

# Camp Christian Summer Devotional



## **Forward**

Being on Camp Christian Summer Staff is probably (to date) the most influential thing that has happened in my life. Like a lot of people, I wanted to be on staff since my first year of Chi Rho camp. Upon graduating from High School, I knew for sure that applying for a job the following summer would be a major priority. If I remember correctly, I filled out the application in full the day I received it in the mail and sent it back very first thing the next morning. I was an absolute wreck waiting to find out if I had been hired. I was in fact hired, and I was filled with all sorts of emotions. At first I was so excited I could hardly stand it. Then I was worried; what would this experience really be like? I had no idea how it would affect my life.

First, on the most basic level it really helped me develop my work and leadership skills. Second, it led to most of the strongest friendships I have ever had. Not only with the people I served on staff with but people I met through being on staff. Over the years we have experienced so much together. Attending and participating in weddings, being around for new babies, going on vacations, attending ordinations, decorating new houses, celebrating new jobs, and so much more. We've also shared the not so fun stuff with each other, fights, failures, breakups, miscarriages, job losses, deaths, diseases, and other things that test your relationships and faith. I have experienced laughing so hard I cried and crying until there were no more tears with these people. It's a rare thing to find one person you can do both with, let alone a group of people.

Third, and most importantly, it secured my relationship with God. As most people who have been to Camp Christian can attest to, there are few places where I feel closer to God than at Camp. Working and living at Camp adds a whole other dimension to that experience. I found myself seeing God in freshly cut grass or the "thank you" from a Chi Rho camper at the Dining Hall counter. I lost some of the romanticism of Camp that I thought would always be with me, but that's OK. The relationship became more real, I could more easily see how God worked outside of the Vesper Spot.

The majority of the devotions in this booklet have been written by people who have served on Camp Christian Summer Staff. You'll find that this bond of being on Staff spans the decades and that we are not all so different. It has been an added blessing in my life to make connections with those persons who came before me working on this book. I sincerely hope it has some impact on those who have and will come after.

May you feel the presence of God all summer!!

***Jennie Stoddart***

***Staff: 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004***

## **Week One, Day One**

Philippians 2:3-11 *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...who humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross....*

During my two summers on camp staff I cleaned toilets, a lot of toilets used by a lot of messy people, six mornings a week. During my two summers on camp staff I was never happier.

How can those two statements go together? I knew how then, in 1976 and 1977, and I still know how today. I signed on for Camp Christian staff to serve God in a very tangible way. I wanted to help others grow closer to God through the summer camp experience. I'm sure I did not think ahead of time that having clean toilets would help people grow closer to God. But it did. At least I think it did.

The real thing that happened those two summers was that I learned how to be a servant. I learned that I am happiest when I truly focus on putting the needs of others before my own needs. I learned that I feel most in tune with God when I am happily serving others in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Serving with complete abandon, absolutely without regard to my own interests. My model for that today is still those two summers on camp staff. Serving others was my mission, my goal, my reason for being. (That and falling in love, of course!)

I still sometimes think of walking down by the old admin building to the really old boys' cabins on lower campus each morning. On most of those magnificent summer mornings the sun would be filtering down through the tops of the huge trees and I would see the sun's rays reflecting in the morning haze. On many mornings the sense of God's presence in those rays of sun was nearly overwhelming to me. It gave me the desire to serve and serve and serve.

While I still strive to serve God and others every day of my life, I was never more successful at doing so joyfully and happily than cleaning toilets at Camp Christian. May you be blessed in the summer of 2009 with that same happiness, joy and closeness to God.

***Roger McKinney  
Staff 1976, 1977***

## Week One, Day Two

### **Prepare Yourself for a New Journey**

*“Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.” -- Matthew 9:17*

The words an elder offered to me at a church celebration for my graduating high school class stayed with me over the years. “Everybody gets a couple chances to start fresh in life – going to college, beginning that first job, moving somewhere new – more if you’re lucky. At these times few people know you, they have no assumptions about who you are.” I see some wisdom in these words. At certain times in life it is easier to work on being the person you want to be. When not burdened by living up to a mold of expectations cast by those around you, when not surrounded by people familiar with your every weakness and shortcoming, when not pressured by friends and family to conform to behaviors of the past, it is easier to re-start in earnest at becoming the type of person you would like to be – at becoming the type of Christian God wants you to be.

I believe God is calling each of you this summer to jump-start your faith journey, to strengthen your love of and commitment to Jesus, and to deepen your relationship with God. However, the terms of our faith journeys are never ours to choose. Starting your summer on Camp Christian staff is not exactly one of those start-fresh, free-from-the-past, ‘do over’ moments. You are about to start a new journey, but you will know some if not many of the co-staffers, bosses, counselors, campers, and other people God brings into your life this summer. And they will know you. Clearly some will be helpful on this journey. But others will challenge you with expectations (high and low) set based on your past behavior. Some will be familiar with your faults, your shortcomings, and those embarrassing or regretful moments in your past.

The question then is how best to begin the journey. For guidance read again the words of Jesus spoken in Matthew 9:17. This summer God will provide the ‘new wine’ for your spiritual growth in the form of early morning reflection times and late night vespers services; quiet breezes over the lake and awe-inspiring lightning storms dancing over the cabins; opportunities to be a good Christian example to campers and unexpected examples of grace and compassion shown by the same campers; and joyful and challenging moments with your co-staffers. If you are burdened by your past you will not be able to receive these gifts in the way God intends. It is your task then to make of yourself a new wineskin. Name the faults of your past. Recognize the patterns of behavior that you have fallen into – whether learned in college, high school, or summer staffs past – that prevent you from becoming the Christian that God intends you to be. Then commit yourself to making a break from these parts of your past, from the expectations of others, and perhaps even your own expectations, that are a stumbling block in this new faith journey. Make a commitment this summer to jump-start your relationship with God; and help your co-staffers in their journey by releasing them from any pre-conceived expectations you might otherwise hold them to.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, I realize that I do not get a ‘do over’ this summer to break free from my past. Yet I know that you want me to continue my faith journey despite any ruts I have fallen into or expectations others have of me. I commit to you now that I will free myself from past unhelpful*

*behaviors and make myself receptive to all of your many gifts. Thank you for the opportunity to strengthen my faith and deepen my relationship with you. Thank you for the people you will bring into my life this summer to challenge me along my journey. And thank you for my co-staffers, my brothers and sisters in Christ whose faith journeys will be intertwined with mine this summer. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Zach Baird**  
**Staff 1995, 1996, 1997**

### **Week One, Day Three**

“From the beginning I predicted the outcome; long ago I foretold what would happen. I said that my plans would never fail, that I would do everything I intended to do.” – Isaiah 46:10  
When I applied to work on Camp staff in 1997, I had been hoping to be selected for the one opening on the maintenance staff that summer. However, the letter that I received informed me that I had been chosen for the kitchen. To be honest, I was bitterly disappointed at this; in fact, I initially marked an “X” next to the option on the response sheet that indicated I was declining the position. But something must have told me to not be so rash, that I could be turning down a wonderful opportunity, so with some trepidation I changed my response to accept the position.

Not long after this, I happened to run into Tim VanAuken outside the grocery store where he worked. At that point we were merely acquaintances, but I knew that he had worked in the kitchen the previous two summers, and would be doing so again that year. We chatted for a few minutes, and I asked him questions about staff to gauge what to expect, and to perhaps mollify the reservations I still had. He assured me that we would have a lot of fun, and I think, too, he was genuinely glad at the prospect that he would no longer be the only male kitchen staffer.

Tim ended up being more right than he could have known. I consider that summer of 1997 to have been one of the most remarkable experiences of my life, something I will always cherish and warmly regard. Not only did Tim and I immediately bond as we toiled together, but I formed fast friendships with many others on staff that I maintain to this day, as well as strengthening the one I'd already enjoyed with Matt Dickinson, and I would return to staff for two more summers (albeit, on maintenance). I cannot imagine what my life would be like had I not changed my response to the staff invitation.

God truly works in mysterious ways; I may not have served in the capacity that I myself might have originally wished that summer, but He obviously had something else in mind and I am enriched as a person because of it.

As you work this summer, know that God chose *you* to be on staff this year for a reason, as well as all the others. This is a bond that connects each of you together, and to me as well, and indeed to all those staffers who served at Camp before us.

**Matt Stewart**  
**Staff 1997, 1998, 1999**

## **Week One, Day Four**

My friend Juanita! She was the type of lady who I would beg to let me wash her walls on Sunday afternoons just so I could be with her. Of all of the church people I knew growing up Juanita was one who always stayed in my life. She even became a counselor at camp when I was a camper and when I was on staff. She was there when I held my torch during consecration and was there when I mowed the lawn in front of her cabin in the rain.

Juanita was the first person I told I had met the guy I was gonna marry and I had her blessing long before my parents knew his name. She held my children in her arms and we dreamt together of them going to camp.

When Michael and I were ordained it was most important to us that she be part of it. She, beyond anyone else, knew the struggles we had getting to that day and the excitement we had looking at the possibilities of the future. Despite several health problems she blessed us that day as she shared the list of saints who had shaped us into who were.

The last time I saw Juanita her body was failing her badly. I remember the tears streaming down my face as I bent over to tell her I had was a pastor again and she gave me the blessing I didn't even know I was seeking. She had that way of always knowing what I needed to hear even when I didn't.

The last thing I said to her was that when she died I knew I would feel her spirit at camp where her heart had been so alive. I was at camp last fall after death and made sure I was there early. I stepped out of my car and the tears flowed. I felt my beloved friend whisper past me on the gentle morning breeze.

Camp is full of memories and people. May this day find you blessed by the cloud of witnesses that surround the life and ministry of Camp Christian.

***Heather Schimmel***  
***Staff 1988, 1989, 1990***

## **Week One, Day Five:**

### **Living in Unity**

*Psalm 133 A song of ascents. Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> *How good and pleasant it is  
when brothers live together in unity!*
- <sup>2</sup> *It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
running down on Aaron's beard,  
down upon the collar of his robes.*
- <sup>3</sup> *It is as if the dew of Hermon  
were falling on Mount Zion.  
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,  
even life forevermore.*

Being on Staff was one of the best summers of my life as I was able to make new life-long friends and catch up with old friends. It was also nice being away from home, living in basically a college environment, and being at a place I love. The summer had many great times such as staff night outs, directors treats, the July 4th parade, doing puzzles while hanging out with other staffers, and taking part in Camp activities ranging from the Ho-down and recreational activities to vespers, consecration, and serving the Lord.

Although being on staff has its wonderful times, it can be a bit hectic and stressful as well. These hectic times and the stress tend to take a toll on staff unity and conflicts will arise. Now I was only on staff for one year, but I am pretty sure every staff there has ever been has faced this problem to some degree or another. There will be arguments, complaining, and complications that arise in the everyday work activities. Someone may get a job that is not that pleasant to do. Someone will have a great idea for completing a task and it may be done another way. Or there may just be relationship differences among staff members. So the question is: How do we live together in unity knowing that conflicts are inevitable?

A very important key is not necessarily come to a resolution but to reconcile our relationships with one another. There's a very important difference. Reconciliation means to re-establish a relationship with the person(s) there is conflict with. Resolution means to resolve every issue by coming to agreement on everything, which most likely will not happen.

So work on reconciling your relationships so that you may learn how to live with the conflict and make it work for you rather than against you. If you are able to do this, you and the entire staff will have a great summer working and living together in unity.

Prayer: Lord, Thank you for this day where we have the opportunity to serve you. If conflict arises, we ask you to give us the strength, patience and wisdom to reconcile our relationships with each other so that we may live in unity and can be role models for the people around us. Help us to work together in serving the camp, campers, and ultimately serving you. Amen

***Clint Messner  
Staff 2002***

## **Week One, Day Six**

“Be an example to the believers with your words, your actions, your love, your faith, and your pure life.” I Timothy 4:12b

The news is all too often crowded with stories about professional athletes behaving badly. One day a professional football player is arrested for carrying a gun, the next a rising basketball star is in trouble for using drugs. All too often we hear the same tired excuses after the media or the public turns against the athlete. “I didn’t ask to be a role model. I’m an adult; I can do whatever I want. It’s not my fault if somebody’s kid wants to imitate me.” They seem to quickly forget one of the reasons they’re taking home that large paycheck is because kids want to be like them.

For better or for worse, anyone who puts themselves in view of impressionable kids is a role model. Others will hear their words and see their actions and will determine whether they want to speak and act in the same manner. Politicians, teachers, doctors, professional athletes, and even Camp Christian staffers do not get to choose to be role models. They can only choose to ignore or accept this responsibility.

As a member of the Camp staff, you are in an interesting position. The staff is not responsible for teaching classes or for leading worship. However, your presence at camp as you go about your job can have an impact on a camper’s week. You may never come into contact with a camper, but you are still presenting an example of how a Christian young adult lives. Campers will see you when you worship at vespers, they’ll hear you when you’re singing at meals, and they’ll notice the fun you have as a community. Unfortunately, the campers will also see empty seats when you don’t make it to vespers, they’ll hear you when you swear at work, and they’ll notice the tension when your community breaks down. Like it or not, the campers will associate your actions and interactions with those of a college-aged Christian. What do you want the campers to learn from your example? Can you ignore the responsibility, or will you accept it and add the words from I Timothy to your job description: ‘My words, actions, love, faith, and pure life will be a Christian example to others’?

***Zach Baird***

***Staff 1995, 1996, 1997***

## **Week One, Day Seven**

*“From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised”*

*-- Psalm 113:3*

How many people do you know have tried to articulate why Camp Christian is a special place? I can remember being told it is because of all the people there, or because it is on sacred ground, or because it simply has a special place in God’s heart. Somewhere along the way, I decided it may be all of those things, but what makes camp a special place to me is that it is the only place I know where the Lord is praised in all that you do. In those times when it is difficult to believe



God is present at all in your daily struggles with counselors, staffers, or the hot sun, think about your answer to why camp is that special place.

As you go about your day or end your day, consider all the places God has been a part of your day and rejoice. Maybe it was a brief moment while singing in the dining hall, a conversation with a fellow staffer, or working side-by-side in Christian love. "From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised!"

**Prayer:** Gracious God, thank you for your presence in all that we do. Help us to lift you up, help us to praise you! You give us so much; you surround us with your love. Help us to co-create with you in all that we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Audrey Connor**  
**Staff 1996, 1997, 1998**

### **Week Two, Day One:**

#### **Encountering God with Jacob, at Camp Christian**

*"And Jacob said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'" Genesis 28:10-17*

David Letterman has made famous the art of making Top Ten Lists. They're easy to make up and can be really funny. Chances are good that at some point during the summer, Jim will deliver a Top Ten list of his own as he reports on Staff Lodge inspection. Consider for a moment your Top 10 Least Favorite Camp Songs. "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder" makes the list for many staffers. By the end of the summer, it can take a special effort to keep from singing "Every round goes slower... slower..." out loud.

But consider the scripture that was the inspiration for the song. Jacob is on his way to a foreign land, the land of his grandfather Abraham. When the sun sets, he has no choice but to stop for the night. With a stone for a pillow, he sleeps peacefully enough to dream--and what a dream he has! God comes to Jacob in his dream, and makes some incredible promises. Jacob reacts with complete surprise: "Surely the LORD is in this place--and I did not know it!" Luckily, he discovered God's presence before he left.

Even at Camp Christian, with what little distractions there are, it can be easy at times to forget that God is in this place. Many former campers, counselors, and staffers understand what Jacob means when he says, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The important thing is to recognize God's presence while you are there.

Take a moment to make a list of the Top Ten Places you experience God at camp, offering a prayer of thanks for each.

**Josh Baird**  
**Staff 1995, 1996, 1997**

## **Week Two, Day Two:**

### **Encountering God with Deborah, at the Green Chairs**

*“She used to sit under the palm of Deborah...and the Israelites came up to her for judgment.”  
– Judges 4:4-6*

The period of Judges was a redundant one for the people of Israel. Judges 4:1 gets a new cycle going with the words, “The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.” In some ways, this ruins the suspense of what is coming. But each cycle is different because each features a new Judge raised up to help the people. Each new judge acts according to his or her own personality. Look back no further than 3:12 to see a cycle begin with exactly the same words (and tell a rather gruesome story of a very different kind of judge).

Despite the predictable pattern, there’s something appealing about these stories. Every time the people get themselves into trouble, God raises up a judge to help set things right. And while the cycle repeats, the stories do not, because each judge is unique. Deborah stands out for one obvious reason: she’s a woman, judging and prophesying--and saving Israel!

But I really like her style. She sits under the palm tree, and shares wisdom and guidance with any who comes to her. There are people who do that at Camp; we call them counselors. Each counselor has a different style. A few, like Deborah, will “sit under the trees,” or hang out in the green chairs sharing with any who joins them. The staff won’t like every counselor, and every counselor won’t appreciate the staff. But each counselor that is there has something to offer. What camper hasn’t felt God’s presence through the kind words of a modern-day “judge,” called by God to this important ministry? And they can be there for you, too.

Reflect on your own memories of important counselors. Get to know some this week, and thank them for their presence.

***Josh Baird***  
***Staff 1995, 1996, 1997***

## **Week Two, Day Three:**

### **Encountering God through Creation, on the Dock**

*“The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork”  
– from Psalm 19*

It can be hard, especially during the week, to get more than a moment or two of peace and quiet. That’s mainly because campers are always around, always loud, always distracting. But there are a few times when they are not around, when they are not loud, and when they are not distracting. When the campers are at Vespers, for example, the rest of Camp enjoys relative peace. And when they are in bed at night, the rest of Camp enjoys so much peace that it comes to life with sounds of its own.

It seems almost hard to believe that the author of Psalm 19 was not sitting on the dock during one of these moments when the Psalm was penned. The sky is clearly the source of inspiration for the entire Psalm ('firmament' in the first verse means sky, even though it sounds like it means earth, the firmer of the two). Sitting on the dock during Vespers or at night, the sky is nothing short of inspirational. There are certain times in the summer when, during Vespers, the sun is at a beautiful, blinding angle to anyone who faces the lake from the dock. And on a cloudless night, glory is undoubtedly proclaimed by the uncountable scattering of stars.

It can be hard, especially during the week, to get more than a moment or two of peace and quiet; which means, it can be hard to slow down and take note of the regular alleluias proclaimed all around, without speech, without words, yet resounding, pouring forth from all around. But the alleluias are there for anyone to hear, anyone who takes time to listen.

Get in the habit of sitting in a favorite place at a favorite time each day. Read a favorite scripture. Then be still. And listen.

***Josh Baird***  
***Staff 1995, 1996, 1997***

### **Week Two, Day Four:**

#### **Encountering God through a Stranger, in the Dining Hall (Luke 24:13-35)**

*"Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight."  
— from Luke 24:13-35*

Two friends traveling together are joined by an unknown man. Their journey ends with a meal, and an encounter with the risen Christ. "Weren't our hearts burning?" they said while hurrying back to Jerusalem to tell others what had happened. They weren't talking about a bad reaction to the meal; they'd hardly had a chance to eat anything. They knew from the start, or in hindsight, for sure, that there was something special about the one who joined them. It took a simple act of breaking bread for them to figure out what that special something was. This is a miracle.

Breaking bread at a meal is a mundane, everyday experience for these men. Yet it's taken on deep spiritual significance. As food and stories are shared at the table, bonds are formed. Ritual is established and repeated. Love is shared. Some families pass food in a specific direction. Others take turn telling stories from their day, and so share in each other's lives. Many tables at camp will develop their own rituals: some will make a ritual of trying to keep the jumper jumping through the entire meal; a few will ritualize a kind of sharing of their day. Staff, too, will develop ritual in the Dining Hall. It may center on the way refills are given to campers. It might be a special, or especially obnoxious, way of passing food to each other. Whatever rituals develop around the tables, watch out! You may just catch a glimpse of the risen Christ

among you. Each time you do, he's sure to slip away, leaving your hearts burning--in a good way.

Consider the most mundane, basic, everyday and not at all spiritual act you perform. Compare it to breaking bread at a meal. Learn to watch out for the Holy.

**Josh Baird**  
**Staff 1995, 1996, 1997**

### **Week Two, Day Five:**

#### **Encountering God in the Writing on the Wall, in the Craft Cabin**

*"Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace..."* —  
*from Daniel 5:5-12*

Consider the King's shock when he sees fingers appear. His shock is the double shock of seeing both these crazy floating fingers and the damage being done to his beautiful palace walls. Just wait until Daniel arrives and translates the inscription for him! It is a shocking event. It's strange. It's God, speaking through the writing on the wall.

The Craft Cabin is definitely no palace, and that's a good thing. If it were, it wouldn't have character. And how often can you talk about a building, and say that it has character? It's a rare thing, the Craft Cabin. It's no palace--and yet it's emblazoned with the word of God. That word is present in two ways. The first is as testimony to the countless campers who are nurtured and taught and who grow in their faith while sheltered (sort-of) within the Craft Cabin's walls. The names of recent campers whose lives were touched there can be seen. It may be said that where a name is written, it will soon be written over. Most names cover up others who came before, and thus represent generations of campers. The second way that the word of God is present is in writings where the graffiti artist was not concerned with his or her own inevitably short-lived posterity. Look carefully around the walls, ceilings, and floors of the Craft Cabin; other messages are present. Some are even messages of love and of faith. It is always shocking when the hand of God appears. Which is more shocking: when it appears as fingers writing on a palace wall, or when it appears as the hand of a Chi Rho camper leaving behind a message of faith?

Carefully consider what message you would leave. Write it out for yourself, or share it with others.

**Josh Baird**  
**Staff 1995, 1996, 1997**

### **Week Two, Day Six:**

## **Encountering God with Moses, at the Vesper Spot (Exodus 3:1-6)**

*“Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”  
– from Exodus 3:1-6*

One great thing about Camp is that you never have to make anything up. You don't. For example, a group planning worship one week years ago was inspired by the story of the burning bush. They approached some of the staff and asked the staff to create a bush that burned but wasn't consumed for the evening's Vesper service. They were serious.

Staff is capable of some pretty amazing things. But there's a reason this bush-that-burns-but-is-not-consumed catches Moses' eye. It's unheard of! It's crazy! Even camp staff couldn't do something like that! It's so crazy it's got to be God! But Moses doesn't seem very excited. He stiffly announces: “I must turn aside and look at this great sight.” It's like he's saying, “Okay God, I'm going to turn now. You'd better move before I see you.” Moses knows what's up with the bush; he knows it's God. And God, as it turns out, isn't planning on going anywhere. There are moments and there are places in our lives when we don't want to deal with God. We don't want to see the burning bush. We warn God that we're coming, hoping that maybe this time God will heed the warning and get out of our way. There are also moments when we desperately want to have God call us by name and wrap us in God's presence. The times and places where we experience God in this way are truly holy. How else can we explain a bush that burns but is not consumed? And even though such a bush has never been seen at Camp Christian's Vesper Spot, it is truly holy ground.

Sometime today, remove your shoes. Walk around and imagine your feet are like roots growing in holy ground. Then imagine they are like roots growing in the holiness of God.

***Josh Baird***  
***Staff 1995, 1996, 1997***

## **Week Two, Day Seven:**

### **Encountering God with Elijah, on the Lodge porch**

*“...and after the fire a sound of sheer silence” from I King 19:9-13*

What is the sound of sheer silence? That's a good question for a Buddhist monk. How can silence make a sound? Maybe it's close to the sound of one hand clapping. Whatever it is, Elijah hears it.

Elijah spends the night in a cave. Then the word of God comes to him and tells him to stand outside because God is about to pass by. But before Elijah gets outside, an amazing wind blows through. This wind is so strong that it splits mountains! But God isn't in the wind. Then there's an earthquake, but God isn't in the earthquake, either. After the earthquake there's a

fire. But there's still no sign of God. Ah... but then there's a sound--a sound of sheer silence. And when Elijah hears it, he finally steps to the entrance of the cave. He knows that God is now passing by.

The storms that tear through Camp can be powerful. There aren't any mountains around for the winds to split, but there are plenty of trees ready to shed branches or be blown over completely. Flash floods occur from time to time. Thunderous downpours alter even rainy day plans. Sometimes at night storm clouds will roll over head, keeping the rain for themselves but providing a visually stunning display of fire-in-the-sky. There is no better place to watch the near-silent procession of these lightning shows than the Lodge porch. Here at the entrance of your own cave, especially in the silence of a Saturday night, do not be surprised to hear the voice of God ask you, "What are you doing here?" When the question comes, how will you answer?

Meditate on this question: What am I doing here? Pray over the week that has past, and for the new week to come. And enjoy the silence, for a little while.

***Josh Baird***  
***Staff 1995, 1996, 1997***

### **Week Three, Day One**

#### **Desert Moments**

Have you ever wondered why Jesus retreated to the desert? Have you ever wondered how he felt refreshed in that parched land filled with silent mystery? Have you ever been to the desert? During my desert moments I discovered that the desert is a great spiritual illustration of the world in its extreme. It is a place of holy encounters, limitless intrigue, terrifying silence, and loss. There is no other place as hot and dry and empty. There are few places as hostile to life. Yet, it is lived in. There is beauty. There is God.

For all its delicate beauty, however, the desert is a foreboding place for people. One of the most threatening features of the desert is the unpredictable sandstorm. It blows up suddenly and, just as suddenly, vanishes into nowhere... like unattainable dreams, broken relationships, and unforeseen tragedies. And God is there.

On other occasions, the desert is visited by rare rainstorms. These storms leave in their wake a lovely array of instant flowers that spring up, bloom, and die overnight... like momentary human pleasures. And God is there.

More than any other land surface, the desert jostles human pride. It reminds us of our human limitations. Desert dwellers warn drivers, especially tourists who tend to panic and drive aimlessly, that if you get lost or break down, you must be calm because the desert is calm. When you get lost, you should sit. Wait. One hour, two hours, a full day. Sit. You will find your orientation. And God is there.

In our rushed society filled with commercialized holidays, rapid images, fast food, fast cars, automatic everything, is it possible to simply sit with a calm spirit and peacefully wait? You should try it sometime.

When you are feeling anxious, tired or overwhelmed, lose yourself in the desert with God--for an hour, two hours, a full day. Maybe you will find your orientation--yourself--God. As you spend time in the desert's silence, you will see changes in your life and eventually you will become more deeply dependent upon God's grace. The desert will begin to provide your daily bread.

Where do you go to escape from the hectic noise of life? Where do you go to connect with God and allow God to work in and through you? Do you find yourself connecting with God in the car, at the gym, before you fall asleep at night, on long walks, at the vesper spot? That is your desert space. Go there often and be refreshed.

***Laura Fitt Baird***  
***1994, 1995, 1996, 1997***

### **Week Three, Day Two**

“ Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.’” -- Matthew 19:13-14

Sometimes people think I'm crazy for taking a week of vacation to spend it with a hundred and some Chi Rho campers. In general, middle school children are just too squirrely for most people to deal with for a whole, undiluted week. Sometimes, in the middle of the week, I too wonder if I'm crazy when it's really hot and the kids are building sculptures with the leftover food and the plates. Generally though, I can snap out of it because I love the energy, affection and silliness of twelve- to fourteen-year-olds.

Last summer was my first summer as an A.D. at Camp Miami. As luck would have it, I managed to have what felt like half the camp per day in the office because they had blisters on their feet. Remember that joke about the Chi-Rho showers? Well, chlorine doesn't do anything for people's feet either and it was a pretty messy process to clean and bandage toes and heels and ankles. I joked that God was reminding me to be humble in my service to these children.

One of the boys brought this message home clearly. I had already bandaged his foot for a blister in the afternoon. Then, at recreation, he ended up somehow tearing his toenail off. So, off to the office we went. I cleaned up his toe, put a band-aid on it, and prepared to return to the gym. He promptly burst into tears and told me that he was really homesick and he missed his parents very much. I sat back down and we talked about home and his folks and his dog and how he couldn't wait to see them on Saturday. Then he added that he was having a good time at camp and maybe we should go back to the gym.

It reminded me that I really am at Camp Christian in service to these children. It isn't really important to have sage advice to give them or all the answers to their (amazingly) numerous questions. The gift is just to be there, to smile at them, to say hello to them, to try and remember some of their names and to treat them as children of God.

**Prayer Thought:** Which kids at camp need your prayers? Which of them will you reach out to today?

***Joy Omslaer***  
***1983, 1984***

### **Week Three, Day Three**

Being Present

1 Peter 4: 10-11: Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised...

This is clearly an important message and a good philosophy to live by at all times, but I think it is particularly significant when you are working on camp staff. Being a ministry associate can make for a long summer- week after week you put in 12 or 14 hour days, you deal with little to no privacy in the lodge, and you run around trying to find cell phone service to talk to your friends and family back home. I don't think anyone can blame you for wanting to go back to your room and crash instead of going to every vespers service or every evening activity, but that is when it becomes so important to remember why you are here. Each of you has been selected to serve God in a specific way based on your experiences; it may not always be easy to remember when you're snaking a toilet, cleaning up the quest group supply bins, or waking up with the sun to go make breakfast, but the truth is every moment you work at camp is a moment you spend serving God and serving the community of believers that camp fosters. So on days when you're tired and frustrated, instead of retreating to your room go to vespers. Be present in the moment, be mindful of the opportunity you have and let the spirit give you the motivation to go on. When you go out of your way to participate in the camp experience you will appreciate the time you get to spend at camp much more and it will make it infinitely easier to deal with all of the other *stuff*. Just think back to how inspiring it was to be a camper and see all of the young adults that came back to give their entire summers to camp. Just that thought should be enough to remind you that everything you do is for the glory of God and your experience as a staffer will be much more fulfilling if you are mindful of this every day!

God, please always give me the strength to wake up every morning and be motivated by the opportunity to serve in your light. Though I may be tired, help me to remember constantly that everything I do here is to create opportunities for people to become closer to you. Keep me grounded, mindful, and most of all appreciative of the time I have here so that my life will forever be enriched by this experience. Amen.

***Molly (Eakins) Marsh***  
***Staff 2004, 2005***



### **Week Three, Day Four:**

#### **No nos cansemos de hacer el bien.**

*“And let us not grow weary of well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” --Galatians 6:9*

I never thought of staff as a job, but a labor of love, dedication, service, and doing good. Even when the summer is over, God still calls upon us for these labors. This year at Colegio Internacional the motto is, “No nos cansemos de hacer el bien,” or, “Don’t get tired of doing good.” This year I have come to live by those words and as Christians I feel we are all called to not get tired of doing good because in due time WE WILL reap from our good doings, but only if we do not lose heart.

Don’t get tired of doing good:  
because you are the future of the church.  
because you are the voice for those who have no voice.

Don’t get tired of doing good.  
Although nobody helps you.  
Although you feel alone in your work.  
Don’t get tired of doing good.

Don’t get give up on telling the truth.  
Although others may lie  
Although you feel alone when you tell and live the truth.  
Don’t get tired of telling the truth.

Don’t get tired of serving God.  
Don’t get tired of looking for God’s Will.  
Because the time will come when we can harvest the good work we have sowed,  
But only if we do not give up.

**Prayer Thought:** Our Lord and God, give us the strength to endure the bad without getting tired of doing good. Amen.

***Erin Larsen***  
***Staff 1999, 2000, 2001***

### **Week Three, Day Five**

“Lord, you know everything I do; from far away you understand all my thoughts...You are all around me on every side; you protect me with your power.” -- Psalms 139:2, 5

*“May the Lord himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you always.” -- II Thessalonians 3:16*

I loved working on the Camp Christian Staff. I loved meeting the new groups of kids each week, the songs they sang, the different stories that they brought with them, and the way the camp buzzed with energy while they were there. However, one of my favorite times was on Saturday night after they had all gone home and before the next group arrived. There was a gentle quietness that covered camp on Saturday nights. I would always go down to the dock and watch the sun set over the lake. It was a time of reflection for me. I would think back and evaluate the week I'd just had and then regroup and reenergize for the week that was to come. The most beautiful sunsets I have ever seen in my life were over that lake. The sky would be bright reds, oranges, and pinks as if God had painted it just for me. The only sound was the lapping of the water as it gently hit the dock beneath me. I could feel him all around me and that gave me a strong sense of well-being and peace. Just those few minutes of solitude with God and His sunset would give me enough strength to face another busy week.

Today, I live a long way away from Camp Christian. Los Angeles is the busiest, noisiest, most fast-paced city in the country and I have been living in it for six years now. I am constantly surrounded by people, traffic, cell phones, appointments, road-rage, and the attitude that the most important person in the world is “me, me, me.” It can be maddening and often difficult to get one's thoughts and priorities into a clear and straightforward direction. After I have had a week filled with all the joys and frustration that L.A. has to offer, I walk down to the beach for my reflection time. The second-most-beautiful sunsets I have ever seen are those over the Pacific Ocean. I sit on the rocks and watch God paint his masterpiece across the sky. The only sound is that of the waves crashing into the shoreline as the tide comes in. There on the beach, away from all the craziness in my life, I am once again filled with the same sense of peace and well-being because I know God is with me.

The sunset is proof of His presence. I can see Him in the colors of the sky and feel Him in the force of the waves. I know that this special time that I take to reflect and just sit quietly is the most important time that I spend all week. No matter where I go, God is always with me; and no matter what I'm doing, I take time out to be with Him. This is what gives me life.

***Megan Lash***  
***Staff 1992, 1993***

### **Week Three, Day Six:**

Lessons of Faith and Practice from World Religions: Christianity

“Do not Judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.” – Matthew 7:1-5

Being on Camp Staff is such an honor. You and a handful of others were chosen to bear the responsibility of Camp Staff. Although it is fun, relationships with your fellow staff members can be challenging at times. As you journey through your staff experience this summer, remember that even though you all went to Camp Christian, you each come from different backgrounds and upbringings. Embrace that about each other; learn from each other; search yourself for the reasons behind what you love about your neighbor and what drives you a little crazy. Take some time out this week to really find out who your lodge neighbors are this summer. Who are they under the surface? The person you may have thought least likely to be your best buddy could turn out to be your closest confidant.

***Kristen & Brian McCreanor***  
***Staff 1993, 1994, 1995 (Kristen)***  
***Staff 1997, 1998, 1999 (Brian)***

### **Week Three, Day Seven**

**"Sheep are dumb"**

"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice." Jn 10:3b-4  
"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jn 10:11

Sheep are quite possibly some of the dumbest creatures God ever created, right? They follow blindly. They run away, often into danger. If they fall down, they will not survive without the shepherd's help. Pretty dumb, right? So why we are constantly regarded as Christ's sheep? Ouch... Well, look at the descriptions above. Does any of that sound like you?

I heard a woman speak at a conference about this subject. She was born Jewish and converted to Christianity in her 30's. She found the sheep analogy fascinating. When sheep wanders away, the shepherd goes and finds it. Sure everyone knows that. If the sheep continues to wander away again and again, however, the shepherd breaks its legs! (Just imagine a woman who grew

up Jewish saying "How do you like *that?!?*" complete with accent and hand gestures! She was a trip!) Obviously, the sheep cannot survive with broken legs. It will be eaten or eventually will suffocate under its own weight, so the shepherd picks it up and carries it around on his shoulders, feeding it, giving it water, talking to it. When the sheep is able to walk again, it follows the shepherd wherever he goes, not because it's afraid of getting its legs broken again, but because it loves the shepherd.

What a beautiful analogy for anyone who has had to experience brokenness to stop being dumb and wandering away!

Then again, sheep may not be as dumb as we think. They know the voice of their shepherd. At night, shepherds would share a small pasture and take turns keeping watch. Throughout the night, the sheep would intermingle, but this was not a problem. In the morning, the shepherds would call their sheep by their names, and only their sheep would follow them. No joke!

*He knows your name...* Meditate on that for a minute... The same One who holds the stars in the palm of His hand and created all with a word knows you by name... and He is calling to you. Do you know the voice of your shepherd? Do you listen, or do you wander?

Prayer: Our beloved shepherd, thank you for loving us so much that you carry us through our brokenness. You teach us that we are not dumb animals, we are your precious children. You watch over and teach us because you love us so dearly. Keep us safe from any who may harm us, including ourselves, and help us to recognize your voice so we may follow you more closely. In the name of your gentle, compassionate Son we pray. Amen.

***Kristi Hicks***  
***Staff 2002, 2003, 2004***

### **Week Four, Day One**

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven..." (NRSV)

The passing of time at Camp Christian is fairly regimented: there's a time to set up the registration tables, a time to start the hot cereal, a time to scrub the toilets, a time to go to the square dance; the list goes on and on and on. And that's the way it has to be when you've got a camp full of a hundred or more youth and only six short days to help them on their spiritual journey.

But let's consider the other "times" mentioned in today's scripture. Verse three talks about "...a time to break down and a time to build up;" As a member of the staff, what barriers can you help to break down among your fellow ministry partners? What relationships can you help to build up with counselors and camp directors? Or how about the times in verse four, "a time to

weep, and a time to laugh;" There will certainly be (probably already have been!) times over the course of the summer that will make you want to cry: too much work to do, careless words spoken by a friend, maybe even a touch of homesickness for family and other friends. But there will also be plenty of times to laugh: when a Chi Rho camper says the funniest thing ever, when you've messed up the spaghetti for the third time in a row, when you've escaped into town for some silly escapade--there will be laughter. :)

The important thing to keep in mind during all your times this summer and beyond is that the almighty God is with you in each and every moment. God is with you in times of mourning and dancing; in times of birth and death. I believe that if we practice what verse seven suggests, "...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;" we will go to God in prayer for strength during all such times, and then speak God's response to us through our words, thoughts, and deeds.

What time is it? It's God Time.

Prayer: Gracious and forgiving God, thank you for the time that you have called me to be here in ministry at Camp Christian. Please help me not to take it or you for granted, and to praise your holy name in all times of my life.

**Liz Jewell Becker**  
**Staff 1993, 1994**

### **Week Four, Day Two**

*John 15:9-17*<sup>9</sup> "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love."<sup>10</sup> When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.<sup>11</sup> I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!<sup>12</sup> This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.<sup>13</sup> There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.<sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command.<sup>15</sup> I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.<sup>16</sup> You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.<sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.

At this point in the Gospel Jesus is preparing for the ascension (going to Heaven) when he will leave the Disciples yet again. He is calling them out of the fear and confusion that consumed them after his death and into a clear call to ministry in his absence. There are no more secrets or surprises, but instead he treats them as equals, partners in ministry; calling them friends.

After all that has happened between them it's as if Jesus finally gets to say the good bye he never got to have before his death. The miracle is done and he can simply say, "I love you.

Take care of each other. Love one another. Just keep loving, as I have loved you, and good things will happen.”

It sounds so simple, but we know that it is not. We still have barriers to loving—greed, selfishness, pride, guilt. We still keep secrets that keep us from feeling loved – regret, shame, jealousy. Thankfully the love that Jesus has placed in us that he calls us to, is bigger than all these things; stronger even than death. God’s agape love is unconditional and unending. There is no escape from god’s love for you because as Christ says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” And he goes on to say, “and I appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.” Having been anointed with His love we are also capable of His love and are called to share it.

Take a few moments to think about what barriers exist in your life that keep you from loving or feeling loved as fully as God loves us? Who in your life needs to experience this love? Can you answer God’s call to share it?

Prayer: Ever living and ever loving God, we know that at times the hurts of the world harden our hearts and keep us from experiencing the joy of your love. Help us to be vulnerable to your spirit and rejoice in your mercy as we love one another. Amen.

**Debbie (Duckworth) Saxe**  
**Staff 2001, 2002, 2003**

### Week Four, Day Three

#### **A Listening Heart**

*“Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy. In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me.”* -- Psalm 86:6-7

A writer by the name of Charles Swindoll once found himself with too many commitments in too few days. His busyness created a sound barrier between him and the ones he loved. He found that he was nervous, tense, and tired all of the time. He recalled the below experience in his book Stress Fractures.

*“I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions through the day. Before long, things around our home started reflecting the pattern of my hurry-up style. It was becoming unbearable. I distinctly remember after supper one evening the words of our 5-year-old daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day. She began hurriedly, ‘Daddy, I wanna tell you somethin’ and I’ll tell you really fast, okay?’ Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, ‘Honey, you can tell me--and you don’t have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.’ I’ll never forget her answer: ‘Then listen slowly, Daddy!’”*

Staff can get really busy. Weeks begin to fly by as fast as days. Before you know it the hot summer wind is becoming cool and the last Chi Rho camp is leaving. Be present and soak up the moment you are in while you are in it. Don’t rush. Take the time to listen slowly.

Listen to the early morning bird songs.

Listen to the sound of the mower.

Listen to the splashes.  
Don't think of what you are going to do in an hour or next weekend.  
Listen slowly to the moment.  
Listen to the creaking doors.  
Listen to the crackling of firewood.  
Listen to God's presence.  
Don't hide.  
Listen slowly to the moment.  
Listen to the bullfrogs and the crickets.  
Listen to the laughter and the tears.  
Don't interrupt with your own agenda.  
Listen slowly to the moment.  
Listen to the serenade.  
Listen to the choir of prayers.  
Listen slowly.

**Laura Fitt Baird**  
**Staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997**

#### **Week Four, Day Four**

*"Jacob had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it. And the Lord was standing besides him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring...Remember, I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." -- Genesis 28:12-13, 15*

Being on Summer Camp Staff allowed me to experience camp in a new way. It granted me perspectives that were fresh and challenging. Suddenly the songs I had sung as a younger camper fell on my ears with brand new meaning.

This last week my seminary choir sang a beautiful version of "Jacob's Ladder." I simply can't sing "Jacob's Ladder" without images of Camp Christian flying through my mind. I was reminded of the many times I have sung that song, standing in front of the old girls' cabins waiting to commence our journey to the Vespers spot. How many times I must have sung that song, marching down the Vesper Trail, arm-in-arm with those I just didn't want to let go of. How many times I must have sung that song, one of many young, sweaty bodies, standing in the human hug we called closing circle. While I didn't really understand why we were "climbing Jacob's ladder," or what Jacob's ladder was, I understood that we were climbing something together, on our way up, moving towards some higher vision, sojourning hand-in-hand as a community, whether that was Chi Rho Camp Portage, Wilmington CYF, or Advance Conference. We had been through something so powerful throughout the week that we couldn't put it in words. Our tears, our touching, and our united voice in song were all we could express. Whatever "it" was, we knew that we were in it together, and we were on a journey of faith,

love, and friendship that we could feel in our bodies and in our hearts. Jacob's ladder symbolized our never-ending striving for peace and true community. It represented that stairway of angels we had all witnessed at camp, all of us ascending and descending many times over the course of a single week. We met God on our way up and back down. And this prepared us for leaving camp and entering the "un-real world" again. While I never fully grasped the concept of the song,

I learned as a Summer Staffer that Jacob's ladder is what connects us at camp to all that is divine. And it connects the generations of families and campers who spend weeks at camp, climbing the ladder, seeking the promise of God. It is what brings us back to that sacred place, that sacred land, time and time again.

**Amy Gopp**  
**Staff 1991, 1992**

### **Week Four, Day Five:**

#### **Taking a Step of Faith**

Song: "Lord I Want to Be a Christian (in-a my heart)"

2nd verse: be like Jesus

3rd verse: be more faithful

*"He said to them, 'Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have the faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.'" -- Matthew 17:20*

We all take steps of faith. Whether you go to college or work, go to seminary or become a missionary, or have decided to work on Camp Christian staff, as Christians we take steps of faith every day. I never thought that working on Camp Christian staff would lead me to serving God in another country, but each step leads to a bigger step. It is not easy taking those steps. We may feel alone or doubt whether we have the gifts required for the job. We find ourselves as modern day Moseses: "I can't do this," "I'm not a good speaker," "There has to be someone else who is better for this than me," "How can I inspire anyone?" God shows us though that when we take that step of faith in Him we can do things that we never thought possible. What is more risky than gambling in Las Vegas, more exhilarating than going down the first hill of that big roller coaster, more rewarding than that "A+" is taking that step of faith into the unknown and realizing you never took it alone, but that God was with you all the time.

"If we did all the things we were capable of we would literally astound ourselves."

--Thomas Edison

**Erin Larsen**  
**Staff 1999, 2000, 2001**



## **Week Four, Day Six**

*“For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” – II Peter 1:5-8*

Have you heard anything like this before? I Corinthians provides an excellent list on how love can be defined. But in this passage, we find a near flow sheet of emotions, or 'cause and effect' for what I will call righteous living. I have also reviewed a "Fruits of the Spirit" offering provided by Mother Theresa that is not only similar in structure but message. And by no means are these the only relevant examples.

A pop culture example that draws extensively on the story of Jesus (at least from a particular point a view) is Star Wars. In the originals as well as in “Star Wars I: Phantom Menace,” Yoda suggests the path of feelings to the dark side. Paraphrased and quasi-accurate, “...fear leads to anger which leads to hate which is the path to the dark side.” This is a clear representation of what those that are Jedi must not do. In the same way, all followers of Christ are instructed that if life is lived in a certain manner, one will be kept from "being ineffective and unproductive" with respect to knowledge of Jesus.

From these two examples, numerous thoughts can be rationalized and discussed. I would only offer one thought of my own: how often are we told what to do to be successful versus that which we should NOT do? Do some of us rebel by doing that which we should NOT do rather than that which is requested?

I believe this passage is useful in communicating that not only is there a path to unequaled love through Christ with commitment, but also that God loves us and knows we can maintain the above stated virtues and thereby have successful relationships with both people and with God, on Earth as well as in Heaven for eternity.

***Kyle Paladino***  
***Staff 1996, 1997***

## **Week Four, Day Seven**

*“Be still, and know that I am God!” -- Psalm 46:10a*

These eight words have the power to stop me wherever I am and transport me back to Camp Christian. A ton of memories come ringing back: morning prayers, morning watch, the flowers around the lake, the mist on the pools first thing in the morning, the sun coming

through the trees on the lower campus, Vespers, taps and the stars at night. It is easy at these moments to be still and to know that God is real and visibly present.

It's not so easy to remember to be still when the Camp really gets moving. The kids are running around not really knowing where they are supposed to be. And sometimes the counselors can't figure it out either. Kids and counselors are at the kitchen window wanting seconds NOW and someone has flushed the wrong thing down the toilet AGAIN. Then, there are the times we realize the joke about the "Chi Rho Showers" isn't really a joke and a fair number of campers actually believe that chlorine is a suitable replacement for soap. And, sometimes, the staff is a little grumbly with each other because it is hot and/or everyone is tired. Many times, nothing is going wrong, but camp is a very busy place with several hundred people moving around and through it. Being still is hard enough, let alone knowing who or where God is.

The miracle is, however, that God is present whether we are still or not. It would be wonderful to be the kind of person who constantly has a stillness of the soul that always knows God, but most of us aren't. Instead, we must consciously step back at different moments in the day and become quiet and listen.

**Prayer Thought:** In what part of the busyness of today can I *know* the presence of God?

***Joy Omslaer***  
***Staff 1983, 1984***

### **Week Five, Day One**

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, Slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

This is perhaps one of the most dynamic passages in the New Testaments. No longer are the labels of the world to divide the body of Christ. In that body there are no divisions or separations between us we are all one people.

What does this passage mean to you as you sit where ever at camp as a staffer reading this? In the past the staff has had its divisions. Kitchen vs Maintenance, Men vs Women, etc. It is easy to understand how this can happen, after all the staff becomes naturally segmented, different jobs, living next to each other. It's still important to remember that you are each called to a different part in supporting the ministry of Camp Christian. Your jobs each provide a vital role, with their own hardships and difficulties. Maintenance works outside in the heat, almost every time there's a screw up in the kitchen the whole camp knows, and the secretary has to put up with the A.D.'s all day (it doesn't sound that bad till you think about it).

It's easy to fall into a "grass is greener" mentality, especially as the summer drags on and the stress (and heat) builds. It's important to remember that you are all one staff. Let me write that again and in crazy font **YOU ARE ONE STAFF!!!** You need to listen to each other and make sure that what you regard as a joke the other(s) don't see as a nuisance.

Remember all you have is each other and you are servants not only to the campers and directors, but to each other. As servants to each other try to bear and ease each other burdens, not add to them.

Remember we are one body with out separation.  
Remember you are one staff.

**Brian Saxe**  
**Staff 2002-2003**

### **Week Five, Day Two**

Where jealousy and selfishness are, there will be confusion and every kind of evil. But the wisdom that comes from God is first of all pure, then peaceful, gentle, and easy to please. This wisdom is always ready to help those who are troubled and to do good for others. It is always fair and honest. James 3:16-17

I remember fondly the three years I served on the summer staff at Camp Christian. We could hardly wait for the end of the work day when we could sit on the porch of the old farmhouse, put our feet on the railing and “hang out.” Some days this didn’t happen until after vespers, other times it happened at 2:00 in the afternoon if it was particularly hot and we started roofing at 5:00 in the morning. It was these days that really irritated the kitchen staff in particular whose day continued long after 2:00. It wasn’t until our daily round of “joys and concerns” did we get the chance to talk this out and settle the petty jealousy and irritation of each group’s particular routine.

It is an honor to be chosen to work as a summer ministry associate at Camp Christian. You are working here because you have a certain gift to share; a gift that is not the same as anyone else’s, a gift that is meant to be used to glorify God, not you. There are certain things you can do that no one else can. Perhaps it is cooking. Maybe it is an ability to fix things that are broken. Perhaps it is encouraging someone who is discouraged. There are things that only you can do. And yet at Camp Christian you function best as a team. If petty jealousy and selfishness begin to rear their ugly heads, replace them quickly with gentleness, kindness and peace.

Prayer: Good day, God. We thank you for the beauty of this day, and this place. We thank you for the ministry interns and ask your help in allowing us to function as a team. May we do our best to glorify you in everything we do and say. Amen.

**Mary Jo Bray**  
**Staff 1984, 1985, 1986**

## **Week Five, Day Three**

Psalm 55:22

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. (NIV)

Recently, I was involved in a Bible study of Exodus. I wondered aloud to the group why God doesn't seem to be doing these great works in front of our very eyes in modern times to convince people of God's power and create more followers of God. Or perhaps he is and people aren't noticing...The group had various explanations of why or why not.

This reminds me of the story of our car. My family is the typical two-car sort, where husband and wife each go their own ways throughout the day, thus necessitating two cars. Our old Subaru Forrester, which we bought used, was having problems. My husband, ever frugal, vowed to drive it until it could no longer be driven. It was a great car, especially in the snowy New York winters, but the heat could not consistently be used as there was a leaky head gasket that would cause overheating of the engine while running the fan to blow heat. Even a short trip to the grocery store in the winter would leave my teeth chattering!

One day we were doing some clean-out and decided to give away a small child's bed our kids had outgrown. We have a local refugee center that is happy to come pick up used furniture for free so I called them to come out. As the two young, strong men are lifting the bed into their waiting truck, the older gentleman asked me in a thick Bosnian accent, "Is this car for sale?" as he points to the Subaru. "Uh, well, no, but maybe. Why do you ask?" I, not being well-versed in selling cars, get a phone number and quickly call my husband at work. That very evening the man returned with a friend who spoke little English but was apparently able to fix cars. In talking with my husband, they were able to communicate that the daunting and expensive repair of a leaky head gasket was not an issue for them. After a test drive and transport home with two virtual strangers, my husband had \$600 cash in his pocket and we had sold our car!

This seemingly silly car story of mine really speaks to me as evidence of God's care in my life. Through an act of kindness (giving something away to needy refugees), I received the blessing of the answer to a concern of mine. How long would I have been stuck with a no-heat car had I not risked generosity? Why would some guy randomly ask if a car sitting in my driveway was for sale?

By the way, my husband reports that the car was fixed and is now driving around the city, seemingly providing reliable transportation. They never took off the Kent State sticker from the window so it's easy to spot. Now this car continues to be a blessing for a refugee family.

God, When I am wondering where you are and if you care, remind me to open my eyes and my heart to seek you. When I see a need that can be filled, remind me to be generous and give what I can, even if (and especially if!) those in need may be different than I. Remind me that when I ask for your help to ask for one thing more--a grateful heart.

***Cindy Muder***  
***Staff 1987, 1988***

## **Week Five, Day Four**

“And David danced before the Lord with all his might” -- II Samuel 6:15a

After reading this scripture, the song from country singer Lee Ann Womack echoes in my head, “I hope you dance.” Maybe at this point in the summer, you have already done a body prayer with Jim, and you are cool with the whole praying with all your being.

In this story, David gets the beloved Ark of the Covenant and he celebrates with all his whole body as he dances in the streets and shouts to the Lord. It is not often that we really celebrate God’s presence by dancing in the streets! The power of the Holy Spirit can catch you though, and it can make you want to do crazy things! And don’t think David didn’t catch heck for it. One of his wives, Mi’chal was watching and she thought it quite disgraceful! Does that ever happen in your life? So often when we do feel that presence of God, we are so worried about embarrassing ourselves by looking crazy! But David danced on. He explained to Mi’chal that he saw what the Lord gave him and he insisted that he “will make merry before the Lord” (2 Samuel 6:21)!

Allow yourself to be taken away this week--dance, sing, and act crazy on the street for the Lord is with you!

Prayer: Jubilant God, you excite us, you redeem us, and you empower us with your love. Thank you for your joy! Help us to dance. Amen.

***Audrey Connor***  
***Staff 1996, 1997, 1998***

## **Week Five, Day Five**

### **Finding the Strength to Love ALL of God’s Children**

*“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged.... In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” --Matthew 7: 1-29*

As I was sitting with my one year old son recently in the doctor’s office waiting room, I watched a six year old girl come out of the doctor’s office. She stopped to take one of the stickers made available as a reward for enduring a visit to the doctor. And then she took another sticker, and another sticker, and then a few more. I thought to myself, what a greedy ill-mannered little kid. I soon felt ashamed and guilty for having so quickly judged the little girl, for in no time she was smiling at my toddler, making him laugh and generously giving him one of her stickers. One of the very stickers that I had judged her for collecting. Who am I to be judging other people?

How often do we pass judgment on people we don't know, people whose stories we have never heard, people who we have never taken the time and effort to talk to? I know as a staffer I did this more times than I'd like to admit. It was especially easy to do as that fourth and fifth group of campers came through and I started to get tired. Serving up seconds in the kitchen window during lunch, I would secretly criticize the boy that rudely demanded more mashed potatoes with no please or thank you. Sitting at my desk as the camp secretary, I would mentally chastise the home-sick Chi-Rhoer who was forever coming into the office. Relaxing on the front porch of the lodge after a long day of work, I would silently chide a fellow staffer for always being with her boyfriend and never hanging out with the rest of the staff. Not very loving ways to act towards God's children.

It is often so easy to feel we have someone pegged, but how unfair that is to that person – and to you. Everyone has a story to tell, and truly getting to know someone is one of the joys of life. In my personal experience it has led to new-found friendships, a new understanding of people's actions, and a broader view of the world. When I find someone to be particularly frustrating, I consciously remind myself that everyone is God's child – particularly this person. You never know when a kind word, a friendly smile or a warm hug is just what someone needed that day. And you never know what kind of amazing person you may find when you take the time to get to know someone.

**Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for the many different people you have brought into my life. Please help me to see each person I come across as your child. Please give me the compassion to see the best in people and love them as you have loved me. Amen.*

**Katie (Rule) Baird**  
**Staff 1999, 2001**

### **Week Five, Day Six**

“But Moses said in the Lord's presence, ‘Since I am a poor speaker, why would Pharaoh listen to me?’” Exodus 6:30

With one simple question, Moses expresses sentiments similar to those behind excuses we often hear or give, such as I'm not good enough, that's not my job, I don't want to do that, or I might fail. Moses knows what he is being called to do, but he does not want the job. Moses gives God excuses, he might have even said “That job is just too difficult for me,” or “But it's Aaron's turn to talk to Pharaoh!”

That last excuse was a favorite of mine growing up. Why was I picked to do this chore or that one, wasn't it someone else's turn to do some work? Usually the chore at hand required me to turn off the TV, get off the couch, and take some action. Whether gripped by a fear of failure, or simply selfish laziness, this attitude of excuses only interferes in your relationship with God and with those around you. As Christians we are called to action. Sometimes our calling is to lead an

enslaved population out of Egypt, sometimes it is simply to lend a helping hand and clear the dinner table.

When was the last time you sounded like Moses? Or is the real question not when, but how often do you use excuses like these? As you go about your day, watch carefully for those moments when you just want to say, "I can't do it," or "It's not my job." Make a commitment to yourself now to refrain from uttering excuses, to take action, and to enter into your work willingly and happily with God by your side.

Zach Baird  
Staff 1995, 1996, 1997

### **Week Five, Day Seven**

Dear God of the Mosquito, the Heat, and the Vesper Trail,

Thank You for leading me to this sacred place, full of life and love, full of wounds and heartache.

Help me to be open to listening to the stories of each youth who graces this camp.

Create within me unending patience and empathy for my fellow staffers.

May Your Spirit work among us as we work so hard this summer.

Grant me the persistence to serve You even in those times of total exhaustion and discouragement.

Pick me up when I get so caught up in the connections I have built that I forget to give You the credit.

Focus my attention on what is needed in my own life when I get so drained from others' needs.

Replenish my energy and wisdom and compassion to seek You in all people.

Be my partner in discovering what is truly good, worthwhile and remarkable in all of Your creation.

Laugh with me during the times I desperately need to take a long look at myself and just crack up.

Cry with me when Your spirit moves through me, both physically and emotionally.

Strengthen me when I doubt, when I give up, and when I feel weak from just being human.

Reiterate how to seek the positive potential in every creature on earth.

Demonstrate how to find the positive potential in myself that I have not even remotely tapped into yet.

Teach me the ways of justice.

Hold my hand as I accompany those who suffer from injustice.

Define peace for me.

Forgive me.

Continue to love me...

Thank you for this amazing experience in this sacred space we so lovingly call Camp Christian. In the midst of the mosquitoes and the heat, may we continue to experience the love and peace only you provide.

You are an awesome God!

*Amy Gopp  
Staff 1991, 1992*

### **Week Six, Day One**

1 Samuel 3:10 - *The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."*

Monday through Friday every week, I go to an office, sit at a desk, and work at a computer for at least 8 hours. Is this my calling? Being employed at Christian Church in Ohio has been a **huge** Samuel moment in my life. I must admit I probably was reacting a little more like Moses at the beginning of all this. "Are you sure Lord?" Calling is a tricky thing though. Do I think I am called to sit at a computer the rest of my life...no. Do I embrace the fact that God has called me to be a Disciple wherever I am called? Absolutely! Feeling called to your job and fully grasping its impact are two totally different things however. How could typing, making copies, and other miscellaneous tasks be a calling? I often forget that the mundane tasks that I do contribute to the bigger picture. How does God fit into the deadlines, appointments, chores, and meetings of our lives? In more ways than you can imagine. I am truly blessed to have a job where the ministry of Jesus is part of the job, but we can all bring ministry into our daily lives. A pleasant disposition, a helping hand for a coworker, or even a friendly voice on the other end of the phone is an amazing ministry that we all can participate in. We are all contributing to the bigger picture. We are all called to do incredible things. **God is calling you to do something incredible.** That something incredible could be the most ordinary thing in the world. So I invite you all during your busy lives to stop open your ears and say "speak for your servant is listening" you never know what you might be called to do next.

*Dear Lord, help us to realize that you are with us 24 hours a day and that no matter what our vocation your love can work wonders through us, even (or maybe especially) in the most unlikely of places. Amen*

***Jennie Stoddart  
Staff 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004***



## **Week Six, Day Two**

The other day I was driving and passed a sign at a church. At times I pay attention to these cute “plays on words” or efforts to impress. This particular time, I even remembered the marquee words later.

"If you can't be a lighthouse, be a candle."

It is my wish for you, my friends, that at some point, peers and supervisors will relay to you the analogy of camp staff acting as a light. Many texts, both old and new, describe how darkness can be avoided in lives in which God is present.

From the very beginning when God said, “Let there be light,” the Bible is full of examples of the effects of God’s light in one’s life. Another well-known verse can be found in Psalm 119, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” John 3:19-21 also provides some good commentary about the important role of light in our lives.

In the presence of light, there is no darkness. With God, this light is symbolic in numerous ways. Let’s reconsider the church sign’s message: "If you can't be a lighthouse, be a candle." Lighthouses are revered in these times. Although most are outdated, unused, and unnecessary with the advent of technological advancements, these instruments once acted as guides and saved lives on many a wandering ship. A lighthouse was intended to help--to provide light--to any, and in this example, EVERY ship or boat in need. As a staffer, you have taken it upon yourself to touch lives, one at a time. Therefore, your role is that of providing light. It need not be to EVERY other staffer, child, or counselor that you show the light. But as one candle, try to lighten those around you, as your skills allow. With your youthful spirit, unbridled enthusiasm, powerful singing voice, or just mean weed-wackin' skills to keep camp perfect, know that you are a candle, to someone.

Thank you, Staff, for the WORK that you do. On this day, please attempt to reflect upon those who have touched you, why, and what efforts you can make today to reach out and--figuratively speaking--burn someone with your light.

***Kyle Paladino***  
***Staff 1996, 1997***

## **Week Six, Day Three**

*“She was with Child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.”*  
-- Revelation 12:2

How many times do you do a devotional with the Revelation to John? If you are like me, not very often, but this past year I was able to be part of a study on Revelation and I grew to appreciate a lot of the imagery in this apocalyptic tale. I love this passage because it allows you to see the story of Jesus in such a different way. In fact, many scholars suggest that this scripture portrays God to be a woman giving birth--and this is no ordinary birth! It is a birth of

the Christ child during turbulent times--there is an image of a fiery red dragon--ready to snatch that Christ child away. But God saves the child and saves the woman before she is taken up. I think a common misconception is that God's peaceful presence is available to us once we get everything under control... Once I am out of this crazy relationship, or I finish this project for AI, or once the day is over--then I can finally sit down and worship God. Though this may be true, this scripture reminds me that God is present and active even in those crazy times! So, keep watch and open your eyes to the constant power of God in your life! You may see Her in that crazy counselor who barges into the kitchen to get his or her coffee without asking or in the tense times trying to get the staff talent show together when ideas just aren't coming!

*Prayer: Holy Mother, you come to us in all shapes and sizes. You know us, you listen to us, and you feel us. Be with us today as we experience you. Help us to experience you anew in all that we do. Amen.*

**Audrey Connor**  
**Staff 1996, 1997, 1998**

#### **Week Six, Day Four**

**Ayer es historia, mañana un misterio, pero hoy es un regalo de Dios.**  
*(Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, but today is a gift from God.)*

Perhaps you have you burnt the eggs or maybe the mac and cheese didn't taste quite like mac and cheese. Maybe you've cleaned one too many toilets or broke the lawnmower in places you didn't know a lawnmower could get broken in. Did you forgot to type the address list and now have double the amount of work you would have had to do? Or maybe you didn't set your alarm and now, after your friendly wake up call from the AD, you are running towards the pools to let the five teenage boys in for morning dip. Bad days--we are all entitled to them. In fact, it is almost impossible to go the whole summer without having a couple. However, in Peter 5:7 it says, "...cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you." God wants you to give Him all of your bad days, your anxieties. God doesn't want us to dwell on the past, but look toward the future with hope. Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, but today is a gift from God. What you do with that day is your gift to God.

Tomorrow the sun will rise again; who knows what the day will bring.

**Erin Larsen**  
**Staff 1999, 2000, 2001**

## **Week Six, Day Five**

*“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.”*

*-- Ephesians 4:32*

Peter asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive a person who continued to cause him harm. Jesus replied that the person should be forgiven “70 x 7 times.” In other words, if necessary forgiveness should be granted so many times that we lose track of the count so that there is no limit to the number of times we forgive. We can imagine Peter’s surprise at the answer. He was already keeping score in his forgiveness notebook “John Parker – forgiven 12 times, Jane Smith – 8...” He was already preparing to claim his righteousness. “Look it’s not my fault; I forgave you 15 times already. I’ve done all that’s required of me. From now on, I can hate you and hold onto my anger.”

Not that we can fault Peter for trying. There are times when we just do not want to forgive someone for something they’ve done to us. Not “70 x 7 times,” not even one time. But it often helps to put some perspective on the situation. In Ephesians we are called to forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us. How quickly I forget that God has already forgiven me for my wrong doings—through the death of God’s only son. Suddenly a lot of grievances I hold onto seem petty, and it becomes that much easier to shake hands, forgive, and let go of my anger.

As you talk to God in prayer today, give thanks for the forgiveness granted to you through the death of Jesus. Ask for help in forgiving those who have caused you harm. Finally, acknowledge that you are not perfect and pray for the strength to ask forgiveness from those you have wronged.

***Zach Baird***

***Staff 1995, 1996, 1997***

## **Week Six, Day Six:**

### **Praise God with Dancing**

When was the last time you were out of breath telling someone about God and what God has done in your life? As you read each verse and each word in Psalm 150 you can almost hear the celebration, the dance, the music, the joy that the author had in his soul as he wrote it.

*Praise the Lord!*

*Praise God in Her sanctuary;*

*Praise God in Her mighty firmament!*

You can almost hear the volume go up and up and up.

*Praise the Lord with trumpet sound; praise the Lord with lute and harp!*

*Praise God with tambourine and dance; praise God with strings and pipe!*

Louder and louder until he was ready to shout:

*Praise Him with clanging cymbals;*

*Praise God with loud clashing cymbals*

*Let everything that breathes praise the lord!*

*Praise the Lord!*

God wants us to sing, to shout, to dance with every kind of instrument we have...solemn or happy, percussive or melodic, gentle or strident.

I know what some of you must be thinking--‘Yeah, right! When I’m done scrubbing pots and pans, dealing with ADs in the office, cleaning up the WWTP, and chasing after Chi Rho kids at the pool, I don’t have the energy to dance. I would rather take a nap.’

What do you do when you notice others who are out of step in life’s dance? What do you do when life creates cliques and someone is left sitting alone in the green chairs, at the pool, in the dining hall or at the square dance? Do you take them by the hand and invite them to dance?

During the conflict in Sarajevo, a reporter saw a little girl shot by a sniper. He rushed to the man who was holding the child, and helped them both into his car. The man holding the bleeding child said, "Hurry, my friend, my child is still alive." Another moment passed, "Hurry. Oh, God, my child is getting cold." When they got to the hospital, the little girl was dead.

As the two men washed blood off their hands, the man turned to the reporter and said, "This is a terrible task for me. I must go tell her father that his child is dead." The reporter looked at the grieving man and said, "I thought she was your child." The man looked back and said, "No, but aren’t they ALL our children?"

What a day of celebration it will be when all of God’s children are cared for and no one is a wallflower in life’s dance. What a day of dancing it will be when we reach out, in one united song, to praise God.

How will you fill someone’s life with dancing today?

***Laura Fitt Baird***

***Staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997***

## **Week Six, Day Seven:**

### **Lessons of Faith and Practice from World Religions: Islam**

Taken from The Quran 1.1-7, 2.163-164, 177

“In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. All praise belongs to God, the Lord of all being. He is compassionate and merciful. He is the master of the Day of Judgment.

We worship only you; in you alone we seek refuge. Guide us along the straight path, the path of those whom you have blessed...

Your God is one God. There is no God but him. He is merciful and compassionate.

There are many signs of God for men and women of understanding. There is the creation of the heavens and the earth. There is the alternation of night and day. There are the ships sailing the ocean with cargo that bring pleasure to people. There is the rain that God sends down from the sky; by this means he revives the barren earth, and nourishes the creatures that live in the earth. And there are the changing winds, and the clouds that are driven throughout the atmosphere between the earth and the sky.

Piety does not consist in whether you face east or west during worship. True piety consists in this: believing in God and his final judgment; believing in his angels, in the book and in the prophets; giving your wealth, for the sake of God, to your relatives, to orphans, to the needy, to wayfarers and to strangers; ransoming slaves; attending prayers and paying the poor-rate; being true to your promises; and being steadfast in times of distress, adversity and war. Those who show true piety, are genuine in their faith; they honor God.”

There will be times in your staff experience that you are feeling overwhelmed. You feel like you can't let go of the thing that bothers you. It is easy in your everyday life to forget that you always have someone there for you. Even on staff you can sometimes forget. That someone is God. God is merciful and compassionate, so take refuge in God. Give your troubles to God. Look to God for hope and peace. Believe it today and everyday. You are surrounded by proof that God exists when you are going through life, especially in nature. Where do you see proof of God's existence at Camp? Is this the place where you feel most comfortable talking to God? Go to that place today in a spare moment and spend some time talking to God. Try a Body Prayer. It might help you feel more connected. Be sure to praise God for all that is right in your life as well as asking for guidance on the things that aren't quite right yet.

***Kristen & Brian McCreanor***

***Staff 1993, 1994, 1995 (Kristen)***

***Staff 1997, 1998, 1999 (Brian)***

## Week Seven, Day One

<sup>28</sup> “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, <sup>29</sup> yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. <sup>30</sup> And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

<sup>31</sup> “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. <sup>33</sup> Seek the Kingdom of God<sup>[a]</sup> above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

<sup>34</sup> “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

-Matthew 6:28-34

It becomes real easy to slip into a routine when you are on staff for the summer. To be honest, after the first few weeks you pretty much know all the basic things that will get you through the summer (Don’t tell Al or Doris I said that). Once you get into a groove it becomes real easy to get so focused on your “job” that you are not open to God working in your day to day life at camp.

Some of my fondest memories from being on staff are the rare moments when I was able to put aside the thoughts of how many grilled cheese sandwiches we had to make at lunch or why Chi Rho kids can’t go more than 34 minutes without clogging a toilet, and stop to think about how amazing it is to be able to spend an entire summer outdoors working in such a beautiful and awe inspiring place. I used to love sitting in the grass outside the lodge with my staff friends after a long day and watching some of the most amazing sunsets I have ever seen. It wasn’t exactly your typical “worship service”, but sitting outside on an amazingly beautiful summer night with your friends and starrng in wonder at the gorgeous sunset that God has created, can really fill your heart with a sense of contentment that only God would know how to create.

You are all doing amazing things this summer by working as true servants to help ensure that others will be able to get the same life changing camp experience that you once received. But do yourself a favor and stop every once and awhile and think about yourself. While you are certainly there this summer to serve, there is no reason why you cannot also grow in your own relationship with God. What is going on in your spiritual life that you need to take time for this summer? Don’t let this summer slip by without taking full advantage of the opportunity (be it nature, thoughtful friends, wise counselors or just being alone with God) that has been given to you to grow in your faith

God is everywhere at camp. Make sure to open up your eyes.

**Dave Bernard**  
**Staff 2002, 2003, 2004**

## Week Seven, Day Two

### **Some Thoughts on What to Do When You Have to Re-enter “The Real World”**

- 1.) Sing your favorite camp songs in the shower.
- 2.) Call one of your camp friends and just start retelling one of your favorite memories.
- 3.) Display your camp pictures all over your room.
- 4.) Send an e-mail to someone who made a difference in your life over the summer, telling them so.
- 5.) Wear your favorite camp t-shirt to bed every night.
- 6.) Send a card to someone you didn't get to know that well, just to say you were thinking of him.
- 7.) Go to church.
- 8.) Wear a religious symbol somewhere on your body.
- 9.) Re-read the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) every now and again. It's a good place to start.
- 10.) Commit to volunteering somewhere on a regular basis.
- 11.) Give some money--no matter the amount--to charities and to the church.
- 12.) Pray before meals.
- 13.) Read Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*.
- 14.) Give up something for Lent. Or, add something (morning prayer).
- 15.) Make plans to see your camp friends as often as possible.
- 16.) Read *Traveling Mercies*, by Ann Lamott.
- 17.) Learn about different religions.
- 18.) Say thank you at least once a day.
- 19.) Act humbly.
- 20.) Go for a walk. Appreciate and marvel at the beauty of nature.
- 21.) Do something nice for someone you don't know.
- 22.) Clean out your closet. Donate the old clothes to Goodwill or Volunteers of America.
- 23.) Form a Bible Study group with a small group of friends.
- 24.) Plan a road trip to the Campbell Heritage Center at Bethany College to learn more about the D. O. C.
- 25.) Go to church. (yup, I know I already said that one!)
- 26.) If you have a friend in seminary, ask to go to one of her classes with her.
- 27.) Commit to having your own daily devotional time. Do whatever is most comfortable for you.
- 28.) Practice a body prayer.
- 29.) Don't neglect your physical body: do a bit of exercise, eat some fruit, take a bath.
- 30.) Forgive someone who has hurt you.
- 31.) Talk about religion with the people you love.
- 32.) Ask for help when you need it.
- 33.) Make s'mores. ☺
- 34.) Think about keeping a daily journal. Write down your thoughts, fears, questions.
- 35.) If you learned a bedtime prayer as a child, start saying it again every night.
- 36.) Send some money to the “Keep the Fire Burning” campaign to renovate camp.
- 37.) Be a camp counselor. It really makes you see the Camp Christian experience in a whole new light.
- 38.) Light candles.
- 39.) Be confident in the knowledge that God loves you unconditionally.
- 40.) Make crafts.

- 41.) Sign up to help with Vacation Bible School.
- 42.) Sign up to teach Sunday School. Get a friend to help you.
- 43.) Reuse, reduce, RECYCLE. Take care of the earth God gave us.
- 44.) Find out where there's a square dance happening and go. Or have one of your own!
- 45.) Turn off the TV, phone, and computer one night every week.
- 46.) Repeat numbers 1-45 on a regular basis.

**Liz Jewell Becker**  
**Staff 1993, 1994**

### **Week Seven, Day Three**

*"The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them. And you are my friends..." -- John 15:13-14*

*"The world does not know you, Father, but I know you, and these know that you sent me. I made you known to them, and I will continue to do so, in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and so that I also may be in them." -- John 17:25-26*

*"Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." -- John 19:30*

I'd always had trouble visualizing Jesus on the Cross. I could never explain why, but it just didn't seem like it could really have happened. It was never real to me until one night at Advance Conference. As we filed into the Vesper Spot and took our places on the benches, I noticed that the Cross had been draped with a large sheet. As the service began and a prayer was said, I stared at the Cross wondering what was being concealed by the sheet. Throughout that particular week I'd been fighting a feeling of detachment from my faith that I was struggling to understand. That is why what happened next changed my life forever.

The sheet was yanked away and there, hanging on the Vesper Cross was my dear friend, Byron Walton. I was caught off-guard and my heart skipped a beat. It was the most stunning sight I had ever seen and completely unexpected. Chills covered my body and tears rolled down my cheeks as I looked at my beloved friend with his arms outstretched and his head bowed low, clothed in only a loincloth. Byron, the friend to whom I had grown so close, the friend who had colored my life with music, laughter, strength, and love, was the exact image of our crucified savior. The sight overwhelmed me. In that one instant, it all became clear. I immediately understood. I could feel the sadness and the hopelessness that the Disciples must have felt as they watched their friend, the one who gave them guidance and unconditional love, die for them. I could feel the love that came from Jesus as he asked God to forgive them. He made the ultimate sacrifice because He loved us so much. God gave us His son, in flesh and in blood, so that we could believe.



Looking at my own friend reenacting that moment made the strength of God's love real in my life and every doubt I was feeling disappeared. My spiritual life changed forever in that night. The vision has remained alive in my memory and in my heart. The road has not always been smooth and I have made a few wrong turns throughout my life so far, but I have never once questioned my faith again. I am loved and, if I ask, I am forgiven. No matter what challenges God has planned for me in the future, I know that I will never stop believing. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior." John 3:16-17.

***Megan Lash***  
***Staff 1992, 1993***

### **Week Seven, Day Four**

#### **Finding Words for the Indescribable Mystery**

Words are the source of our images, our understanding, our reality. They shape and form the way we live. But words are also bound by limitations. How many times have you had an experience and found yourself saying "there are no words to describe how I felt, what I saw, what I experienced?"

The brush of a hand  
A tearful goodbye  
An incredible sunset  
The joy found in surprises and laughter  
The death of a loved one  
The exhilaration of success  
Working on Camp Christian summer staff

Words often feel useless when trying to explain experiences such as these to someone who wasn't there. My college friends, to this day, joke about how this camp thing is really a cult. But we know all you have to do is glance at the beauty of camp, experience the warmth on the dock, and hear the perfect harmony of untrained voices resonating through vespers, to realize God's awesome presence.

So how do we share that experience of the Holy with others when our words fall short of expressing the fullness of the experience?

How do we share our encounters with God when God is a mystery, God is indescribable, God is beyond words and names?

Here's a thought... God is more than a hundred words can explain. God is thousands of images yet none of them fully explain who or what God is in God's fullness. So, expand your vocabulary. Give life and fullness to your experience by using many names for Her. The more

descriptions and images you use, the more intimate and tangible and full God will become. Glance through the Bible and you will find hundreds of examples...

YHWH: "The Self-Existent One," "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be"

Elohim: Creator, Preserver, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Mighty, Transcendent, Strong.

Adonai: Master or Lord

El: Prominent God

El Shaddai: Almighty God, or God of the mountain(s)

El Olam: The Everlasting God

El Kedem: God of the Beginning

El Mishpat: God of Justice

El Selichot: God of Forgiveness

El Mauzi: God of My Strength

Father, Creator, Wisdom, Eagle, Rock, Mother Hen, Holy, God of the Heavens, God of Eternity, Truth, Life, Compassion...

Now list all the other words you can think of to describe God. Does this expand your image of God?

***Laura Fitt Baird***

***Staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997***

### **Week Seven, Day Five**

Please read Luke 8:4-15, the Parable of the Sower.

Whenever I am at camp or visiting with camp friends, we tell a lot of stories about our experiences at camp and what the whole camp experience has done for our lives. I have heard stories of the purchase of the camp, Harold Monroe, and staff legends and adventures (I even added one of my own to the collection! 😊). My friends and I talk about the people we've met and the things we've done together, including retreats and reunions hosted whenever someone pulls it together and plans one. When camp people get together, there is a lot of sharing and statements that start with "Do you remember when...?" My friend Brittany Barber, a minister in Youngstown, Ohio, said that when she first moved here from Chicago, one of the first questions that she was asked when she met new people was "Are you a camp person?" (She is now, by the way.)

Last summer was my first summer as an A.D. at Camp Miami. Larry Pigg was also an A.D. and believe me, he has a ton of stories to tell. It occurred to me that some of my stories and memories overlapped with his because he was an A.D. when I was at Wilmington Conference. As a counselor and now an A.D., my stories will overlap with the stories and memories of my

nieces and nephew who are now beginning the camp program. My nephew and I visited Advance Conference last summer and he can't wait to be on staff and go to Advance.

As staff people, you are continuing to plant the seeds of these stories and some of these stories change not only your life, but the lives of others as well. Some of you will go on to Seminary/Divinity school (I finally did), some of you will become youth leaders and Sunday School teachers so that other kids might know a God who loves them as God loves you. And when you drive the minivan with your own children back to camp for that first day of Chi Rho, you will know that you are a part of the legends and stories of this place where the Kingdom of God is reaping a hundred fold.

**Prayer Thought:** What kind of seeds are you planting today?

***Joy Omslaer***  
***Staff 1983, 1984***

### **Week Seven, Day Six**

#### **Lessons of Faith and Practice from World Religions: Buddhism**

The following excerpt is from *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist Monk who has had a worldwide effect on the struggle for peace. This particular book is about finding inner peace and, therefore, being a more peaceful person to others. This excerpt is about living in the present moment in order to focus your time and energy on living your life to its fullest and being conscious of your life and your activities, even your breathing.

“Twenty-Four Brand-New Hours”

“Every morning, when we wake up, we have twenty-four brand-new hours to live. What a precious gift! We have the capacity to live in a way that these twenty-four hours will bring peace, joy, and happiness to others and ourselves.

Peace is present right here and now, in ourselves and in everything we do and see. The question is whether or not we are in touch with it. We don't have to travel far away to enjoy the blue sky. We do not have to leave our city or even our neighborhood to enjoy the eyes of a beautiful child. Even the air we breathe can be a source of joy.

We can smile, breathe, walk, and eat our meals in a way that allows us to be in touch with the abundance of happiness that is available. We are very good at preparing to live, but not very good at living. We know how to sacrifice ten years for a diploma, and we are willing to work very hard to get a job, a car, a house, and so on. But we have difficulty remembering that we are alive in the present moment, the only moment there is for us to be alive. Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy, and serenity. We need only to be awake, alive in the present moment.”

Attitude is everything. As you go through the day, the week, the summer live, for the moment. Look for the positive in everything happening around you. Each evening, take a moment to reflect on the day. What amazing things happened to you? Did you learn anything new? Did you miss anything? Did you make peace with the unpleasant experience that may have crossed your path? Will you change anything about yourself for tomorrow? When you are finished processing it all, let go of it. It is time to get back to the moment so that you can enjoy living the next 24 hours.

**Kristen & Brian McCreanor**  
**Staff 1993, 1994, 1995 (Kristen)**  
**Staff 1997, 1998, 1999 (Brian)**

### **Week Seven, Day Seven**

#### **God's True Gifts**

Song: "God is so Good"

*"Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have."  
-- Philippians 4:11*

This story was shared with me by one of my teachers while studying in Costa Rica, in response to a classmate's comment about being a "poor college student."

There once was a young boy who had little money. As he grew into a young man he saw the world and saw that there were people who had money and lots of nice things. The young man grew angry with himself and with God. "Why God do I not have anything and others have so much?" Nearby was an old homeless man listening to the young man's complaining. He told the young man that he had a way for him to get money. The young man inquired about how he might do this. "I will give you \$100 dollars for you arms" said the old man. "Are you crazy, how would I be able to work without my arms?" responded the young man. The old man tried again. "I will give you \$1,000 dollars for your legs." Growing angry, the young man said, "No way, how would I be able to get around with out my legs. And what good are my arms without my legs?" Finally, the old, homeless man said, "I will give you 100,000 dollars for your eyes." "Impossible," said the young man. "There is no way I would be able to find work without my eyes. I need my arms, I need my legs and I need my eyes to find work," said the young man. "Ahh!" said the old homeless man. "You are not poor, but very rich indeed." At that moment the young man saw what the homeless man saw, and knew he spoke the truth.

Dear Lord, I pray that you open my eyes and heart to the true wealth that you give. Amen.

**Erin Larsen**  
**Staff 1999, 2000, 2001**

## **Week Eight, Day One**

“I will send down the showers of rain when they need it; there will be showers of blessing.” -- Ezekiel 34:26

If there were one word I could use to describe working in the camp kitchen, it would be HOT. For hours everyday, we would work in that sweltering heat--chopping and stirring, baking and blending, and trying not to think about how hot we really were.

I remember one afternoon in particular. There was a record-breaking temperature and I stood over the stoves stirring my huge vats of creamed-chipped beef. The fans were up full-blast, but didn't help much to lower the heat. We were taking turns standing in the walk-in cooler, but the reprieve only lasted a few minutes at a time. We were all moving rather slowly and not one of us was singing to the radio as we usually did. We could feel ourselves wilting as we prayed for some relief.

Suddenly, a huge rumble of thunder woke up the sky and that is when the rain came. It poured down over the camp in buckets. We instantly stopped what we were doing, looked at each other, and then quickly made a mad dash out the front doors of the dining hall. For the next ten minutes we frolicked in the downpour, jumping in the puddles, swinging each other around, and dancing to the music of the rain falling down upon us. We must have looked like a band of lunatics, but we were having too much fun to care.

Eventually, we all skipped back into the kitchen, laughing hysterically. Soaked to the bone, we resumed our duties with new energy and higher spirits. Dancing in the rain became an ongoing ritual of our kitchen staff that summer as God sent his own kind of air conditioning to us during those hot, hot months. This is the way God works in our lives everyday. Just when we are at the end of our ropes and believe that we may not be able to go on, He will send some relief to lift us up, renew our spirits, and keep moving us ahead.

***Megan Lash***  
***Staff 1992, 1993***

## **Week Eight, Day Two**

Thy Will be done on Earth as It Is in Heaven

*Paul spoke these words to the church in Ephesus, “put away from you all bitterness and anger and bickering and slander, together with all malice, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. Be imitators of God, as beloved children and live in love, as Christ loved us.”*

It was the thirties in Poland, the tense pre-war years. Relations between Jews and Christians had already diminished. But Tomek, a five-year-old Jewish boy, and Hans, a five-year-old Christian boy, refused to let a silly war end their friendship. One day Hans had an idea. “Tomek,

if you teach me a Jewish prayer then I'll teach you a Christian prayer." Tomek thought it would be fun and soon each had memorized something, which was important to his friend's religion.

Ten years passed and everything in Tomek's life changed. Tomek was now 15, orphaned, and fleeing Europe disguised as a Gentile. He was on a train when a Nazi soldier boarded his car and demanded to see everyone's papers. Tomek handed him his forged documents. As the soldier inspected them he turned to Tomek and said with a contemptuous sneer, "So, you are a Christian? Well, why don't you recite a Christian prayer that all good Christians know?" Somewhere deep in Tomek's memory he remembered his Christian friend Hans and the prayer that he had memorized so many years ago.

Tomek took a deep breath and confidently spoke these words, *"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."*

Despite the soldier's shock and hesitation, he let Tomek go. Tomek fled Europe and made it to Palestine. He survived the war and built his life. He taught his children to respect all human beings, regardless of race or religion. After all, it was the friendship of a young Christian boy and the power of the Lord's Prayer that saved his life.

We all share the many faces of the one God... rich and poor, able-bodied and disabled, young and old, men and women, stranger and neighbor, friend and enemy, Muslim and Jew and Christian. Instead of fighting one another and making the other the enemy, we need to discover ways to surprise our world by working together as a community of grace, replacing hate with love. Taking peace as seriously as we take war. Trusting in God's abundant and inclusive love. Sharing in the Psalmist's joy *"How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God's people to live together in harmony!"*

What thoughts came to mind as you read the Lord's Prayer through the eyes of Tomek?

What if you read it through the eyes of the soldier? Is peace as plausible as war?

**Laura Fitt Baird**  
**Staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997**

### **Week Eight, Day Three**

And now for a mildly scientific point of view:

Some days I think about humankind and how much anger, confusion, and discontent it brings me. Poverty, anger, war, conflict in general . . .

But when was the last time you stopped to think about....

How humankind allows us to communicate, by telephone and e-mail, to friends far, far away?

How crummy, moldy bread allowed us to discover Penicillin and save thousands of lives?

How we can see a 3-D image of the young person inside a mother's womb?

How humankind builds tunnels and bridges, through mountains and under water, so that we can get to something that would ordinarily be hidden or difficult to reach?

How buildings can be constructed with such precision?

How humankind can send a rocket ship into space?

The above questions are only a very few examples of advancements in just three fields-- technology, medicine, and architecture. But when you begin to discover the vast amount of information that becomes more refined and more accurate, and consider how it is all interconnected, one wonders how there could possibly be an absence of God.

Take what you enjoy best in this earthly world. It may be music or movies, reading or writing, eating an ice cream sundae, or snowboarding. Whatever it is that drives you, think about all that you know about it. I bet it's more than you can communicate.

Now think about that same thing you love existing in an uninspired world, a world without God. Humankind sure would be the ultimate invention in a completely scientific world, eh? And to top that off, humankind is not replicable. No matter how much humankind knows of its self, it cannot reproduce via artificial means. There is something to be said about that.

By no means is this a world that is perfect. But don't leave God out.

We are so blessed to live in such a great place. Thanks be to God for all the wonderful things we learn, invent, share, do, or have the hopes of doing! Please take time today to revel in all the things that encourage you about God's presence in your life.

***Kyle Paladino***  
***Staff 1996, 1997***

### **Week Eight, Day Four**

“Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you? Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’”

-- Matthew 25:44-45

The first summer I was on staff, in 1983, the lower campus flooded during Hiram Conference. The boys were in the swamp and at six a.m., the maintenance staff began rowing boats to the cabins to transport the boys and their luggage to higher ground. There were two guys on the

kitchen staff that year, for the first time in camp history, and they were recruited to help move the boys into the East Side girls' cabins and then move all of the girls into the West Side girls' cabins.

As one of the kitchen staff guys walked into one of the cabins, a camper said, "Oh, here comes the help." The staffer immediately became offended and complained loudly when he returned to the kitchen that he wasn't some servant to be taken for granted. We all laughed and reminded him that actually, the camper was right, we were "the help." He never did find it as humorous as the rest of us did.

As I look back now some twenty years later, I still find it funny because what better thing can we be than "the help"—the people who assist and serve God in the process. Not all of the counselors or campers will appreciate your "help"—the work that goes into making camp a place that has the potential to change lives. But God sees you and knows that you are giving back to a program that gave something to you. I still think it's a wonderful thing to be "the help."

**Prayer Thought:** What can I do to help make camp a memorable experience for someone else?

*Joy Omslaer*  
*Staff 1983, 1984*

### Week Eight, Day Five

There probably aren't very many of you who know what it feels like to parachute out of an airplane several thousand feet above the ground. Neither do I, but I'd imagine it feels a little like I felt my first night in England. I remember thinking, "Oh dear, oh dear God, what have I done?" I couldn't sleep all night--it was the worst insomnia I've ever had. It probably didn't help that my body clock was 5 hours behind England's clock. But I know that a lot of my problem was being in strange surroundings, with people I didn't know and realizing I wouldn't see the people I did know for a year.

Somehow I made it. I remember sometime around the 4-month mark, when I was feeling a bit run down and homesick, I e-mailed a friend and told her how I was feeling. She e-mailed me back and said that sometimes, when we're far away from everything we know, we have to find new ways to experience God. To me this was a wake-up call, which made me realize that I needed to connect with these people God had allowed me to be with. I needed to try to understand what made them tick, and how they understood God. I needed to understand how God had shaped them, and even how their culture fit in with their faith. And what I learned from them was that God is everywhere. God is even in the unlikely places. God was in the girl I had an argument with because she chose to play explicit music in youth fellowship, my teenagers group. God was in the pre-schooler who needed me to hold her one day when she was sad. God was in the Cub Scout leader who always made it a point to include me in the activities. God was there the night I just happened to bump into a Camp Christian friend on Westminster Bridge. He was over to study at the University of London for a semester. God was



there in the friendships I formed with the other “Time for God” volunteers. God was there when I lost some money in Paris and almost missed my train back to London.

From these people and experiences I also learned that just because life is often difficult doesn't mean that God is not there. That was a valuable lesson when September 11 happened, when I was far away from my family and the church I was working in showed me how desperately sad they were that it happened. Through this event and so many others, these people taught me that we are all connected. I went from worrying about myself and my feelings to reaching out and learning from others during this “gap year.” By God's grace I may have retained some of what I learned. I'm just thankful that God is here every day, and everywhere to remind me.

***Lisa Gordon***  
***Staff 1997, 1998***

### **Week Eight, Day Six**

*“So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure’” -- Genesis 18:12*

Have you ever laughed at the wrong time? I love this story as you see not only the place of women, but also the way Sarah reacts to God. While Abraham talks with the Lord, Sarah is confined to the kitchen, but she is listening. And God promises this old lady, who has never been able to have a child, that she will have a son. And she laughs. You can almost hear the sneer--yeah right--like I could have a child. And the Lord hears her, but she still conceives.

How often do you feel like you are on the outside of things looking in? Decisions are often made for us and we never even get to have a say. For me, education was always one of those decisions. High school graduation was not much of a choice, and after high school, I didn't know much else to do but college. It felt a lot like watching a bunch of men in another room deciding what was best for me while I listened from the kitchen. And there were many points along the way that I laughed. Getting out of college seemed pretty far away and whenever people talked about what was beyond college, I could never see it. But one message I hear in this story is that out of those times when we are stuck in the kitchen, God delivers new life. Maybe the birth of that new life will be a great career, the life of a student, fun adventures, or a family. Regardless of what it is, new life occurs.

***Prayer:*** *Precious God, we come before you with so many emotions. At times, we feel powerless. Thank you for allowing us our voice. Thank you for delivering new life despite our scoffs of the future. Help us to live into your summer, in Jesus' name, Amen.*

***Audrey Connor***  
***Staff 1996, 1997, 1998***

## Week Eight, Day Seven

### **Love Your Neighbor as Yourself**

I'll never forget Valentine's Day in first grade. The kids went this way and that, putting cards in the decorated bags. As I playfully placed a card into each of my 30 classmates' bags, I knew that at the end of the morning my bag, too, would be filled with cards from all those other kids... some of whom I didn't even know yet.

Just before lunch I peered into my bag. Right away I knew there weren't 30 cards. In fact, there were only a dozen. Then I noticed that this little boy named Robbie, who always had a runny nose, only had two cards in his bag. My mom said that I had to bring a Valentine for everyone, not just my friends, so I did. As I watched Robbie examining his bag again and again, searching for any lost cards, I understood why.

I am thankful to my mom for her wisdom. For making me take cards for everyone, even to those who forgot me and especially to those who others forgot. As I look around the world today I see too many Robbie's. Too many people who could use a little Valentine reminder that they are human, likeable and loved.

If it is true, as the old saying goes, that every preacher preaches one sermon thousands of times, Jesus' sermon was *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* During Jesus' ministry, his good works caught the eyes, and hearts, of those around him.

Jesus saw hungry people... hungry for food, hungry for acceptance, hungry for knowledge... and he fed them.

He saw people who had no shelter... for their bodies, for their hearts, for their faith... and he showed them warmth.

He saw people who were broken and disconnected... from their world, themselves, God... and he healed them.

He saw people who were deprived of the resources that God so abundantly provides for all people... and he worked for justice.

Jesus invites people to withhold their judgment, to come down from their towers of power, and to connect with others on the ground of compassion. Through his words and actions, he taught us that we are to receive God's love and grace and then let that same feeling flow outward toward our neighbors.

How do you care for yourself?

How do you reach out to others?

How do you serve God and Life with joy?

**Laura Fitt Baird**

**Staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997**

## **Week Nine, Day One**

If you have ever said this...  
Just remember God says this...

You say: It's impossible.

God says: Nothing is impossible. (Luke 18:27)

You say: Nobody really loves me.

God says: I love you. (John 3:16 and John 13:34)

You say: I can't continue.

God says: My Grace is sufficient. (II Corinthians 12:9)

You say: Nothing goes right for me.

God says: Trust in me I will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

You say: I can't do it.

God says: You can do all things. (Philippians 3:14)

You say: I can't forgive myself.

God says: I forgive you. (I John 1:9)

You say: It's not worth it.

God says: It's worth it. (Romans 8:28)

You say: I can't do it by myself.

God says: I will provide for all your needs. (Philippians 3:19)

You say: I'm frightened.

God says: I did not give you a spirit of fear. (II Timothy 1:7)

You say: I'm tired and frustrated.

God says: Give all your anxieties to me. (1 Peter 5:7)

You say: I don't have enough faith.

God says: I have given each of you a measurement of faith. (Romans 12:3)

You say: I'm not smart enough.

God says: I gave you wisdom. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

You say: I feel alone.

God says: I will never abandon you. (Hebrews 1:5)

\*This devotional was shared with me at a teacher's service at Colegio Internacional in Asunción, Paraguay.

Dear Lord, Help me to know that with your love nothing is impossible. That Your grace is enough to get me through the day, and even when I have given up on myself, you have not given up on me. In your Holy name, Amen.

***Erin Larsen***

***Staff 1999, 2000, 2001***

## **Week Nine, Day Two:**

### **Lessons of Faith and Practice from World Religions: Native American Spirituality**

--Taken from N. Scott Momaday's *The Man Made of Words*

“Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of the noon and all the colors of the dawn and dusk.

I am interested in the way that a man looks at a given landscape and takes possession of it in his blood and brain. For this happens, I am certain, in the ordinary motion of life. None of us lives apart from the land entirely; such isolation is unimaginable. We have--sooner or later--to come to terms with the world around us—and I mean especially the physical world, not only as it is immediately revealed to us through our senses, but also as it is perceived more truly in the long turn of seasons and of years. And we must come to moral terms. There is no alternative, I believe, if we are to realize and maintain our humanity, for our humanity must consist in part in the ethical as well as in the practical ideal of preservation. And particularly here and now is that true. We Americans need now more than ever before—and indeed more than we know—to imagine who and what we are with respect to the earth and sky. I am talking about an imagination, essentially, and the concept of an American land ethic.”

As a member of staff, you have probably been to Camp Christian before on more than one occasion. Take time to reflect on your surroundings. Has anything changed over the years? How about through out the season? What about day to day or within the day? Find your favorite natural surrounding. Why is it your favorite? What is your favorite time of day to sit there? What colors are in the sky? What noise do you hear in the environment? Focus on your surroundings and the senses. What do you notice? Praise God for giving us our beautiful earth. What can you do outside of camp to preserve it?

***Kristen & Brian McCreanor***  
***Staff 1993, 1994, 1995 (Kristen)***  
***Staff 1997, 1998, 1999 (Brian)***

## **Week Nine, Day Three**

“Beloved, let us love one another, because loved is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” -- I John 4:7

My friend Fritz was on staff with me and in 1984, we were both “main dish” cooks. He went on to work on staff for four years and he was the dietician for the last two. Thinking about him I remember that he and I and our friend Lynn, the dietician, understood that we were not “morning people” and it was O.K. not to talk until after breakfast was being cleaned up. Fritz loved music and had us all singing along with the *Cats* soundtrack and to anything by Prince. He was also afraid of mice and Lynn and I had to get rid of the ones who wandered into the kitchen while Fritz was perched on a stool. He had a dry, sarcastic sense of humor and he could be counted on for his honest advice and good taste. We kept in touch over the years and when I went to grad school in Chicago, he had already moved there and we continued to get together when we could.

Then, on February 10, 2003, I got a phone call from Lynn who told that me Fritz had died on February 7<sup>th</sup>; his funeral was to be the next day. I had known that Fritz had been ill, but I did not know that his health was this precarious. I could not believe that he was gone already. I hastily made arrangements to ride with Lynn to Northwestern Ohio for the funeral. I think that Fritz’s funeral was a testament to the bond of Camp Christian friendships. Many of the people who had been on staff with him were there and his mother included camp pictures in a montage she created in his memory. We learned that his best friend from high school/camp/staff was with him and his mother when he died. Certainly, we cried a lot and we told a lot of camp stories that we probably hadn’t thought about for years. Most of us faced a long drive home that night, but nobody left quickly after dinner. It was Camp Christian that brought us together.

I’m sure it’s hard to think about yourself twenty years in the future and that the people you’re hanging out with now can still be among your best friends. It is my hope for you, however, that this happens for each of you.

**Prayer Thought:** What is the most wonderful thing about your Staff/Camp friends? Say a prayer of thanksgiving and then TELL THEM!

***Joy Omslaer***  
***Staff 1983, 1984***

## **Week Nine, Day Four**

<sup>14</sup>"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

-Matthew 5:14-16

So have you had that moment yet this summer where you think to yourself, "Holy crap, I'm a role model?" How about that for a scary thought? Believe it or not, you are a role model even if you don't think you are worthy of it. Think back to your days as a camper at Camp Christian. What do you remember about the staff from when you were a camper? I always laugh because I hear everyone telling stories about who their favorite staffers were when they were campers... and to be honest I barely even knew there were staffers when I was at camp. The only staffer I remember from when I was a camper was Lisa Gordon and I really don't know why. A bunch of us were playing some sort of sport out in front of the Dining Hall on a really hot day. After we were done and just milling around outside the Dining Hall, Lisa took us inside to get us some water from THE KITCHEN... that's right she let us into THE KITCHEN. For some stupefying reason this was really cool to me at the time and to this day I remember how cool I thought she was for letting us in the kitchen.

I'm sure if you were to ask Lisa Gordon about this event she would have absolutely no recollection of it, but it just goes to illustrate how you are always setting an example for someone. Believe me I know how hard it can be to keep a smile on your face all summer, but when times get bad remember A) that being on staff is pretty sweet, no matter how many toilets you have to clean or how many times you have to mop up spilled Kool-Aid in the Dining Hall and B) You are in a privileged position that has given you an opportunity to show some impressionable minds how "cool" it is to have God in your life.

So next time you are trying to figure out how to best remove a nail that a Chi Rho kid decided to stick in an electrical outlet...without electrocuting yourself, typing up another tedious address list, cleaning the leaves out of the pool from that one tree that won't stop shedding it's leaves all summer or about to scream at a Chi Rho kid who just can't seem to comprehend that you don't have Count Chocula cereal in the Dining Hall, try to have a smile on your face, you never know when one of those campers will be looking your way... trust me, they're tricky ones.

Remember... those kids are watching you, even if it seems like they aren't paying attention, don't miss your opportunity to show them how fun joyful service to God can be.

***Dave Bernard***  
***Staff 2002, 2003, 2004***

## **Week Nine, Day Five**

### **Staff Devotional**

Romans 8:28 “For we know that all things work together for the good for those who love God...”

This is a passage of scripture that has become central to my ministry throughout the years. Growing up in Wooster, OH, I believed it meant that if you had faith, good things would happen. However, during my first summer on camp staff, it took on a whole new meaning.

It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon. The campers had gone home and the staff was preparing to have a luau on the new cement slab that had been put in beside the lake, when my parents showed up unexpectedly. What they told me changed my life forever—my 23 year old brother had been murdered. After going home for the funeral and to be with my family, I made the decision to return to staff and to Camp Christian, a place that had nurtured and supported me through the years of attending camp.

What happened that summer 25 years ago set me on a path I couldn't have possibly imagined. I'll never forget the day I returned to staff after the funeral and the whole staff met me at my car and surrounded me with a huge group hug. Throughout that summer, the staff as well as several ministers who were there for camp, surrounded me with love and compassion that started me on a path that led me to Bethany College and eventually to the discovery of a call to ministry that took me to LTS and my current ministry as a hospital chaplain.

What I learned looking back on that summer is that the passage from Romans doesn't say that all things that happen are good, but that God can bring good out of the worst of situations. There was nothing good about my brother's death, but the love and support I received that summer helped me to eventually see light in the darkness and to make choices to honor my brother's life instead of rejecting a God who would “let” this happen.

I pray that none of you will ever deal with something this tragic. However, I do pray that you'll remember that how you respond to one another as a staff makes a difference. In addition, never forget that each camper you see comes with a story, sometimes a very painful one, and showing them unconditional love and support can change a life. Finally, remember that God, through you, can bring about amazing things.

God bless you this summer!

***Deb Zuercher***  
***Staff 1984, 1985, 1986***

## Week Nine, Day Six

### **Allah ho Akbar!**

Moses and the Israelites set out into the desert in search of the land that YHWH promised them. Imagine for a moment what that experience must have been like. The ground they walked upon was cracked and clumpy. The dunes were perfectly curved by the forces of water and wind. The wind that carved the dunes, like the journey itself, was an oppressive desert wind, hot and without moisture. The sun, the land, and the wind conspired to drain them. Once the Israelites penetrated the desert, discouragement set in. The people asked Moses, "Why have you brought us out into the desert to die?" During my visit to Israel I walked on similar parched earth. On the ground I could see corroded bits of wood and branches from a war stricken land, bones of our ancestors, and pottery shards filled with dreams and untold stories of life from millions of moments ago. I envisioned their struggle, their hope, and their faith, as if it were my own. The desert reminded me that just as we believe in life, we must also believe in death. And, we must know that God is present in both.

The landscapes of the desert have become an open cathedral to the Bedouin people who dwell there. The Bedouin leader starts to sing 'Allah ho Akbar!' (God is Great!). As each camel leader draws near they join in, until the whole desert echoes 'Allah ho Akbar..!' 'God is great..!' We know that Moses did not bring his people into the desert to die. He brought them there to discover new life. He brought them there to discover God. The days of desert wandering did eventually end for the Israelites. Stretching out before them was a luxurious valley. And the land did, indeed, echo 'God is Great...!'.

The desert served as a schoolroom for the Israelites. They learned about their weaknesses, their fears, their limitations, and about God's presence and grace. Moses wanted them to remember that experience of wandering in the desert. He said, *"Think of the past. Ask the eldest to tell the story. God found them wandering through the desert, a desolate, wind swept wilderness. God protected them. Like an eagle teaching it's young to fly, catching them safely on its spreading wings, the Lord kept Israel from falling."*

Like a Mother Eagle, YHWH will be there for us too! When our lives feel like they are falling apart. When our bodies are tired from working hard in the sun. When our families are broken and our communities are divided. When our nations are caught in deadly cycles of violence, ignorance, and indifference. God is there! In the silence and mystery of this desert land, God is speaking and listening, acting and embracing us. --

**Laura Fitt Baird**

**Staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997**



## **Week Nine, Day Seven:**

### **Dreams**

*"I saw a new heaven and a new earth..." -- Revelations 21:1*

At Colegio Internacional we have a devotional book with meditations for each day. I wanted to share one of my favorites. It is a collaboration of the middle school students along with Nestor Aveiro (middle school minister.) The poem expresses the thoughts on dreams that they have. I like the meditation because even though there are differences between our respective cultures and societies, the similarities are stronger.

I have dreams, dreams of liberty...  
dreams of justice, of love, of respect, and equality.

I have dreams, shared dreams of friendship, and brotherhood.  
Dreams to share with those who suffer in this saddened and pained humanity.

I have dreams, dreams of a better world.  
Dreams where the human has more solutions and not so much pain.  
I dream that with each day you can find me with God,  
with His love, and with His forgiveness.

I dream that this surrounding can change, and that I can help.  
I dream that faith, love, and hope will never end,  
and that it won't end in pain,  
but with all my confidence.

***Erin Larsen***  
***Staff 1999, 2000, 2001***

## **Week Ten, Day One:**

### **'A Common Beat'**

(words taken from the end of the Up With People song "A Common Beat")

*Is there a common beat that connects us all?  
We all have a story.  
Our histories tell us where we are from  
Old legacies and legends  
Repeating-beating--like a distant drum  
But can't these be foundations of a bridge between us and them  
The past is not our future, only fear is in our way*

*There IS a common beat that connects us all  
The sound of a constant wind, blowing down the walls  
It sings like a mighty song, a symphony with many parts,  
A human melody, playing in you and in me  
A common beat of our hearts*

*Isn't the yellow moon the same moon we see at night?  
Isn't the morning star, our universal light?  
We may be different but we aren't so far apart  
We want love... We want to be free  
It's the beat of every heart*

*Maybe this is just a dream of our youth  
But, in truth, without the dream,  
Can we ever realize the reality?*

Einstein said, *"Imagination is more important than knowledge."* It is NOT enough to analyze the world as it is and ask 'Why?' We also need to imagine the world as it might be and ask 'Why not?' Camp is one of those rare places. It was discovered and built around imagination and dreams.

'Why not?' create a place that is radically different from the world around us.  
'Why not?' challenge all who enter to share and live this reality beyond camp boundaries.  
'Why not?' celebrate a place where we have more in common than we have in conflict.  
'Why not?' build a place where young people discover unity and acceptance in the midst of marvelous diversity.

Jesus spent most of his ministry asking 'Why not?' He put that question into action as he broke down barriers of fear; as he began connecting people to one another, and to God, through the common beat of hearts. He commissioned his disciples to spread the good news in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He challenges us to do the same.

Dream big! 'Why not?'

**Laura Fitt Baird**  
**Staff 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997**

## **Week Ten, Day Two**

*”<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul.*

*O LORD my God, you are very great;  
you are clothed with splendor and majesty.*

*<sup>2</sup> He wraps himself in light as with a garment;  
he stretches out the heavens like a tent*

*<sup>3</sup> and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.*

*He makes the clouds his chariot  
and rides on the wings of the wind.*

*<sup>4</sup> He makes winds his messengers,  
flames of fire his servants.” – Psalm 104:1-4*

Near the end of the camping season, on a Saturday night when camp was empty, a handful of us decided to go out to the cookout spot and enjoy a nice bonfire. It was sweatshirt-type weather, and we started a large fire as we munched on some Pop Tarts and reflected back on the events of the summer.

One of the goals of our bonfire was to eliminate a large pile of scrap wood that had accumulated out around the storage hut at cookout. Old cabin shutters, some boards, rotten logs, and even an old shed roof were part of the mix. None of them, not even the wet boards, were going to slow down our super-hot bonfire.

Eventually we reached the bottom of the pile, and got to the big-ticket item--the top of an old ping-pong table. Three of us picked up the heavy piece and threw it on top of the fire, covering most of the flames and temporarily making the cookout spot much dimmer. Soon, flames were curling around the edges of the table, and little pinholes of light were starting to pop through the top of the table. Right then, much to our amazement, a very distinct cross about a foot and a half long burned through near the middle of the tabletop. We watched in awe as it appeared, burned brightly for about 20 seconds, and then disappeared amidst more flames that came through and engulfed the rest of the table.

May you also find the warmth of God through Jesus Christ, who burns brightly in our souls through the sign of a cross.

***Ryan Rupp***

***Staff 1992, 1993, 1994***

### **Week Ten, Day Three**

"...As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples."

-- John 13: 34-35

"Friends are friends forever, when the Lord's a Lord of them." Michael W. Smith's words are forever stamped into my brain. We sang it every year of Chi Rho, every year of CYF, and every year of Advance Conference as we wrapped our arms around each other and swayed back and forth to the music. I had no idea at any of those times, however, that the friends I had made at camp really would be my friends forever.

Although we are all in our thirties now and, for most of us, camp lives now in our memories, we are still very good friends. Our lives have taken us in many different directions. Some of our camp romances have bloomed into marriages, many of us are now moms and dads, some of us have moved far away from Ohio, and a few of us have houses right down the street from each other. Our jobs have changed, our addresses have changed and even our dreams have changed. However, there is one constant that exists in all of our lives: the friendships that we first formed at Camp Christian still remain and have even grown into something stronger over the years-- now we are family. We continue to love and support each other everyday, whether it is through e-mails, phone calls, or a knock on the door. Together, we've been through illnesses and births, weddings and divorces, promotions and unemployment. We travel from everywhere to celebrate New Year's Eve, Superbowl Sundays and Halloween costume parties. The list goes on and so do we. There is not a doubt in my mind that I will have these friends for the rest of my life.

I am so grateful for this family that I have. God brought us together and God keeps us together. I thank Him everyday for blessing me with these people, these friends who will be my friends forever.

***Megan Lash***  
***Staff 1992, 1993***

### **Week Ten, Day Four:**

#### ***Lessons of Faith and Practice from World Religions: Christianity***

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37, The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. <sup>F108</sup> "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

So this is "the short" of what is required by God...Love God, love your neighbors and serve others. What are you doing every day in your life to accomplish these three things? Go, and make it so!

***Kristen & Brian McCreanor***

***Staff 1993, 1994, 1995 (Kristen)***

***Staff 1997, 1998, 1999 (Brian)***

### **Week Ten, Day Five**

I have just read a book detailing the life of Theodor Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. It is my privilege to work with children on an everyday basis and who better to learn a tidbit from regarding what kids may like, right?

If I recall the story correctly, Dr. Seuss developed his formula and rhyming scheme while traveling across the Atlantic and listening to the constant engine sounds of a ship called the Kungsholm. This rhyme scheme--utilized in several books--is called anapestic tetrameter. When Dr. Seuss was attempting to convince publishing companies that only children were the potential audience, he tried to apply (and sought the help of many other authors) this formula to his books with respect to language, structure, and illustration, specific to age group.

Dr. Seuss succeeded with structure, and I thank God for his creativity. Perhaps his example will inspire you too to follow a specific formula, be it with prayer or with any other routine.

Regardless of how you practice, God's love for you will not be lessened, reduced, or compromised.

At this time, please think about how routine, or the lack of it, impacts your life. Then enjoy this selected text, reading it as if God could be speaking to you.

Congratulations!  
Today is your day.  
You're off to Great Places!  
You're off and away.

You have brain in your head.  
You have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself  
any direction you choose...

You're on your own, and you know what you know.  
And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.

--from *OH, The Places You'll Go!* by Dr. Seuss

So, where are you going TODAY?

***Kyle Paladino***  
***Staff 1996, 1997***

### **Week Ten, Day Six**

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*  
-- *Psalm 119:105*

I love the end of Consecration at Chi Rho camp. One of my most irreverent thoughts is always, "Whose brilliant plan was it to give open flame to middle school kids and then turn them loose in the woods after dark? But this thought usually passes quickly as I look down the path to see the torches winding their way back to the main campus.

It wasn't until my first year as a Chi Rho counselor, though, that I had an epiphany about this sight. I was making my way down the path with my own candle, stumbling around in near darkness with the girls in my cabin. I found pretty quickly that if I tried to walk too fast, I would stumble or my candle would almost go out. In addition, if I tried to look too far ahead, I couldn't see anything well enough to travel. But, if I stayed at a fairly steady pace and just concentrated on the next torch on my path, I had just the amount of light I needed to get that far. Besides, if my candle went out, I could always light it again when I got there or I could ask one of the girls to help me. Then, once I reached that torch, I could turn and find the next one.

This image is a very meaningful one for me because in my life I am always looking too far ahead, and it is then that I make mistakes and become unhappy because I'm not concentrating on the very next task. Like all of God's children, I carry part of God's light with me. If I move steadily to the next torch on my path, whether that is my next client or my next meeting, I'm bound to get there. I have people around me to assist me and when I see their

light, I am reminded that God is still present. When we stop at the next torch on the path, we are assured of being refueled. When I get to the next station, then and only then, do I need to turn and look for the next thing that God is asking me to do. This doesn't mean that we can't plan for our futures--after all we can see the torches down the path, but it does mean we need to be present now, moving faithfully where God's light leads us and trusting that God will get us to where we need to be.

**Prayer Thought:** What are the next torches on your path, the most immediate ones? Where is God leading you today? What strength can you take from the light of God in others? Is it time to refuel?

**Joy Omslaer**  
**Staff 1983, 1984**

### **Week Ten, Day Seven**

*"All [people] are interdependent. Every nation is an heir of a vast treasury of ideas and labor to which both the living and the dead of all nations have contributed. Whether we realize it or not, each of us lives eternally 'in the red.' We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women. When we arise in the morning, we go into the bathroom where we reach for a sponge, which is provided for us by a Pacific islander. We reach for soap that is created for us by a European. Then at the table we drink coffee which is provided for us by a South American, or tea by a Chinese, or cocoa by a West African. Before we leave for our jobs we are already beholden to more than half of the world." – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

A counselor once told me that camp was real life--the other 51 weeks in the year are just getting through day to day. Though I have gone in and out of agreeing with this philosophy, one thing Dr. King teaches all of us is that no matter where we are, we are always connected to the rest of the world.

It is amazing to think how connected we are here at Camp Christian. In this little pocket of rural Ohio, hundreds of youth come to create a better relationship with God, friends, and people like you who change lives. Each of these youth represents churches that in turn affect hundreds of communities. Through these communities, great things can happen. The power we have in our world is absolutely astounding!

As a special project today--look up fair trade products on the Internet. Buying fair trade products is one way that we can intentionally help those hands that we are always connected to in our day-to-day living. (Plus the coffee tastes great!)

**Prayer:** Loving God, help us to listen to your world. Amen.

**Audrey Connor**  
**Staff 1996, 1997, 1998**

## **For the days, weeks, and months ahead...**

“Be still, and know that I am God!” -- Psalm 46:10

We live in the age of information. Constant, continuous, incessant, unstopping information. We can tune our televisions to at least three different 24-hour news stations, two around-the-clock sports stations, and even a dedicated weather station so we'll know when it's raining in Wyoming. We use laptops so we can take information with us wherever we go. We carry pagers or two-way radios so our employers can get a hold of us whenever they need information. We have cell phones so anyone can get a hold of us at any time and in any place.

We live in an age where it is very easy to be consumed by the noise that surrounds us. Do you waste time channel surfing when there's nothing worth watching? How many times a day do you feel obliged to check your e-mail just in case someone sent you a message? Have you noticed how often people will answer their phone while in a restaurant, ignoring their present company to talk to someone who is not even there? I often wonder how we were ever able to leave our homes without worrying about who was going to call while we were out. And I believe that the best and least utilized feature on each of these devices is their off buttons. In Matthew 14:28-31 we learn that Peter stood with Jesus on the surface of the sea. His faith held him up above the waters, until he was distracted by the wind and began to sink. The noise of the wind consumed Peter's attention and he began to lose his faith. Turn off your T.V. Turn off your VCR. Turn off your radio, your cell phone, your ceiling fan. Turn off every distraction that you can control. Then close your eyes and tune out every distraction you cannot control; sit, listen, and be still. You don't even need to think about anything. Simply acknowledge God's presence and open your heart and mind to God's direction. Be still, and know that God is.

***Zach Baird***

***Staff 1995, 1996, 1997***