

*prepare in advance*

## WORSHIP IDEA

## Bonfire Thanksgiving

*Teenagers will symbolically lift their praise to God around a bonfire.*

**SUPPLIES:**

*Safe outdoor location for bonfire, bonfire materials, index cards, pencils*

**TIME:** 30 to 45 minutes

Once everyone has arrived at the bonfire, give every person two index cards and a pencil. Tell students that during the course of the evening, the bonfire is going to be a thanksgiving altar where we can bring our praise and gratitude to God.

Lead students in singing three or four worship songs. After the songs, read loud Psalm 54:6-7. Then, on one index card, have students write an answer to this question:

- **What's the best thing that God has done for you this year, the thing that you are most thankful for?**

When students finish, ask several volunteers to share what they have written to question 1. Then lead students in another praise chorus. As they sing, have students throw their praises into the fire, symbolically offering their thanks up to God.

On the second card, have students write a response to this question:

- **What's the hardest thing you have found to give thanks for this year?**

When students finish, ask several volunteers to share what they have written to question 2. Then lead students in another praise chorus. As they sing, have students throw their praises into the fire, symbolically offering their thanks up to God—even for the difficult things that have happened.

Close by reading Psalm 54:6-7 again, and encourage students to be thankful in all things in the coming year.

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## WORSHIP IDEA

## Party of Gratitude

*Teenagers will celebrate God's goodness in this worship party.*

**SUPPLIES:** *varies*

**TIME:** *varies*

**P**lan a celebration of thankfulness! Use the following ideas to get your celebration planning started:

**INVITATIONS**—Invite teenagers to attend this meeting without telling them much about it. Send a simple invitation that reads somewhat like the passage in 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 and asks teenagers to attend a meeting to focus on the faith of the youth group.

**DECORATIONS**—Decorate the meeting room with lots of memorabilia from previous youth group events. Include photos as well as items representing events or service projects they've done. For example, if teenagers went on a service project to rebuild homes, include a display of hammers, nails, and paintbrushes. Also, include plenty of colorful streamers.

**FANFARE FOR THE FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN**—Keep the youth group room closed until teenagers arrive. Then, while playing fanfare music (such as the theme from the movie *Rocky* or “Fanfare for the Common Man,” by Copland), open the doors and announce that the commendation celebration will begin.

**FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT**—Serve your teenagers' favorite foods, play their favorite music, and lead them in their favorite games. At some point during the celebration, have teenagers pause to read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10.

**SAY:** *The church at Thessalonica was a young church, just as each of you is young. And people were struggling with all kinds of issues that challenged*