

THEME CLASS FOR KIDS CAMP

Day One: Wahabu

meaning: God of love

pronounced: “wa-ha-boo” with
accent on second syllable)

Song

Begin class by singing “Praise Him, Praise Him, All Ye Little Children” or another song linking God and love.

Introduction

“Who can tell me what today’s theme is?”. (answer: wahabu)

“Who can tell me what ‘wahabu’ means?” (answer: God of love)

“That’s right. We just sang that God is love, and now we also know an African word that means God of love, _____ is going to read a scripture for us: John 3:16-17.”

Have a camper read John 3:16-17 NRSV.

“Who is God’s only son?” (answer: Jesus)

“Jesus is the love of God. We can learn to understand and express God’s love by the example that Jesus set for us. Who can tell me a loving thing that Jesus did? (Take a couple of answers.) We can also understand God’s love by learning about loving things that other people do.”

Living Story: The Good Samaritan

Adapted from Luke 10:30-35

Read the following story. While you read it, have campers or other staff members act it out. For visual appeal, have characters in appropriate costumes or have some props.

“A man was traveling on a road. It was a beautiful sunny day, and he was enjoying his drive. Suddenly, some robbers came upon him and blocked his car. They dragged him out of his car and beat him up violently and took his car and even his clothes. The robbers left and he lay moaning on the road, hurt so badly that he might even die.

Later, a woman came driving along on her way to a business meeting. When she saw the badly injured man lying there, she sped up and pretended not to notice. After all, she didn’t want to be late.

Soon the pastor of a local church came along riding his bike and when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road. What could he do with just a bike? The man lay there bleeding badly and in great pain.

Then finally, two young people came walking by on their way home from swimming in the river, and they saw the man. They went to him and decided to do whatever they could to help him. One of them ran to a nearby house to call an ambulance and get some water. The other one ripped a towel into strips and wrapped them around the bleeding wounds. They took care of him until the ambulance came and took the man to the hospital.

The man was in the hospital for five days, and each day the two friends went to visit him and make him feel better by telling stories and jokes. Soon the man made a full recovery and was able to go home to his family.

“Which people in this story showed the love of God in their actions? That’s right, the two friends. Do you think it was easy for them to help? Wouldn’t it have been easier to just walk away without helping the man? Expressing the love of God is not always easy, but it is the right thing to do. Helping others is a good way to express love. We can’t see love or touch love, but good works are love made visible.’

Journal

A template for creating a journal for each camper is provided. Have campers complete the journal entry for Day One. When everyone is finished ask a few people to share their answers.

Closing

“Let’s remember that good works are love made visible, and that we can show each other the love of Jesus by helping where we can.”

Have a camper close with a prayer asking God to help us help others to demonstrate Jesus’ love for everyone.

Day Two: Umoja

meaning: unity, harmony

pronounced: “oo-mo-jah” with accent on second syllable

Materials

For this class; each person will need a musical instrument. Include variety of percussion instruments and horns. Many household objects can be used, especially kitchen utensils.

A balloon can be used to make noise by letting their air out while stretching the neck. Be creative, there’s no need to spend an excessive amount of money.

Music Activity

Pass out an instrument to each person. At the count of three ask everyone to play their instrument. The resulting sound will be chaotic and without form or harmony.

Next, the leader will set up a rhythm for a few seconds and then slowly, others will follow suit. The resulting music will be more unified and harmonious. Keep practicing until everyone can follow the rhythm and the music comes together.

Engage campers in a discussion about the difference between everyone playing separately and everyone playing together. Make sure that they understand the concept of unity. Include the following points:

- When everyone is doing whatever they want, things don’t work as well.
- When everyone is working together, things flow more smoothly.
- Everyone has a unique and important role to play. Life is not as rich if any one person isn’t included.

Game: Holding Us Together

Materials: A length of rope long enough to wrap snugly around the group a few times.

Preparatory Thoughts: With everyone standing in a circle, explain that it is important to work together and that it is the love of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in our hearts that helps keep us

unified. Explain the game to the group and have them briefly discuss how they should go about working together once they are connected with rope. What will be important to keep in mind? How can they ensure that no one gets hurt or upset? Immediately stop the activity if a few people charge ahead and drag the others behind. Point out what is happening, have them discuss what they need to change, and start again.

Directions: Have everyone walk to the center of the circle until they are in a fairly tight cluster. Snugly tie a rope a few times around the whole group, tight enough to hold them close, but not so tight they can't move or breathe. They should be able to turn around with a little effort. Explain that if their relationships are held close together through Jesus, they will be able to work together and accomplish great things together. Now have the group, as a whole, walk slowly and carefully to a designated finishing point. There should be obstacles along the way that they have to go over (curb, fallen tree, etc.) or around (orange cones, furniture, trees, etc.). Make sure they move slowly and carefully so they don't get too rambunctious. You may need to have them practice a few times before they can move together from one point to the other.

Processing: After the activity, spend a few minutes discussing how it went and how it felt working so closely. What worked, what didn't? How did it feel at first? Did it get easier? Point out that every person had an important part in helping the group work together.

Journal

Have campers respond in their journals for Day Two.

"We have discussed that it is important to create unity among us and that everyone needs to help create unity, whether it is in a game, or at church, school, or home.

"What is unity?"

"How do you help create unity? at home? at church? at school?"

"How do you restore unity if you are mad at someone or people are fighting?"

Closing

"Let's remember that we all need to do our part to create unity in our churches, families, schools, and neighborhoods." Have a camper close with a prayer asking Jesus to help us work together and have unity among each other.

Day Three: Heri

meaning: good wishes, goodwill, blessings pronounced: heh-ree; "roll" the "r" sound, as In Spanish, with the accent on the first syllable

Introduction

"Who can tell me what *heri* means? Yes, it means good wishes, goodwill, and blessings. Today we're going to focus on how we can spread goodwill and be a blessing to others. God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others. Who would like to share with us a way that God has blessed you? (Take a few answers.) God has blessed us all in so many ways. Now let's take a journey and learn how we can be a blessing to others."

Activity: The Path to Goodwill

Preparation: Designate four stations on your campgrounds that campers will rotate through, and explain to staff members the procedures for each station. Materials are listed below in the station procedures.

Directions: Split the campers into four groups. Each group will start at a different station and rotate clockwise to keep them from overlapping. Rotate every fifteen minutes. Staff members at each station will guide campers through an exercise.

Variations: Give each group a map to follow, or give them hints to figure out the location of the stations.

Station One: Blessing Others through Peacemaking

At least three staff members needed

Materials: one giant hand. You may use a foam hand such as those sold at sporting events or make one out of cardboard or any convenient material. On the hand, cover any existing logos, if applicable, and write “reconciliation” on it.

Presentation: After each group enters the area, one staff member says: “We are called to bless others through peacemaking. It is so important to help create peace where there is fighting or conflict. When we help people who are fighting make up with each other, this is called reconciliation. We must never take part in any violence that we see. It is much better to spread peace and understanding.” Next, read or have a camper read the following:

Become a people... who see violence but proclaim peace, who feel conflict yet extend the hand of reconciliation, who encounter broken spirits and find pathways for healing.

— Doctrine and Covenants 161 :2a

The staff member continues: ‘Who can tell me what it says on this hand? This hand represents the ‘hand of reconciliation’ talked about in the scripture we just heard. Now we’re going to play a reconciliation game.’ Two staff members should act out a series of situations. When a camper feels like (s)he can help make peace between the staff, (s)he should pick up the hand and place it between the two staff, which will freeze the action. Then the camper will say a few peacemaking words, and the staff will make up. Campers can discuss what strategy they should use to help the staff stop fighting and be reconciled. A third staff member should help the campers if they need some suggestions and help them take turns with the hand.

Debrief after each scenario, briefly recounting what happened and how the situation was reconciled. Feel free to ad lib according to the needs of your campers. Here are some suggested situations:

- argument over who gets the last cookie
- bully-type person trying to provoke someone into a fight because of the way they look
- two people getting physically violent with each other over whose fault it was for losing a game

Station Two: Blessing Others through Acceptance

one or two staff members

Presentation: Say “Accepting others is a way to be a blessing to them. We are called to include all people in our community of Christ no matter what they might have done, no matter how they look, or how they act — even if they have other religious beliefs, we must be open and

accepting. That doesn't mean that we change what we believe, but that we make it okay to have our beliefs and let others have their beliefs. We can celebrate what we have in common."

Read or have a camper read the following:

Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and in vile all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.

— Doctrine and Covenants 161 :3a

Continue: "It's not always easy to accept people is it? Let's play a game. I am going to ask some questions. If you would answer 'yes,' go over here to my right. If you would answer 'no,' go over here to my left. Now don't just do what your friends do, answer for yourself."

Here are some suggestions:

- Would it be hard for you to talk to someone who is blind?
- Would it be hard for you to be friends with someone who was mean to you a long time ago?
- Would it be hard for you to smile at someone who is in a wheelchair?
- Would it be hard for you to be nice to someone who your friends didn't like?
- Would it be hard for you to talk to a new student at school?
- Would it be hard for you to play games with someone who didn't speak your language?
- Would it be hard for you to make friends with someone who had no friends?

"Thank you for being honest. It's okay that it is hard to accept all people, but it is not impossible. One way to understand others is to put yourself in their place. Ask yourself how you would feel if you were them. Here are some more questions. Answer the same as last time, yes to the right, no to the left."

- Have you ever had a hard time finding a seat in the lunchroom?
- Have you ever been the last one chosen for a team at recess?
- Has anyone ever been mean to you because of the way you look?
- Have you ever felt misunderstood by an adult?
- Have you ever felt lonely?
- Have you ever felt left out or rejected?

"We all know what it's like to feel hurt or rejected by others. When you think about rejecting someone, try putting yourself in their place, remember what it is like to feel that way, and ask Jesus to change your heart so that you can accept everyone.

Station Three: Blessing Others with Kind Words

one or two staff members

Materials: large sheets of paper and markers for brainstorming; a greeting card on which to write a letter (large enough for all the campers to sign, but small enough to mail). The card could be made from card stock that is folded down the middle. The left inside panel is for the letter and the right panel for the campers to sign.

The card may be sent to the Africa Region, P.O. Box 1059, Independence, MO 64051 USA (Care of IFSO). If you would prefer to create and send it to a specific group or

congregation, contact the Africa Regional office at 800/825- 2806, (IFSO) to get the name and address of a pastor or leader in the Africa Region.

Presentation: Say “So far you have learned about being a blessing to others through peacemaking and acceptance. Another way to be a blessing is through kind words. Let’s write a letter to some of our brothers and sisters in Africa.”

Have the campers brainstorm what they want to say in the letter. They can write their ideas on the paper. *Variation:* Give the campers smaller paper to draw pictures for inclusion in the card.

When all four groups have brainstormed, compile all the ideas into one letter. You can have staff do this or a couple of eager campers with nice handwriting. You can also have a camper who is artistic decorate the cover of the card. Attach a photo of the camp to the back cover of the card before mailing.

Station Four: Blessing Others with Love

two staff members

Presentation: Say “There are so many ways to be a blessing in our communities. We can be peacemakers, we can accept others, we can use kind words, the list is endless. What are some other ways we can be a blessing in our communities?” (Take a few answers.)

Read or have a camper read the following:

Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is [very hard] and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.

— *Doctrine and Covenants 161:3c*

Continue: I believe with all my heart that love will overcome the voice of fear. Fear is the root of most of the trouble in the world. When people discriminate because of race, gender, or religion, it is because they are afraid of what is not familiar. Sometimes countries go to war because they are afraid of each other. Sometimes we run away from our responsibilities because we are afraid. But if we put God’s love in our hearts, the fear will be overcome. If we do as the scripture says and become vibrant, shining witnesses, we can change the world and spread love. Now we’re going to play a game that will give you a chance today to help love overcome the voice of fear.”

In this game one staff member will play the voice of fear. (S)He will begin softly chanting a fearful, disabling thought. The campers will confer in a huddle and come up with a phrase of love to overcome the fear. The second staff member can help the campers in the huddle to make suggestions if necessary and keep them on the right track. As the campers confer, the voice of fear will begin to get louder. When the campers decide on their phrase, they will surround the voice of fear and get louder than it. The goal is for the voice of love to overcome the voice of fear so that it can no longer be heard. The campers can be as loud as they want, so definitely have this station outside a good distance from the other stations! Campers can even assume a “vibrant witness” body posture such as arms raised to the sky to symbolize rays of God’s love. Let the campers be creative and a little crazy, but make sure they understand that they are the voice of love, and therefore, they must be loving and gentle in the midst of their “bold” statements. The round ends when the volume reaches an exuberant frenzy and the voice

of fear is overcome (the staff who plays fear will, of course, make sure this happens). Play a few rounds using different phrases. Be creative and consider using phrases specifically applicable to your campers. Suggestions —

Fear: "I'm just a kid. What can I do to help?"

Love: "All are called. Jesus loves children (or kids or youth)."

Fear: "That new kid looks stupid; I don't think I like that kid."

Love: "Love everyone; accept everyone."

Fear: "My sister was so mean to me, I'll never forgive her."

Love: "A loving heart forgives."

"You all did great at helping love overcome fear! Remember that you can be a blessing by keeping love in your heart and helping to build loving communities at home, church, school, or wherever you are."

Journal

Have the campers complete their journal entries for Day Three. What changes do you think need to take place where you live in order to promote them? What would you most like to change about yourself on the inside, so that your outward actions are more Christ-like?

Closing

Have the campers form a circle and silently pray for a blessing on the person standing to their right and then their left. Afterward, have the camp director or camp pastor close with a special blessing for each person at camp.