

# There Ain't No Cure For the Summertime Blues- Really?

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Summer is coming. The lazy-crazy days of summer always get our hopes up. Especially the “lazy” side—that hope that life will slow down a bit. After all, the school year schedule comes to halt and things seem to take on a different feel.

Our hopes and goals are high: Read that book that's been sitting on the shelf, start that exercise program, take time out to pray for an extended period of time once a week, take that family vacation that always gets put off, or just s l o w d o w n a bit.

Sounds great. But our experience is that summertime nirvana lasts for a very short time. Like the slow moving roller coaster ascending before making that fatal turn that hurls us to mach speed, are the summers that many of us experience.

Somewhere between early summer nirvana and frenetic fall insanity we suddenly find ourselves in a spiritual and emotional ICU. People surround us wondering if we're going to make it while simultaneously and often unintentionally asking us to run harder.

So who's to blame?

Students? Summer makes students available 24/7. We don't have that wonderful governor during the school year, called school that contains our students and keeps them managed during the summer. Sleep is not needed in the morning and students become nocturnal and available.

Schedule? In youth ministry we tend to capitalize on the “freedom” of summer by providing an increased number of programs and trips. These can be good things but not if they cause us to arrive at the end of the season in a comatose state. Let's be honest. The “relaxing summer schedule” is often anything but relaxing. And while we're at it, will somebody please tell adults to stop asking us “How was your vacation?” after we've been on a week-long trip with teenagers!

Us? Are we to blame? Ouch. How can we be the problem if we're supposed to be the problem solvers? Maybe we get the summertime blues because we have a blurry summertime vision. It may help to remember who we are:

We are shepherds. Plan ministry activities that allow you to *shepherd* your students and leaders. Trips, leader retreats, weekly gatherings are good and necessary. Discipleship doesn't stop just because it's summer. However, the goal is not to cram the summer with these activities as a way to keep students and parents happy and entertained. We're not activity planners, we're shepherds. Keep trips and weekly gatherings manageable.

We are learners. Create time for extra study and reflection. Refuel by reading books, journaling, and study things that take you beyond next week's lesson.

We are spouses and parents. Block out dating and family time now or it will get squeezed out. Can we get an “amen?” Singles. You're not off the hook here. In fact, you might have to work harder to block out “friend time” because people don't let you use the “family” card as a way out. But you need time for you to connect with your peers too!!

We are individuals. Make time to do things that energize you. Read, exercise, get lost in the woods, write poems, or plant something. We must continue to be people of substance and not short-circuit who God made us to be.

We are human. So unplug from the fake life-support systems that artificially keep us going. Turn off the computer. Don't check email as often, leave the cell phone, unplug the phone, stay away from the office on your days off. Often the addiction to being efficient and pleasing the masses, keeps us from ever really living.

Summer is certainly a great time for youth ministry. But youth ministry is more than cramming in more activities. It's about us demonstrating to impressionable, beautiful minds that life can be thoughtful, reflective, deep, colorful... and real. After all, we want nothing less for their own lives, so let's resist spreading the “summertime blues” epidemic.