

Summer Camps – Camper and Spiritual Matters

Before you start: Once you have reviewed these notes please click “Take the Quiz” to advance. The quiz is ‘open book’ meaning you can use these or the attached notes to help complete the quiz.

Campers & Spiritual Matters

As children arrive at camp, they bring with them the entire package of their physical, mental, social and spiritual backgrounds. Each camper comes as an individual child with special needs and each has accomplished various growth tasks in each area of human development. The camp staff needs to be keenly aware of, and sensitive to, where each individual camper is in the growth process in order to enable the staff to encourage continue development. In order to assess the spiritual decisions made by campers at summer camp (the focus of the follow-up program) it will be important to consider the various capabilities of religious understanding and the growth standard for each age of camper that attends camp. As mentioned above, each camper should be and deserves to be considered individually. There are, however, certain characteristics that are generally agreed upon to accompany the spiritual growth and understanding of children at various ages.

AGES 9 – 12

- Beginning to value approval of own age group.
- Can understand doctrine and know what sin and salvation are.
- Does not grasp symbolism well and they are just beginning to think abstractly.
- Have trouble thinking of God as a Spirit.
- Memorize well – can be helped with a strong foundation of Bible facts.
- Want an obvious purpose in what they do.
- Not emotional in regard to religion.
- Beginning to think of God in more than superhuman terms.
- Are beginning to look at God both theologically and scientifically.
- Beginning to understand meaning of commitment.
- Beginning to internalize prayer.
- Capable of having “quite time”.
- Acquiring a religious vocabulary.
- Not interested in principles but in fact.
- Have questions, but will still quite readily accept adult answers on

religious matters – beginning to form own ideas.

- Peak age for commitments in SDA church.

AGES 12 – 14

- Acute hero worshipers.
- Increased ability to articulate faith and to discuss.
- Can deal with questions honestly and scripturally.
- Prayers tend to be more personal and self-directed.
- Beginning to develop and understand inner moral control. Unbalanced in emotion; do not appeal to emotion but to needs.
- Connect church fellowship with spiritual life.
- Think of God in supernatural terms.
- Can begin strong habits of Bible study.
- Basic beliefs of childhood may begin to break down as he learns to analyse.
- Want to do things and be involved.
- Can not think abstractly and spiritualize ideas and understand symbols.

AGES 14 – 16

- Some confusion of aims and values.
- Want satisfying answers to their religious questions.
- Seeking to make religion their own.
- Need to experience the reality of God.
- Formulating their own moral code of conduct.
- Require a very personal style of ministry.
- Discovering spiritual gifts.
- Have a strong desire to be committed to something.
- Accept Christ as a matter of faith.
- Sharper discernment of right and wrong.
- Crave guidance outside the home.
- May be indifferent to spiritual things – this may have nothing to do with religion itself – is often the result of rejection of authority, etc.
- Most influenced by leader example.
- Value serious discussion with peers and leaders.
- Religion is very personal.

The implications for the camp and the follow-up program of the above summary are immense. The entire integration of the spiritual aspect of camping into the

total camp program must be planned with the needs of the various age groups of the campers in attendance in mind.

Counsellors and other staff, including the camp pastor, should be sensitive to these general characteristics when inviting campers to make spiritual commitments each week. When an 8 year old makes a decision to commit his life to Christ during a Friday night campfire, it may be different in motive and the concept of commitment than when a 14 year old makes the same decision.

While it is important to understand the capability of the camper to understand what commitment is, it doesn't necessarily change the realness of that decision to the camper, nor does it change the fact that a commitment is possible at every age. It is possible that a young child's commitment may be based on a personal loyalty and desire to please the Counsellor and it may be possible that the group-oriented teen camper may make a decision due to the fact that others in the peer group are making decisions, it can, however, still be a valid and meaningful decision as long as the camper realizes what they are deciding for. They must be aware of what is expected of them after making that decision and what the camp will do.

Children are capable of expressing commitment and love for God. They express this within their capacity to understand and to decide. We cannot expect them to express themselves or articulate their faith and beliefs in adult terms. However, the decisions made at camp can be complete for the camper at that time and it is essential for the camp staff, through a strong follow-up program, to let the camper know that they recognize the importance of the spiritual decisions that the camper made while at camp and that they are committed to seeing the camper grow toward spiritual maturity.

Why Are Devotions Important?

When a student is studying a subject, does he/she not have to attend class, do his homework, and read his/her textbook out of school and in his/her own time in order to do well in that class? If he/she doesn't do all three, he/she may have a difficult time with getting a good grade in the class. You may do some of the key principles for being a Christian, go to church and pray, but without being in God's Word, you will not mature and grow in knowledge. You must do all three to be a complete and God-blessed Christian. In the same way, you cannot attend church and do devotions, and then hope to be blessed by God. Yes, you are doing 2 of the 3 key ideas of being a Christian, but you are not communicating with God.

Ultimately, you cannot be a mature Christian unless you have all of these concepts.

5 Biblical Dynamics Of Spiritual Growth

1. Ephesians 4:15 "We will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ." People should grow in their personal day-to-day relationship with Jesus. We are to nurture our commitment to God and not the church or youth group. "In all things" means that all that we do, say, feel, think needs to grow spiritually. Physical, mental, social and spiritual.
2. Ephesians 4:12 "To prepare God's people for works of service." Means a growing sense of being called to service.
3. Ephesians 4:14 "We will no longer be infants." Our spirituality should develop from an infant through to an adult. Our faith becomes more mature as life goes on.
4. 1 Corinthians 13:1 "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." Love must be evident in our spirituality otherwise it is useless.
5. Ephesians 4:16 "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

We must work in harmony together and build each other up for the kingdom of God.

How To Talk About Spiritual Things

Moving a conversation around to spiritual things can be the most difficult part of witnessing. We can talk freely with our friends about many subjects, but we are at a loss when we want to bridge the gap between everyday life and the Lord. Turning a conversation around to spiritual things is not a gift. It can be learned if you are concerned enough about the salvation of your unsaved friend to practice thinking through your own everyday situations and plan ahead what you would like to say in each situation. The process for spiritual conversation:

1. **Pray** Ask the Lord to guide your thoughts and comments as you approach a person. Ask Him to work in your friend. It is God who does the work. You just have to begin the process.
2. **Surface talk** This level of conversation is the perfect starting place for an evangelistic conversation. Talk about the weather, the slow service in the shop, the sports, etc. Mention something that opens your life up just a little. Then, casually ask the acquaintance about that same area of his or her life. Example:

I've lived here for [it doesn't matter how long], and I think that the weather is [it doesn't matter what you think about the weather]. Have you lived here long? Be sure that you really listen to what the person has to say.

3. Personal talk You will never run out of things to talk about: ask questions about the person's birthplace, hometown family, education, work, vacations, retirement, interests and hobbies. Once a subject has been mentioned, ask a question about it. Attempt to establish some common interests with the person. Be a good listener and use their name in the conversation. Check their body language to see if the person is comfortable with the direction of the conversation.

4. Religious talk The first levels of conversation are pre-evangelism. They build rapport. Don't assume that a stranger or acquaintance doesn't want to talk about religious things. Even atheists like talking about their views of God and most people appreciate having someone ask them about themselves and listening to their ideas or their problems in life. Talk about religion, churches, or church activities. A listening ear may be the very thing that causes a person to seek God. Example: On Saturday mornings we usually go to church and then go hiking. Do you attend church? If the friend is not interested at this time, retreat to step three. Don't push the gospel on anyone. Don't feel guilty or become discouraged and quit witnessing altogether. Leave the results to God.

5. Spiritual talk Ask yourself; does this person's actions and attitudes indicate that he or she wants to talk about spiritual things? If you sense openness after the religious talk, you can do several things:

1. Invite him or her to visit your church. Be sure to meet at the door and sit together.
2. Talk about what Christ has done for you. Keep your story simple or just share a few
3. Ask the person two questions: What happens after this life is all over? What hope do you have?
4. Share the gospel with him or her. Keep the message as simple as possible.
5. Give him or her a religious book that has a message of hope and get together in a few weeks to discuss it.
6. If the friend is not seeking at this time, retreat to step four.

Writing Your Personal Testimony

One of the privileges and responsibilities of Christians is to share with others our faith in Christ. Although many methods and plans can be used to communicate our faith, none is more effective than sharing how the love, grace, and mercy of Christ has changed our lives.

People to whom we witness may evade issues, attempt to discredit biblical and historical facts, or blame their condition on others. But it's hard to discount the authentic testimony of a believer whose life has been transformed.

That's the reason for this lesson. Completing the worksheet will better equip you to give a logical and organised presentation of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done in your life.

PAUL'S ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS BEFORE HIS CONVERSION

Read Acts 26:1-23

- Lived as a Pharisee – v5 (see also Galatians 1:13-14)
- Imprisoned many saints – v10
- Condoned the deaths of many saints – v10
- Persecuted Christians – v11

CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING PAUL'S CONVERSION

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15

- 1 Where was he going?
- 2 What time was it?
- 3 What did he see?
- 4 Who was with him?
- 5 What did he hear?

CHANGES IN PAUL'S ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS AFTER HIS CONVERSION

Read 1 John 1:5-9; 2:3-6

What evidence of Paul's repentance and conversion can be found in the following verses?

- 1 Acts 26:19
- 2 Acts 26:20
- 3 Acts 26:21
- 4 Acts 26:22-23

Your Turn!

INTRODUCTION

- Name
- Year in school (or age)
- School
- City

ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS BEFORE I BECAME A CHRISTIAN

if appropriate, include family or church background. Avoid naming religious denominations, since this may alienate some of your listeners.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING MY CONVERSION

Consider time, date, place, people, motivation, etc. This is a natural place to summarise the gospel: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

CHANGES IN MY ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS SINCE MY CONVERSION

Be enthusiastic!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

The Acts Of Prayer

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (requests)

Adoration (or worship)

(a foreign concept for most 21st Century Australians)

- It reminds us whom we are addressing, whose presence we have entered, whose attention we have gained.
- How often have our prayers been reduced to a “wish list”? Beginning with “adoration” means we have to slow down and focus our attention on God.
- The experience of prayer is more than a bunch of requests.
- Have you ever prayed a prayer without asking for anything at all?

How to Adore (or worship) God

- List his attributes (all of them – or ones you’ve been aware of in the last few days)
- When facing major decisions – concentrate on His guidance
- When suffering from inadequacy or guilt – praise Him for his mercy.
- When in need – worship him for His power and good gifts.
- Listing God’s attributes reinforces our understanding of who He is.
- Read a Psalm to God
- Read Him a poem, letter or song you wrote Him

Confession

(A forgotten art)

- Don’t pile your wrongs into one general confession (that’s a cop out)
- List them off. . . it becomes a whole new ball game then.
- Be honest with yourself. Instead of admitting you have been less than the ideal husband today – say: “I wilfully determined to be self-centred, uncaring and insensitive. . . I need your forgiveness for being selfish.”
- Remind yourself of verses like:
- (Ps. 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.)
- We don’t take confession seriously enough. If we did our lives would be radically different. When you are totally honest with yourself something happens. After admitting to God everyday for a week that you are a liar, a greedy person, a manipulator (or whatever), you say to yourself: “I’m tired of admitting that, I’ve got to get that out of my life!”
- Paul’s words start to become real to you: 2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Thanksgiving

(probably the most neglected area in personal prayer)

- 1 Thess. 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
- There is a difference in feeling grateful and expressing thanks.
- It’s not enough just to feel grateful, we need to express it with thanks.
- Thank God for:
 - – Answered Prayers (yes and no ans)
 - – Spiritual Blessings
 - – Relational Blessings
 - – Material Blessings

Supplication (Requests)

(Too often we begin our prayers with requests)

- Request from God what you want. (Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Phil. 4:6).

- Are your requests legitimate? "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." James 1:5.
- Plan to trust God, tell your wants/needs, also tell Him that if He has a better way you'll accept it.

Here are a few ways to approach God:

- "God, this is my heart on the matter, and I'd really love you to do this.

But if you have other plans, far be it from me to get in the way."

- List your requests in categories:
 - – Your own Ministry (opportunities to share God)
 - – People (friends, your bosses, the sick, unsaved etc)
 - – Family (marriage, relationships, children, family time, finances, holiday time, etc)
 - – Personal (your own character, ambitions, dreams, etc)

Acting On Answers To Prayer

Here are a few cautions:

- If a leading requires you to make a major, life-changing decision in a very short period of time, question it.
- If a leading requires you to go deeply into debt or place someone else in a position that is awkward, question it.
- If a leading requires you to shatter family relationships or important friendships, question it.
- If a leading creates unrest in the spirit of mature Christian friends or counsellors as you share it with them, question it.

The Mystery of Unanswered Prayer

- If the request is wrong, God says, 'no'.
 - If the timing is wrong, God says, 'slow'
 - If you are wrong, God says, 'grow'
 - If the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, 'go!'
- Take heart, even Jesus prayed to God for something that God refused... and just as well (While on the cross Jesus cried out, 'take this cup from me?').

In the mean time, remember "PUSH"

Pray Until Something Happens.

More than anything, God seeks PASSIONATE believers.

The Prince of this world.

Remember that Satan is still the prince of this world, everything is not yet submitted to God. Satan causes much suffering and often seems to have the upper hand . . . his years though are counted and his end is sure.

What Prevents Prayer from being Powerful?

Ps.. 66:18 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;
James 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

1 Pet. 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Prov.. 21:13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

1 John 5:14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask –we know that we have what we asked of him.

John 16:24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

Mark 11:23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.