

# Help, I'm a counselor... what will I be doing at camp??

## 1. You are responsible for a cabin and the campers in your cabin.

### A. Care for the campers in your cabin:

1. Cleanliness, hygiene and rest
2. Nutrition (encourage children to eat well at mealtimes, drink lots of water).

### B. Provide a safe, encouraging atmosphere for spiritual growth:

1. Go over the Camper Orientation with campers in your cabin as soon as everyone has arrived.
2. Make, post and keep a covenant (p 44 in Counselor Resources [CR] Manual).
3. Conduct evening devotions (pp 30-31 in CR Manual):
  - a. Soft instrumental/background music while getting ready for devotion,
  - b. Re-read day's scripture, explore understanding and questions,
  - c. Option: read a short story related to key ideas of scripture,
4. Close with a quiet song (Sanctuary, Alleluia, Amazing Grace, etc.).
5. **Please Note: no candles or incense in cabins** – use a flashlight lantern or flashlight standing on end.

### C. No food or rough play in cabin.

### D. Keep cabin reasonably clean, door closed to keep AC functioning at its best

### E. Optional: at some camps counselors pick a cabin theme and decorate before campers arrive, including perhaps a poster or wrapping paper covering for the cabin door, name plates for each bunk, etc. Theme ideas have included FROG (Fully Rely on God), current movie themes appropriate for the age (and church camp), camo, pirates, Harry Potter, Flamingos, Tropical Island, etc. Check with your director and other counselors before you come to camp about this.

## 2. You are responsible for a facilitating a family group with another staff member. Family groups provide time to dig deeper into the scripture and keynote and groups usually do several other things together, like planning/leading campfire or vespers and meal set-up.

### A. Family group time includes:

1. Scripture reading for the day
2. Facilitating curriculum activities related to the theme of the day
3. Leading group discussions on the theme of the day
4. Prayer time (leader led, camper led, group, or solo reflective prayer)
5. Group selected activity – hike, service project, crafts, music, archery, etc.

### B. Campfire includes: (Campfire Planning sheet on p 46 in CR Manual, skits and planning sheets in 3-ring binders in Room 104, **be sure to talk to musicians about music the day before you will lead Campfire so they have time to prepare.**)

1. Songs
2. Skits & Cheers
3. Games or participatory stories

C. Worship includes: (Worship Planning sheet on p 47 in CR Manual, be sure to talk to musicians about music the day before you will lead Worship.)

- 1. Music
- 2. Scripture
- 3. Drama or story that communicates key ideas of scripture
- 4. Option: other readings, poetry, art
- 5. Prayer, both opening and closing

- D. Meal time
  - 1. Dining hall set up – wipe tables, set down chairs, put out water.
  - 2. Mealtime prayer
  - 3. Clean up of dining hall after the meal: stack chairs, wipe tables, sweep under tables, mop once a day the dining hall.

3. You may be asked to lead a 1 hour Special Interest Group.

- A. Pick a special interest of yours and prepare to spend an hour with a small group of campers sharing your interest. Examples: you might lead a discussion about an issue of interest to campers (music, internet, video games, current movies) and how we relate as Christians to these contemporary issues, lead a hike, teach campers a skill or craft, etc.
  - 1. Develop your idea and gather resources or materials needed for session.
  - 2. Bring copies with you or any information or handouts for campers.
  - 3. Supplies: please check with your director before making supply purchases; many items are already available at camp. Reimbursement for supplies is available, if needed.

## Some Thoughts About Leading a Small Group

- The leader can and needs to assume responsibility for facilitating the group to function and care for each other.
- Each person of the group needs to be included so as to feel a part of the group. A word of "thanks" or "okay" can help keep the discussion going, too. Be sure everyone is allowed to share his or her opinion.
- To facilitate discussion, ask open-ended rather than yes or no questions. For example, instead of asking, "Do you think Billy should have acted that way?" ask, "What do you think Billy should have done?"
- Ask group members to clarify answers that may feel incomplete or confusing. Use phrases such as, "What causes you to feel that way?" or "How come?" or "Can you say more about that?"
- Be willing to defend another's right to his or her opinion. If a put-down comes from someone, simply say, "(Name) has a right to her or his opinion."
- Try to use the consensus method when making a group decision; discuss until everyone agrees.
- The leader always participates in every activity.
- When you observe someone not participating, you may want to ask if he or she has something to share, or you may want to ask if he or she is okay.
- Seize teachable moments. If an issue comes up that the group needs to address, don't ignore it simply because it's tangential or off-task.
- Remember, the group can support but it cannot cure. Time in small group is not a therapy session. Some people's problems may be so awesome that you may need to refer them to someone who is more skilled, such as a competent counselor or minister. Remember, you are a group leader, not a therapist.
- Most of the time, circular response (going around the circle) is the least threatening and most structured form of sharing.
- Encourage all to share, but don't let one or two group members monopolize the conversation. A helpful method in curbing this is to ask group members, after speaking, to let at least two other people speak before they do so again.

(Adapted from *Heavenly Hash or Leftovers . . .*, Ben Bohren, et al.)



# Great Family Group Activity Ideas with a Flow

## Begin the week:

1. Make meaningful covenant - involve all campers, counselors, staff in this process

### Creating a group covenant:

Explain to the group that a covenant is a pledge God made with the Hebrew people. It contained promises to help establish their relationship. Today, we will be making some promises to one another. A covenant is different from a contract in that once a contract is broken, it is null and void. A covenant allows for promises to be broken and forgiveness to be shared.

One suggestion for getting all involved is to break your family groups of 3 or 4. Give each group 3 minutes to brainstorm what items would be really important to state in the covenant of this group while at camp. After 3 minutes, gather the groups together and create one group covenant from these lists. Write the covenant on large paper. Try to limit the covenant to ten items. Have each person sign the covenant and post it in a prominent place.

2. Easy, simple get-to-know-you group-building games, refer to your **Super-Duper Game List**.

For example:

- Any name games played during Keynote
- Hula hoop games
- Birthday line-up
- Sew the gap
- King of the Lillypad

3. A faith activity to start discussions on faith

For example:

- Sharing your own faith story
- Biblical and/or faith-related references/ties to activities you do
- Object-faith identification activity (assess your group first --- is it appropriate --- age, comfort level, etc.?)
- "Weather report" faith sharing (each person gives an actual weather report that describes their faith at this time on their journey)

**Beginning of the week - continued**

4. Some more middle-level group-building activities if group is ready -- work up to these first! These should not be done on the first day -- Human Knot, Continental Divide, T.P. Shuffle, etc.

5. Making journals at arts and crafts (kids can use them during week)

**Rest of the week:**

1. Higher-level group-building activities, continue to build on their group dynamics. Refer to your group-building/challenge course materials from staff training or talk with your Program Coordinator, or Program Specialist for ideas or which challenge would be best for what your group needs.

2. Hike

3. Theme-related activities from curriculum (see your curriculum packet and check with Session Director for ideas)

4. Random Acts of Kindness

5. Making up a family group song that uses the tune of a camp song or other familiar song

6. Make a family group cheer

ther group

## Devotional Time:

Devotional time is a time for reflection on the day, faith sharing, prayer, quiet singing, and to quiet down with a cabin group before bedtime. During this time, some plan is needed, but go with those teachable moments. Kids, and people in general, are more likely to share in more depth when time pressures are fewer, when they feel people are listening, and it is dark. Do not neglect a moment to teach important lessons or for you to listen to child, just so you can stick with your plan. A well-formulated plan should allow for flexibility.

There are two philosophies to devotions. One is to use this time as a way to quiet campers down and help them fall asleep and the other is as a way to reflect and share faith. Both are equally important, but as you work with campers of differing ages, be aware that the session director may want you to approach devotions from the other philosophy. For example, using devotions as a way to calm campers and get them to sleep may be more appropriate for the youngest campers. However, in Junior High and Senior High Camps the philosophy may focus more on faith sharing.

It is important to forming your group that the leader shares a story, poem, etc. first. It will be more difficult for the campers to give to the group if the leader has not modeled what is expected or given to the group him/herself. This can be an important step in guiding the discussion and depth of sharing from the campers. Remember that campers will follow your lead. If you are serious, they will be. If you are lighthearted, they will be. If you show a little more depth each night during devotions throughout the week, then they will also.

**Remember:** There are certain topics of discussion that you, as a leader, should not be sharing (i.e., your romantic relationships, intense personal issues, anything that is shared more for your benefit than for the benefit of the campers).

One idea that has been shared and proved to be effective in group building and developing depth throughout a week of camp is to have each member of the group share some item and its significance to them. At first, campers will say that they didn't know to bring such things, but they will find something in their suitcases. In the middle of the week, they might state that they have nothing else to share, but they will still manage to find something. By the end of the week, if you have managed to get your group to stick to this, they will request this time and the item they bring will be more representative of a bigger situation or positive personal experience. Remember, these can be funny as well as faith-based. It gives everyone a chance to share more of themselves and to have others listen. This could be modified for any age group.

## Suggestions for Devotions:

- Pray with and for your campers
- Start at a time when everyone is quieted down
- Put your flashlight or lantern in a central location
- Have campers sitting a circle – if focusing on faith sharing
- Have campers lying or sitting on their bunks – if focusing on calming and sleeping
- Play calming music in the background – Classical, Nature sounds, Enya, etc.
- If you start too late at night, campers will be too tired to participate
- Involve the campers. This not a time for the counselor to monopolize the discussion or to criticize a camper's actions or beliefs
- Continue discussions around experiences earlier in the day – vespers, family groups, interest groups, evening activities, etc.
- Ask campers to tell you what was the best part of their day and why. What could they do differently tomorrow?
- Camp Directors may have specific ideas or topics for devotions
- Ideas from theme curriculum
- Stories from Chicken Soup for the Soul, etc. with debriefing questions
- Devotions Question Sheet
- Encourage the quieter campers to share
- Give each camper ample time, but gently move on if they are veering way off
- For groups, where camper(s) feel he/she needs to add to everyone's story, use the talking stick technique