



**MAKING THE MOST OF YOUTHCON'S IMPACT  
BEFORE YOU EVEN ARRIVE!**

# YouthCon Heart Prep

(Making the most of YouthCon's impact *before you even arrive!*)

## Introduction For Lead Youth Workers

The YouthCon organizers are confident that everyone is going to have a blast at YouthCon! It's going to be a fun, enjoyable experience. And, of course, God is going to be present with us as we meet in Glorieta. He wants to speak to us and give us good gifts!

We want to be able to receive those gifts!

One thing we can do for students on the front end is make sure they are focused and paying attention and aren't clinging to other things that would prevent them from receiving those gifts. (Even if we know we have been forgiven for our sins, we need to have a clean heart before God as we come into His Presence there.) Then on the back end have a chance to debrief and digest what each person experienced at YouthCon.

These three pre-sessions are designed to help the students (and leaders!) slow down and think; to be aware of themselves and God...to take an inventory of sorts. And then we have one debrief session after YouthCon.

Help your students and leaders be prayerful about what God reveals in the weeks that lead up to YouthCon. The best thing you can do for your students to get the most out of YouthCon with this material is encourage them to participate in these lessons and be completely honest with themselves about "where they are" spiritually and what might be going on below the surface.

These lessons are completely customizable. You can edit however you want based on your needs for your group. Each lesson can stand alone each week, combine them for all one week, or anything in between.

For any questions please email us at [info@usmbyouth.com](mailto:info@usmbyouth.com). Written by Stephen Humber from Multiply.



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## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **Q: How can these sessions be used?**

A: These sessions have been designed to be deliberately flexible. They can be used in one large group, or in smaller groups after some large group teaching/instruction. There are 3 sessions that can be used in the run-up to YouthCon. (And one post-YouthCon "debrief" session.) They can be done once a week, or condensed into one session with options for students to gravitate toward materials that get their attention. Use the material how it makes the most sense in your context with your group size. The best impact will come if there is opportunity for smaller group sharing and prayer at some point each week.

### **Q: How long does each session last?**

A: There is enough material to go for about an hour. It can certainly be less. It depends on how much teaching/introduction is given to each session, and how much time is given for individual reflection and group discussion.

### **Q: Can these session be used for students who are not going to YouthCon?**

A: Yes, with some adaptation, each pre-YouthCon session can be used for all students.

### **Q: What supplies will we need?**

A: We have tried to make things as easy as possible for our youth workers. So supplies are minimum. Pens, the handouts printed, and maybe one or two things in each lesson but most if not all items can be found around any church. And of course you can make each lesson as big or as small as you feel necessary.

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## Session 1: Spiritual GPS “Where Are You?”

### Leader's Notes



**Goal:** Our lives are noisy with sound and input, and they move fast. It can be hard to find time to be still and be in touch with ourselves. The goal of this session is to give time to students (and leaders!) to be quiet and reflect on their lives. Stopping to be quiet is a powerful exercise to help us see “where we’re at” and it’s a first step in the YouthCon Heart-Prep series.

Once the students answer the handout questions, they’ll come back together to share what they realized/learned about themselves, and also to pray. Decide ahead of time if you’ll reconvene in small groups, or as a whole group to share. (If you have the leaders to do it, meet in small groups. At least separate into guys and gals if you can. It’ll make the sharing and prayer much better to be in some kind of smaller group. You’ll want a solid student or adult leader for each group.)



**Supplies:** You’ll need a single handout per person (page 5) and a pen, and places for students to be by themselves and quiet. If you can play some soft/instrumental music, it might help create a reflective atmosphere.



**Teaching/Leading:** Say... “God can reveal to everyone, even before they get to YouthCon, where He is already at work in our lives. We’re going to take some time this evening to be still and answer some questions about ourselves. Even if you’re not able to join us at YouthCon, this is a good exercise to do to have a clearer understanding of your life these days. Being in touch with ourselves is a first step to understanding where God may already be at work.”

These might be easy questions for some. Some questions might take some more time to think through. In a moment, you’ll take a handout and find a quiet place to sit for (pick a time). *(Depending on how much time it’ll take students to get the handout and find a place to sit, 15 minutes ought to be enough time to answer the questions.)*

At the end of that time, we’ll call you back together/to small groups.



**For Small Group Leaders/Discussion:** Once you’re in small groups or have reconvened as a larger group again, take some time to invite students to share their answers to each of the questions. (By the way, questions 1 and 2 are different questions! Some people tend to feel more than think and vice versa. Tease this out during the sharing time.

Students can share their simple answer, or you can prompt them to elaborate. The goal is for each student to express something about what they realized (or God revealed to them) about themselves. It’s okay if students aren’t able to answer the questions. It may be a stretch for some.

Lastly, pray together. Don’t skip this! Depending on the size of this group, consider breaking into even smaller groups (2-3 for this prayer time). Encourage each student to pray and to ensure that each person is prayed for. Silence is ok. Listen for the Holy Spirit to prompt your praying. Take 5 minutes.

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## Spiritual GPS “Where are you?” Handout

*Instructions: Take some time to answer the questions below. Be as honest and detailed as you can. Afterwards you will have a chance to share your answers with the group if you wish.*

#1 In the last few months, what have been your dominant thoughts?

#2 In the last few months, what have been your dominant emotions?

#3 In the last few months, what has been the condition of your body? (What is your body telling you?)

#4 In the last few months, what has been your strongest desire? (What do you want?)

#5 In a sentence, where are you today? (How would you describe your life right now?)

#6 In a sentence, in light of the above, what might God be doing in your life these days? (How do you sense that He is working for your good?)



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## Session 2: Cleaning House & Making Room

### Leader's Notes



**Goal:** It's difficult to receive from God when our lives are full of our own junk. Sliding away from God can be so gradual that it can be difficult to detect. The goal of this session is to gently help students (and leaders!) see areas of their lives that have become log jams for spiritual growth, and move toward confession, and repentance, paving the way for a fresh wind of God's Spirit to blow in their lives.



**Supplies:** Bibles, paper/journals, (page 8), and something to write with. Some quiet music to play while students are working. Before you begin, decide if you'll share and pray as a whole group or in small groups at the end.



**Teaching/Leading:** Say, "We'll be heading to YouthCon in a couple of weeks. The goal of tonight is to help you see if something is out of sync in your life with Jesus now, so that you won't be hindered by it at YouthCon. Even if you're not going to YouthCon, this will be a helpful exercise."

Sometimes, without realizing it, we look to things or people (even ourselves) to provide goodness and security in our lives. Anything we're counting on besides the love that comes from a relationship with Jesus is actually a counterfeit that will eventually let us down. God wants to free us from those things.

Jesus said, 'The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10) Jesus has gone to great lengths so that we could have his powerful life operating in ours. Let's not miss that because we're distracted by a counterfeit kind of life. You need not be afraid or intimidated here. God has demonstrated his love and commitment to us in Jesus. He is for us!

Grab a handout and find a quiet place to work for about 15 minutes. We'll call you back together (or "We'll go to small groups") at the end of that time."



**Group discussion instructions.** As you call the students back together, or to small groups, ask them to share their insights and what it was like to ponder that God completely knows them (dirt and all) and still loves them deeply and is for them. These could be more difficult things to share. If you have the leaders to do it, it would be a huge help to split groups between guys and gals. If the sharing is slow, it always goes a long way for a leader to model being vulnerable and sharing...not only the dirt, but the confidence in God's love and the experience of being forgiven. Don't dominate, but be sensitive to how your appropriate sharing could help the group open up. Only do this if they're not sharing.

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## Cleaning House & Making Room Handout

*Instructions: There are two groups of verses (Psalm 139 and James 4) that are part of this handout. Pick ONE to work on. (They're both good!) You have about 15 minutes. As you begin, take some time to pray, asking God to help you see areas of your life that may be out of sync with His life for you. Express your desire to have a clean, undistracted heart toward God. Quiet yourself. Don't rush this.*

Write your prayers or answers on the back of this sheet.

### **OPTION ONE: Read Psalm 139: 1-10, 16-17, 23-24**

God's knowledge of us is so thorough it could be scary, but the psalmist remarks that "such knowledge is too wonderful for me," (v. 6) and "how precious to me are your thoughts, God!" (v 17) He isn't scared; he is in awe of God! Try not to resist God's complete knowledge of you. Rest in it. He knows you and he still loves you! That is flat out amazing! Be in awe of God!

1. What thoughts and emotions do these verses stir up for you about God's knowledge of you? Do they frighten you or give you peace?...or something else?
2. Read verses 23 and 24 again, give the Spirit some time to point out something that might be off. What, if anything, is the Spirit bringing into the light from the hidden places in your life? Is there something you tend to ignore or don't think is that big of a deal that God is inviting you to deal with? (Ideas: family dynamics, relationships, habits, cravings, desires, etc.)

### **OPTION TWO: Read James 4:1-10**

That first verse is powerful! "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from desires that battle within you?" When you consider troubles and difficulties that you have, especially with other people, you need not look further than your own desires to get to the heart of the matter!

One of the most natural things any of us do is blame others or circumstances for our own weakness and sin. The best thing we can do is "own our stuff".

Do you have a feel for what the "desires that battle within you" actually are? This could be very subtle. Take some time to reflect on what those desires are. (When you are driven to speak and act in a certain way, or when your thoughts are spinning in your mind, what's going on? When you are arguing with someone, what's behind that?)

1. Write down some words or phrases. (If your mind is blank, take some time to ask God to show you what those things might be.)
2. How do those desires complicate your life and relationships?
3. How do they impact your life with God?
4. What is the personal invitation for you from verses 7-10? Write it out in your own words.



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## Session 3: Our Identity in Christ

### Leader's Notes



**Goal:** To recognize and acknowledge biblical truths that we often have a hard time believing about ourselves—things that the Bible declares that are true of us in Christ.



**Supplies:** Bibles, paper/journals, handout (page 11 & 12), pen/pencil. Maybe some quiet music to help maintain a reflective atmosphere for the students. *There are two pages to this handout one is a Bible verse chart on the back that will be needed to do the activities on the front.*



**Teaching/Leading:** Say, "We head for YouthCon next week! It's been good to take these last few weeks to prepare our hearts for what God will do. And even if you're not able to join us, I hope you see that these have been good things for you to think about."

Last week we looked at things that can hinder our spiritual lives from the standpoint of sin and bad attitudes. Another huge way we hold ourselves back is through disbelief.

There are things that the Bible says about us as followers of Jesus that we're not aware of, or we resist. When we don't believe what's true, it does great harm to our lives and to what our life communicates to those around us about what it means to believe in Jesus.

This session will look at the three most common truths that we have a hard time believing about our identity in Christ. They are: I am Accepted. I am Secure. I am Significant.

In a moment, you'll take the handout (front and back). Find a quiet place to answer the questions. You'll have about 15 minutes.

When that's done, we'll call you back together." (or "...you'll go to small groups.") for sharing and prayer. Any questions?"



**For Small Group Leaders/Discussion:** Once you're back in a group/small groups invite the students to share which area they focused on (see if they can elaborate on the weakness), and which Scriptures were the most helpful and encouraging.

The goal is for each student to express something about what they realized (or God revealed to them) about themselves. This is a big deal! When we bring the truth to bear on the lies we believe, people can experience a new freedom!

Lastly, pray together. Reinforcing these truths over each other is a powerful experience of fellowship. Don't cut this short! Depending on the size of the groups, 5 minutes is enough time for this. Quiet in prayer is ok. Keep listening for the Spirit's prompting!

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## **Our Identity in Christ Handout (Page 1)**

*Instructions: Find a quiet place where you can spend approximately the next 15 minutes answering the two questions below.*

*Start your time with prayer. Ask God to give you insight about how you see yourself in Christ...to understand what you really believe about your identity in Christ. Using the "Who I am in Christ" handout (on back), look over the 3 sections down the left side (I am Accepted. I am Secure. I am Significant.) and answer the three questions below.*

**1. Which area feels the "strongest" to you? Which one are you most confident in spiritually? Describe below how you experience that in your relationship with God.**

**2. From the same three sections, which area feels "weak"? Put some thoughts down about what's going on with that? What feels weak about it? How do you experience that spiritual weakness in your life?**

**3. Lastly, from the same section that you chose in #2, look up some of the verses and encourage yourself from the Bible. Look up as many as you can in the remaining time. Makes notes below.**

Note: To dive deeper, use the handout (on back) and look up more of the verses for both the area that feels "strong" and also the one that feels "weak". Also, notice the right side of the handout where some of the most common "lies" and "truths" are paired together. Meditate on that section and ask God for insight about how those lies affect you.

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## Who I am in Christ? | My Identity

### I Am Accepted...

Jn. 1:12 I am God's child  
 Jn. 15:15 I am Christ's friend  
 Rom. 5:1 I have been justified  
 1 Cor. 6:17 I am united with the Lord (one spirit)  
 1 Cor. 6:19-20 I am bought with a price, I belong to God  
 1 Cor. 12:27 I am a member of Christ's Body  
 Eph. 1:1 I am a saint  
 Eph. 1:5 I have been adopted as God's child  
 Eph. 2:18 I have access to God thru the Holy Spirit  
 Col. 1:14 I have been redeemed and forgiven  
 Col. 2:10 I am complete in Christ

### I Am Secure...

Rom. 8:1-2 I am free forever from condemnation  
 Rom. 8:28 I am assured all works together for good  
 Rom. 8:31-34 I am free from any charge against me  
 Rom. 8:35-39 I cannot be separated from the love of God  
 2 Cor. 1:21-22 I am established, anointed, sealed by God  
 Col. 3:3 I am hidden with Christ in God  
 Phil. 1:6 I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected  
 Phil. 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven  
 2 Tim. 1:7 I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind  
 Heb. 4:16 I can find grace and mercy in time of need  
 1 Jn. 5:18 I am born of God; the evil one cannot touch me

### I Am Significant...

Matt. 5:13-14 I am the salt and light of the earth  
 Jn. 15:1, 5 I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life  
 Jn. 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit  
 Acts 1:8 I am a personal witness of Christ's  
 1 Cor. 3:16 I am God's temple  
 2 Cor. 5:17-21 I am a minister of reconciliation for God  
 2 Cor. 6:1 I am God's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9)  
 Eph. 2:6 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm  
 Eph. 2:10 I am God's workmanship  
 Eph. 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence  
 Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me

"Understanding your identity in Christ is absolutely essential for your success at living a victorious Christian life!"

Dr. Neil T. Anderson, *Who I Am in Christ* (Gospel Light, 1993)

Satan's Lie	God's Truth
You are a sinner because you sin	You're a saint (one declared righteous by God) who sins
Your identity comes from what you have done	Your identity comes from what God has done for you
Your identity comes from what people say about you	Your identity comes from what God says about you
Your behavior tells you what to believe about yourself	Your belief about yourself determines your behavior

Dr. Timothy Warner, *Resolving Spiritual Conflicts and Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Freedom in Christ Ministries, 1993)

Dr. Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness* (Gospel Light, 1990)



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## Recap Session: YouthCon's Debrief

### Leader's Notes



**Goal:** This session is designed for your students (and leaders!) to reflect on YouthCon. You can use this in different ways, but the best results will come if they are able to reflect sooner rather than later on. This could be done on the drive/flight back home, or before your next youth group gathering. Your first youth group gathering after YouthCon could be a great sharing time and commitment time for next steps.

There are 2 significant values for doing this debrief. The first is to make a bigger impact for the student, and the second is for those around them (and that impacts future YouthCons!). See below.



**Supplies:** The debrief handout (2 sheets pages 15 & 16), paper/journal, something to write with.

**Teaching/Leading:** Say, "There are two really important reasons to do this debrief. The first is for your own benefit! Without intentionally thinking through the spiritual impact, the odds are that it will be less than it could be. By naming what God did, it's easier for you to see God at work in your life over time. YouthCon becomes a part of that process, and you can continue to anticipate that God will lead you and build on what He is doing. That's exciting!"

Paul wrote to a church in the Bible, "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that **he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**" Philippians 1: 3-6 God started something and He is still working...and you can cooperate with that process! Be encouraged!

The second value of the debrief is that it helps you talk about the impact with your family and friends, and the wider church family. Someone is going to ask you how it was, probably lots of people. You'll know just what to say!

Take 20 minutes to work through handout, and then we'll share in small groups. (Leaders: Figure out your sharing time. It's super important that they get to do that because it's practice for them sharing with others and will give them confidence.

"At the end of that time, we'll \_\_\_\_\_ (...call you back together ...go to small groups"...or whatever)."



**For Small Groups:** During this time, you're helping the students talk about what they experienced at YouthCon. What did God say? What did He do? What's a next step to continue to grow? How are they feeling led to serve in the church/at school after YouthCon. Help the students "keep going"...using YouthCon as a stepping stone for the next thing that God is doing!

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## Youthcon Debrief handout (Page 1)

*Instructions: Now that YouthCon is over, give yourself some time to reflect on how God spoke to you. The activities are in a specific order so follow through this sheet to come up with a short testimony or story to share when people ask "how was YouthCon?"*

**1. Highlights.** Think back over all of the sessions, labs and activities. Capture your highlights. Look at your notes and schedule on the YouthCon app. Looking at pictures on your phone or social media posts may help with recall.

What did you hear that was a big deal to you? What did you hear that made an impact? Were there some quotes from your notes that you could write out? What did God awaken you to? Try to capture the four biggest highlights for you personally.

*You don't have to write out the details, that'll be next in the debrief. Here, you just want to capture the big thoughts/ideas.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Two Sentence Testimonies.** A simple way to begin a debrief process is to create a few simple sentences to summarize the biggest ideas. Look back on some of your highlights and use that as a guide.

AS EXAMPLES use one of these sentences:

Before YouthCon I thought \_\_\_\_\_. Now I think \_\_\_\_\_.

Before YouthCon my life was feeling \_\_\_\_\_. Now my life is feeling \_\_\_\_\_.

Before YouthCon, my life with God felt \_\_\_\_\_. Now, it feels like \_\_\_\_\_.

Before YouthCon, I thought God was \_\_\_\_\_. Now I know God is \_\_\_\_\_.

Write out your two sentence testimony:

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(Continue on back)

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## Youthcon Debrief handout (Page 2)

**3. Next Steps.** While YouthCon was an event that is now in the past, its impact certainly doesn't have to be! Wouldn't it be cool if YouthCon was a bridge to something else (or a *slingshot* to rocket you forward?!) Refer back to the highlights above. Tease more out of those things.

For example, how was God in each of those things? What was it that made it a highlight? What did you learn or realize that changes things? What is God inviting you into as a result of that?

Suggested questions if you need ideas:

Does it make you want to learn more about something? How could you do that? Who could help you sort this out?

Is there some action that you feel compelled to? (For example: Do you need to talk to someone about anything? Is there someone you need to ask to forgive you for something? Is there some discipline you want to begin? If so, who could you do it with?)

If you're drawing a blank. Stop and pray. Ask God to give you guidance about what He's inviting you into next.

Write your thoughts in the box below (be as specific and action-oriented as you can be):

**4. Testify!** Inevitably, people are going to ask you, "How was it?!" The good news is that because you write those summary sentences in #2, you have an easy, personal way to respond when they ask.

Those simple sentences that you wrote in #2 are going to create curiosity in people and they are going to want to know more. More good news! Because you did the hard work of thinking through highlights in #1, you're able to talk in more specifics when they ask you more follow-on questions.

Your testimonies about how God spoke to you or worked in your life are super important. You can encourage people with your stories. You can influence younger students that will be going to YouthCon in the future. ***Giving God the glory in your story*** is a very important aspect of being a follower of Jesus. In an important way, how God has worked in your life is all you really have to say, right? Don't miss a chance to influence others!

So take some time in your small group or overall youth group to each share your two sentence story.