

Theme Class

DAY 1: Building Community

Introducing the Theme

Seat the campers in chairs or on the floor where they can easily stand up and sit down quickly. Tell them that you are going to call out some “Stand up if...” statements, If that statement is true for them, they are to stand up. Sample ideas include:

- you have blond hair . . .
- you are wearing sandals
- you have a brother . . .
- you live in a city
- you come from a large family . . .
- you are wearing buttons
- your congregation has a lot of kids

After you have started the game with several examples, choose campers to be leaders in the game. Keep it positive. When some time has passed, seat the campers again and talk about the theme for the day, *Building Community*.

Say: Each time you stood up, you were standing with others with whom you had something in common. If you were the only one standing, you are really unique. Most of us have several things in common with others.

We choose communities where we find others with common likes and interests. How does it help to have somethings in common? What’s good about having differences in a community?

Activity: Group Poster

Divide campers into teams of four and seat them at tables. On each table will be two scarves and some tape. Tell each team they are to create a poster

about how the gifts of all can be used in a Christ like community. Point out the central table where there are markers, crayons, magazine pictures, glue, yarn, poster paper, and scissors. Camper teams are to get supplies from this spot and take them to tables where the team can work. Designate each team member with one of the following characteristics:

- can’t use their hands or arms
- can’t see
- can’t talk
- can’t walk

Discussion

When the posters are finished, hang them on the wall and ask each team to tell about their poster. Then discuss how each team accomplished the task with the special challenges of the team members. How does this reflect the use of gifts and talents of all in a community?

Games

Octopus Grab: In a large area with boundaries, choose one player to be the “*octopus*” while the remaining campers are “*fish*” The *octopus* roams the ocean to catch fish who must keep swimming constantly. When the *octopus* catches a fish, that fish becomes a helpful tentacle, holding onto the *octopus*’ arm with one hand and snagging fish with the other tentacles continue to be added until all fish are caught.

Discussion: When there was danger, the fish struggled to keep away from the *octopus*. How would things be different if the *octopus* was Jesus? What would happen when he “reached”

someone? Why would you want to be come attached?

Beacon Island: Have campers sit in two parallel lines to represent the shore. Choose one camper to be the beacon, standing between the two lines. Designate a few campers to sit between the shore and serve as rocks. Anyone who is not a rock is a seagull. Choose a camper to be the *boat and* blindfold the player. The boat is to find a path to the beacon, following the intermittent beeps coming from the beacon. Seagulls can help by calling out “*rock*” whenever the boat gets close to one. When the boat reaches the beacon safely, another boat is selected and the first boat becomes a seagull.

Discussion: How helpful is the beacon? How is Jesus like a beacon? What do the *rocks* represent? How are the seagulls like a community that works together?

Day 2: Christian Values

Introducing the Theme

Have a large Wooden cross at one end of an area. From the base of the cross, create a “river” using a blue cloth which resembles water. Place blue or green balls of paper under the material to create the rolls in the river. Have a table at one side with a clear pitcher on it. Put red food coloring in the bottom and conceal the bottom with folds of cloth. Have another clear pitcher with water sifting close by. As the campers gather, have a CD or cassette playing water or ocean sounds.

Celebration

Jesus gave us many examples to follow during the short time of his ministry. From the things he taught, we

identify Christian values that we want in our lives.

The opening worship reminded us of renewal, rebirth, commitment, and the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus’ day value was placed on the marriage relationship. Marriage was a time of celebration for family and friends and often included the whole community

One of Jesus’ first acts of ministry was at the wedding in Cana. He attended the wedding with his mother and other family friends. It was the custom in those days to make and drink wine with meals and at times of special celebration.

At this wedding, the host ran out of wine. This might be compared to running out of cake at a wedding reception today. Everyone expected to take part, but what could be done if there was no wine? Jesus’ mother came to him and asked him to help. He hesitated, knowing that each miracle would point to him as God’s messenger He felt that timing was up to God.

The story says he did as his mother asked. He called for the ceremonial jars that held several gallons of water and asked that they be filled with fresh water. Once this was done, he asked the servant to dip out some and take it to the chief steward, (pour water from the pitcher into the empty one with the food coloring.) The remarkable quality of the wine that was tasted surprised the chief steward, but the servants knew where it had come from.

Jesus provided a ministry not only to the wedding guests, but protected the dignity of the host. In those days it would have been a major insult to run out of wine when you had guests.

- Jesus *valued his* family.
- Jesus *valued* other people.

- Jesus valued celebration.

Jars of Clay

Have students form pairs and take turns telling each other what they think is the most valuable thing in life. Share ideas with the group.

Distribute pennies so that each person has one. Explain that this penny represents everything that they consider valuable. It is so valuable it needs a special vessel in which to keep it.

Give each person a one-inch cube of clay. Ask them to place the penny in the center of the clay and form a pinch pot around the coin. Allow time for them to complete the task. Share the creative results with the class.

Return to the original pairs and discuss these questions:

- What did your penny represent to you?
- How does the jar of clay change the value of your penny for you?
- How do your surroundings or situations change your values?

Explain that the pennies are at the base of the jars, just as Christian values are at our “foundation.” They are a base from which we can build Christ like lives. Sing “Firm Foundation” (by Nancy Gordon and Jamie Harvill, © 1994 Integrity’s Hosanna! Music (c/o Integrity Music, Inc.) CCLI Song #1355753.

Understanding Faith

Two of the examples Jesus used to teach the disciples faith lessons involved water—calming the storm and walking on water. Both events are regarded as “supernatural—beyond our natural, human abilities.

Divide the class into two, four, or six groups. Assign one of the following scripture passages to act out. One person

can be the narrator who reads the story and the others can be actors or sound effects.

Calming the Storm

Matthew 8:23-27

Mark 4:35-41

Luke 8:22-25

Walking on Water

Matthew 14:22-33

Mark 6:45-52

John 6: 16-2

After the presentations, ask the class what Jesus seemed to value in both these situations. What do they understand about faith? courage?

Closing

Use “That’s What Faith Must Be” written and performed by Michael Card, (© 1988 Birdwing Music [a div. of EMI Christian Music Publishing], Mole End Music [Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing] CCLI # 68113). Dismiss with a team prayer by several campers. The first one opens the prayer, the last one closes it, and those in between add a phrase about having stronger faith or courage.

Day 3: Restoration Principles

Introducing the Theme

Place several objects on a table that represent things that are found in homes today and things that could have been found in great-grandparents’ homes. Add the signs from the morning worship.

Divide the group in half. Explain the object of the activity like this: At home we have all the conveniences modern science and economics can provide. At camp we still have most of

the conveniences. But many years ago when our church was just beginning to grow in Ohio and Missouri, families lived and worshiped quite differently. We will take turns letting each group go first. The group who goes first names something used today that has a counterpart from pioneer days. The second group must come up with the item that matches from the 1800s. Then the teams switch time periods and name appropriate objects. For example, if one group said “air mail letters” the other group might respond with “handwritten letters carried by whoever was going that way.”

Activity: Restoration Responses

Break into small groups with a leader. Give each group a flip chart or poster board and markers.

Say something like: We may have come a long way from the days when our families used candles and kerosene and hauled water and raised their own food. Many families in places around the world still live this way. We played a game that helped identify some of these old and new ways.

When Jesus walked the earth and introduced people to Christian values, these included some remarkable changes from what they had been used to. (Review some of the values discussed on the previous day.)

Jesus was twelve when the first reports of his questions and answers in the temple reached people. Joseph Smith was not much older when he took his questions and went in search of answers.

As the Restoration has grown, Christian values and restoration principles have blended together to move us closer to God. Spend a few minutes in your groups listing values and principles you can think of that are a part

of your faith. *What is it you believe today that was taught by Christ and reinforced in the restoration movement? (Starter ideas: faith, revelation, prophesy forgiveness, Zion, reconciliation, community peace, justice, servant ministry, stewardship)*

Getting the Picture

Put the sheets or poster board on the walls where all can see them.

Review the results.

- What made this task hard or easy?
- How would your list be different from the one your grandparents might make?

Just as tools and conveniences have changed over the years, our understanding of restoration principles has expanded. Imagine someone stopped you, showed you a paper with one of these principles written on it, and asked you what you know about it. How would you respond? (Sample questions:)

- Have you ever heard of something called Zion? What do you know about it?
- What do you mean by “stewardship of the earth?”
- What does peace have to do with reconciliation?
- Justice means fairness. That’s all there is to it, right?

Wrap Up: Review activities planned for this day that continue to explore the church through the past years.

Day 4: Peace and Justice

Introducing the Themes

Gather the campers and talk about breakfast. How did they feel about campers with a certain color ribbon being allowed to eat first? Was there

conflict within the color groups for position in line? Were those dismissed for KP allowed to eat early regardless of the color of their ribbon? How do they feel about that?

Peace and Justice Defined

Provide butcher paper or poster board and markers. One page should have JUSTICE printed in large letters at the top and the other should have PEACE. Divide the campers into two groups, letting them choose their group. One will come up with ideas about peace and the other about justice. Ask them to choose a group according to their passion on the subject, not necessarily the one with their friends in it. Be a cross current in the challenge of life.

Provide leaders in each group to help with the discussion. Gather ideas and definitions for the subjects displayed. How have they heard it defined? How do they personally define it?

Peace and Justice Defended

Ask each group to explain the conclusions they have reached, Are there other ideas that could be added?

When the issue is justice, there are always two sides. Feelings run high. Tempers flare. Give examples from experiences the campers would be familiar with.

Discussing justice issues causes emotional responses in some people. How can protests and anger be resolved peacefully? What does it mean to be a peacemaker? Give examples from the lives of the campers.

Peace and Justice Practiced

Talk about the ribbons. Explain at this point how lunch and supper will be handled. (See closing in the Morning

Devotions.) How does knowing affect your responses? Will there still be a race to the lunch line? Who will be in the race? Who will not? What factors will govern your choices for the evening meal? Will you keep your ribbon and take a chance that will be the first one called? Will you ask/beg someone to trade you? Will you be disappointed if you made the “wrong” choice?

How do our responses affect issues of peace and justice? Does “knowing” the outcome make a difference in our choices?

What would Jesus do? He has been called the “Prince of Peace.” Give examples of peaceful times in his ministry.

Jesus also found times when he felt it was necessary to be a crosscurrent. Just because the majority of the people did something one way didn’t mean he had to. Discuss the challenges to his ministry when he:

- ate with tax collectors and sinners
- drove the money changers from the temple
- talked with and valued women and children in a culture that was patriarchal.

Many people have reacted in strong ways to injustice and violence over the years. Discuss some of the following people and their methods for practicing peace and justice:

- Gandhi
- Mother Teresa
- Princess Diana
- Martin Luther King
- Arafat, Begin
- other current peacemakers in the news

Closing

Hang an outline of a dove over the Peace

poster and an outline of a balance scales over the Justice poster Ask each one to write something they are willing to do for peace on one slip of paper and some justice issue they wish to support on another Attach the papers to the appropriate shape as the campers leave for the next activity. Leave the posters where they can be read during the day.

Day 5: Community Responsibility

Introducing the Theme

This lesson is designed to help campers develop a sense of how they can be responsible and caring where they live. This community responsibility is tied to family, school, friends, neighborhoods, and the church. It will be more fun if it is based on a hike complete with water bottles and snacks,

Tied to the Dock

Open this class with a song about friendship, such as “Friends” by Michael W Smith. Have campers describe their best friend. Ask them what they like to do with their friend. Have campers get into groups of 6-8. Have them all reach in with both hands and grab a hand of someone not next to them. Challenge the group to get out of this knot and form a circle. As they make their attempts, ask them what they think about their group. Is everyone helping? Does everyone have to do the same thing to get out of the knot? Did all groups untie the knot? Our communities are like these knots in many ways. Say, “Let’s see how we can explore what our responsibility to our community looks like.”

Anchors Away

Ahead of time, prepare five “anchors” using poster board or cardboard. Label one “Robbed,” another,

“Stripped,” another, “Beat Half-to-Death,” and two which read “Ignored.” Make them 12” to 8” high with a yarn or rope loop at the top so they can be worn around the neck. Have the class act out the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37 NRSV). Have each character place their “anchor” around the neck of the man in the story. Encourage the “man” to act like they are heavy until he falls down. Have the Good Samaritan remove them in reverse order and have the man react accordingly. Ask them what are some anchors they see in the community? What are some ways we can remove them?

Going Down the River

Take a snack break. To tie to the theme, serve blue-colored drinks and Gold Fish crackers, if possible. At the end of the break ask them to stop and consider who they are visiting with. How did they make this choice?

Back on the Barge

Explain that you will ask a series of questions. When you do, each person is to find one other person (ask for adult participation to make sure there is an even number of players) and exchange answers. Explain that when they hear the bell (or horn, or other sound from a river that you choose) they are to get quiet to hear the next question. The game continues until all questions have been answered.

What is a friend?

How do you make friends?

Do you prefer a lot of friends or just a few?

What new friends have you made at camp?

What kind of people would be unlikely friends for you?

How could you make an unlikely person a friend?

The Perfect Pier

Have the class form small groups and make the song “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” into a rap. Have the groups share their creations. Close the class in prayer emphasizing the Jesus is our best friend, our perfect pier, and if we stay tied to him, we might get under the water, but we can always pull ourselves up with his help.

Evening Activities and Campfire

Day 1: Community Responsibility River Challenge

Choose a large outside or inside area, and set up challenge stations as described on this page. Areas designated as water or islands must be well defined. Use posters to help explain the layout. Understanding the directions are important to the success of the activity.

Create teams of three or four campers each. Start each team at a different station and give the class fifteen to twenty minutes at each station, working together as a team to meet the challenge. Emphasize the importance of teamwork. Rotate the teams around the stations until every team has completed all three. If space is limited, stations can be set up one at a time and taken down after the completion of the activity.

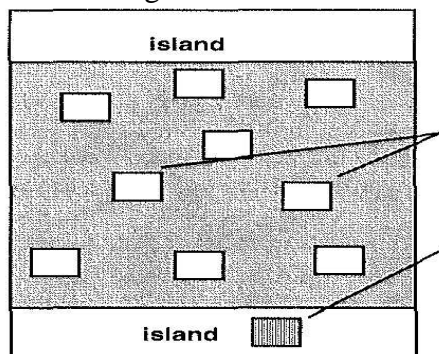
After the River Challenges, gather the campers together and discuss what happened at the stations.

- What did they like or dislike about the challenges?
- Did they successfully complete all three?
- Why or why not?
- How did working as a team help?
- How were the gifts of all used?
- How did leadership emerge at each challenge?

Rafting the Rapids

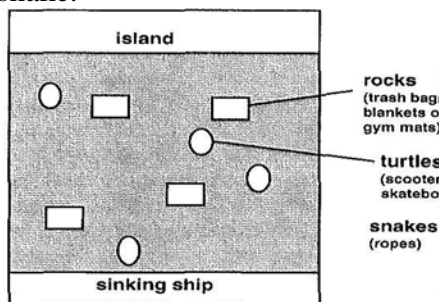
Campers must create a raft out of cardboard boxes, trash bags, or other supplies large enough for all members of their team to get on and maneuver down the rapids and around the rocks. They must use their hands as paddles to move the raft along, but if anyone falls into the

water or the raft comes apart, they must start again.



Sinking Ship

Each team must get from the sinking ship to the island at the other end safely. They must move from rock to rock by helping each other. Rocks are trash bags or carpet squares. Also in the water are turtles (skateboards) and snakes (pieces of rope). Team members can be moved from rock to rock on a turtle by pulling them with the snake.



Island Hopping

Campers must hop from island to island avoiding piranhas and sharks while carrying a cup full of medicine (water) in one hand. Medicine is precious and should not be spilled. The islands should be laid out far enough apart to create a challenge, but close enough to allow for success.