can choose to spend our time watching television and trolling social media sites, or we can choose activities that stimulate growth and development.

# Closing Remarks



A CRN Resource

## Finding Leaders

There are two kinds of leaders: those who naturally lead, and those given the title of "leader." Unfortunately, the two are not always synonymous.

Whether it's a school classroom or adult leadership team, a quality facilitated team building program, like the ones offered at our properties, helps groups unleash and capitalize on the leadership potential within any team. Many groups are surprised when the opportunity to work outside of assigned titles reveals a new group dynamic

Here are 4 ways incorporating team building into your next retreat can help your group "take the lead":

1. *Identify potential leaders within the group.*
2. *Shift focus from self-success to group- success.*
3. *Draw out the pillars of team leadership: Communication, Respect, Encouragement, Safety, and Trust.*
4. *Recognize negative leadership traits and make corrective steps.*



## It's All Over...Now What?

When all is said and done, don't forget to poll your staff on how they thought the retreat went and ask for suggestions for future retreats. Again, truly allowing your staff to be an integral part of the entire process is essential, but I'd also suggest doing this on an individual and group basis to get the best, most honest feedback.

When it all comes down to it, everyone needs a break sometimes. Vacations, personal days and "sick days" help, but you'll find that truly investing in the morale of your staff during work hours shows them that you appreciate them, and are committed to the long-term success of your team.



## Christian Retreats Network

*Your Partner in Effective Off-site Ministry*

The Christian Retreats Network helps churches plan, promote, and host off-site ministry events at our seven retreat locations in Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Michigan, West Virginia, and Virginia.

We are professional planners, helping your church every step of the way. We understand you're holding a ministry event for a purpose. The planning team at the Christian Retreats Network will help you focus on mission critical aspects of your off-site ministry like worship, workshops, and small groups. Our Conference Services and Guest Service teams will help you plan logistics and coordinate hospitality so you can minister to your attendees.