

# PREPARING AND LEADING DEVOTIONS

Counselors from past years express that preparing and leading devotions can be one of the most challenging & rewarding things to do at camp. Here are some guidelines to help you prepare.

## 1. What Devotions are

- A time to get to know your campers, to build community & trust within your cabin.
- A time to let your campers talk about their faith & life situations.
- A time to share your own faith & help your campers grow spiritually.
- A time for high's & low's (the days reflections) and to be a good listener.
- A time to pray together in a variety of ways.
- One of the most important parts of the camping experience!

## 2. Nurture Yourself

You will want to find ways to grow in your own personal faith. Find some good books to read (how about THE Good Book?) Attend church youth events (Re. Peer Leadership, High Life, retreats, etc.) Attend Saturday evening or Sunday morning worship at church. Seek other opportunities for you to grow spiritually.

## 3. Preparations

Wash up time is not the best time to try and come up with an idea for that evening's devotion. Make sure you are well prepared in advance. You may want to have your devotions mostly ready before camp (which stories to use, etc.)

- Prepare your topic, story, and questions – write them out.
- You may want to write out your prayers ahead of time.
- Make sure you have all of the supplies needed if any.
- Make sure everyone has gone to the bathroom and is ready for bed before beginning.
- Have everyone sit on the floor in a circle when doing your devotions.
- Establish the importance of your devotion/prayer time for the cabin.
- Encourage the whole group to participate & be involved.
- Let your campers know that you have something important to share with them.

## 4. Problem Areas

During your devotional time, camp staff members will be wandering outside the cabin areas to help with keeping the noise level down and if problems or concerns arise.

- Be prepared & focused with the topic. Don't just "shoot the breeze".
- How your cabin behaves affects other cabins and their devotions.
- Make sure devotions are age appropriate.
- Watch for building behavioral problems – ask Burke or God Squad for help if needed.
- Don't pretend to be an authority. Suggested responses might include:
  - "I don't know, but I can help you find out."
  - "This topic is not appropriate for devotions."
  - "I have different devotions planned for tonight."
  - "I can't answer that right now, but why do you ask?"
  - "If you have these questions tomorrow, we'll talk about them with a staff person."

# PREPARING AND LEADING DEVOTIONS (Continued)

## 5. Devotional Topics

Your attitude will reflect itself in your devotions with your campers. Show your interest in your campers by choosing subjects that are appropriate and relevant to them.

Suggested topics for the different grade levels:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Base devotions on stories they are interested in from Bible Story books (relate the stories to personal life.) Friends, family, prayer, God's love, promises, gossip, jealousy, camp life, creation, etc.
- 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
You could also use the Bible Stories (these kids will ask more questions.) Also, anger, forgiveness, trust, sin, honesty, self-esteem, respect, etc. Plus, all of the topics from the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade section.
- 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Faith, peer pressure, Christianity, the church, divorce, gossip, self-image, worrying, witnessing, temptation, handling stress, the Bible, etc. Plus all of the subjects from the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade section.

## 6. Topics to Avoid

These issues need to be addressed by parents or a pastor back at home. There are so many more appropriate topics that are positive in nature to discuss, focus on those. However, there might be times when you might be tempted to tackle one of these topics. Please ask & talk to Burke first. Do not offer personal experiences, or "Yea, I did it, but don't you do it...".

- Drugs, alcohol, smoking, chewing, etc.
- Religious questions not having to do with the Lutheran faith.
- Shoplifting, gambling, getting in trouble with the law.
- The second coming, Revelation, Satan, Angels, etc
- Scary ghost stories, urban legends, etc.
- Boy/girl relations, starting up "crushes", etc.
- Sex, sexual orientation, sexual experiences, someone's anatomy, etc.

Sometimes kids ask questions or make comments to see how far they can push boundaries.

Don't get sucked into inappropriate discussions, degrading comments or bad jokes. There is no place for them in this Christian environment. It is not enough to just not participate. You must not tolerate it at all!

Devotions are such a special time to share with your campers. It's a chance for them to get to know you and a chance for you to guide them in understanding how God works in their lives. A simple message often times is the best message.

Use your resources ... use personal illustrations, stories from books, the Bible and this manual. Always ask your campers for their feelings, questions and opinions. Help your campers to learn, help them to share, help them start thinking and becoming aware of Christ in their lives. Emphasize that God loves us and is with us always, no matter where we are or what we are doing.

# CABIN DEVOTIONS

1. **Open in Prayer** – Always begin with a short prayer.
2. **Highs & Low's of the Day** – Everyone in your cabin shares a high and a low for the day.
  - Make sure that the person who is talking has everyone's attention.
  - It is O.K. for someone to pass on the low if they can't think of one.
  - Counselors should participate also. Encourage and support others.
  - Be sure to listen for potential problem areas or recurring lows each day.
  - The highs and lows may be used for prayer topics or future devotions.
3. **Devotional Message** – There are several different ways to bring your message across;
  - **Bible Story**, read or tell a favorite story from the bible.
  - **Read a story**, choose a story from Chicken Soup for the Soul or another favorite
  - **Storytelling**, fiction: "Once upon a time...", personal: Share an experience from your life. Be careful what experience you choose and how specific the details.
  - **Role Playing**, skits or drama to illustrate a point. Act out the Bible story as it's read.
  - **Games/Activities**, Faith Talk Kit, Bible Baseball, Trust Walk, etc. Get O.K.'d by Burke or the God Squad first.

With any devotional, make sure you are able to write the point of the message down in one sentence. It can be very simple and often time needs to be (K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simple Simon) Make sure the topic is age appropriate and that you are well prepared. Make sure that the supplies needed are collected beforehand.
4. **Discussion** – Make sure that the questions you have prepared beforehand pertain to; 1) the story details themselves-to make sure they were listening, 2) how the story relates to the campers or their week at camp, and 3) how does God, Jesus, or being a Christian fit in.
  - Ask open-ended questions. A discussion is not a quiz.
  - Begin with non-threatening questions and move to deeper stuff later.
  - Don't be afraid of silence – don't be the first to answer. Don't force kids to talk.
5. **Close in Prayer** – Always end your devotions with prayer. Try different types of prayer;  
**Open/popcorn:** You begin and invite the prayers. Everyone is encouraged to pray out loud at random. You would close the prayer...maybe the Lord's Prayer?

- **Circle:** You begin the prayer and encourage everyone to say a prayer out loud as you sit in a circle. You would close the prayer once everyone has prayed.
- **Squeeze:** Everyone either sits or stands in a circle holding hands. After each person prays, they squeeze the hand of the person next to them to continue the prayer. This also works well when the counselor starts with a prayer topic and each person shares.
- **Leader:** You say a closing prayer on behalf of the cabin. Everyone says "amen".
- **Responsive/Petition:** You pray out loud on various topics you and your campers have selected. The campers respond with "Lord, here our prayer", or some other affirming response in unison.
- **Lord's Prayer:** Everyone says the Lord's Prayer together.

## Cabin Devotions Outline

Every Counselor and CIT will be responsible for writing a cabin devotions for 2012 and turning them in for review. Being prepared in advance and having solid devotions go hand in hand. We want to help you succeed.

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year Counselors</b>	Write 2 devotions geared for 8 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> grade campers.
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Year Counselors</b>	Write 2 devotions geared for 6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> grade campers.
<b>Counselors-In-Training</b>	Write 1 devotion geared for 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> grade campers.

Your first draft of devotions should be entirely typed following the outline below. You may print out, or e-mail your devotions to Burke or Melissa by **January 22 at 7:00** for our Counselor/CIT gathering. They will be read and suggestions or comments will be added and then returned to you on March 4. Your final draft (if needed) will be due March 18 with specific formatting requests. Save all work on your computer for future reference.

**Devotions Topic** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age Intended For** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supplies Needed** \_\_\_\_\_

### **1. Opening Prayer:**

How would you want to start off your devotions? Type some ideas here.

### **2. Highs & Lows:**

This will be spontaneous each night.

### **3. Devotional Message Point:**

What are the 1 or 2 main points of your message? (Remember K.I.S.S.) Type them here.

### **4. Devotional Story:**

Type out the entire story you are using, including source reference and page #.

### **5. Discussion Questions:**

#### **Were you listening?**

What are 4 - 5 questions that pertain to the story itself (to make sure they understood and were listening).

#### **How does it relate?**

What are 4 - 5 questions to help relate the story to the campers and/or their week at camp.

#### **How does God fit in?**

What are 4 - 5 questions that show how God, Jesus, and/or being a Christian connects the story to your campers.

### **6. Close in Prayer:**

How would you want to end your devotions? Type some ideas here.

**E-mail to [bhancer@standrewlu.org](mailto:bhancer@standrewlu.org) or [mwilliams@standrewlu.org](mailto:mwilliams@standrewlu.org) by January 22, 2012.**