

THEME CLASS

Day One: In Search of Adventure

Introduction:

This question and answer session needs a lot of energy and enthusiasm like a pep rally. Be animated and exaggerate your movements. Begin class by yelling loudly: "LIFE IS AN ADVENTURE!" Ask the following questions and encourage campers to answer them (The answer: NOD:

Are we supposed to go through life bored stiff?" (If necessary, put your hand to your ear and say "I didn't hear you." The point is to get everyone yelling: "NO!")

"Is the point of life to always be solemn and serious?"

"Does God want us to be passive and easily swayed by what others think?"

"Did Jesus always do what other people expected him to do?"

"Did Jesus sit around and never go anywhere or do anything?"

"No! Life is an adventure, fun, exciting, scary, and challenging! We're supposed to be happy at times, sad at times, and have hearts full of joy and love all the time. Let's go on an adventure right now!"

Game: Scavenger Hunt

Suggestion: Unless there are safety issues involved (i.e., lightning, slippery mud, too cold, etc.), have this activity outside even if it is raining. Rain will only add to the sense of adventure! Just put everything in plastic bags.

Note: This activity requires some preplanning and preparation. This is an adventure for the campers, so take those few extra minutes before camp to gather the necessary materials and make plans. The campers will love it!

Preparation:

1. Photocopy the sheet of cards on the following page. Use card stock, or mount on thin cardboard.
2. Prepare clues. At the beginning of each clue there is a short story about Jesus. Then you will finish the clue based on where you decide to hide items on your campgrounds. See below for the clue stories,
3. Gather items to hide on the day of class. Each group will find four items. The first letter of each item is a clue for the final puzzle. Hide items in the correct order for each group. The second item should be an edible treat for everyone in that group. You will choose items according to the letter the campers need to know. Here are suggestions:

GROUP ONE

FIRST CLUE: Jesus teaches us to leave our comfort zones and embrace life's adventure. After being baptized, Jesus left the comfort of family and friends, and went out into the desert where he was tempted by the devil. Even though he was hot, and hungry, he remained strong and faithful to God. He resisted temptation and continued on his journey, ministering and serving God's people. Now it's time for you to begin your adventure:

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH ITEM BELOW:

1. _____ 3. _____
2. * _____ 4. _____

The first letter of each item is a piece of, the final puzzle
*An asterisk means that this letter counts as two pieces of the puzzle

GROUP TWO

FIRST CLUE: Jesus teaches us to leave our comfort zones and embrace life's adventure. After being baptized, Jesus left the comfort of family and friends, and went out into the desert where he was tempted by the devil. Even though he was tired, hot, and hungry, he remained strong and faithful to God. He resisted temptation and continued on his journey, ministering and serving God's people. Now it's time for you to begin your adventure:

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH ITEM BELOW:

1. _____ 3. _____
2. * _____ 4. _____

The first letter of each item is a piece of the final puzzle.
*An asterisk means that this letter counts as two pieces of the puzzle

GROUP THREE

FIRST CLUE: Jesus teaches us to leave our comfort zones and embrace life's adventure. After being baptized, Jesus left the comfort of family and friends, and went out into the desert where he was tempted by the devil. Even though he was tired, hot, and hungry, he remained strong and faithful to God. He resisted temptation and continued on his journey, ministering and serving God's people. Now it's time for you to begin your adventure:

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH ITEM BELOW:

1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____ 4. _____

The first letter of each item is a piece of the final puzzle.

GROUP FOUR

FIRST CLUE: Jesus teaches us to leave our comfort zones and embrace life's adventure. After being baptized, Jesus left the comfort of family and friends, and went out into the desert where he was tempted by the devil. Even though he was tired, hot, and hungry, he remained strong and faithful to God. He resisted temptation and continued on his journey, ministering and serving God's people. Now it's time for you to begin your adventure:

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH ITEM BELOW:

- 1.* _____ 3. _____
2. _____ 4. _____

The first letter of each item is a piece of the final puzzle.

GROUP FIVE

FIRST CLUE: Jesus teaches us to leave our comfort zones and embrace life's adventure. After being baptized, Jesus left the comfort of family and friends, and went out into the desert where he was tempted by the devil. Even though he was tired, hot, and hungry, he remained strong and faithful to God. He resisted temptation and continued on his journey, ministering and serving God's people. Now it's time for you to begin your adventure:

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH ITEM BELOW:

1. _____ 3.* _____
2. _____ 4. _____

The first letter of each item is a piece of the final puzzle.
*An asterisk means that this letter counts as two pieces of the puzzle

GROUP SIX

FIRST CLUE: Jesus teaches us to leave our comfort zones and embrace life's adventure. After being baptized, Jesus left the comfort of family and friends, and went out into the desert where he was tempted by the devil. Even though he was tired, hot, and hungry, he remained strong and faithful to God. He resisted temptation and continued on his journey, ministering and serving God's people. Now it's time for you to begin your adventure:

WRITE THE NAME OF EACH ITEM BELOW:

- 1.* _____ 3. _____
2. _____ 4. _____

The first letter of each item is a piece of the final puzzle.
*An asterisk means that this letter counts as two pieces of the puzzle

Edibles:

Group 1: R = raisins

Group 2: G = grapes

Group 3: D = dates

Group 4: A = apples

Group 5: A = apricots

Group 6: N = nuts

Other Letters:

V = volleyball

S = snake, rubber

R = rope

E = egg, plastic/boiled

G = glue

N = nail

O = onion

I = igloo, drawing of

T = tape

D = dog, stuffed animal

H = heart, cut out of paper

U = umbrella

Below is the order to hide items as well as the letters campers should have after the hunt:

Group 1: v, r, s, e

Group 4: e, a, r, g

Group 2: n, g, o, i

Group 5: v, a, t, d

Group 3: h, d, i, t

Group 6: e, n, r, u

4. Write the clue for the first item on the cards, then hide the second clue with the first item, and so on. (If you hide multiple items in one place, be sure to label them clearly with the group number.)

Clue Stories:

Clue 1:

Already on cards,

Clue 2:

Jesus teaches us to have faith and believe that we will be provided for. Do you ever get irritated when you are hungry? Imagine how Jesus must have felt when he was faced with 5,000 hungry people in a crowd that he had been teaching. The disciples were very nervous and wanted Jesus to send them away. Instead, Jesus blessed and broke five loaves of bread and two fishes, and the whole crowd was fed with twelve baskets of food left over. Now follow this clue to a tasty treat.

Clue 3:

On Jesus' adventure, he pushed social and cultural boundaries so he could minister to all people. He healed people with leprosy by touching them, even though they were considered unclean and untouchable. He ministered to a Samaritan woman at the well, even though Jews and Samaritans never associated with one another. He healed on the Sabbath even though the social norm was to do no work on the Sabbath, even healing. He constantly shook things up by being counter-cultural, breaking social rules in order to do good. It's time for you to get shakin'.

Processing:

Bring everyone together and discuss the scavenger hunt. Reinforce what the stories teach and help the campers relate them to their own lives. Use the following questions as discussion starters:

How did the scavenger hunt go for your group?

Which did you like better, the adventure of trying to figure out clues or actually finding the items? Why?

Have someone read Clue 1 (just the story about Jesus), and then discuss it with the following:

What does it mean to you to step outside your comfort zone to serve God?

Have someone read Clue 2, and then discuss it with the following:

Why is it important to trust that God will provide for your needs, instead of worrying about things like money and clothes?

Have someone read Clue 3, and then discuss it with the following:

What are some social or cultural boundaries that you might step over in order to serve God?

Have someone read Clue 4, and then discuss it with the following:

In this game, we all worked together to solve the mystery that "Serving God is the Great Adventure." How did you like working together compared to a game that creates winners and losers?

Our society encourages competition. Can we truly serve other people if we are always competing and trying to be better than them? How can we overcome what society expects and do what God expects?

Closing:

Reinforce the key points of the day: 1) Being about God's work is an exciting adventure.

2) Our journey in the Lord is a constant process of learning and growing.

Have a camper close today's class with a prayer.

Day Two: Maps of the Past

Activity: Map to the Past

Preparation:

1. Establish four stations for campers to rotate through. The stations should be roughly laid out in a circle so groups can rotate through them in a clockwise direction. If possible, set them far enough apart so that the stations are not in view of one another. Draw a map of your campground showing the four areas and any necessary landmarks. Copy it onto off-white or parchment paper. You will need one map for each group. You can even burn or tear the edges to make the maps look old.
2. Choose four staff members to be the living history figures outlined below and give them plenty of time to prepare their characters.
3. Gather costumes for the four living history figures. Staff members can be responsible for their own costumes. The costumes should reflect the historical time period.

Living History Figures:

Your staff can use the information below as well as any other personal research to develop their characters. Staff should be prepared enough that they can be "in character" without having to read from notes. It is important for the characters to include the "Points of Connection" so campers understand how the biblical stories relate to their lives today.

It is very important that the characters speak and act within their historical context as much as possible. For example, characters do not watch T.V or drive cars. The characters speak from the past to the present. This requires preparation, enthusiasm, and some creative ad-libbing.

Zechariah: Luke I

Zechariah was a priest and the father of John the Baptist. He and his wife, Elizabeth, were good people who strived to keep all of God's commandments. One day Zechariah was on duty in the temple and it was his responsibility to enter the temple alone and burn incense. The angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him his wife would bear a son and foretold the great purpose John would fulfill (see Luke 1:13- 17). The things Gabriel told Zechariah were so amazing that he questioned, "How can I be sure of this?" They had no children and had been socially disgraced for it. Over the years they had prayed and prayed for a child. Elizabeth was infertile and menopausal: how could she get pregnant? Gabriel gave him proof by punishing him for questioning: he was prevented from speaking until the baby was born.

When Elizabeth gave birth, all their neighbors and relatives were happy and excited for them. Everyone knew it was a miracle. When the baby was eight days old, everyone came for the circumcision ceremony where the baby would be named. Social custom dictated that babies were named after someone in the family. The crowd wanted to name the baby after Zechariah, but Elizabeth spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

They responded, "But none of your relatives have that name!" Then they looked to Zechariah for the baby's name. Since women were not considered socially equal to men, they didn't listen to her. They were quite surprised when he replied, "His name is John." When he said the name, the Holy Spirit came upon him so strongly that he began praising God and prophesying about John (see Luke 1:68-80). He was so proud of his new baby and the important work he would do when he grew up, for he was to prepare the way for Jesus.

Points of Connection:

Just as John was an important part of Jesus' ministry, so are each of us. John prepared the way for Jesus, and we prepare the way for Jesus to return again. God answers prayers even in ways that don't always seem clear. Zechariah had probably given up hope of ever having a child, but God answered the prayer according to His divine timing.

God can overcome anything that holds us back, or keeps us from being whole people—even things that seem impossible to overcome.

The Canaanite Woman: Matthew 15:21-28

The Canaanite woman, a *Gentile*, had heard of Jesus. She knew of his miraculous ministry, and she believed. When she heard that Jesus was traveling in her region, she approached him to beg for the healing of her daughter who was very ill and demon-possessed.

Gentiles and *Jews* did not mix company. Religious and social customs forbade it. There were also social taboos against men and women speaking together in public and against people who were thought to be demon possessed. Jesus had already established in Matthew 10:5-6 that he had been sent only to the "lost sheep of Israel." not to the *Gentiles* or anyone else. He seemed to believe this to be God's will until his interaction with this woman of unshakeable faith. The Canaanite woman changed the ministry of Jesus forever. We have her to thank that the blessings of Jesus extend to everyone, not just the *Jews*.

Very aware of all the social implications, the Canaanite woman came to where Jesus and his disciples were gathered and burst into the scene yelling, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." She did not approach quietly or timidly; she was desperate and bold. Jesus ignored her, and the disciples told him to send her away. He reminded her, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." Strong in her faith, she fell to her knees and begged, "Lord, help me!" Jesus replied to her with harsh, racially offensive words. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." Still insistent, she replied humbly, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

In that moment, Jesus did something we don't often associate with him: he learned. In that profound moment of faith, the Canaanite woman taught Jesus that it was God's will that he be open to everyone. He believed that he was sent only to the *Jews*, and when he was tested, it seemed that he would continue to uphold his beliefs even though they were causing him to discriminate based on race and culture. But in his awakening, he opened his

arms, not only to the Canaanite woman, ("Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."), but also to all people for all time. Her daughter was healed in the very moment that Jesus extended his ministry to her.*

Points of Connection:

Jesus taught us to have an open mind as he did when he reconsidered some of his old beliefs,

Like the Canaanite woman, we are called to have an unshakeable faith even when life gets hard and people reject us or try to discredit our belief in Jesus.

God wants us to serve all people in his name, regardless of their race, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, gender, physical appearance, or behavior.

*Historical and contextual insight on the Canaanite woman is from "The Woman Who Extended the Lord's Table," in *Do What You Have the Power to Do* by Helen Pearson, (Upper Room, 1992) pp. 76-86.

Lazarus: John II

Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha who lived in the town of Bethany in the country of Judea. Jesus was good friends with Lazarus and his sisters, When Lazarus became very ill, his sisters, fearing he would die, sent word to Jesus asking for his help. Jesus was traveling with his disciples when he heard. When Jesus told the disciples that they were going back to Bethany they couldn't believe it. After all, the Jews had tried to stone Jesus: why would he want to go back there? Jesus told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going back there to wake him up." As usual, the disciples didn't get what Jesus was saying, and they said, "Well, if he's resting, he'll get better." Jesus had to spell it out, "Lazarus is dead." By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days, and his sisters were in mourning. Since Jerusalem was less than two miles away, many Jews had come to comfort Martha and Mary. Jesus met the sisters at a place near the tomb: the Jews had followed, supposing the sisters were going to the tomb to mourn. Everyone was crying and deeply troubled. When Jesus saw how upset they were, he started crying as well. He asked, "Where have you laid him?" So they took him to the tomb. Some of the Jews were touched that Jesus was also crying and said, "See how he loved Lazarus!" But others grumbled, "yeah, but if he could heal a blind man, couldn't he keep Lazarus from dying?"

The tomb was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance, Jesus, still crying, asked them to open it. Martha said, "But Lord, he's been in there four days. By this time there is a bad odor," Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" They took away the stone and Jesus looked up and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me, I know you always hear me, but I say this for those standing here, so they will believe you sent me," After saying this, Jesus said in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

(Note: This part should be very funny. Feel free to really ham it up and add to this

interpretation.) Lazarus woke up rather confused. There was a horrible odor in the air. He was cold and his body was very stiff, He couldn't see anything, but he recognized Jesus' voice and tried to make his way to it. Because he was wrapped from head to toe in burial cloth, he fell down when he tried to get up from the stone slab where his body had been laid. He stumbled toward the light coming in from outside, scooting along like a giant inchworm. He heard voices and finally emerged into the light. Jesus smiled and chuckled at how funny he looked trying to walk in all that cloth. His sisters ran over to unwrap him and smothered him with hugs and kisses. Everyone was laughing and crying—well, almost everyone.

Many of the Jews who were there believed in Jesus, but some of them were threatened by him and went to tell the Pharisees what he did. Because of them, the Pharisees were convinced that Jesus was a threat to their power, way of life, and the status quo, so they began plotting how to kill Jesus.

Points of Connection:

Even when faced with the truth, some people will reject it, if we have done our part to share truth and goodness, we are not responsible for those who reject it, However, we are not to "give up" on such individuals. Jesus never gave up hope that his own people, the Jews, would one day believe in him. He never quit sharing his truth with them, even though he knew they would kill him,

Jesus has power over everything, even death, When we believe in him and ask for his help, he will be there for us—maybe not in the exact way we expect or in the timing that we want, but he will be there, The best thing we can do is surrender our own desires and say "Thy will be done, and not mine,"

The Woman Who Anointed Jesus: Mark 14:1-9

Jesus was in Bethany just two days before the Passover, which celebrated the Jews' deliverance from Egypt. Many people were traveling to Jerusalem for the occasion. Since Jerusalem was less than two miles from Bethany, it was a convenient place to stay away from the commotion in Jerusalem, Simon the Leper was having a dinner party and the guests were all gathered around the table. The tables in that time were low, so guests would sit on the floor reclining on cushions, Jesus knew his death was growing near and he had already tried to prepare his followers for this.

As Jesus and the others were gathered around the table, a woman came in carrying an alabaster jar of expensive perfume. Standing behind Jesus, she broke the jar and anointed his head with all the perfume. Considering the social status of women in those days, this was a bold move. She came into an all-male dinner gathering uninvited, stood above Jesus, and touched him without permission.*

The other male guests were extremely offended and said, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." They continued to speak harshly to her until Jesus cut them off. "Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing for me. She did what she

could. She poured perfume on my body to prepare it for burial. Wherever in the world the gospel is preached, what she has done will also be told in memory of her,"

Even though Jesus had already predicted his death, his disciples just didn't seem to understand or believe that Jesus was going to die. This woman seemed to understand and was doing what she could for Jesus. She didn't do it to get any power or reward for herself; she did it as a selfless and prophetic act of service, Jesus was always trying to teach the disciples that the key to following him was serving others, and they just missed the point time after time. This woman, having no official authority, no priesthood, no political voice, no social power, understood that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah and anointed him as such.*

Points of Connection:

Each of us is called to be a "prophetic" witness of Jesus, even though we may not be adults or in the priesthood or well-educated or whatever.

Serving God is a selfless, not a selfish, act. We should never do it to receive power or praise but just to glorify God.

Being a follower of Jesus requires some risk-taking on our part, but as long as our intentions are pure, the risks will be worth it.

*Historical and contextual insight on the woman who anointed Jesus is from "The Woman Who Anointed Jesus," in *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, by Helen Pearson, (Upper Room, 1992) pp. 38-44.

Instructions:

Divide the campers into four groups. Give each group a map and route of travel. Groups can use markers to plot their course on the map. Have each group start at a different location and rotate through the stations in a clockwise direction to avoid running into each other. On their journey, groups will encounter four characters from the past who make the scriptures come alive. Groups will stay with each character for ten minutes and then continue the journey (Hold to this time frame so groups don't overlap), then the groups will meet back at the classroom. If you would like to include the characters in your group process, have them come to the classroom as well.

Processing:

In the time that remains, have a discussion about the campers' journey through the scriptures. Reinforce the "Points of Connection" from each character, and make sure the campers understand which scriptures the character's stories are from. Encourage them to read more about these characters on their own. If you choose, the characters can participate in the discussion to help clarify points and to add more information, but they are not to dominate the conversation. This is the time for the campers to discuss the activity

Closing:

Have a camper close today's class with a prayer.

Day Three: Open to New Direction**Diversity Game: What's the Word?***

NOTE: This activity is to be explained and started during the last ten to fifteen minutes of Day Two evening activities. The game will end when today's theme class begins.

Preparation:

Index cards, one per person. Divide the cards into five roughly even groups. See below for what to write on the cards.

Group 1:

Secret Word: Diversity

How you treat others:

- Group 2: You are nice to them in a false, two-faced way.
You know that they can't really help you because you are so much better than they are.
- Group 3: You always try to compete with them. They think they know everything, but they don't.
You don't trust them at all.
- Group 4: You respect their physical strength, but you don't like them because they always give you a hard time.
They are so stupid.
- Group 5: You want to fit in with them, but you know you never will. They are such snobs.

Group 2:

Secret Word: Is

How you treat others:

- Group 1: You are nice to them in a false, two-faced way
You know that they can't really help you because you are so much better than they are.
- Group 3: You always try to compete with them. They think they know everything, but they don't.
You don't trust them at all.
- Group 4: You respect their physical strength, but you don't like them because they always give you a hard time.
They are so stupid,
- Group 5: You want to fit in with them, but you know you never will. They are such

snobs.

Group 3:

Secret Word: The

How you treat others:

- Group 1: You are nice to them in a false, two-faced way.
You know that they can't really help you because you are so much better than they are.
- Group 2: You always try to compete with them. They think they know everything, but they don't.
You don't trust them at all.
- Group 4: You respect their physical strength, but you don't like them because they always give you a hard time.
They are so stupid.
- Group 5: You want to fit in with them, but you know you never will. They are such snobs.

Group 4:

Secret Word: Strength

How you treat others:

- Group 1: You are nice to them in a false, two-faced way
You know that they can't really help you because you are so much better than them.
- Group 2: You always try to compete with them. They think they know everything, but they don't.
You don't trust them at all.
- Group 3: You respect their physical strength, but you don't like them because they always give you a hard time.
They are so stupid.
- Group 5: You want to fit in with them, but you know you never will. They are such snobs.

Group 5:

Secret Words: Of Life

How you treat others:

- Group 1: You are nice to them in a false, two-faced way.
You know that they can't really help you because you are so much better than they are.
- Group 2: You always try to compete with them. They think they know everything, but they don't.
You don't trust them at all.

- Group 3: You respect their physical strength, but you don't like them because they always give you a hard time. They are so stupid.
- Group 4: You want to fit in with them, but you know you never will. They are such snobs.

Instructions:

The goal of this game is to find out what all the secret words are and be the first group to figure out the sentence and quietly tell it to the leader. Explain that the index cards you will hand out contain their secret word and important instructions for how they are to treat the other groups. The instructions are a secret within each group. They are to guard their cards carefully so no one outside their group sees them.

Hand out the cards and give the groups a couple of minutes to find each other. Have them greet each other by saying, "I'm a (group number), what are you?" Then give them five to ten minutes to figure out how they are going to try to get the words out of the other groups based on the information on the cards. After that, the game starts and continues until theme class tomorrow (Day three).

Remind them that they are in a role-playing game and that they need to make it clear to others when they are in their role and when they are just being themselves and not playing the game. We don't want any feelings hurt for real.

NOTE: This activity is deliberately competitive in order to support the divisiveness of the role-playing. It is very important to address the negative potential of competition in the processing discussions.

When Class Begins:

Share the sentence with everyone and do not offer any prizes or positive recognition for the group who figured it out first—downplay the competitive component. Lead a discussion on the game using the following questions and any others you think of as you watch the campers interact during the game.

How did you feel when you were first approached by those in your group?

Why didn't you share your secret words with the other groups immediately?

Why did you just accept the way you were told to treat others instead of questioning it?

How did you feel about approaching friends in other groups in this way?

How were you treated by others who were not in your group?

How did you make decisions in your group about who to ask for information?

Who were you willing to share with?

How did this activity make you feel?

How does this parallel what happens in school for you?

What ways can you think of to overcome some of these unhealthy patterns of social interaction?

How can we all coexist peacefully and still be different?

Why is cooperation generally better than competition?

*This activity was adapted from "What's Your Sign?" *Diversity in Action*, by Sharon Chappelle and Lisa Bigman, (Simon and Schuler Custom Publishing, 1998) p. 114.

Close the above activity by exploring how Jesus dealt with these challenges. Discuss how Jesus crossed social boundaries by being open to diverse people. Use the following examples or others you might think of:

Jesus associated with the Samaritan woman at the well John 4:4-26, 39-42).

Jews and Samaritans did not associate with each other. They had different religious beliefs and had been at odds with each other for centuries. There was also a social custom that prohibited a man from speaking to a woman in public. Jesus crossed those racial and social boundaries and spoke freely with her, asking her for a drink of water and witnessing to her, revealing himself as the Messiah. The woman believed him, and because of her witness, many other Samaritans were converted to Christ.

Jesus healed a crippled woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13: 10- 17).

The corrupted religious leaders condemned Jesus, considering healing the woman to be working on the Sabbath. Working on the Sabbath was a social taboo. Jesus overcame that taboo in order to do God's work. The woman was also thought to be demon-possessed, therefore, she had been socially shunned and was considered untouchable.* Jesus touched her and healed her in front of everyone in the synagogue. Through this act, Jesus taught us that his love and healing are available to everyone; therefore, we should be open to and minister to all types of people.

*Information on the cultural implications of demon-possession is from "The Bent-Over Woman," in *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, by Helen Pearson, (Upper Room, 1992) p. 58.

Diversity Game: Pyramid

The goal of this activity is to demonstrate that there are diverse ways of reaching goals. Split the campers into groups of six or groups of ten, depending on the size of your camp. Use staff if necessary to even out the groups. Go through the following exercises:

Rules: Be safe so no one gets hurt. Every group member must be included in the pyramids. Pyramids must have three people on the bottom, two in the middle, and one on top (or four, three, two, one if you have groups of ten). Give no other information even if there are questions asking for clarification.

1. When I say go, make a pyramid with your bodies. Ready go!
2. This time, make the fastest pyramid you can. Ready, go!
3. Now make the lowest pyramid you can. Ready, go!
4. Finally make the widest pyramid you can. Ready go!

Hopefully the groups will come up with different ways of making pyramids other than the typical way: (everyone on their hands and knees, facing forward, in a vertical configuration). Here are some possibilities:

Everyone lays down flat, in a vertical configuration.

Everyone sits down in a horizontal configuration: three people in back, two in front of them, one in front of them.

Everyone on their hands and knees, facing sideways, in a vertical configuration.

Everyone lays down flat, in a horizontal configuration.

If they did come up with a few different ways, move on to the processing. If they didn't break out of the typical pyramid, give them a minute to discuss their strategy and do it again. You may need to make some suggestions such as. 'Don't just think vertical,' "Think of different ways of making pyramids," 'What can you do different with your bodies?' etc.

Processing:

Bring everyone back together and discuss the activity and the different approaches that were used. Talk about the importance of being open to different ways of thinking and doing. Include that this is important as we seek to do God's work. Read or have someone read this scripture:

Be not overly concerned with method as you go forth to witness in my name. There are many techniques for proclaiming my word which may be used as needs and circumstances dictate. — Doctrine and Covenants 155:7

Discuss the scripture and its implications for us as Christians. Use any of these questions to get started:

What does this scripture mean to you?

Have any of you ever sat through a really boring church service?

How would you have changed that service so that you got something out of it?

What different ways can you serve God and do good work which may be a little off the wall?

Close your discussion with the following excerpts from Psalms, showing us some different ways to praise God. Let it serve as a reminder that we need to be open to diverse ways of doing Gods work, and that serving God is not boring or mundane.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; make a loud noise and rejoice and sing praise. Psalm 98

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the tambourine and harp. Psalm 149

Praise ye the Lord. Praise God for his mighty acts.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the harp.

Praise him with the tambourine and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals; praise him upon the resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Psalm 150

(Adapted from the Inspired Version)

Closing:

If time permits, sing some of the campers' favorite Christ-centered camp songs. Have a camper close today's class with a prayer.

Day Four: Traveling Light

Activity: Backpacking Through Life

Preparation:

Prepare six index cards for the skit activity Here is what to write on the cards:

1. Godly and Worldly Fruits: Light Pack

Contents: Godly Fruits

Hope, peace, love, joy, justice

2. Godly and Worldly Fruits: Heavy Pack

Contents: Worldly Fruits

Despair, chaos, hate, fear, discrimination

3. Lifestyle Choices: Light Pack

Contents: Counter-Culture

Buys only what is necessary to meet basic needs; rejects excessive materialism.

Avoids TV and would rather read a book or interact with others.

More concerned with what is on the inside rather than outer appearances.

4. Lifestyle Choices: Heavy Pack

Contents: Popular Culture

Materialistic, compulsive shopper; indulges wants excessively

Addicted to T.V and media images.

Fanatically image conscious, but not concerned with inner-quality

5. Environmental Impact: Light Pack

Contents: Wise Stewardship

Chooses reusable things over disposable things (i.e., cloth shopping bags, avoids paper and plastic).

Rides bike to school, walks, or takes the bus.

Wears appropriate clothing for the season instead of overusing heat and air conditioning.

Never uses harmful pesticides; thinks bugs are cool.

6. Environmental Impact: Heavy Pack

Contents: Poor Stewardship

Uses disposable everything (i.e., paper products, styrofoam, plastic utensils, etc.).

Drives or rides in a personal car to school.

Blasts air conditioning all summer and cranks up the heat during the winter.

Sprays pesticides on every bug in sight.

Optional: gather a large selection of props to choose from.

Introduction:

Leader:

"How many of you have ever been backpacking or know much about it?"

(If most campers raise their hands, move on. If only a couple raise their hands, offer a quick description of backpacking such as: A backpacking trip is usually conducted in a wilderness area where there are no roads or other indications of civilization. Each person carries only the basic necessities in a backpack and experiences the beauties of nature by hiking during the day and camping at night in a tent or other simple shelter,")

"When preparing for a backpack, the most important thing to remember is to travel light, packing only what you need. Because you have to carry everything on your back, too many extras will quickly weigh you down and you'll be too tired to go on. ? Although it would be nice to have things like a portable CD player and your favorite CDs, it's much more important to fill that space with food and warm clothes. The operative word here is needs, not wants. Choosing wrong could mean the difference between life and death."

"Today we're going to be using backpacking as a metaphor for exploring life as followers of Jesus."

Read or have a camper read the following paraphrased scripture: Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you that are burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me: for I am gentle and you shall find rest in your souls: for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Skits: What's In My Pack?

Split the campers into six groups. Give a card to each group. The cards list the contents of a backpack. Each group is to come up with a skit that illustrates what is in their pack and how their lives might reflect those contents. Give the groups ten minutes to come up with their skits. Optional: Have a large pile of props that groups can use for their skits. The skits are split into three sections with two skits in each section. One represents

a "Light Pack" (positive contents), and one represents a "Heavy Pack" (negative contents).

Have both (Light and Heavy) skits for a section presented, then facilitate a reflective discussion about the skits. Begin the discussion by having a member from each of the two skits read their card. (This is to make sure everyone understands what was in the "packs" if it wasn't clear in the skits.) Then use the "Processing Thoughts" for each section to guide the discussion, Gauge the length of the discussions to allow time for all six skits and three discussions.

The purpose of the discussions is to help campers be aware that they can choose how to live their lives; they do not have to blindly accept the status quo because there are other options that might be more in line with the teachings of Jesus.

Section 1: Godly and Worldly Fruits

Skit 1: Light Pack: Godly Fruits

Skit 2: Heavy Pack: Worldly Fruits

Processing Thoughts:

How did the first skit make you feel? How did the second skit make you feel?

Would anyone share an experience you have had with carrying worldly fruits in your heart and how you would like to have handled the situation better?

Would anyone share an experience you have had when someone responded to you with Godly fruits in their heart and how you felt?

Read the scripture below (Galatians 5:16-17, 19-26 NIV) and ask:

What advice could you give to a friend who was wrapped up in worldly living?

So, I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity... idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition . . . envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you . . . those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control . . . Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit, Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Section 2: Lifestyle Choices:

Skit 3: Light Pack: Counter-Culture

Skit 4: Heavy Pack: Popular Culture

Processing Thoughts:

What makes pop culture heavy?

It might seem easy, but why might being wrapped up in popular culture actually be a burden when we are trying to follow Jesus?

(It takes much energy and resources to acquire all the things and keep up the image that pop culture pressures us to have. We might be so busy that we don't have adequate time for God. Our hearts and minds might be so cluttered with worrying about superficial things, like wearing the right clothes, that we might miss God speaking to us about the things that really matter, like helping others and sharing love.)

What makes counter-culture light?

It might seem very difficult, but how could living more simply and rejecting the superficial requirements of popular culture leave us with more time and resources to serve God.

(If we were living more simply and just meeting our basic needs, we could donate more to the church and charity. Living an uncluttered life leaves more time to serve God, and more space in our hearts for God to fill with worthwhile things such as love and caring for others.)

How was Jesus counter-cultural?

(He associated with society's rejects, he broke social norms, and he denied himself the indulgence of a typical lifestyle in order to be God's witness.)

Read the scripture below (Doctrine and Covenants 147:5 a,b) and ask:

What does "repression of unnecessary wants" mean to you?

Stewardship is the response of my people to the ministry of my Son and is required alike of all those who seek to build the kingdom. . . . Repression of unnecessary wants is in harmony with the law of stewardship and becomes my people.

Section 3: Environmental Impact

Skit 5: Light Pack: Wise Stewardship

Skit 6: Heavy Pack: Poor Stewardship

Processing Thoughts:

What was the environmental impact of poor stewardship in the skit?

(Disposables use more resources and take up more landfill space. Driving a personal car overuses fossil fuels and pollutes the air. Overusing heat and air conditioning demands more electricity which causes air pollution from coal-burning electric plants and ecosystem destruction from damming rivers for hydroelectric plants.)

Using dangerous chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides pollutes air and water and harms all life including humans.)

How did the wise stewardship skit illustrate walking lightly on God's creation?

(Reusing things instead of throwing them away. Reducing demand for destructive products such as paper and plastic [deforestation and toxic emissions]. Reducing demand for fossil fuels. Reducing air pollution caused by cars and electric plants. Reducing toxic chemicals in soil, water, and air.)

What environmental issues concern you the most and why?

Read the scripture below (Doctrine and Covenants 150:7) and ask:

How can we be in the forefront of the movement to help the environment?

These are portentous times. The lives of many are being sacrificed unnecessarily to the gods of war, greed, and avarice. The land is being desecrated by the thoughtless waste of vital resources. You must obey my commandments and be in the forefront of those who would mediate this needless destruction while there is yet day.

Closing:

Sometimes discussing these issues can be really overwhelming. If your campers seem burdened, spend a few minutes encouraging them to confront their pain and let it motivate them to do what they can, then let the rest go. We all have to live with the contradiction of how we want to be and how we really are. The most important thing is to do what we can do rather than get so overwhelmed that we do nothing.

Have a camper close today's class with a prayer.

Day Five: The Horizon Awaits

Small Group Activity: Make It Happen!

Preparation:

Gather the cards for each camper from this morning's devotion.

Introduction:

Leader:

"This week we have journeyed together in Christ, searching for adventure, learning from the past, being open to new direction, and exploring what it means to travel light. Now our week is coming to an end, and the horizon awaits. The horizon is calling each of us forward, beckoning us to be the best disciples of Jesus that we can be.

This morning, we shared with each other what we can do in our congregations and communities to spread the truth and love of Jesus. Now, let's help each other brainstorm ways to make it happen."

Instructions:

Split the campers into small groups of about four. Hand out each camper's index card from the morning devotion sharing. Give them fifteen to twenty minutes to brainstorm how each person in the group can put their desires into action. Tell them to be as concrete and specific as possible —to make real plans instead of talking in generalities. Remind them that they need to encourage each other and be very supportive. (Focus on what they can do, not on what might go wrong.) We want everyone to end the activity feeling empowered and excited. If their actions involve their home congregations, encourage them to write a letter to their pastors or arrange to meet with them when they get home. If their actions are community oriented, encourage them to meet with community leaders who might help them. As the leader, you can circulate throughout the groups offering support and suggestions as needed.

Discussion & Activity: Fool for God!

Preparation:

1. Gather a large selection of art materials (i.e., clay, markers, paint, brushes, paper, collage materials, etc.)
2. Pick out some nice music to play quietly while campers work on their projects.
3. Option: Find a jester's hat to wear during this activity

Introduction:

Read these words from President Grant McMurray's 1997 address, "Envisioning our Future: A Call to Transformation":

*We call ourselves to foolish faith in an age of stifling rationality.
We call ourselves to be poets in a tabloid world.
to embrace mystery that defies reason.
to discover spirit that evades language,
to place our faith in the hands of God*

Spend some time discussing these powerful words, Make sure that your campers really understand them, Here are some thoughts you might use:

"It can be very liberating when we realize that we don't have to always understand and explain everything in objective ways. Our society places great emphasis on scientific inquiry, research, and statistics, but sometimes we need to accept the mystery of life and place our faith in God, even when it doesn't make sense. Our society might call us fools for doing this, but if we're 'fools for God' we can't go wrong! Mystery can also be 'explained' in subjective, or irrational ways, like through the eyes of a poet, musician, dancer, or artist."

Activity:

In the remaining class time, have the campers create a poem, song, interpretive dance, or art piece (or any combination of these) "explaining" what it means to them to be a fool for God. Let them split up according to their interests. They can work alone, or they can get together in pairs or small groups. Provide art materials for them to use if they want to.

Let your campers know that this is a spontaneous, creative activity. Creations don't have to be perfect or polished. There is no right or wrong approach. There is no ugly or bad: every expression of our love for God is beautiful and accepted. Make the atmosphere safe and supportive. Tell them that there will be a special opportunity tonight to present their creations. You may need to make space throughout the day for those who need more time to work. (See tonight's evening activity for more information. Don't give away the surprise of the evening, but tell just enough so that campers can prepare presentations or dress up for the event.)

Closing:

Leader:

"The horizon awaits. Pursue God's mysteries with a foolish passion. Continue your study of the scriptures and learn from the wisdom contained there. Always be open to new direction and new ways of doing good work. Hold Jesus and his teachings in your heart and walk lightly on his creation, Follow your dreams and pursue what makes you come alive in Christ, for what the world needs are people who have come alive."

Have a camper close today's class with a prayer.