

EVENING ACTIVITIES

Day One: In Search of Adventure

The purpose of tonight's activities is to make sure everyone knows each other's names and begins feeling more comfortable interacting as a group. Choose as many of the following team-building activities as you have time for. You may choose to use some of these for mixers on the first evening of camp.

Simile Smiles:

Have the group stand in a circle. Using their names, everyone will think of a simile that describes them, such as: *Fred, fast as a fox; Sara, sly as a snake; Jess, runs like the wind; Lisa, sings like a meadowlark.* Choose someone to begin by saying their simile. Everyone in the group repeats that person's simile. Then the next person says theirs and the whole group says the first one and the second one. Go around the circle, each time having the group repeat every simile and adding on the next one. As an added challenge at the end, mix everyone up and then try to go around and say every person's simile.

Name Tag:

Have the group stand in a circle. Start the game by pointing to a person across the circle and saying their name. Then walk over and stand in that person's place. Before you get there, that person must point to a different person across the circle from him/her and begin walking to that spot. Once the group gets the hang of it, speed things up. Then stop and this time start two people at once.

Name Sprint:

The leader will need a stopwatch for this game. Have the group stand in a circle. Start by saying your name and go around the circle, each person saying their name as quickly as possible (but only one person at a time). The names will blur into one long name. Now let the group compete with itself to see how fast the names can be said, using the stopwatch to time it. As a variation, go in both directions and see how crazy it is when the names overlap on the opposite side of the circle.

Worm Hole:

Have the group stand in a circle and join hands. Add a hula hoop, having two people link hands through the hoop. The object of the game is to pass the hoop all the way around the circle without letting go of any hands. Each person has to pass their body through the hoop in order to move it to the next person. For a real challenge, get two hoops going in opposite directions. They will have to figure out what to do when the two hoops meet.

Lap Sit:

Have the group stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder, then turn to the left. Each person places their hands on the waist of the person in front of them. Everyone slowly sits down, knees together. It takes teamwork to keep people from falling outward. Keep trying until the group gets it.

Group Standup:

Everyone should pick a partner of about the same size. Have them sit on the floor/ground facing one another with bent knees and touching shoes. Ask the pairs to join hands and pull themselves up to a standing position. Then have them join with another group and repeat the activity in fours, then eights, etc. Finally try to do this in the full group.

Random Acts of Kindness:

Close tonight's activities by suggesting that one way to combat the violence and negativeness in the world is to practice random acts of kindness. Challenge campers to practice random kindness throughout the week in creative and spontaneous ways.

Day Two: Maps of the Past**Diversity Game: What's the Word?**

NOTE: This activity is to be explained and started during the last fifteen minutes of today's evening activities. The game will end when tomorrow's theme class begins. Don't forget to prepare the index cards for each person beforehand. See Day Three Theme Class for game instructions.

Community Builder: Puzzle Challenge**Preparation:**

Create a huge 20-piece puzzle measuring at least 3'x5' out of thick cardboard (or $\frac{1}{4}$ inch plywood if you're handy with tools). If you're using cardboard, you may need to glue two or three layers together to make it strong enough. You can project the template on the following page onto your material of choice, using an overhead (make a transparency) or an opaque projector. Since this is a blind activity, coat one side of the puzzle with a textured paint or other tactile surface. If you're feeling really creative, paint an image that symbolizes your camp community.

Instructions:

Include this thought in the introduction: "This morning we acknowledged our unique place within the sacred circle of Jesus. It is important to be an active member of that circle and do what we can to help others and work together with them." Have the puzzle players discuss how they worked together when they are finished. Encourage them to

discuss their strengths and weaknesses as a group and how they dealt with frustrations.

Variations:

There are a few different ways to go about this activity pick the one(s) most appropriate for your group.

1. Blindfolded:

Blindfold twenty (or ten) people. Make sure they can't see! Give them each a puzzle piece (or two puzzle pieces). Let them work with absolutely no outside help to put the puzzle together. This may take up to an hour, but every group is different. If you want more or less people involved, make multiple puzzles, or give a couple of players an extra piece.

2. Blindfolded/Can't Speak with Helpers:

Whoever gets a puzzle piece is blindfolded and not allowed to speak, but they can hear directions. Everyone else is a helper. They can give verbal directions, but they cannot touch or help the blind players in any other way the helpers can also talk to each other.

3. Look Ma, No Hands:

Scatter the pieces on the floor/ground. There can be as many or as few people as you want for this one. Players cannot use any part of their arms or feet to put the pieces together (shoulders and knees are okay). They are free to communicate as needed.

4. The Ultimate Challenge for 40 People:

Frustration levels in this one may soar, but when (it) they succeed, they'll feel great. Let the forty people choose partners (twenty pairs). Blindfold all of them. Each pair gets a puzzle piece. One partner can only use his/her left hand to hold the piece and the other partner can only use her/his right hand. The other arm may only be used to hold onto the partner. Both partners must be connected with each other and hold their piece at all times until it is placed on the floor. Everyone can talk freely Good luck!

Activity: All Life Is Sacred

If the group seemed to enjoy it, repeat the song learned during morning devotions.

Circle Check:

This is a rather serious activity that may be more appropriate for older youth: however, use your best judgment. It is particularly useful whenever your camp seems to be struggling with interpersonal relations, fragmentation, and negative energy it usually breaks the tension and induces a sort of community euphoria afterwards. The best setting is outside, sitting on the ground in a circle, weather (and mosquitoes) permitting.

Circle check is a time for group members to share how they are feeling about the camp, to share anything that is bothering them, to release any emotional baggage, or to

make amends with another camper. This is a time for everyone to be heard and supported. No one is forced to share and may pass at any time. It is important for the camp pastor to be involved and to follow up on any issues that need personal attention. You may set a time limit for each speaker, or you can allow each person to speak as long as needed.

When you introduce circle check to your camp, include these components of a successful check-in;

This circle must be an emotionally safe place where people can feel comfortable sharing without the risk of being laughed at, attacked, or humiliated.

Absolutely no interrupting people or rudeness is allowed.

The mediator (preferably the camp pastor) is the only person allowed to interrupt, and may do so any time others' words feel threatening or clarification is needed.

Treat each other with compassion, loving kindness, and understanding.

Most of the time each person will share and there will be no response from the group, but sometimes it might be appropriate for two people who are in conflict to have a dialogue in order to resolve it.

If some sort of group response to each person seems important, try a group affirmation after a speaker finishes, such as "We support you, _____," or "Thank you, _____."

Use a talking stick (or ball, or stuffed animal, or whatever). The item will be passed to each person.

The person holding it is the only one who may speak. When he or she is finished, it is passed on.

Day Three: Open to New Direction

Solo: Just God and I

Often we stay so busy that we can't hear God speaking to us, or we keep on the move so we don't realize that something is going on inside that we need to deal with, or we never stop to just enjoy simple pleasures such as sitting outside and doing nothing.

The goal of this activity is to spend some time outside alone, sitting quietly in a natural area. It is a chance to stop all activity and just be still, listening to sounds in

nature, listening for God's "still, small voice," and listening to whatever our hearts need to tell us. This may seem like a very adult-like activity, but youth are often more open to such experiences than adults because they often have less internal clutter to deal with.

Encourage your campers to find a natural area where they cannot see anyone else. Avoid buildings, tabernacles, or other major structures. Rest against a rock or tree, lay face up in the grass, or sit by a stream. Suggest that they be as quiet and still as is comfortable for them, that they try to still their minds and open their hearts to the experience.

This activity can be threatening for some people and empowering for others. You will need to judge the maturity and readiness of your campers. Set an appropriate time limit (i.e., thirty minutes for younger campers and up to an hour for older campers). You may need to check in with your campers about feeling safe. Some may be very apprehensive about going off alone. Don't require anyone to do this. Some may need to go in pairs, but encourage them to sit at least fifteen feet apart. Another way to create an atmosphere of safety is to have staff dispersed throughout the campgrounds at "safety points," so campers know that they can quickly call for or go to an adult. It is also important that an adult knows the location of each camper.

After the solo, bring everyone together, sitting on the ground in a circle, and allow time to share for those who would like to talk about their experience.

Day Four: Traveling Light

Micro Hike

Preparation:

Make (or buy) enough tiny flags for each person to have three or four. Use toothpicks and colored paper.

Instructions:

Split your campers into expedition groups with at least one staff member per group. Send them to different natural areas of your campgrounds. Each person will do a twenty to thirty minute "micro hike" by slowly crawling on their hands and knees and looking at all the tiny little things in nature. Their discoveries will depend on your bioregion. Equip each camper with three or four little flags to mark interesting discoveries (i.e., tiny moss, mushrooms, leaves, insects, bones, nuts). At the end of the hike, expeditioners will share their favorite discoveries with the other members of their group and share their feelings about the hike.

Option: give the campers more time and have them draw or write poems about a few of their favorite discoveries. Include them in your camp log.

Before the hike, talk briefly about walking lightly: don't remove or disturb plants: don't kill anything: pick up flags and any human garbage and dispose of it properly, etc.

Here are some questions for campers to ponder during the hike:

How does it feel to be so close to the ground?

What sort of natural things most attract you?

How does the world look from this perspective?

Do you feel closer to God's creation when you take time to be in nature?

Does being outside make you want to preserve nature more than when you spend all your time indoors?

Skit Activity: Now Would Jesus Live Today?

Split everyone up into groups of three - six (depending on how much time you have), and let them create skits demonstrating how Jesus might live today if he was living in our culture. Give them ample time to prepare and then present their skits to everyone.

Day Five: The Horizon Awaits

Activity: Fool For God Creative Exhibition

Create a special setting for the sharing of the poetry music, dance, and art that was created earlier today Set up a stage or decorate your room. Set up theater-type seating so each person/group will take center-stage during their presentation. Serve special snacks. Have sound effects. Create a ritual to honor each presentation (i.e., snapping of fingers after a poetry reading, cheering after a song, doing the "wave" after a dance, or giving a collective sigh after a piece of art). Dress up in a flamboyant costume and act as MC with grand gestures and introductions. Get crazy and add any other special touches you can think of to make this a memorable evening!

Consider bringing the evening to a close with a surprise "Fool for God" presentation that the staff have secretly prepared!