

Whatever It Takes

For use in the 2012 Youth North American Mission Study. Use any of these activities in place of, or in addition to, ones noted in the 1-hour session guide.

PUZZLED

Purchase or borrow a 100-piece puzzle (or several similar size puzzles if a large group). Do not give youth the benefit of seeing what the puzzle is to look like by showing them the box cover. Instead, give them a specific amount of time and have them put as much of the puzzle together as possible. Keep one piece of the puzzle to put in last. Do not give them assistance. As they put together the puzzle, make notes of who takes leadership in the overall task or in specific tasks (such as finding all the edge pieces first). What is the “order” used to complete the puzzle? What is done first? How well do the youth work together to complete the task?

After the specified time, ask the youth about the experience, drawing from your notes to frame the discussion. Help youth draw parallels from the task of putting the puzzle together to what it must be like to be a church planter. Some such parallels include:

- There are many pieces to the puzzle. In the same way, there are many people with diverse skills, background, and needs who make up a church plant.
- Doing a puzzle alone takes a long time and having a team makes the task go quicker; a church planter benefits by having a team of people assist him or his family—though sometimes assembling a team takes a lot of time.
- Not having the box cover of the finished piece can make the task more challenging; a church planter only knows that the “picture” he wants to achieve is to honor God and grow God’s kingdom with healthy disciples of Jesus Christ—he doesn’t have the box cover to show who goes where and how they all fit together.
- There is a sense of incompleteness if a piece is missing or time runs out on the task; a church planter often has “missing pieces” related to lack of resources to complete the needed tasks.

VISIT A CHURCH PLANT

Consult with your pastor associational missionary to identify a church plant in your association or nearby. Plan a visit to the plant, reserving time with the pastor to speak to your youth either before or after a worship service.

MISSIONS RETREAT

Consider making this study part of a spring break or weekend retreat – or even just a one-day getaway. Incorporate a local missions effort based on Joshua Lenon and Shaun Pillay’s examples. After completing the 1-hour study, youth could clean up the yard or home of someone who cannot do it themselves, or refurbish a park in an at-risk neighborhood, following Red Door’s example.

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If you choose such an option, include youth leaders in the planning, suggesting they incorporate music, skits, or games in the retreat, depending on the preferences of the group. Have them glean ideas from www.iamreddoor.org and www.cornerstonenorwich.com.

MEET AT A POSSIBLE PROCLAMATION POINT

Shaun's Cornerstone congregation demonstrates the power of "proclamation points," meeting at the same place with the same people, at the same time, sharing the biblical message. Perhaps the youth may want to have their study in a community center or other public place—someplace out of the ordinary—inviting friends who may not feel comfortable in a church building. Consider some of the workplaces where members of your congregation work. How could meeting away from church create interest in attending the study?

Other Cornerstone-inspired mission activities could include working at a soup kitchen, assembling and delivering gifts for a homeless shelter, or partnering with an internationals' ministry within the state or association to support an English-as-a-Second-Language program, church start, or other ongoing effort.

PAINT A RED DOOR

Consider leading youth to paint the door to the youth area red, as a lasting reminder that their group should be a safe, welcoming place, covered by the blood of Jesus. Challenge youth to consider how they can make the "Red Door Welcome" a reality. Encourage student leaders to address any issues that might be separating the group or discouraging growth because some teens may feel excluded. Does your youth group reach out to internationals, all ethnicities and every income level like Shaun's congregation does? Are you willing to welcome the "unlikely" people, whom God may want to use in amazing ways? How can your red door represent Jesus' love for everyone?

If youth want the door painted red, have everyone participate as they did when they painted a red door on the canvas during the study. Lead them to pass a paint brush among themselves, each having at least one chance to add their stroke. Remind them that each has a responsibility to reach out to each other and newcomers, helping create a Christ-like, loving atmosphere. Consider transferring the sticky notes during the "Coming to America" discussion to the door after it dries, using those notes as prayer reminders for "unlikely" persons whom youth continually pray for.

Conclude with prayer for the group and for those who are not yet part of it. Pray for Shaun and Joshua's ministries.

PENNY WAR

Emphasize how youth can contribute to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® and build excitement about the study by organizing a penny war. Two weeks before the study, display large, clear jars, bottles, or clean gallon jugs, each labeled for specific groups, whether by age, Sunday School class, or gender. Display them in a well-trafficked area when youth are present, securing them at other times. Youth are responsible for collecting pennies in their containers, and can undermine their competition by making "point-reducing" donations to other jars. They may also solicit donations from adults to boost their chances of winning.

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Each penny donated in a group's jar counts as a point. Any silver or dollars placed by the competition in that jar take away points from the group. Challenge groups to compete. Have adults count the bounty during the study, and announce the winner at the study's conclusion. Consider offering a reward for the winners to recognize their effort. Losers must roll the coins to be deposited to the church account, the church can write a check for the amount to go toward the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

BE A MISSIONARY ENCOURAGER

Lead youth to connect with and encourage Shaun Pillay and Joshua Lenon by securing their contact information at www.anniearmstrong.com/missionaries. One of the best ways to encourage Shaun and Joshua is to encourage their congregations, so instead of writing to them, write letters to their congregations encouraging members to stay strong in the faith and continually share with others the love of Christ.