

Preparing Your Park Program



Each team that comes is going to put on a 5-day park program. The area in Surrey where we are ministering is made up of numerous neighbourhoods, each having its own park. There are 600-1200 homes surrounding each of these parks. We run the programs from 7-8 pm, Monday to Friday evenings, and generally see 20-50 children and parents in attendance each evening. We have developed an exciting strategy in which each team "adopts" a neighbourhood. They will do ministry, including their park ministry, in that neighbourhood all week.

What should we do for the park ministry?

Many churches use their VBS material for this ministry, and adapt it to an outdoor setting. Some will have the youth group run the church VBS so they are practiced up for the Great Canadian Adventure. Some will use CEF 5-day club material. There are lots of ideas available in Christian bookstores, or perhaps from your church's CE director.

What should our park program look like?

The following is a basic plan that we suggest. You are welcome to expand and do more, but you should have these basic elements in your plan:

1. Each event should be 45 min. - 1 hr. long.
2. Your program should include the following elements:
 - a. a game time
 - b. a song time
 - c. a Bible lesson
 - d. a craft or game that reviews the lesson
3. The primary focus is to love the children, with the secondary focus of winning the parents' trust toward Community of Hope Church.
4. Focus on moral principles which will help the child immediately, i.e. honesty, obedience, respect, loving your neighbour. These are significant teachings that any parent would appreciate you sharing with their children. Remember, you are in a biblically illiterate, post-modern, secular culture. The parents are searching for ways to give their children moral teaching, but don't know how. They don't recognize that they need Christ, but they do have a hunger for moral teaching. If we can fill this void, we will gain the respect of the parent and will help them take the next step of coming to church where we can introduce them to Christ.
5. If the children (and the parents listening) can walk away from that week knowing that Christians can show love and care, and that this church will be a great place to help them bring moral instruction into the home, then you have more than done your part.
6. Please do not focus on making decisions. This culture is very skeptical and very secular. For many, this will be the first time that they have heard the good news. Allow the Holy Spirit to work and please don't remove our ongoing opportunity to reach these neighbourhoods because of zeal for immediate response. This will be a difficult task for some who come, but please respect our experience in our culture. We have seen many come to Christ as a result of ongoing contact, initially made months before in the parks, and at the same time have maintained positive relationships with the others, so that we are still welcome in those neighbourhoods.

NOTE: You will want to break the 4 sections into 15-minute segments. Some churches have puppets and drama, etc. These elements are great, but not necessary. If you are new at this, focus on the four key elements, and make them terrific! Get your whole week mapped out and remember that since you'll be in the same park all week, your program needs to build but still allow for new children each night. I hope this helps get you started! If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me, Philip Bryant at philip@gbcanada.ca or (604) 591-1514.
