

Campfire Resources

Fire is a recurring element in scripture. During the Exodus journey of Israel, a pillar of fire provided light so the sojourners could travel by night (Exodus 13:21). In the Gospel of John, Jesus visited the disciples after his resurrection. Jesus instructed the disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. The disciples complied and were not able to pull the net in because of the multitude of fish. Peter finally realized that this was indeed Jesus, and became so excited he jumped into the sea and swam to meet him. Jesus had prepared a fire so they could eat and share in fellowship (John 21:1–10).

Perhaps these events suggest the purpose and importance of a campfire—often the last activity before we make an exodus to our separate quarters. It is an important place where fellowship is shared and meaningful relationships may be enhanced. Above all, it may be a place where spiritual encounters are encouraged and occur.

A successful campfire is made up of a variety of items: songs, skits, and stories that enable us to share the peace of Jesus Christ with each other. Here are some brief suggestions that might be helpful. There are numerous resources on campfire specifics available through national or regional camping associations.

- 1) Make the fire big and memorable (well built). Plan ahead and assign the task of fire building early so it isn't rushed at campfire time.
- 2) In publicity and announcements, suggest that campfire time will focus on exploring and talking about sharing Christ's peace. Everyone needs to be present. Work creatively to get everyone there. Encourage the Christian education classes to promote and participate in providing elements for the campfire. People will be more likely to come if it is well planned and engaging.
- 3) Twenty-five to forty minutes of actual "campfire time" is plenty.
- 4) Closing remarks and prayers need to be short and focus on the theme or story for the day.
- 5) Give attention to the needs of those with wheelchairs, walkers, and canes, and provide some benches or chairs for those who need to sit off the ground.
- 6) The best campfires are well planned, yet look spontaneous. A campfire leader is a minister, pastor, emcee, and entertainer all rolled into one. Prepare for the future; create an atmosphere where others can be trained to carry on the campfire tradition.
- 7) Share and teach new songs during the week. To teach in a captivating way, the leader should be enthusiastic and have the songs memorized. Do not teach new songs at the close of campfire; make it early in the experience. If the campfire leader isn't familiar with a new song, or can't sing it, then it should not be taught. Some excellent campfire song resources include *Sing a New Song* (Herald House, 1999); *Songs for Camps and Reunions* (Herald House, 1986); *Rise Up Singing* by Peter Blood and Annie Peterson (Legacy Books, Bethlehem, PA, 2004); *Joyful Noise*, Ann E. Turner, ed. (United Church Publishing House, 1999); and *Chants de Taizé* (Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 2001).
- 8) The leader doesn't need to be up front all the time; this allows for the fire itself to be the focal point and is very meditative and worshipful.

- 9) Get skits in place quickly; otherwise all the momentum gained in the evening is disrupted. Several common-sense rules should be used when providing skits:
 - a) No inappropriate, sexist, or ethnic humor is allowed.
 - b) Be respectful and affirming of everyone.
 - c) Remind participants to bring whatever props they need.
 - d) Skits should be previewed by the campfire leader and rehearsed prior to the campfire.
 - e) Everyone needs to speak loudly, so all can hear.
- 10) There are four time-tested parts to a typical campfire. Let creativity inspire the planner; almost anything can work if the planner works hard.
 - Part 1: Opening—fun, light, wild, silly, fun skits (ten minutes)
 - Part 2: Transition—shift from light to serious (ten minutes)
 - Part 3: Serious—tender, introspective, closing thoughts or testimony (twelve to fifteen minutes)
 - Part 4: Closing—prayer, sending forth, announcements

Campfire Planning Guide

Opening

Transition

Serious

Closing

Campfire Songs

FUN SONGS

Make New Friends
Gray Squirrel
Alice the Camel
Ants Go Marching
Two Elephants Went Out to Play
Bingo
Father Abraham
Flea
Grand Old Duke of York
I Want to Be a Friend of Yours
I've Been Working on the Railroad
John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt
Keep on the Sunnyside
The More We Get Together
One Bottle Pop
Quarter Master's Store
Sarasponda
She Threw It out the Window
Poor Little Bug on the Wall
If I Were Not upon the Stage
Kookaburra
Grab Another Hand
Do Re Mi
Day-O (The Banana Boat Song)
Home on the Range
Be Kind to Your Web-Footed Friends
Clementine
I'm My Own Grandpa
Vive l'Amour
Boom Boom (Ain't It Great to Be Crazy)
Green Grass Grows All Around
I Know an Old Lady
If You're Happy and You Know It
Peanut Butter
She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain
Waltzing Matilda (Australian)
A Ram Sam, Sam
Kookaburra

TRANSITION

Five Hundred Miles
My Grandfather's Clock
Allelu—Praise Ye the Lord
Do Lord
I've Been Redeemed
Rocka My Soul
Bubblin' Over
Ain't No Rock
Rise and Shine
Give Me Oil in My Lamp
I Love the Flowers
Peace Like a River
He's Got the Whole World in His Hands
Michael Row the Boat Ashore
Standin' in the Need of Prayer
When the Spirit Says Move...
Study War No More
Jesus in the Morning
Lean on Me
I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy
This Train (Round: Swing Low and I'm
Gonna Sing)
May There Always Be Sunshine
Shenandoah
Ezekiel Saw the Wheel
Old Time Religion

SERIOUS

Father, I Adore You
Sanctuary
Love, Love, Love, Love (Peace Song)
Sing Alleluia to the Lord
Freely, Freely
I Have Decided to Follow Jesus
Jacob's Ladder
Lord I Want to Be a Christian
Seek Ye First
Spirit of the Living God
Vine and Fig Tree
Where He Leads Me I Will Follow
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
We Are "One in the Spirit
Pass It On
King of Kings
Kumbaya
If I Had a Hammer
Dona Nobis Pacem
Lord, Be Glorified (in My Life...)
Let There Be Peace on Earth
Be Thou My Vision
Fairest Lord Jesus
Holy Ground
How Can I Keep from Singing?
Lonesome Valley
Simple Gifts
Wondrous Love
Wade in the Water
Amazing Grace
Blowing in the Wind
For the Beauty of the Earth
Balm in Gilead