



Taking
It
Down
the
Mountain

RTLCL 2009

BIBLE STUDY

TAKING IT DOWN THE MOUNTAIN!

We are grateful to the following writers of the 2009 Bible Study for Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp:

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2009 RTLC BIBLE STUDY TAKING IT DOWN THE MOUNTAIN!

DAY ONE: COMMUNITY

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Community—The most obvious gift of a week at camp (and maybe the foundation of our cairn) is the intentional community in Christ that invites everyone and values everyone to be a part of that week's "family" at Rainbow Trail. Some kids will feel more included and valued than they ever have before. Some will find themselves in relationships with kids whom they would never be in the same group with "down the mountain." Many of the campers, especially those who have been to camp many times, find themselves wondering (during camp and afterwards) why they can't have this same kind of experience in their daily life.

While the intense community experience of camp can't really be re-created at home, community is still a marker that guides us on our journey of faith and shapes us into the people God would have us be. Some people say that they can be Christians without being a part of a community, but the witness of scripture doesn't really support that idea. Those who followed Jesus both before and after the resurrection lived as brothers and sisters, who learned, grew, served, and lived and died together. In Christian community we are accepted, loved, challenged and stretched. We are on a lifelong journey with others that will shape us and change us and also hopefully change the world. On this first day together, let's encourage campers to be in community not just at Rainbow Trail, but also down the mountain.

What are the defining pieces of the community of Christ here, and how can we find, experience, and create that community for ourselves and others in our daily life?

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

Campers will:

- *Learn about the importance of Christian community—what does it mean/how is it a cairn to draw us into the promise and presence of Jesus
- *Read specific examples from the Bible of those who experienced community with and in Jesus
- *Think about a Christian community they are a part of back home—hopefully including their congregation
- *Think of ways they can help make Christian community happen and be committed to try to be a part of one at home

Goal: Campers will experience and learn about Christian community and know that it isn't confined to camp.

C. MORNING WATCH

Scripture: Mark 10: 13-16

This may not be a passage that you think applies to you. After all, you're not a baby or a toddler! You're on your way to becoming a young adult. But Jesus sees us all as his children, and we're all welcomed to be a part of his community. In fact, in Jesus' day it was a radical idea to value children as something more than property.

- Do you feel like you are a child of God?
- Are there people in your life that have helped you know you belong to Jesus?
- Why do you think people who believe in Jesus gather in churches or camps or Bible study groups?
- What do you receive from this camp community? What do you give others while you're here?

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

This first piece of Bible study can be a bridge between home and camp. You may have kids who have never been to camp before or never been to Rainbow Trail before. Take a few minutes to talk with them about why we have Bible study every day and what they can expect each day during the hour (reading the Bible, prayer, sharing thoughts together.) Then move into an **Opening Prayer:**

Ask everyone to think about someone or something important that they've left behind at home, and to also think about one thing that they are looking forward to or would like to have happen during this week. Tell them that you are going to pray together about those things, going around the circle, with you starting. They can pray by using a phrase like this:

“Take care/be with _____ at home and this week, help me _____.” Invite everyone to say “Amen” at the end of the prayer.

Warm Ups: Take some time to go around the circle and get to know a little bit about everyone in the group. Ask kids to tell names, school, something they like to do, and if they are part of a youth group, team, or activity, what is it? (You can use whatever questions you want, but if you include the last question about a community it flows into today’s study)

Introduction to Bible study:

In today’s study, you want to introduce the whole idea of Cairns. For some kids this will be a foreign object, for others who are in scouts or who spend time outdoors hiking, it will be familiar. Use the introductory material and the picture at the beginning of this study to help campers understand what they are. Invite your campers to go find stones and together build a small cairn in the middle of your circle.

Explain that there are Cairns that shape our life as Christians, and that we will experience some of them during this week at camp. But those Cairns are also part of our life down the mountain as we live our whole lives as followers of Jesus.

Community

Talk together about the communities they mentioned when they introduced themselves to the group. Ask questions like:

- What do you like about that group/team/community?
- What are some of the things you do together?
- Do you have any goals together that you try to accomplish?
- What do you get from the other people in the group? What do you give to the group?

Find out how many of your campers have been here before. Talk about the camp experience:

- What do you like about coming to camp?
- Have you made friends here previously or have you met some new kids already since yesterday?

Tell them that one of the great things about camp is the community that we all get to experience together. Give some examples: caring for one another, listening to each other’s ideas, welcoming everyone, sharing our faith in God. Ask them for their ideas as well.

Today we’re going to look at some Bible passages about people who experienced being invited into Jesus’ community and how that affected their lives.

Turn together to **Luke 19:1-10**. Ask someone to read the passage out loud; go around the circle with each person reading one verse (sometimes difficult if Bible versions are really different); or read it aloud and ask the campers to follow along.

Afterwards, give some brief background: **Zacchaeus** was a tax collector in Jericho. Because he collected taxes from the Jewish people and worked for the Romans, he would have been hated by most people. He was the last person you would expect to be interested in Jesus.

Discuss:

- When Jesus came to Jericho, what made it difficult for Zacchaeus to see him? (his height, the crowd)
- When he was up in the tree did he get to see Jesus? (actually, Jesus noticed **him**)
- What did Jesus tell Zacchaeus that he wanted to do, and what did other people think about that?
- How do you think he felt when Jesus said he was going to his house? What promise did Zacchaeus make to Jesus?
(Noticed, accepted, cared about. When he feels all those things, he wants to be a part of the life of Jesus and will change his life in order to do it)

Here are two possible contemporary examples that your group might be familiar with, which could spark some discussion:

In Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, Harry experiences what it’s like to be not just left-out, but made fun of:

“When Harry and Hermione arrived at Snape’s dungeon, they found the Slytherins waiting outside, each and every one of them wearing a large badge on the front of his or her robes...Harry saw that they all bore the same message, in luminous red letters the burned brightly in the dimly lit underground passage: **Support Cedric Diggory—the Real Hogwarts Champion!**

“Like them, Potter?” said Malfoy loudly. “And this isn’t all they do—look!” He pressed his badge and the message upon it vanished, only to be replaced by another one, which glowed green: **Potter Stinks.** The Slytherins howled with laughter.”

Older youth (especially girls) will be familiar with the Twilight series. They can probably tell you all about the main character, Edward, and his tortured life. As someone who is ‘dead’ and yet lives in the living world, he doesn’t fit in anywhere. It’s only when he meets Bella and falls in love that life seems livable; yet she doesn’t belong in his world, either.

Ask:

- What’s it like to feel left-out of a group (like Zacchaeus?Harry/Edward was)? Has that ever happened to you?
- Can you think of a time that you were accepted in a group?
- Do you think that Jesus welcomes everyone to be a part of his community? Are you welcome in that family?
- What do you think might be different about a community of Christians as opposed to another group?
(All are welcome regardless of how you look or your abilities or if you are a “good” person or not; the thing you have in common is not a particular sport or activity but being called by Jesus and wanting to follow him. A community of Christians doesn’t just care about themselves but cares for others outside their group.)

Tell the group that you’re now going to read about how the early believers in Jesus acted in their community. Turn together to **Acts 2: 43-47** and read it out loud or ask someone to read it.

Discuss:

- What were some characteristics of these folks who believed in Jesus? (they shared their possessions, they had glad and generous hearts, they worshipped together, Jesus was with them, others joined them)
- What did they know about Jesus that made them act like this? (He was the Messiah, he had risen from the dead)
- Think about your own congregation back home. How do people feel accepted and cared for there? (Some possible answers might be that all are welcome at worship and communion, people pray for one another, take care of each other, drawn together by Jesus)
- Do you feel welcome in that community and are you are part of it? Do you give something of yourself in that congregation? (It’s possible that you may get some negative feedback here; some campers may be part of churches that are not receptive to youth. Try asking them what they think needs to happen in order for them to feel cared for or a part of their congregation)
- Think back to your experiences of being left out of a group. Are there things **you** can do either in your youth group or in your congregation to help other people feel welcomed and cared for?

Wrap-Up:

Look at the cairn that your group built at the beginning of the study. Say something like: In finding our way this week and throughout our lives, a community of other people can help us know that God loves us, can help us discover our talents and gifts, and can encourage us to keep going on our journey of faith.

On a piece of paper, draw a picture of a rock cairn. Invite your campers to use markers to write words or draw pictures on the rock that tell or symbolize ways that a Christian community helps one another. (ex: encourage, love, care, listen)

As you close in prayer, ask each person to say something that they hope your group can be or give to one another this week. Examples might be “I hope we can care for each other,” “I hope we can be friends, etc.”

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

See above, using Harry Potter and Twilight if comfortable with them as examples.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- During meals, emphasize the community aspect of eating together: talking at the table, passing each other the food, helping one another clean up, etc.
- VOD could use a theme along the lines of “We Are Family”
- Worship can incorporate the idea that faith and worship are not just “Me and Jesus” but involve brothers and sisters in Christ

G. OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Dance With Me	There’s A Place	You Are the Light of the World
Hey Everybody	We Are Walking in the Light of God	
I Love You	Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying	

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

This age group might have a hard time with the second scripture from Acts. It might be easier to use the Morning Watch scripture passage, Mark 10:13-16, to talk about being a part of a congregation. You can still ask questions like:

- Who makes you feel welcome in your congregation?
- Are there people in your congregation who have helped you feel like a child of God?
- Do you help other kids feel welcome at Sunday School or Day Camp or Bible School? How?

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

Many campers in this age group have meaningful and even very intense friendships. If those friendships are with other Christians, how does that shared faith influence or undergird their friendship? What do they find in those relationships that they might not find with friends that aren’t involved in a faith community?

If they have been involved in a congregation, it’s likely that at this age they can tell you quite a bit about the positives and negatives of that community. Try to help them think about what they might bring to that congregation as a young adult, and why/if being a part of a congregation is going to be important as they get older.

J. STAFF STUDY—Community; Companions; Convergence

Take time to read some of the instructions that St. Paul and others gave to early Christian communities:

- 1Corinthians 16:13-14
- 2Corinthians 13: 11-14
- Philippians 4:1, 4-9
- Philippians 1: 3-11

Think about some of the **communities** that have been important to you and have helped to shape your faith. It may be the staff community, or your congregation, or friends at college.

*How have those people helped make you the person you are today?

*In what ways have they helped to shape and strengthen your faith?

*How have they been Cairns that helped you set your direction in life?

*Have there been times when they have helped you smooth some of the rough edges of your personality? (helping you to be more patient or less judgmental or less tightly wound-up?)

*** A famous quote says “It is the friends that you can call at 2 in the morning that matter.”**

Is there someone who has been a **companion** to you at a difficult time in your life or faith journey? How have you been a companion to that person or to someone else? Have you hung in there with someone even when other friends got tired of listening or being supportive?

*Have there been times in your life when your faith life or path **converged** with someone else in a surprising way, or with someone that you didn’t expect to become close to?

*How did your time with that person or people change you or shape you? How do you think you shaped that person?

Take time in prayer today to remember and give thanks for those communities and people. Maybe you know a specific joy or difficulty that needs Jesus' grace or healing touch. Also take time to pray for yourself as a member of the staff community and as a mentor and teacher to your campers.

K. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

On this first day at camp we are talking about the importance of Christian community. One of the great gifts of a week at Rainbow Trail is a powerful experience of living, singing, praying, and playing with others who believe in Jesus. Together we'll be reading Bible passages about being welcomed into Jesus' community and how those who believe in Jesus act when they are together.

Please read **Acts 2: 43-47**. The early believers in Jesus lived, prayed, served and praised God. When people encountered them, they felt like they wanted to be a part of the community.

- Are you and your child(ren) a part of a congregation?
- If so, what does that connection to a community bring to your faith, and do others feel welcome to be a part of it?
- If you're not involved in a congregation, is it possible that you're missing something?

When your child comes back from camp, take time to hear their stories of community. Be affirming of what they've experienced this week, especially how they have felt the love of God coming to them through others.

Prayer: Gracious God, draw us to others who will bring your love to life; and help us to welcome and care for others in your family. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY TWO: ACCESS TO GOD in Christ... A cairn for daily living

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

For the regular camper at RTL, God is a part of everything. Aside from worship and Bible studies, God is here in talks with their fellow campers and counselors. God is here at mealtime. God is here in all the adventures from ropes courses to white water rafting. God is here when it rains and when the sun shines. God is here when its time for KP and when they are part of the Village of the Day. At Rainbow Trail the connections to God seem to always be there: morning, noon and night.

It is a great joy that a regular camper returns to their regular life and routine remembering camp as a special place to be close to God through Christ. This means that your ministry is very effective in drawing campers closer to God through your work and interactions with them.

At the same time the regular camper often experiences a disconnect between their regular world life and the special week they have here. In their daily life, they discover all too quickly that many of their conversations seem to not be blessed with God's presence, meal time is too rushed for prayer or it is too uncomfortable to suggest, rain is at best a minor inconvenience as well as a whole array of other differences and challenges. So then in contrast to camp, in the regular world for the average camper accessing God through Christ, seems to be next to impossible. Is it any wonder many throw up their hands in frustration and leave their connecting with God to those special moments in life when all other distractions are left behind?

Today's theme acknowledges that this world in which we all carry on our regular lives is chaotic and disconnected. Furthermore in this world today, it *seems* difficult to remain connected to God in Christ. Yet, Christians throughout the centuries no matter the pressures (from the initial oppression of the early church to modern times that include the Cold War) have discovered it is still possible to feel close to God at any time no matter the circumstances.

In modern terms it is possible to ACCESS God through Christ like you would text your best friend only *without* your phone. You and your campers should know and understand at the conclusion of this day that ACCESS to God and feeling connected is never far away no matter where you and your campers may find your selves during the day, the week or the rest of life. God's choice is to always be there, your BFF, 24/7/365.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- 1) Raise awareness of:
 - a. When to pray... (always)
 - b. Kinds of prayer... (any... but some are more right to the situation than others)
 - c. Who to pray for... (any person who needs to feel the power of God to make a difference in their life)
 - d. Importance of prayer (acknowledges God's desire for a relationship with us and stimulates it in us)
- 2) Prayer is not a way to control God but to be in relationship with God

For Staff: In a special way, teaching the Bible studies in this summers study is both a chance to shape young Christian men and women as well as your chance to sharpen skills and awareness for the presence of God. Both are sacred trusts. In particular today's study is a chance to deepen your ability to pray in a wide variety of places and ways.

Each week undoubtedly you will pray numerous times; including but not limited to: in advance of meals, with your campers and on your own. You are challenged to remember these times and prayers so that in the following week, when you are teaching this day's study you can make a special note the times you prayed that drew you in closer to the Spirit of God.

Use the repetitive nature of the study to your advantage, discovering the most effective ways for you to pray. No two of you will develop in drawing closer to God in Christ in the same way. You may choose to share some of these reflections and struggles with your campers and fellow staff members some of the notable elements of your prayers. You will likely discover your awareness and openness to God's love, grace and understanding affects the style and form of your prayers just as general mood, energy level, and sense of connectedness to community will affect it as well.

C. MORNING WATCH

Letter from former staff member illustrating the joys and challenges of taking prayer into daily life.

Some possible questions to address:

Was it hard to figure out how to pray daily? Are you able to?

Does the way you pray change from situation to situation? (ie. Public, devotional, intercessory, personal)

What lesson concerning prayer at camp carries the greatest meaning for you today? Why?

Scripture: *Jonah 2:1* From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God...

Message: Prayer is one of the most personal experiences of the faith. It can be some of the best time we spend in a lifetime journey of faith and it can prove to be some of the most difficult. Today we are going to spend time talking about prayer and its importance in life. As a way to get geared up for today's focus consider and answer the following

List: five different times you have prayed in the last week

Describe your favorite time and way to pray.

Have you ever been ignored by a friend for a few days? How long do you remain friends? Have you ever considered prayer as a way of just talking to God? Have you considered the possibility that God would like you to be in touch?

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

As this is hike day... it is important to introduce the following activity that will unify the day across all of the hikes.

Shout out "Access Point!"

This activity is introduced before camp splits into various hiking groups and happens throughout the day.

At camp, particularly on hikes we stop along the way to admire and even take pictures of the beauty of the creation that surrounds us. Shout out "Access Point!" is intended to be a chance for staff and campers to create impromptu moments during the day to "Access" God in Christ through prayer. It is intended to teach that prayer can happen at all times and in many places.

The following two texts form the backbone of today's study. They illustrate the central important aspects to the cairn of **Access**. Which are 1) always pray, 2) in whatever form makes sense, 3) for that which we believe we need and so 4) we remain in constant relationship with God through Christ Jesus.

Jonah 2 – remained connected even through difficult times and never abandoned his relationship with God despite not liking where life was headed.

Luke 1:46-55 Song of Mary – at the most mystifying time of her life... prayer was her companion.

She rejoices in the good news that God has remembered her.

Share together results of morning watch.

Discuss the shout out "Access Point" experiences:

How did people choose to pray?

Discuss the day:

Who needed our prayers today?

What did we pray for today?

Discuss prayer in daily life:

What do you often pray for?

What does it mean when others pray for us like our parents, our pastor(s), our friends?

Who do you not want to pray for? Why?

Can you pray for those you do not like or those who do not like you? How?

Does praying for those you do not like change how you view them?

Review the Lord's Prayer... and Jesus' teaching on prayer (see Luke 11:1-13)

Review how Jesus responded to Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)

We are called to become Cairns of accessibility for others to see and experience in us the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Remaining connected to God through Christ Jesus in and through prayer shapes us and others. In the journey of life, remembering to stay connected like Mary and Jonah or upon discovering a disconnect seeking to reconnect like Nicodemus or when lost like the disciples simply turning to prayer...

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

1) Despite being resistant to a life of service to others in the name of Christ, it is fascinating that our culture hungers to connect with God outside “organized” religion, to be in the presence of great and authentic mystery. The heart of the new age movement seeks to address this hunger by utilizing all five senses of sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Challenge your campers to find ways to activate all their senses connecting to God through Christ by brainstorming together how they could be used in their public, devotional and personal prayers.

2) Do you remember how the broader culture has illustrated gaining access to God? It can be rather strange and humorous. For example connecting to God has have been the subject of many movies. Many years ago it was the *Oh God!* series with George Burns & John Denver and more recently *Bruce Almighty* with Jim Carrey, as well as *Evan Almighty* with Steve Carell. What expectations do movies like these raise in a non-Christian when they encounter Christians? What are some of the ways these movies illustrate connecting with God that are helpful? Unhelpful?

3) Grab some of your favorite Christian Music such as Mark Schultz’s, *I AM*, from the album, *Live... A Night of Stories and Songs*. How can listening to these words be helpful in forming our prayers? Can our prayers reveal how we rely or don’t rely on God to be our “I Am?”

4) What does it mean to submit ourselves to God’s love even if our prayers are very descriptive about how we want God to love us back?

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Really use the Shout out “Access Point” throughout the day

G. OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Alleluia (14); Awesome God (31); Be Bold (40); Create in Me a Clean Heart (38); Father I Adore You (2); Give Thanks (65); Have You Seen Jesus My Lord (85); Humble Thyself (30); I Exalt Thee (13); Jesus, Remember Me (8); Lord, Listen to your Children Praying (61); Seek Ye First (3)

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS (4-6 grade)

Understanding prayer as a cairn for the journey of faith for this age group will likely be similar to the junior high aged group the study is written for. However, they will be even more concrete and be inclined to seek rules for prayer like pray before meals, bed, tests, and for the things I want and for my friends and what they want. Gently invite them to consider other possibilities with questions like... “What do you want to tell God about your day.” What were your highs and lows? What do you worry about? What are you happy about? You can even model what you will pray about by telling them ahead of time.

Consider taking time to gather in prayer before and after each event during the course of the day. If you have a particularly verbose child in your group ask quietly before the time for the prayer if they would be comfortable leading public prayer. If they say yes... give them guidance so they can feel successful by adapting the central tenants of the RTLC document “Leading Public Prayer at RTLC” to the situation you have in mind. One note of caution: if you ask your campers what to pray about, use some technique like pencil and paper to be sure you include all their concerns. Accidentally missing a concern could be perceived by some campers that God doesn’t care. Pray with this age group using some typical techniques like the popcorn prayer and if a camper indicates they didn’t have a chance to speak their prayer give them permission to speak it next time or to close their eyes and pray right then and there.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS (9-12 grade)

1) Watch and/or discuss all or a portion of the movie *Bruce Almighty*. Draw campers into a discussion about: a) how God is portrayed receiving prayers, b) how people pray. Would you want to be drafted into service the same way Bruce is? Why or why not? How does this movie change how you pray?

2) Watch and/or discuss the movie *Evan Almighty*. Draw campers into a discussion about Evan’s new job as a congressman. Was God behind Evan’s election? What means of communication does God use? Would you like God to communicate with you that way? Why or why not? Is there any indication that Evan is a man of faith before God made it impossible to be anything else? Does this movie change your awareness of how God chooses to communicate?

3) Invite discussion about how life would be different if God answered exactly the way we asked? Many prayers would be self-focused... all the money needed, most popular, most successful, etc... would that be good for us or the world God created? Other prayers would be focused on others and their needs... how is that different?

J. STAFF STUDY

Reflect on this quote from Ted Loder in *Guerrillas of Grace* (p. 13) "...I believe life itself is a prayer, and the prayers we say shape the lives we live, just as the lives we live shape the prayers we say; and it all shapes the kingdom which expresses itself in and among us..."

How are you living this week, this month, this summer, this year?

How accessible do you experience God through Christ Jesus?

Is God that far off, in the distance being that you call on only when necessary?

Is God your constant companion to whom you turn to regularly in daily life?

Are you a living cairn of "Access" for your campers, your peers and others to know the nearness of God?

K. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Theme and Purpose: On day two, we introduce campers to the second cairn or marker on their journey of faith and life to remind them how to be connected to God through Christ Jesus. We have known for some time that campers often experience a disconnect between their regular world life and the special week they have at Rainbow Trail. Coming back to daily living with all of the pressures can be difficult. Campers discover all too quickly that many of their conversations seem to not be blessed with God's presence, meal time is too rushed for prayer or it is too uncomfortable to suggest, rain is at best a minor inconvenience as well as a whole array of other differences and challenges. In contrast to camp, in the regular world for the average camper accessing God through Christ, seems to be next to impossible. Is it any wonder many throw up their hands in frustration and leave their connecting with God to those special moments in life when all other distractions are left behind?

Today's theme acknowledges that this world in which we all carry on our regular lives is chaotic and disconnected. Furthermore in this world today, it *seems* difficult to remain connected to God in Christ. Yet, Christians throughout the centuries no matter the pressures (from the initial oppression of the early church to the modern times that include the Cold War) have discovered it is still possible to feel close to God at any time no matter the circumstances.

In modern terms it is possible to ACCESS God through Christ like your camper would text their best friend only *without* their phone. Our goal today is for your camper to know and understand at the conclusion of this day that ACCESS to God and feeling connected is never far away no matter where they find themselves during the day, the week or the rest of life. God's choice is to always be there, your BFF, 24/7/365.

Read the focal Biblical Texts: Jonah 2: 1-9 and Luke 1:46-56 Both texts illustrate ACCESS to God at important times in life. The Jonah text illustrates praying to God when things appear to be in the most dire straits. While clearly asking God for what Jonah wants, his prayer clearly recognizes God's dominion in all matters. The Luke text is more commonly thought of as Mary's Magnificat. Here Mary is clearly delighted and hopeful and it is a prayer said in the presence of Elizabeth that acknowledges God's power and might in our world.

Family Activity: To help your camper bring home the experience of accessing God no matter where they are: pray outloud before all meals no matter where you are... ask your camper to lead some of the prayers. Try to maintain this practice for two straight weeks.

Prayer: Almighty God, you hear our prayer as it is and make it pure and acceptable to you.

DAY THREE: Inspiration (Worship)

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

- * Clear theme for the day - one from which creative camper themes can be developed
- * Brief explanation of the theme

A highlight of the week at Rainbow Trail for many campers is worship. Young people find themselves stirred during these services in ways that they rarely are at home. Some have the impression that this is the case because of the extraordinary character of worship at Rainbow Trail (music that connects with young people; music led by young people; instruments that are familiar to young people; messages by speakers who are closer to their age – with whom they can more easily identify; set in the beautiful surroundings of the Sangre de Cristo mountains; freedom to wear what you want, sit where you want, sit how you want, sit with whom you want...). It may have more to do with the attitude that campers bring to worship. When worship is something we look forward to; when it is something we have been preparing for; when it is something that we expect will stir us... we are more likely to be stirred by it.

During this day of the study, we will explore why it is that many campers respond so positively to worship at Rainbow Trail. We will consider worship as one of the Cairns that guide our journey through a week of camp. And we will discover some ways to prepare ourselves to be more engaged, more inspired, by the times of worship and devotion where we live.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

During this day of the study, each camper will:

Understand why worship experiences are so compelling at Rainbow Trail (it has more to do with what we bring to the experience than most campers realize...)

- We've been looking forward to them since last year at camp (or since someone told us about how inspiring they are).
- We expect them to be moving, and so we are more likely to notice that they are.
- We are invested in the experience (either because we have recently led worship ourselves, or are anticipating that we'll do so soon).
- We have spent the day focused on the theme of the day (or the theme of the week), and are primed to connect with the message at the heart of the service.
- We are willing to trust and be open to those who are leading the worship service, and are willing to be touched in the way that they want us to be touched.

Older campers will discern what they have each done to eliminate some of the roadblocks that prohibit them from being touched by God in worship this week; roadblocks like:

- Refusing to be engaged (We have not stood in the back row and disconnected, but have chosen to sing, laugh, pray and listen.)
- Extreme busyness (We are not showing up late, leaving early, and squeezing worship in between other priorities, but we are arriving early, taking as much time as we need for worship, and visiting with one another afterwards.)
- Focusing on distractions (Our cell phones don't work here, so there isn't the temptation to be texting or checking e-mail during worship.)
- Spending time with people who don't value worship (We are affected by our friends – and when we spend time with people who value worship, it helps us to take it more seriously, and experience it more deeply.)

Make a commitment to prepare for worship (corporate congregational worship, youth group devotions, family devotions, faith time with friends, personal prayer and devotion...) in a way that makes it more likely that they will be stirred by God through these experiences too.

- Ask to become part of the team that plans and conducts worship at home (join a worship planning team, ask to serve as a lector or a communion assistant, volunteer to help with a Children's Message when needed, help to decorate the worship area each season...)
- Study and become familiar with the themes of the seasons and the texts for the day.

- Ask your Pastor ahead of time what the focus will be for the coming Sunday. Read the appointed Bible lessons and study them – come up with your own list of points that the texts are trying to make – themes that would be included if you were planning the service.
- Visit internet sites that discuss the texts for the coming Sunday.
- If you have an e-mail address, subscribe to a mid-week devotional message or daily devotional messages that are based on the liturgical texts for Sunday.
- Reflect, ahead of time, on how those themes connect with your life today.
- Organize a group of young people to sit together at worship, and to gather afterwards (at Starbucks or in the Youth Room) to talk about what you learned, what you experienced, how you grew... You may be able to learn from the experiences of other people – and they may be able to learn from your insights.
- Make a habit of preparing physically for worship (like you'd prepare for a big game or a big performance or a big test).
 - Don't stay out especially late the night before.
 - Rise early enough that you are not rushed before church.
 - Eat a healthy breakfast.
 - Commit to treating family members with love and respect before worship, so that everybody arrives at church (or at devotion time)
 - Show up early enough so that you can get your head in the game, and be ready to join in right away.
- Pray ahead of time (or in your seat before worship) that God will open your heart to discover at least one way that this time of worship or devotion will stir you and inspire your faith.

C. MORNING WATCH

Text for Morning Watch: St. Luke 2:22-40

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” ²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” ³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. ³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. ¹

Questions after hearing someone read a letter from a former staff member who continues to experience the presence of God during worship:

1. What does that person get out of being involved in worship?
2. What does that person do to ensure that worship is a vital and meaningful part of life?
3. What might I learn from that person about being more aware of how God is trying to touch me during worship services and times of devotion where I live?

¹ St. Luke 2:22-40, *New Revised Version Bible* (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

4. What will I do when I get home to be better prepared to meet God in the midst of my worship and devotional life?

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Introduction: St. Luke 2:22-40 – Jesus in the Temple, with Simeon and Anna

Simeon, St. Luke tells us, was a righteous man and a devout man: filled with the Holy Spirit, and waiting for the “consolation” of Israel. Simeon had received a vision from God. It told him that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. Simeon was a faithful man, and so he believed the vision. Day after day he remembered that vision; praying, studying, contemplating, discussing with friends in the Temple, waiting for the Messiah.

One day, Simeon had an undeniable urge to visit the temple. St. Luke tells us it was the Holy Spirit that moved him to do so. And so he awoke early in the morning, carefully dressed himself, and made his way to the temple, where he sat down and waited.

Anna, St. Luke tells us, was also in the temple that day. She became a widow after only seven years of marriage, and dedicated the rest of her eighty-four years to serving God in the temple. She could be found in the temple day and night — fasting and praying and, like Simeon, filled with God’s spirit. She was a familiar sight to all who worshipped in the temple. Old and stooped with age, leaning heavily on a cane. Every day she would come out of her quarters, walk into the midst of the people, and join in the singing of the Psalms and the services of public prayer. The people believed that she had a special understanding of God’s presence in the world. They called her a prophetess. She too made an appearance in the temple that day — and was, no doubt, somewhere in the building praying and singing Psalms.

As these two saints went about their business, Mary and Joseph brought their baby boy to the temple, according to custom, to dedicate him to the Lord. While they were there, two strange events took place. First it was Simeon: when he saw Mary and Joseph come in with their baby, he immediately went over to them. He took the baby from the mother’s arms, and held him high so all the people could see. Then he began to sing aloud: “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

No sooner had Simeon completed his song, than Anna came over. She too began to praise God, singing songs of great joy when she saw the child. She told all who were there that this child was the one for whom they had been waiting. This child was the anointed one of God — the Christ. He would be the one to bring redemption to Israel.

Two saints in Jerusalem. Two saints who were devout, religious Jews. These two were the first ones to understand just who this young Jesus from Nazareth truly was. There was much going on in the temple that day. People were offering sacrifices. Children were being dedicated. Arguments were being resolved. Scripture lessons were being taught. Most of the people involved in those activities had no idea that something incredible was taking place in the Temple that day. They went about their business completely unaware that the Messiah was among them.

But in the midst of all the commotion, Simeon and Anna picked out the arrival of the Savior. They had waited, prayed, hoped, and prepared themselves for that day. They had studied the Scriptures, and sought to understand them as best they could... so they would know what to look for when the Messiah arrived. And when the day came — when the Messiah did arrive — they were ready.

We can learn from Simeon and Anna. They were intentional about how they prepared for the Messiah, and because of it they experienced the presence of God in a powerful way when they met the baby Jesus in the Temple. We too can be intentional about the way we prepare for worship, and because of it we will be much more likely to experience the presence of God when we are together with God’s people — whether it is a congregational worship service, a gathering of “two or three,” devotional time with our family, or devotional time on our own. By establishing some simple habits of preparation (see “Make a commitment to prepare for worship” in the objectives above), we can increase the likelihood that this week’s time of worship and devotion will guide us into God’s presence.

Study Section

1. Open with Prayer

Think about the goals in this section of the study. Pray that participants will be able to understand why worship can be such a rich experience in a camp setting. Pray (that we will see some of the roadblocks that we create which make it

hard for us to meet God in worship, and) that we will also discover some ways to make it more likely that we will experience the presence of God when we are at worship, or in quiet devotional times.

2. Warming Up

The campers have had two Bible studies together so far this week. They are beginning to know one another a bit better. Some cabin groups may really be gelling by this time of the week. Others may just be getting started. Regardless, it is helpful for us to take a little time as we begin to continue getting to know one another. Let each camper have a couple of minutes to answer questions #1-3, and then either question #4 or #5.

1. What is your name, and who makes up your family back home?
2. What is the best thing that has happened to you so far at camp this week?
3. What is the worst thing that has happened to you so far at camp this week?
4. What have you learned about the difference it can make to be part of a caring community? Or the difference it can make to have a strong prayer life?
5. What is the best worship service you have ever experienced? What made it so good? How did it change you?

3. Introduce the Bible Passage

Today we are going to study a passage that takes place very early in the life of Jesus. By tradition, he would have been 8 days old (see St. Luke 1:59 or Leviticus 12:1-5). It was customary for parents to bring their newborns into the temple for this ceremony. Let's take a look at the story.

Have someone read St. Luke 2:22-24.

Questions:

1. Why did Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the Temple?
2. What do you suppose they hoped was going to happen while they were there?

Have someone read St. Luke 2:25-26

Questions:

1. Who was Simeon, and why was he in the Temple that day?
2. What were his hopes for Israel?
3. What were his hopes for himself?

Have someone read St. Luke 2:27-35

1. What did Simeon do when he saw the baby Jesus?
2. Why was Simeon the first one to recognize that this baby was the Messiah?
3. What did he do with Jesus?
4. How did he describe the role Jesus would play in the life of God's people?

Have someone read St. Luke 2:36-37

Questions:

1. Who was Anna, and why was she in the Temple that day?
2. What was the purpose of her life?

Have someone read St. Luke 2:38

Questions:

1. What did Anna do when she saw the baby Jesus?
2. Who did Anna talk to about the baby Jesus?

4. Reflect on the Bible Passage

Think about how many people must have been in the Temple that day. The Temple was different from our modern day churches. It was massive. It was chaotic, with people doing many different things at the same time. There were certainly

hundreds of people milling around – worshipping, sacrificing, arguing, trading, studying the Bible, talking with one another... It was more like a mall than what we consider a church today

Out of the hundreds who were there, why do you think Simeon and Anna were the only two who recognized who Jesus was?

(They were expecting to see the Messiah – Simeon had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would. This caused them to be actively looking all the time – and when you are actively looking, it is much more likely that you will find what you are looking for. They also spent much time studying God’s word, and seeking God in prayer, so they became familiar with the mind of God, and were more likely to realize it when God began to do something.)

5. What does this mean for us?

Today we are working with the third letter of the word *Cairn* – i – which stands for inspiration. More specifically, we are considering how God meets us and moves us and inspires us during times of worship (with our congregation), or during times of devotion (by ourselves, or with our friends, or with our families).

We worship a lot here at Rainbow Trail, don’t we? Why is it that during worship in this place, it really seems like God is present with us? Why does this seem like special time with God?

(Provide time for them to answer – expect most of their answers to be from the first paragraph in the introduction on page 12 – answers that have to do with the character of worship during Rainbow Trail events.)

Some of that is true, of course. But there is another factor. Worship is special at Rainbow Trail, in part because of what you bring to the experience. Most of us come from Lutheran churches, and most Lutheran churches are liturgical churches. Does anyone know what the word “liturgy” means?

(They may provide answers that describe the structure of our worship services, or the “call and response” nature of much that we do, and those are good answers. Thank them for offering these responses. But the word “liturgy” literally means “the work of the people”. Liturgy is something we gather to do. Worship is something we gather to do. We don’t come to be entertained or inspired or fed – although that often happens. But that’s not why we worship. We worship in order to give ourselves to God. To do that well takes preparation – just as it takes preparation to do anything else well, like sports, or dance, or academics, or music...)

So if liturgy is the work of the people, and if people can prepare themselves to excel at what they are attempting to do, what do you think we usually do to get ourselves ready for worship here at Rainbow Trail? What is it about how we think or how we feel or how this week is put together that helps us to do a good job when we get together to worship?

(There are many ways that the campers might answer these questions. Try to guide them into some of the answers in third section of “Objectives for This Day of the Study.” – see above, page 12)

The focus of this week’s study is “taking it down from the mountain.” How many of you feel closer to God when you’re here than when you’re home? The truth is, you are just as close to God when you are at home. Part of the reason you feel closer to God here is that you expect to. Being close to God is what Rainbow Trail is all about, and when we come here, we expect to be close to God. But if we expect to be close to God back home, we can experience it there too. It just happens a bit more easily here – a bit more naturally.

I’d like to have you take out a piece of paper, and think about those suggestions you just offered – suggestions about how we can get ready for worship.

(Remind your campers of the suggestions they made. If they missed any from the “Make a commitment to prepare for worship” list on page 12, this would be a good time to add them to the list.)

Now write down on your paper one or two ways that you will prepare yourself for worship in the next year or two.

(Provide time for them to think about these suggestions, and decide which ones might work for them. If they are struggling with practical difficulties in doing them, talk with them, one-on-one or including the group. Explore together how they might be able to make it work.)

Remember: God is every bit as much present where you live as here at camp. You are more aware of God here because that is the primary focus of what we are all about when we are here. By being more intentional about drawing near to God at home, you can discover how God is near to you there too.

6. Closing Prayer

Thank God for promising to meet us in our times of worship. Thank God for the way worship here at Rainbow Trail is able to inspire us. Ask God to help the group, as we try to train ourselves to be more aware of God's presence in worship back home. Be with those whom we'll invite to join us in exploring deeper meaning and purpose in worship. And be with us through the rest of this week, to strengthen us, to inspire us, and to transform us to be your faithful children.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

Discuss the roadblocks that keep us from entering fully into worship (see list, above, page 12).

Consider the following questions:

1. Why are we sometimes reluctant to let ourselves become involved?
2. What are the benefits and consequences of holding back?
3. How can we throw our hearts into worship, and invite others to join us in doing so?

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Have a treasure hunt where the whole group knows what the treasure looks like, but the other half of the group knows that the treasure is actually concealed in something (a backpack or a paper sack or a coffee can...). Talk about how much easier it is to find something when you actually know what you are looking for.

Invite your group to take notes during a camp worship service. What inspired them? What didn't touch them? How would these two lists change if the group was more or less certain that something remarkable was about to happen?

As you plan worship, be especially mindful of how the service begins and ends. What can you do at the beginning that might help the worshipper focus and be ready to be part of the service? (*some silence; a prayer for worshippers and worship leaders; a "call and response" call to worship that gets everybody involved right away...*) What can you do at the end of the service to increase the odds that worshippers will continue to reflect on the messages and experiences that were part of the service? (*send them with a question to discuss on the way back to camp; ask them to take a moment of silence and think about what they appreciated most about the service; have them sit down with a partner and share what their favorite song was, or what they remember for the message...*) These kinds of activities might help us be....?

G. OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Songs:

2. Father I Adore You
21. Let Us Break Bread Together
27. Step by Step
38. Create in Me a Clean Heart
61. Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying
66. In the Secret
71. Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord
82. Here I Am to Worship

More Love, More Power, More of You in My Heart (Michael W. Smith)

Uyai Mose (Alexander Gondo)

Come Let Us Eat (Billema Kwillia) – can sing as call and response – no printed words needed

Texts:

- 2 Samuel 6:12-15 – David dancing for joy
- Exodus 14:30-15:21 Israel after the Exodus singing and dancing
- St. Luke 2:41-52 – Jesus reading scripture as a child
- 1 Kings 19:9-21 – Elijah hears the voice of God in a "sound of sheer silence"
- St. Matthew 25:1-14 – Being awake / alert / lamps lit / bridesmaids
- St. Luke 24:13-35 – Jesus on the road to Emmaus

- Acts 9:1-9 Paul – didn't see Christ until he was struck blind
- St. John 21:1-14 – On the beach – didn't recognize him fishing
- St. John 20:1-18 – Mary in the garden – “Are you the gardener?”
- St. Luke 24:36-49 – “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”
- St. John 1:43-51 – Can anything good come out of Nazareth? (Who could see something good from Nazareth?)
- St. Luke 7:1-10 – The Centurion believed Jesus could heal his slave, and expected it.

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS * Ideas to try with Junior Age (4-6 grade)

Talk with them about their teams (soccer, swimming, baseball...). The teams are much more likely to do better when they prepare. So too, we are much more likely to experience God when we prepare ourselves for worship and devotion.

Ask them why they worship – for most of them it probably is because their parents decide that they will. Talk about the possibility that they may just now be getting to the age where they can find reasons of their own to worship. Do they experience God at camp? Do they like what that is like? Can they begin to be more aware of God during worship? More aware of an opportunity to draw near to God, and to honor God with the way they worship?

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS * Ideas to try with Sr High (9-12 grade)

Discuss the dangers of any structured attempt to be involved with faith formation. (*We start to think that this is what saves us – or that God can only come to us based on our own personal effort.*) Talk about the importance of remembering that spiritual formation (and especially worship) is grounded in God's grace. We discipline ourselves to decrease our own natural resistance to the grace of God that comes freely and lovingly.

Give them a chance to talk about their own circle of friends. Are they spending time with people who make it more or less likely that they'll be aware of God's presence in their lives? It may be generous to spend time with non-believers, in hopes of being an influence on them. But it is also important to have circles of faithful friends, who can encourage us in our efforts to follow the cairns of faith in our lives.

Talk about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. What do they believe happens when the church gathers around bread and wine? How are those elements the real presence of Christ for us? Do they know anyone who has talked about being especially moved while receiving Holy Communion? Have they received it in a place or situation that heightened its impact on them (at someone's death-bed, on a retreat, at camp, on a camping trip...)? How can these more extraordinary experiences of the Eucharist inform and deepen our regular participation in weekly Eucharist?

Read the first chapter of St. John and talk about the three-fold nature of God's word (the written word, the proclaimed word, the Word Made Flesh). How do we experience the word in worship? When we truly believe that God is present in the lessons, the sermon, the presence of Christ in our midst – can that be as moving as some of the experiences we have in a camp setting?

J. STAFF STUDY

Today's letter is i – and the entire camp is focused on “inspiration” – or how God touches and inspires us through worship. As a staff, perhaps we could stretch today's message by focusing on the word illumination. Consider the standard format for worship in the liturgical tradition. How does the progression of that service illumine what it means to live as a follower of Jesus Christ? One way to think of the liturgical service is to consider that what we do when we are together for an hour, is how we live throughout the rest of the week. Perhaps you could take two of these aspects of the service each week throughout the summer on Wednesday, and spend some time in personal reflection, asking what this can teach us about the life of faith.

GATHERING

Confessing & Forgiveness	week #1	we begin the service like we begin every day: being renewed by God's gift of forgiveness – for what do I need forgiveness today?
Hymn	week #1	singing a hymn together unites us (we are all breathing and speaking simultaneously) – what can I do to work unity in the community where I find myself today?

Kyrie & Hymn of Praise	week #2	we cry “Lord have mercy” and “Praise be to you” – how does a longing for God’s mercy influence the way we live, and what does it mean to live in a way that gives praise to God?
Greeting	week #2	we wish for each other to experience grace, love and the Spirit of God – how does it change how I view my neighbor, if that is what I wish for him or her?
Salutation / Prayer of the Day	week #3	we ask that God might be with each of us, and then pray together in concert with the day’s theme – what unites the hearts and minds of my community? What purpose or dreams do we share?
WORD		
Readings	week #3	God promises to meet us in the word – what have I learned as I turn to God’s word at the beginning of this new day?
Sermon	week #4	it is important to reflect on God’s word, and connect it with daily living – what connections have I made between this morning’s devotional reading and the situations and experiences I face today?
Hymn of the Day	week #4	the congregation responds to the proclamation of the word in song – as I consider what God has taught me, what makes my heart sing today?
Creed	week #5	we speak out loud our common beliefs – what do I believe about God? about myself? about my calling as a Christian? How do I communicate that to others?
Prayers of Intercession	week #5	God invites us to lift one another up in prayer – who do I commend to God’s care today? What are my hopes for them?
Peace	week #6	gathered, united, inspired... all of this culminates in the peace of God that we share – to whom can I extend God’s peace today? Whose heart is troubled, and in need of God’s touch?
MEAL		
Offering	week #6	God initiates a relationship with us by forgiving us, inspiring us, and granting us peace; we respond by giving our best to support God’s work – what will I do today, to further God’s purposes? How will I give of myself?
Eucharistic Prayer	week #7	we pray over the meal, and remember that Christ promises to be truly present to us through it – where do I sense the presence of Christ in my life today?
Lord’s Prayer	week #7	Jesus teaches us how to pray – can I model my personal prayer life after the themes I find in this prayer from Jesus? What would that add to my prayers?
Communion	week #8	the real presence of Jesus is distributed in bread and wine – what does it mean for me to live with my hands open to what God will provide (and to what I will share)?
SENDING		
Blessing	week #8	in worship we ask for God’s blessing before and after we eat – how has God fed me today? Let us remember to ask God’s blessing on all that we have received, that it might work its purpose out in us.
Song	week #9	Simeon (from today’s study) sang, “Lord, now you let your servant go in peace. Your word has been fulfilled.” – what can I do to stay focused on the peace I receive from God each day, and how can that change the way that I experience life?
Dismissal	week #10	in worship we are fed and strengthened, but not for personal gain; at last we are sent into the world: Go in peace. Serve the Lord! – how will I serve God today?

K. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: St. Luke 2:22-40

Reflection:

Today we continued our focus on the “cairns of faith.” Rock Cairns guide our way on a hike through mountainous terrain. So too, these “cairns of faith” guide our way into the presence of God. One such guide is worship and devotion.

Kids love worship at camp. That is in part because of its character. But it is also in part because of the attitude that they bring to worship. They come, expecting their hearts to be touched by the presence of God, and because of that it is much more likely that God will succeed in doing just that.

There are many ways that we can prepare ourselves to be more open to the presence of God in worship, and in times of family or personal devotion.

- Commit to family devotional time every day, and model an eagerness as you look forward to this time together.
- Join the team that plans and conducts worship in your church.
- Study and become familiar with the themes of the seasons and the texts for the day.
- Talk with friends after worship about what you learned, what you experienced, how you grew.
- Make a habit of preparing physically for worship (don't stay out late the night before, rise early enough that you are not rushed before church, commit to treating family members with love and respect before worship, so that everybody arrives at church [or at devotion time] ready to spend time with God).
- Show up early enough so that you can get your head in the game, and be ready to join in right away.
- Pray ahead of time that God might inspire you through times of worship or devotion.

As we engage in these practices, we prepare our hearts and minds to meet God in worship and devotion, and are much more likely to have this happen.

Activity:

As a family, think about these suggestions, and decide on one or two that you can adopt as a family. Make a poster that can remind you of this commitment, and hang it near the door you use to go out to your car on the way to worship.

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, help us to remember that you have promised to be with us whenever two or more gather in your name. Give us the commitment to prepare well for times of worship and devotion, and the faith to experience you in the midst of your gathered people. We pray this in the name of the Crucified and Risen One, who continues to live among us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DAY FOUR: “Remember THE story and read scripture daily”

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

The Theme for this study is: **Remember THE story and read scripture daily**

THE POWER OF STORIES

Stories are fun (Harry Potter) entertaining (Twilight) educational (Family History) and instructional (Aesop's Fables). Stories are all around us not just in books but also in movies, in the news, and even at the dinner table! “Remember that one time...” “Did I ever tell you about the time...” “The funniest thing happened yesterday...”

Stories are very powerful. They uncover truths about humanity and help us to reflect on love and life and truth. Characters give us a glimpse into our own souls and help us to reflect on our actions and behaviors. Personal stories we tell communicate joy, struggle, success and humor! This summer you will hear thousands of stories from your campers. Each story is a brief glimpse into the life of your camper and possibly a sneak peek at what God is up to in their lives. Your stories can be powerful too! You have the opportunity to testify to the amazing thing that God has done and continues to do in your life. Your stories will also provide your campers with an insight into you and how you choose to live out your faith. Listen carefully to the stories they tell because they are telling God's story! And be bold and faithful in the stories you tell, you too are telling God's story!

THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE

Scripture is a special kind of story. This story has the power to inspire, encourage, teach, correct and amaze us. Scripture is OUR story. It tells us about where we've been and how we got here. Scripture can help us discover purpose, meaning and vocation. Scripture can help us find our way when we are lost and can reconnect us to the promise and presence of God (kind of like a CAIRN!)

MY STORY, OUR STORY AND GOD'S STORY

My story, your story, our story and God's story are all woven together. Scripture is an accounting of God's story unfolding in the lives of His people and in the setting of His creation. It is a story of creation, brokenness, healing, unconditional love, grace, salvation and redemption through the life and death of Jesus on the cross. Morning watch will invite kids to consider their own story, “MY STORY”, and how God is telling His story through their story. Bible Study will be an opportunity to discuss “OUR STORY”- the story of the amazing things God is doing in and through your village and your Bible study group. Finally we will look at THE story of God's love and salvation through Christ and discover that we play a leading role in this amazing story.

PASSING ON THE FAITH THROUGH STORIES

Today, God continues to write the story in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. We know that faith is formed through personal trusted relationships through the power of the Holy Spirit. While the words on the pages of scripture are important, they come to life and take on flesh and blood when the good news is lived out by our family, friends or members of our community (even our camp counselors) It's through these relationships (the CAIRN of community) that the age old story, THE story is passed on from generation to generation.

MAKING SCRIPTURE READING PART OF MY EVERY DAY LIFE

Children, youth and even many adults will read their Bible only when they are at church, camp, Sunday school or Bible study. And even then the scripture passages will appear on power point or printed in a bulletin so that the Bible, the greatest book on earth, never even has to be opened. The physical, daily discipline of opening our Bible on our own and reading scripture is so important and yet so neglected. This study will help youth consider what they can do to make an encounter with scripture a daily discipline.

RATTY TATTERED BIBLE- THE NEW CAMP ACCESSORY!

Please consider modeling this Cairn for your kids by carrying your Bible with you this summer. Make it one of those high fashioned camp accessories like the staff fleece, a bandana or a cowboy hat. Let your kids see you with your Bible. Let them “catch” you reading it in the morning or at night before bed. Use it when you plan VOD take it with you to worship and DEFINITELY use it every day at Bible study. Included in this study is a method for teaching your youth how to do a very simple Bible study on their own. Try it out with them at the

beginning of the week or work it into one of your cabin devos. You will be giving you campers just one more useful tool to take down the mountain with them on Friday.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

In today's Bible study youth will:

1. Share their story and identify God as the author and a main character in their story.
2. Tell "our" story and identify God as the author and a main character in our story.
3. Hear the good news of God's story in the story of Bible heroes and Jesus death on the cross.
4. Discover how these three stories are woven together.
5. Identify scripture as a CAIRN that they can TAKE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN and turn to for guidance when they leave camp.

If your youth get nothing else out of this study today, make sure they understand this:

- **DAILY SCRIPTURE READING IS A CAIRN THAT CAN HELP US TO EXPERIENCE THE PROMISE AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD. REMEMBER THE STORY AND READ SCRIPTURE DAILY!**

C. MORNING WATCH

Letter from alumni staff member that details how he/she is living out the story of scripture or has developed a habit of daily reading/encountering scripture. Maybe someone who has a story that is intertwined- they were once a camper then a counselor then a pastor or caring adult at a church, etc. That way their story is connected to the story of each camper and each counselor who will hear their letters.

Notes for Morning Watch Alumni Staff member:

Please talk about how your story is connected to scripture and how your story is connected to the kids/adults who will be hearing your story.

It would be great if you could focus specifically on how you have continued to be "in the scriptures" after having left camp as a camper/counselor.

MY STORY- Day 4

During Morning Watch this week you have heard faith stories from people who have taken what they learned at Rainbow Trail "down the mountain" and incorporated it into their life. Today it is your turn to tell your story! You will have an opportunity to share your story as part of Bible study today if you want to. What you write in your Morning Watch book does not have to be shared. That is totally up to you!

What should I include in MY STORY?

The people, moments, memories or things that make you happy

The people, moments, memories or things that bum you out

Major events in your life that have helped to make you the person you are today

When have you felt closest to God

When have you felt far away from God

How had God touched your life through another person

What times in your life were highs and what times in your life were lows

How do I tell MY STORY?

Draw a timeline

Draw a picture

Write a letter

Write a story

Make a list of memories

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Open with prayer

Lord please be present with us today in our Bible study.

Thank you for giving us these stories to help us grow closer to you and thank you for being a part of our story.

Open our hearts and minds to your Word and all that you have to share with us today.

Amen

Review your covenant

Take just a moment to pull out your covenant and remind the group that each person has made these promises to the group. It will be especially important today since you are asking people to open up and share their stories. Emphasize the need for everyone to respect each other and keep the stories shared in your Bible study confidential. What is said in Bible study stays in Bible study! You may also want to remind them that there are certain things that you can't keep confidential including knowledge that they have been harmed or have intention of harming themselves or someone else.

Check the A/C! All Comfortable?

Before you dive into the Bible study for today it is important to check the temperature and mood of your small group. Go around the circle and share:

1. Name (if you think the group still does not know one another)
2. Low for the day (Encourage each person to start with the low and move on to the high, this avoids ending their turn on a sad or sour note)
3. High for the day (Not everyone has to have a low but everyone should have a high. If they don't have a high ask them to share one thing they are looking forward to.)
4. What is your favorite book or story?

Explain today's theme

You can begin by asking if someone remembers the theme for today. You can remind them of VOD theme or the Morning Watch. Be sure they are able to articulate it clearly and if they can't then remind them that today's theme is: Remember THE story, and read scripture daily!

Remind the youth that the whole week we've been talking about CAIRNS that they can TAKE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN with them. Cairns are the things we can do when we leave Rainbow Trail to experience God's promises and presence. Remind them that things back home won't feel or look like RTALC but God can still be experienced in a meaningful way when we practice CAIRNS! C- community, A- access to God through prayer, I- inspiration in worship and TODAY is R- Remember the story through scripture!

MY STORY

Introduce MY STORY by asking everyone this question:

"If your life was made into a book, what would you choose as the title?"

Each youth will have taken time to reflect on their own story during Morning Watch. Invite each person in the group to share a little bit about their story and how God has been a main character in their story.

"Everyone had time to think about the story of your life during Morning Watch. I would love to hear your stories! Would anyone like to share?"

As each person shares make a mental note (or a written note) about how they talk about God in their story. If you don't hear them specifically mention God in their story, ask them

"How do you think God played a role in that event or story?" OR "What do you suppose God thought about what happened?"

Give the youth a chance to work up the courage or reflect on the words they need to share. Don't rush them. This may be a tough conversation to get started. You can share your own story if the group is having a hard time getting started but give them as much time and space as they need and be comfortable with some dead air time! They might open up if they have the time and space but they definitely won't open up as long as you are talking! If you do share, make sure your own story is very short to allow time for others to share. Remember you want this to be a safe opportunity for them to explore their own story! Youth may or may not be interested in sharing their story with the group. Be sure to respect those who are not comfortable sharing. If you get stuck, refer to E Additional Study Ideas.

Once you feel everyone has had a chance to share as they are comfortable, take a moment to pause. Reflect what you've heard back to the group by saying,

"It sounds like God has been a main character in your stories. I heard you talking about..." (then list back to them the ways they have named God working in their story)

God has always been a part of your story and He will always be a part of your story. Some of you may feel closer to God when you are at camp than when you are at home. One of the ways you can take camp down the mountain with you is to REMEMBER THAT GOD IS A HUGE PART OF YOUR STORY!

OUR STORY

Introduce OUR STORY by asking the same fun question:

"If someone wrote a book about our Village and our week at camp, what would the title be?" AND/OR "If it were made into a movie, what songs would be on our soundtrack?"

Remind the youth that each person in your Bible study has their own story but together you are living out OUR STORY.

Ask the group,

"We have a pretty amazing story! Would someone be willing to tell our story in your best movie trailer announcer's voice? Don't forget to mention how God has been active in our lives this week!"

Use this time of story telling to celebrate your community/village and to retell those "identity" stories (The moments when you shared a joy or a struggle, or the crazy/funny moments of the week.) THE KEY IS TO MAKE SURE THAT EACH PERSON IN YOUR BIBLE STUDY IS INCLUDED IN THE TELLING. Whether they help tell the story or not, each person's role in the Bible study or the group should be acknowledged in a positive light. This is a GREAT way to affirm your campers, especially those who may not feel included or uplifted by the community. For example:

"Don't forget the time that we were at dinner and David scraped EVERYONE'S plate" OR "Kelly was the one who always kept us on time! Every time the bell rang she helped us get to where we needed to be!"

Enjoy the telling of OUR STORY but be sure to keep things moving! Once OUR STORY has been told, pause to reflect specifically on the role that God has played in your week. This is the perfect time for YOU to point out the great God moments of the week; especially those that may have gone relatively unnoticed or unnamed.

"We have had such a great week! Have you noticed all the incredible ways God has been a part of OUR STORY? I really loved it when..."

We each have our own story and now we see that we are part of another story- OUR STORY. Imagine for a moment what it would have been like this week if one person in our group had not come to camp? Our whole experience would have been different. It would not have been the same! Each person plays a valuable role in OUR STORY. Think of ALL the people who have played an important role in your personal story. Now think of ALL the other stories that you have played a role in! There is the story of your family, the story of your school, your neighborhood, your friends- the list goes on and on. It is important to think about the role you play in other people's stories!

Ask this transition question:

“When did OUR STORY begin?” *Did it begin on Sunday when we all arrived at camp? Did it begin when each person decided to go to camp and sent in their registration forms? Or did it begin back when each of us was baptized? Maybe it started back even further, like in John 1? Or how about Genesis 1?*

Ask everyone to open up their Bibles to John 1:1-3. Have someone read it aloud.

“Who is the WORD?” *The WORD is Jesus! (Easy Sunday School answer!)*

“Why do you think John uses the word WORD?” *It is good to recognize that God’s story began way before Jesus was born. Up until now all of the stories in the Bible are about God and His people. Now in John, God is a person! The story is no longer about God, the story IS God! Jesus is the Word in flesh. The Greek word for WORD is logos which means understanding. Jesus is the WORD that helps us to understand God and God’s love for His people.*

A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus first used the term Logos around 600 BC to designate the divine reason or plan which coordinates a changing universe. This word was well suited to John’s purpose in John 1. John wanted to connect Christ to the story of Genesis 1 in which God speaks (logos/WORD) all of creation into being. By using the same word John is emphasizing the connection between the Christ of the new testament to the God of the old testament. They are one in the same. They share the same story!

“Verse 3 tells us that all things came into being through him. What does that mean for our stories?” *That means that God is part of all of our stories. God is the author of the story. It also means that each of our stories is connected to God’s story and the story of Jesus*

GOD’S STORY

Read Hebrews 11:1-39

This is a HUGE passage but it highlights the faithfulness of God’s people and God’s promises and presence in the lives of the faithful. It might work best to assign each person in the group a “hero” and their verses. Then they can read just the verses they have been assigned and share with the group who their hero is and why they are a faith hero. Some of these stories your youth may be familiar with and some you may need to help explain. Below is a VERY SIMPLE cheat sheet. It may be in your best interest to become familiar with the stories you do not already know before campers arrive Week 1.

Cheat Sheet (This cheat sheet does not include Isaac, Jacob and Esau in verses 20 and 21. If you have more than 5 youth in your group you can also use those verses)

You read the opening in Hebrews 11:1-2

Verse 4, Abel- brought a pleasing offering to God.

Verse 5 and 6, Enoch- walked with God.

Verse 7, Noah- obeyed God and respected His warnings.

Verse 8-12 and 17-19, Abraham- also obeyed God and trusted Him completely by leaving his home, and offering his son Isaac for sacrifice.

Verse 23-28, Moses- denied the pleasures of an easy life as Pharaoh’s son and instead chose to live with God’s people in slavery. He left Egypt and kept the Passover in spite of serious dangers.

Verse 29, Israelites- passed through the Red Sea

The passage says the list of Bible faith heroes goes on and on and includes Rahab, Gideon, Samson, Barak, Jephthah, David and Samuel.

Ask your youth,

“How are the stories of these Bible heroes similar to your story?” *God is a part of each of their stories and many of their stories are overlapping or intertwined. They were faithful but they experienced challenges.*

“The ultimate hero of the Bible is Jesus! And the best story in the Bible is the GOOD NEWS of the New Testament! The story of Jesus, his life, and his death on the cross. “

Invite your youth to open their Bibles to Acts 10:38-43. Have a few people volunteer to read it out loud. Someone can read verses 38-40 and someone else can read 41-43.

“This is the story of Jesus life, death and resurrection! This is the best and most important part of God’s story. It is the Good News! Most people think the story ends with Jesus ascension back in to heaven but it is really only the beginning! The story continues through the story of our lives as we live out our faith in Jesus each and every day!”

When we REMEMBER THE STORY we remember what God did, what he is doing and what he promises to do for us! When we REMEMBER THE STORY by reading scripture we reconnect ourselves with God, the story of his people, the story of our ancestors, even our story that we have lived this week.

Ask everyone to turn to Joshua 3:14-4:7

Tell the youth that this is a story a miraculous river crossing. They may have heard of the crossing of the Red Sea but this is the Crossing of the Jordan river. Joshua and the Israelites had been waiting for a long time to cross the river and finally the time had come. The river was flooded and impossible to cross but God told Joshua the time had come and so they did as God commanded them.

Have someone read the passage out loud.

“Why do you think God commanded them to set up a rock monument?” *God wanted the occasion remembered. There was no way to take a picture of the Israelites with Joshua on the banks of the Jordan and no video blog of the crossing. The monument was the preservation of a story of God’s great love and faithfulness to the people.*

“Why would God want the children to ask questions about the rocks?” *This is the primary way that the crossing of the Jordan would be remembered by generations to come. It is the responsibility of the elders to pass on the stories of faith to the younger generations and just in case they forgot, God knew that children would be curious enough to ask questions about a large monument made out of rocks!*

“What kinds of ‘monuments’ do we have today that stand as reminders of the promises God has made or the amazing things God has done for us?” *The cross is a constant reminder of God’s saving grace through Jesus death on the cross. The rainbow in the sky is a constant reminder that God will never again flood the earth. This week we are collecting rocks and building Cairns.*

“How will we remember God’s promises and the amazing things He has done for us when we leave Rainbow Trail and go back down the mountain?” *You will most likely get answers like my new sweatshirt, photographs, and whatever trinkets they may have collected during the week or made at arts and crafts or wood carving. It is true*

It is interesting to note here that the Israelites had what we might call an “issue” with worshipping idols. They made idols and God rebuked them. They would destroy their idols but after awhile they would make more idols and God would have to rebuke them again. It was a terrible back and forth. Is it possible that God recognized that the people needed a physical reminder of the good and gracious God that was leading them?

As you talk with your youth be sure to emphasize the Cairns as physical reminders of the promises and presence of God. It is a mistake to turn our worship and praise to a monument of rocks or to prayer or scripture or community! While all of these things are good and helpful in drawing us closer to the promises and presence of God they are NOT God.

Have everyone turn to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Ask someone to read it outloud.

“When are you NOT supposed to talk about God’s commandments?” This is a trick question of course because the verse says when you lie down and when you get up, when you are at home and when you aren’t at home. That’s pretty much all the time, isn’t it?

“This verse is pretty intense when it talks about what we’re supposed to do with the scriptures. Where are we supposed to wear them? And where are we supposed to write them?”

This passage is known as the Shema. These may be the most quoted verses in the whole Bible! Orthodox Jews recite these verses every morning and every night. They have great respect for the commandments and laws that God has given us. While we may not quote the Shema every day. It is important that Christians spend time with scripture every day.

“How could you make scripture a part of your every day life? Wearing your favorite verse on your forehead could cause some funny looks at school and writing your favorite verse on your bedroom door might cause a major problem with your parents, but what are some of the ways that you can make scripture part of your every day life?”

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

Telling MY STORY

1. If no one shares, ask each person to share their High/Low for the whole year then assist them in determining how God was present in the High and the Low
2. If no one wants to share, have small slips of paper with story starters written on them. Have each person draw a slip of paper and respond. (Ideas: The best thing that happened to me at school this year. The coolest thing I ever did. The person who has had the greatest influence on my faith. Etc)

Telling OUR STORY

1. If your group seems reluctant, try having each person tell the story of one day starting with Sunday.
2. Try an interview! You (or maybe the clown of your group) can be the reporter and ask each person in the group questions like: “Tell me exactly what happened when you first met your village.” “There are reports that God has been spotted all over Rainbow Trail this week, tell me have you seen Him?” “I understand that there is a very funny story about the hike on Tuesday, would you share that with our audience?”

Joshua Passage

1. Go to the creek and role play the crossing of the Jordan. You (or someone else in the group who is a strong reader) should read through the story pausing after specific actions in the story to allow the actors to do the action and possibly include some made up lines. This works well if you or the youth are willing to be goofy and have some fun with it.
2. Lead your group on a cairn scavenger hunt or tour. (I AM on the mall represents God’s presence at camp, cross on the ballfield or anywhere for that matter serves as a reminder of God’s gift of grace, the only hope for world peace Vietnam memorial, go to the creek for a

baptismal remembrance) This will take a long time so it may be best to start your group off meeting at one of the Cairns and then choosing just one or two others to visit. This is also probably a good one for a hyper active group that doesn't do well sitting still.

Hebrews Passage

1. Assign each youth one of the Biblical heroes from the Hebrews passage and invite them to write a 4-line rap or poem about one of the Biblical heroes and why they are a faithful person. They could also include 2 more lines about how they too (they meaning the camper writing the rap) is a faithful person.

Deuteronomy Passage

1. Make headbands for your Bible study with the Shema. Have each person write the verses from Deuteronomy on a note card and use bandanas, ribbon or yarn to tie the Shema to your forehead or wrap it around your arm. You could also punch a hole in the card and slide the ribbon through the hole to fasten the shema like a gift tag. It might look ridiculous but at camp, ridiculous and embarrassing can be a lot of fun.

2. Decorate your cabin with the Shema. Write the Shema on notecards and tape it to the porch or the door frame. Or surprise the office and or the kitchen with Shemas! (Maybe if they are tipped off the kitchen will have some cookies waiting for you?!?!)

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Ask youth to bring their Bibles to a meal and use scripture as opening and closing graces.

Dress counselors like super heroes of faith

Tie Shemas on the dooposts of every building or structure that campers might enter- showerhouse, pavilion, etc. And when campers enter or exit have them kiss it or touch it with their hands to remember the commandments.

Fortune cookies with Bible verses inside or verses taped to toothpicks and put in a rice krispy treats.

Ring the bell at random times during the day to have people stop and read their Bible (the Shema or something else you choose)

Use the camera to go around and tape cabins or villages reciting a favorite Bible verse from memory and play it at all camp.

Video tape people around camp reading their Bible in funny ways and funny places and play it at all camp.

Tape scripture under random peoples plates or chairs at meal time and have them check before or after the meal and read it to their table.

Sneak Bible verses into Norman or Normas hands and have campers check during the day to see what Norma and Norman are reading.

Read familiar stories about Bible heroes and replace the names with camp counselor names

Take pictures of each camper (or maybe each cabin) on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and make faith hero book marks for their Bibles using their photos. Hand out at All Camp.

Worship ideas:

Have kids talk about the role God is playing in their story.

Ask everyone to bring the Bible with them to worship and look up the scripture verses with you. Maybe even have them read them aloud together.

Practice the scripture reading method Vasteras when you read the lessons- instead of writing an exclamation point, have them say aha! Or instead of writing a question mark have them say HUH? Then have another youth or adult come on scene to discuss their “marks”

Sing Thy Word and play a guitar interlude while several kids from the village recite a Bible verse that encourages them when they are down.

Themes for the day:

The Greatest Story Ever Told

Super Heroes of the Bible

The Never Ending Story

Connect the Dots (we are all connected as part of God’s story)

All Camp Activities:

Story telling

Battle of the Bible heroes (think- non violent WWF smackdown)

Bible Story Melo Drama skits

Memory game (using famous Bible verses)

Bible story mix up (tell the most well known stories but use the ending of a different well known story)

Make Bible bookmarks

Practice Vasteras in small groups

Shema scavenger hunt

G. OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

- I Love To Tell The Story (LBW 390) ***VOD could make up a new additional verse!***
- History Maker #69 (Being a part of God’s Story in the world)
- Rainbow Trail Theme Song #18 (helps tell the campers story in song!)
- I Love You x 12 #75 (MY STORY, OUR STORY and GOD’S STORY)
- Borning Cry #34 (MY STORY and GOD’S STORY)
- Thy Word #6 (Scripture)
- Psalm 27, # 54, Psalm 100 #87, Psalm 121 #63, Psalm 25 #80, (Read scripture then sing the song)
- Just a Closer Walk With Thee (corny, but fun if you do it right and give it a RTLC face lift and a bit of a New Orleans Jazz kick!!!)
- Romans 16:19 (Read scripture then sing the song)

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS * Ideas to try with Junior Age (4-6 grade)

Create a story book for each camper to take home that has two 8 ½ x 11 pages folded in half and tied with yard or ribbon or stapled. Let them make a story book cover with some decorative paper or a picture maybe during arts and crafts or free time but during Bible study try to focus on the story in the book. On two pages side by side, have the children draw a picture or a photo snapshot of the story and the opposite page have them write a few sentences about the story. Do this three times first two pages are MY STORY, next two are OUR STORY and the last two are GOD’S STORY. Don’t worry about getting in the whole story. Just work on getting one brief story for MY STORY, one favorite from OUR STORY and the basic story of a Bible hero and/or Jesus on GOD’S STORY. It will be helpful if

you can make sure that they include themselves and God in all three stories. This will help them visually understand the connection between all three stories.

Use only the Hebrews and Acts scripture to keep things simple. Lift up the Bible faith heroes and the story of Jesus and what Jesus did for us.

OR try using any of the interactive games in section E.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

It is very empowering to understand and be able to articulate your faith story as a senior high student. Encourage your senior high group to share their story as much as possible and be prepared to listen deeply.

You may also want to spend some time talking about how they want their story to go over the next few years of high school or even in to college.

What role do they want to God to play?

How can they be intentional about practicing the CAIRNS they have learned about this week?

If we assume God is the author of our story and is a main character of our story then it is important to ask, how much of our story is going to be about Him and what He is doing in our life versus how much is going to be about me and what I accomplish on my own?

Think of it in terms of story lines- The Hills, LC, Audrina and Whitney versus Heidi and Spencer. Or think Office, Jim and Pam versus Ryan and Kelly. You choose the show, every show has story lines some are major and some are minor.

What does it look like to let God be the major story line in my life?

J. STAFF STUDY New addition to the Bible study – something different for them to Ponder

Before stories could be recorded on paper and in books, or scrolls as in Biblical times, faith stories were passed on from generation to generation by oral tradition- storytelling. The stories were told again and again so they could be memorized and retold when the elders passed away. Today books or youtube or blogs or podcasts are more commonly used to pass on stories but the sharing of stories and the telling of stories is still an important tradition, especially for Christians!

The Bible, staff witness, your personal journaling, the stories your campers share with you- These are the stories of the faithful. The stories recapped in Hebrews span many life times and the entire timeline of the Bible! And when the Biblical history ends, the story of the faithful continues throughout the next several thousand years through the lives of our ancestors which was passed on to our grandparents which is passed on to our parents which is passed on to us and is now lived out in your life and is TODAY being passed on in word and deed to your campers.

Read 2 Timothy 1:5

This is a very short, seemingly meaningless verse but take a closer look and you'll see a very profound observation that Paul is making. In this passage, Timothy's faith has been passed down from his grandma Lois to her daughter Eunice (who is Timothy's mom) to Timothy. The story telling lineage of faith is key to the survival of faith.

Who is responsible for passing faith on to you? Who are your faith heroes?

By what means was faith passed on to you? Stories, role modeling, teaching?

Who are you now passing faith on to? And how are you doing that?

Simply by being a member of the RTLC staff you are passing faith on. The question is are you doing that intentionally and carefully? The stories you tell and the things you teach in Bible study are powerful but more powerful than that is the way you treat your campers, the jokes you make, the way you make them feel and the sincerity with which you love them.

What can you do this week to be more intentional about passing faith on to your campers?

The summer flies by and before you know it you are in the middle of Week 10 with just a few days left at camp.

What will you be taking down the mountain with you after this summer?

When the community of camp is gone along with the built in daily rituals of prayer, worship and devotion, how will you sustain your faith?

What CAIRNS will be the hardest for you to practice? Which will be the easiest?

What can you do NOW to help set yourself up for success after you leave?

Specifically in regards to reading scripture daily- what daily routine or habit can you build into life after camp to sustain that practice?

K. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

The Theme for this study is: **Remember THE story and read scripture daily**

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Today, God continues to write the story in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. We know that faith is formed through personal trusted relationships through the power of the Holy Spirit. While the words on the pages of scripture are important, they come to life and take on flesh and blood when the good news is lived out by our family, friends or members of our community. It's through these relationships (the CAIRN of community) that the age old story, THE story is passed on from generation to generation.

MAKING SCRIPTURE READING PART OF MY EVERY DAY LIFE

Children, youth and even many adults will read their Bible only when they are at church, camp, Sunday school or Bible study. And even then the scripture passages will appear on power point or printed in a bulletin so that the Bible, the greatest book on earth, never even has to be opened. The physical, daily discipline of opening our Bible on our own and reading scripture is so important and yet so neglected. This study will help youth consider what they can do to make an encounter with scripture a daily discipline.

Parents, you are invited to read the following scripture from today's Bible study: Hebrews 11: 1-39, Acts 10:38-43, Joshua 3:14-4:7, Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

MY STORY- Day 4

During Morning Watch this week your child has heard faith stories from people who have taken what they learned at Rainbow Trail "down the mountain" and incorporated it into their life. Today it will be there to tell their own story! Take a few moments to outline your own faith story. It could be a meaningful experience to share your story with your child when they return to camp and have them share their story with you too!

What should I include in MY STORY?

The people, moments, memories or things that make you happy

The people, moments, memories or things that bum you out

Major events in your life that have helped to make you the person you are today

When have you felt closest to God

When have you felt far away from God

How had God touched your life through another person

What times in your life were highs and what times in your life were lows

How do I tell MY STORY?

Draw a timeline

Draw a picture

Write a letter

Write a story

Make a list of memories

How is your story intertwined with the story of your family, your child's story and God's story?

What can you and your family do to spend time with scripture, in God's story, every day?

Family Devotional to be done when child returns home from camp

The Four Keys for family faith formation are Caring Conversation, Devotion, Ritual and Tradition and Service. These four keys have been identified by the Youth and Family Institute as the primary tools for faith formation in the home.

As your child returns home from camp, please consider using the Four Key parent devotionals after dinner time or before bed to continue the rich faith formation experience they had at camp in their own home!

Caring Conversation

If someone were to turn our family story into a reality TV show what would it be called?

What would our theme song be?

Tell your favorite story about our family and don't forget to mention what role God played in that story!

Devotion

Tell your favorite Bible story. (Not just what it is but actually tell the story!) OR Talk about your favorite Bible hero.

Follow up with these questions: Why is that your favorite story? How does that story connect to your own faith story?

What about that person makes them a hero? How does that person's story connect to your own faith story?

Ritual and Tradition

What rituals and traditions are unique to our family? (Tuesday night pizza night? Special greetings? Etc)

What new ritual or tradition could you start that would help you to record your family's faith story? (cooperative scrapbooking, a family journal, a video journal, a family blog?)

Service

Elderly Christians cherish the Bible and find great joy in their favorite Bible stories, but as their vision deteriorates they are no longer able to read their Bibles.

Consider giving up a night at the movies or ordering pizza one night and instead use your money to purchase a large print Bible or a Bible on tape/mp3 to donate to a nursing center or retirement home. Make sure the whole family can be part of purchasing and delivering the Bible!

As a family, organize a large print Bible or Bible on tape/mp3 drive at your church. Give everyone a job, making posters, loading the Bibles, contacting the retirement home, making an announcement at church, etc.

* This is a short, one column summary of your day that parents can share with their camper after their child gets home from camp. Please include:

- * Scripture
- * Reflection on the day's study from camp
- * A short activity for the family
- * Closing prayer

L. SCRIPTURE STUDY TECHNIQUE TO TEACH CAMPERS

An adaptation of The Vasteras Method taken from page #25 Way to Live, Christian Practices for Teens

This method was developed in Sweden for small groups, this method needs no leader and teens can do it on their own! Ideally, once they've read and marked their passage, the teen will connect in person, by phone or email with someone else who's marked the same passage in the same way to discuss their markings together.

- 1. First read the passage through beginning to end.**
- 2. Go back to the beginning of the passage with a pencil, pen or Bible marker and read through it again pausing and making the marks as you go.**
- 3. When a word or phrase challenges you, inspires you, puzzles you or gives you new insight. Use the following symbols to mark your Bible:**
 - Draw an ! exclamation point next to words or phrases that gives you new insight.**
 - Draw an ^ next to words or phrases that tell you about Good News that inspires you and lifts you UP.**
 - Draw a v next to words or phrases that point out a need you have or a challenge you need to face.**
 - Draw a ? by anything you don't understand.**

DAY 5 – “Now...Go!”

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

DAY'S THEME: * Now...Go!

Nothing could be grander than remaining on the mountain top forever. It is safe, spectacular, close to the heart of God, comfortable and secure. Living our faith and growing in our relationship with God and young Christian men and women is fairly easy here. We have been stirred and we have felt God's presence profoundly in worship, prayer, Bible study, caring conversations and even on the low or high ropes courses. All of us would like nothing better than to hang on to what we have lived and loved here at Rainbow Trail. But the reality of our lives is that we must head down the mountain.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION: * Now...Go! is the theme for the 5th and final full day at camp. Today's study will attempt to help staff assure campers that true joy is found, not in staying where it is safe and living an "it's all about me" life. Fullness and joy happen when we die to self and live for others.

By using the story of Jeremiah with references to Moses, the story of the Transfiguration and Matthew 25 where Jesus suggests that when we serve each other we are really serving him, this study will lift up stories of Biblical characters and real live people who have done ordinary and exceptional things with their lives.

The campers will be challenged to think of people they have known who have empowered them (been a cairn) to become more than they ever dreamed they could be. They will also be urged to see themselves as a cairn for others; helping friends and family find their way more intimately into the heart of God.

The final piece of the study will juxtapose wanting to stay and tent with God (the story of the transfiguration) and being sent down the mountain back into the world where faith and action on behalf of one's love for God isn't so easy and clear. To make this point, I've included a quote from C.S. Lewis' book The Silver Chair. *"But long before she had got anywhere near the edge, the voice behind her said, "Stand still. In a moment I will blow. But, first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs."*

We are reluctant to leave. Jeremiah was reluctant to serve God even suggesting that because he was only a boy, he could not do what God expected of him. But being a Cairn is about opening your hands to the world...hanging on to what you got here is making it about you. Opening yourself up and offering yourself as a cairn for others; a guide and a touchstone, brings you the greatest feeling of joy and love you could ever imagine and makes you a witness to the love of God that lives within you.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

* To help campers name and give thanks to God for people in their lives who have been guideposts (cairns) helping them stay on a positive and holy path.

* To encourage campers to be Cairns for others; assisting friends and family to know and see God's presence in varied aspects of life.

* To bless campers with the concept that takin' "it" down the mountain and simply keeping "it" to themselves is not being faithful to God's call upon their lives to serve and give themselves away for the sake of the Gospel.

*To encourage campers to remember that God is with them all along the way and that, even though they are leaving RTLC, the Spirit they have felt here can remain with them if they are willing to engage in the

disciplines they have benefited from here: worship, studying the Word, Praying and living in a community of forgiveness and grace.

*** STAFF GOAL TO ACCOMPLISH ON BEHALF OF THE CAMPERS:** Please help campers understand that even though what they feel here may be unique and they may think they won't feel the same down the mountain, they can and should expect God's presence in the cairns along the way, i.e. Christian friends, God's Holy Word, Access to God in prayer, and worship that truly praises God for all God's goodness. These things will keep them close to the heart of God and assist them in "feeling" some of what they have felt here.

C. MORNING WATCH

* Use a letter from a previous staff person that has "taken it down the mountain" and is now offering their life in service to God. This letter could come from someone who is a church professional or simply someone who understands "vocation" and is living out their baptismal calling in whatever they are doing.

SCRIPTURE FOR MORNING WATCH: *A Story about Jesus and Peter* [John 21:15-17]

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

1. What is the motivation for doing anything meaningful with your life?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says that Simon Peter should feed lambs, tend and feed sheep? Is he talking literally about Peter working on a Sheep Farm? How does feeding lambs, tending and feeding sheep relate to honoring what you have experienced here as you take it down the mountain? What might God hope for from you?
3. How could your love for God make you a powerful witness to the Gospel?

Peter was a cairn for so many people who didn't know Jesus Christ. He helped people find their way. Jesus called him to that ministry. Jesus has called you, too. Peter didn't know anything about telling the story of his faith. But he trusted God that God would lead him and give him Cairns along his faithful journey. Peter lost his life for the sake of the Gospel. He truly died to self to serve the living God.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

* The main biblical stories for this study are the stories of Jeremiah's Call and Commission, verses from Matthew 25 and the story of the Transfiguration in the Gospel of Mark.

*Open with prayer: Lord God, you have called us to a journey of which we cannot see the ending, on paths that we have never been on, and through challenges that are yet to come. Give us the faith to go with good courage, not knowing how it will be when we "take it down the mountain" but only that your hand is leading us and your love, through the cairns in our lives, supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*** READ JEREMIAH 1:4-9**

*** SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND ON JEREMIAH**

There are similarities and differences in the 'Calls' of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel). They are initiated by God who speaks and informs the future prophet what they will be doing, often with some form of assurance that God will be with them. There is occasionally some form of protest as in the case of Jeremiah.

- Jeremiah 1:4 ----- God speaks to Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 1:5 ----- God affirms his intention for Jeremiah to be a prophet was decreed before Jeremiah was even born. His appointment is to the nations.
- Jeremiah 1:6 ---- Jeremiah protests that he is too young
- Jeremiah 1:7 ---- God answers the protest by repeating the words of Jeremiah back to him with further commands telling him he will go and he will speak
- Jeremiah 1:8 ---- Words of assurance as to why Jeremiah cannot say I am only a youth.
- Jeremiah 1:9 ---- The symbolism of God touching Jeremiah's lips is a further reassurance that the words which Jeremiah preaches will be of God. In Isaiah 6:7 the hot coals were used to touch the lips of Isaiah symbolizing the cleansing of his lips and forgiveness of sins.

The clear message from God is emphasized by the use of the strong and frequent verbs in v.5 - I formed you, I knew you, I set you apart, I appointed you. Jeremiah had the reassurance all through his ministry that he was called by God to be a prophet. The verb 'to know' has a deeper meaning than simply cognitive knowing and includes relationship knowledge. It is used of close relationship between husband and wife, and between Yahweh and Israel. It is this word that Jeremiah uses back to God suggesting 'he doesn't know' how to speak. He stands in line with Moses who also protested he couldn't do what God asked. As in that case, so also with Jeremiah, God listens to no argument. Jeremiah is told he will do it and then given the reassurances that God will always be with him.

As we read through the Book of Jeremiah there are times when Jeremiah is very angry with God for appointing him a prophet because he suffers much hardship at the hands of his own people. So, it is today with people who are called to be like the Old Testament prophets, divinely commissioned for the task. Some would prefer not to suffer the ridicule and hurtful words when a message is not acceptable to the hearers.

We note that Jesus stood in line of the Old Testament Prophets, speaking out against the religious leaders of the day, challenging the laws which limit wholeness of life for people or injustices carried on in the name of religion. The reassurance for any who have suffered because they proclaim a message which is unacceptable to some or they proclaim a message that people just don't want to hear, is always the knowledge that God is with them and that the cairns of life will help to strengthen them to do the task God has called them to.

This story of Jeremiah's commissioning strongly invites us to see Jeremiah as one who takes up the mantle of Moses. The excuses of the prophet in 1:6-8 are the same as those of Moses, namely, a he considers himself one who lacks authority (cf. Exodus 4:1) and feels as though he is unable to speak well (cf. Exodus 4:10). God's response and provision in Jeremiah 1:9 echoes the promise of Deuteronomy 18:18 that God will send a "prophet like Moses" and "put my words in his mouth." God raises up a "prophet like Moses" for each generation to represent and communicate God's awesome, spine-tingling reality before the people. Jeremiah is certainly this kind of prophet. Jeremiah's new role as Moses entails his radical self involvement and self sacrifice.

*** QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION**

1. What does God mean when God speaks to Jeremiah in verse 5 and says: I formed you, I knew you, I set you apart and I appointed you? (God's relationship with Jeremiah began even before Jeremiah was born. God's love for Jeremiah was very deep and God knew what kind of prophet Jeremiah would be. God loves you that deeply as well. And God may also know something you don't know...that is...that you, too, are capable of extraordinary things for the kingdom of God.)
2. Jeremiah protests that he is too young. Look at the story of Moses' call by God in Exodus 3:1-12. How did Moses respond to God's request for him to engage in ministry?

You are young, too. Perhaps you have protested God's hope for your life to "take it down the mountain" and share the good news of God in Christ Jesus with the world. Remember and share a time when you knew God wanted you to serve in a special way, to do something even simple that would help another human being, and you chose not to...because you were afraid...because you didn't feel like it...because you were afraid others might make fun of you. Look again at verse 9...what does God do to Jeremiah and why?

3. I hope that God has spoken to you here at camp through the worship experiences, the time spent in prayer, the Stations of the Cross yesterday morning, and the caring conversations and through the new friendships you have made. What have you heard God saying to you through those meaningful events?
4. What can we learn from Jeremiah's story that will help us be strong and courageous as we leave the mountaintop of Rainbow Trail?
5. So, what is it you are supposed to take down the mountain? Where in the Word do we find a good example of what God would have us do? Any ideas of stories in the Bible that relate to how we are to serve God in the world?

ANOTHER STORY FROM THE WORD: MATTHEW 25:34B-40

COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 25:

“Jesus' vision makes it clear. The life of the Christian is a life given in love to the least of these. But that's good works, isn't it? Won't such good works for our neighbor destroy the "faith alone" foundation of our faith? (We Lutherans actually worry about this at times.) The answer to our question is "No." Our good works will not destroy our "faith alone" posture. We can do all the loving of the least and little ones we can possibly imagine and not be liable to belief in works-righteousness. We are called to do lots of good works. We are also called not to keep score. When we keep score of our deeds we want to credit our love of neighbor to our heavenly bank account. Loving our neighbor is not the problem. Keeping score of our good deeds of neighbor-love is the problem. The truly righteous don't keep score. Their left hand doesn't know what their right hand is doing. Such as these will stand before the Sovereign one day clothed in Christ's righteousness alone.”

Everything we do...how we live when we take it down the mountain isn't about earning favor with God and it isn't about gaining the status of heaven. All that we do...our prayer...our worship...our communal life and our service are all a response to the grace and love of God.

Living the way God would have us live in the world is not easy. We need strength for the journey and we find strength in the Cairns along the way. When we gather for worship we are fed with God's word and forced to be quiet to listen to God. The distractions of the world are put away and we can concentrate on giving thanks to God.

When we remember to pray daily we understand that God is with us as intimately and readily as your friends are, when you text and receive text messages all day long regardless of your location. When we hang out with our Christian friends our faith in God continues to be affirmed and we see examples of moral and Christ-like living. The Cairns along our life's journey make us strong to live the way Matthew 25 calls us to live.

Before reading this scripture aloud, ask two campers to act out verses 35-37. Make sure they keep their important clothes on, but they can suggest giving clothes to the naked, food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, hospitality to the stranger and visiting someone in prison.

1. RTLC has blessed you this week. Your life in the kingdom of God has been affirmed in almost everything you have done. What does the passage from Matthew say about those that are blessed? What is their life about?
2. Are you blessed by God first, and you respond by serving? Or, do you serve first and because of your service, you are blessed by God?
3. Serving isn't a requirement of your faith but it certainly is a response to the love of God. The way that we live our faith...the way we take it down the mountain and experience true joy, is to feed the hungry, give drink to those who are thirsty, welcome the stranger and visit and console those who are lonely and isolated.

4. How could you do this in the community where you live? Where would the power and the courage come from to do the things God asks of you? How has your time at camp prepared you for service in the world?

RE-ENTERING THE WORLD

Re-entering the world, our world, won't be easy. It would be much easier to stay in a safe place with people who believe just like you. It's a little like the comfort and safety of the cocoon or the safety of the mother's womb. RTLC is often just that, a safe place to share one's faith, be protected from the harshness of the world and a place to feel stirred by the Holy Spirit. We struggle at home to feel what we feel here.

The story of the Transfiguration is helpful in understanding that we can't capture the moment or hang on to that mountaintop experience. We need to re-enter our world and find a way to keep our faith and the strong feelings of joy and love alive that we have felt here.

ONE MORE STORY FROM THE SCRIPTURES: MARK 9:2-6 THE STORY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Peter, recognizing that this was a special moment, as he saw Jesus in dazzling brightness flanked by Moses and Elijah, makes a suggestion. He says, *Uh, Jesus, this is great. Let's just stay here. Let's pitch three tents—one for Elijah, one for Moses, and one for you.*

Mark states the obvious for us here: *Peter didn't know what to say, for they were terrified*

I think I understand what Peter's trying to do. He's been totally confused all along by Jesus. The story of Jesus' transfiguration follows immediately after Jesus' first prediction of his death and resurrection. And, in chapter 8, right before this glorious scene is that famous moment when Peter rebuked Jesus for saying that his journey would lead to suffering and death. Then Jesus rebuked Peter saying, *Get behind me, Satan.*

And then, right after that, Peter is with Jesus on the mountaintop in all his glory. And I imagine he's thinking: *"Finally! This is what it's supposed to be like when the Messiah comes. He's not going to suffer and be killed. He's coming in glory and power. Look at this."*

Finally, Peter had found a place that he felt good and comfortable with Jesus. So he suggests that they build some shelter and stay for a while.

Here's where we come back to the everyday. The transfiguration was only to last a moment. It was a glimpse of the future but the future had not yet become now. They had to go back down from the mountain, back down into the valley where there were sick people to be healed, disputes among the disciples to settle, and lots more work to be done. And, as Jesus promised, suffering and death.

Peter wanted to fix that transfiguring mountaintop moment in concrete. But we can't.

What the disciples needed to figure out was that Jesus is both the Son of God, powerful agent of transformation, subject of dazzling glory, and the Son of Man, who will be betrayed and persecuted and crucified. Peter, like many Christians throughout the life of the church, want to have the glory without the sacrifice, the mountaintop without the valley. We and Peter want to hang on to the best times of our faith journey and hold on to them for dear life.

The disciples, like some of us, always thought that where the messiah is there is no misery. So Peter would reject Jesus' prediction of his death but want to build a house on the mountain of glory. *Here is real glory now*, Peter might say, *without suffering, without death.*

But it is a mistake to think that where the messiah is there is no misery. The real point is the opposite: where there is misery, there is the Messiah. I think we need to identify with Peter and the disciples here. It's not easy for us to resist the offer of a no problem, all-glory-all-the-time gospel. It's not easy to resist an invitation into what Reinhold Niebuhr once described as a kingdom without judgment through a Christ without a cross. That may be a tempting offer, but that offer doesn't come from Jesus.

And I remembered that you don't get glory like that for free. You don't get glory like that without sacrifice. You can't just receive the good stuff and hang on to it for the rest of your life, without also giving of yourself in a thousand other ways and moments.

Over and over again the gospel lifts up both sides of Jesus' identity, relentlessly recalling that suffering will lead to triumph, but that triumph cannot be had without the price of the cross.

For Peter and James and John, the mountain of transfiguration was a glorious, true mountaintop experience. And we all need that, for sure. And our campers have had it this week.

But the truth of the matter is, we can't hold on to this RTALC-Mountaintop-moment forever. We do have to re-enter the world. And our world is vastly different from camp. But what we have experienced here can be felt and duplicated in our lives (perhaps not as intensely), but surely as beautifully if we continue to watch for God's presence, even expect it, in those places and people of our world that point to Christ. Those people and experiences are the Cairns that keep us journeying as pilgrims toward the ultimate destination; heaven itself.

Remember the quote from Lewis' book that you read in the beginning: *"But long before she had got anywhere near the edge, the voice behind her said, "Stand still. In a moment I will blow. But, first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs."*

Help your campers remember the signs...pay attention to the Cairns and follow them.

*** QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION**

1. Who can help you keep your enthusiastic faith alive when you return home?
2. What can you do personally to keep the intensity of your experience at RTALC strong?
3. What do you think CS Lewis means when he says: *"Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs."*
4. If you could create the ultimate "serving God" experience, what would it look like? How can you make such a dream come true and would you really want to?

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

* John 16:33 – read and discuss the difficulty living like a Christian in the world. Remember that even though we struggle in the world, Christ has overcome the world and in Him, we find peace.

* Read Matthew 14:22-33 – Jesus walks on water

Discuss how easy it is to lose our way when we take our eyes off of Jesus or when we don't take advantage of the cairns in our lives. Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and began to sink. Maybe we could emphasize how JC is the ultimate cairn. Keeping our eyes on Him keeps us on a path to peace and joy.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

* Astronauts acting out the Shuttle's re-entry into the earth's atmosphere as a way of emphasizing that it might get hot...and it won't be easy when we take it down the mountain.

*Simulate packing the things that are important to us about RTALC in a backpack. But be sure to emphasize that we can't leave them packed away when we return home. To keep them alive, they must be shared.

*Henri Nouwen speaks of letting go of our tightly clenched fists and allowing the love and mercy of God to penetrate our lives. Remind our campers that we are also called to release our tightly clenched fists of those things that we experienced at RTALC that we would rather not share. Perhaps your evening devotion can be about sharing our joy and serving others because in the end, that is the only thing that brings true joy and allows us to receive even more from God. Use something tangible in your devotion that kids can clench in their fist. Help them to understand letting go and finally offering it up to God before they go to bed.

*Use Faith Talk "Four Keys" Service cards to stimulate discussion before going to bed or when you have cabin time.

*For evening worship you might do something similar asking kids before they come to worship to think of the best thing about their experience at RTALC. Then at worship, ask them to pray about how they can share it when they take it down the mountain.

*This would be a great day to focus on how we can serve each other both at camp and at home. And, how we can serve those people that are hurting in the world. Even discuss the needs of the poor and destitute in the camper's hometown and brainstorm how they can take the love of Christ that is so prevalent here at camp, to those who are hungry for it back home.

*For evening worship consider giving each camper a small rock...a prayer stone...a touchstone reminding them of the cairns they are called to pay attention to and also the cairns they are called to be.

*Do a commissioning service and have congregational leaders or counselors anoint each camper and commission them for "takin' it down the mountain."

G. OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

* Light the Fire, Go, Step By Step, Here I Am Lord, We Are Walking in the Light of God, Be Bold, Shout to the Lord, Messiah, You Are the Light of the World, Isaiah 43, Psalm 121, History Maker, Open the Eyes of My Heart, and One Way

* Other new songs: "Go My Children with My Blessing (WOV 721); "Make Me a Servant" (Worship and Praise #96); "What Have We to Offer" (Worship and Praise #156); We Are Called (Worship and Praise #147)

* Matthew 28:16-20 – the Great Commission

* *What You Have Done for the Least* –copied and placed in white notebook of Devo ideas in camp office

**The Clown* shared below

Once upon a time, there was a lovely clown who was one of these good, cheerful clowns with a big, red nose, with wide, colorful trousers around his legs and with a small, brown violin in his hands. On his face, he always had a big, warm smile. He lived and worked in a circus that wasn't big but also wasn't that small. But a circus and a clown loved by the people, especially the young people. Times were not always easy for this circus. There were times of recession and economic disaster. There were times when governments changed their financial policies, and circuses no longer got public grants. Sometimes the clown was afraid the circus would no longer be able to have its own tent, or even some artists might have to be sent away. What would happen to the people then?

He knew that circuses and clowns were needed. The clown, for many people in the surrounding towns, was a symbol of hope and joy and humanity; hope, joy and humanity in the middle of a not always easy everyday-life; a life in which the strongest and the best and the fittest succeeded. But people know that not everybody is the strongest, and the best, and the fittest. The clown showed them what really counted in life. He showed them that you can love and be loved, even if you are weak, even if you fall on your nose, even if you sometimes cry. People loved the clown and his big, warm smile. And he loved them.

But there was one, big sadness in our clown's life. He got more and more aware that he was so limited in his thinking and experience. His thoughts only circled around in his limited circus circles. And with every passing year he had more

difficulty to develop new ideas, to show his spectators the many sides of life. While people still loved him, he knew he should give them more. He should open their eyes to the bigger world. He should open their eyes to the many people in this world; to the people who think and live differently from them; to the people who suffer from injustice and poverty and to the people who would like to share their gifts and their human warmth with them. He knew: Life was much more than life in this circus. Life was much deeper than he had experienced so far.

And so, one day, our clown decided to go on a journey. He had heard there was a man called Jesus. And people had told him that Jesus lived life in its fullness, and that He loved and was loved. That's what our clown was looking for: life in its fullness, to love and to be loved. And so he took his rucksack and packed into it his small, brown violin, his wide, colorful trousers, and his big, red nose. And with the violin, the trousers and the nose in his rucksack, he directed his steps to the East, to Galilee, to find Jesus.

When wandering through the lands, it was not long before he met a gipsy girl. Her long black hair hanging over her dark brown face, she was sitting beside the road and crying. "I'm a foreigner in this country", she said, "and because I'm not like the others, I'm cast out. I'm allowed to work here, but not to live." The clown laid his arms around her shoulders and cried with her. But then he took his small, brown violin and gave it to the girl. "Take it and play it", he said, "and let its sound comfort you and the hearts of all suffering people around you."

Wandering further through the lands, it was not long before he met a mother with three children. Holding the youngest at her breast and the other two in her arm, she was sitting beside the road and crying. "Injustice, poverty and brutal war", she said, "have taken our father and everything; my children must now live naked." The clown laid his arms around her and the children's shoulders and cried with them. But then he took his wide, colorful trousers and gave them to the family. "Take them and use them", he said, "they are big enough to give clothes for all three of your children."

Wandering further through the lands, it was not long before he met a young man. Having his head on his knees, he was sitting beside the road and crying. "I'm unemployed and cannot find a job", he said, "nobody needs me, and I'm worth nothing." The clown laid his arms around his shoulders and cried with him. But then he took his big, red nose and gave it to the young man. "Take it and put it on your nose", he said, "and I will teach you how to be a good and human clown".

Finally, after many weeks and months, our clown arrived in Galilee. He went to Nazareth, knocked at Jesus' door and walked into His house. A man was sitting in the room. "Are you Jesus?" asked the clown. People told me that Jesus lives life in its fullness, and He loves and is loved". "Dear friend", responded the man, "Jesus died 2000 years ago, you cannot meet Him here." The clown broke out in tears. "Then my whole journey was in vain. And my life will continue to circle around in my old, limited circus circles." "Don't be sad", answered the man, "you've already met Jesus three times on your way here. Whenever you meet a person and open your hands, you also meet Jesus. And you make an experience of fullness of life, you love and you are loved."

The clown stood there surprised and silent. He dried his tears and started a smile. But then, after a further thought, he sadly answered: "But now all my gifts have gone. There's nothing left I could share. "Your hands are empty", replied the man, "because you faced your neighbors with open hands. But love means giving and receiving. And only empty hands can receive. Open your hands for your neighbors again. And your empty hands will be filled."

The clown opened his hands, and the man gave him a wonderful Pan Flute. "Take this shepherd's flute", he said, "Take it back to your circus. And whenever you perform as a clown, play one piece on this flute for your people. Let them listen to the sound of eternity. Let them listen to the sound of love. Let them understand that the world is much bigger than their circus. Let them experience love and to be loved, to receive and to give, to give and to receive."

The clown stood there, with the flute in his hands. His heart felt warm, and on his face he had a deep and happy smile. "I will go back to my circus", he said, "I will tell my people that I met Jesus. I will blow my flute, and we will face our neighbors, with open hands, to love and to be loved, in the fullness of life."

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS * Use the story of the clown to discuss what it means to give oneself away for the love of the world. And how having open hands can be both a receptive posture and an indication that they have given away what they took down the mountain.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS * Looking at the Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer would be a good way to get at dying to self and freely living for the sake of the world. Perhaps use this excerpt about "The Call to Discipleship" will help. Process the excerpt with the discussion question at the end.

“As Jesus was walking along, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him.” The call goes out...The disciple’s answer is not a spoken confession of faith in Jesus. Instead, it is the obedient deed...

What is said about the content of discipleship? Follow me, walk behind me! That is all. Going after him is something without specific content. It is truly not a program for one’s life which would be sensible to implement. It is neither a goal nor an ideal to be sought. It is not even a matter for which, according to human inclination, it would be worth investing anything at all, much less oneself.

And what happens? Those called leave everything they have, not in order to do something valuable. Instead, they do it simply for the sake of the call itself, because otherwise they could not walk behind Jesus...The bridges are torn down, and life goes on. One is called away and is supposed to “step out” of one’s previous existence, one is supposed to “exist” in the strict sense of the word. Former things are left behind; they are completely given up.”

Wayne Whitson Floyd comments on Dietrich’s words. “Discipleship isn’t a volunteer job. It is a calling. “Follow me.” And either we get up and follow Christ’s leading or we don’t. To be a follower of Christ is to walk behind Jesus, to go the way that he has gone. Usually we do cost-benefit analyses. We calculate the gain before taking the risk. Our goals and ideals are reached by sensible programming and planning. Investments worth making are those that promise the highest possibility of return.

Then the call goes out from Jesus: “follow me.” This time, however, there’s no spiritual broker to consult, no eschatological investment manager who can help us weigh the long term potential for our capital risk. “And what happens? Those called leave everything...not in order to do something valuable, but...because otherwise they could not walk behind Jesus.”

Security is traded for insecurity. The reliable is given up for the sake of the unforeseeable. Christ calls. And we follow. “The bridges are torn down, and life goes on.”

And yet we know. The first generation apostles did not know what they were in for. But we know. The way of Christ leads to the cross. It is, we shiver, the way of the crucified. We think twice. Three times. Reconsider. Weigh options. And...and...

*The way of the cross is not easy. It could lead to hardship, even death. Actually, discipleship does lead to dying to oneself. What do that mean and do you think you are capable of doing it? Perhaps you already have...

J. STAFF STUDY “N” the last letter of the word CAIRN IS FOR “NOW...GO!” but also represents:

“N”ew Life in Jesus Christ

*What’s in it for you this summer? Why are you here and when you leave, what will you take with you besides a worn out sleeping bag and memories of your counselor friends?

We’ve challenged the kids to think about “takin’ it down the mountain. We’ve told them how hard it will be. I need to tell you the same. When you leave here, you leave your good friends, the busyness of the summer, the safety of this holy place, the comfort of sharing your faith where “everyone knows your name” and thinks basically just like you. In some ways, you become another face in the crowd rather than the spectacular counselor that every camper wants to hang out with.

Maybe you came here feeling as though you have a good grasp on what it means to live a “N”ew life in Christ. But my best guess is, you came from a fairly typical college environment. “Takin’ It Down the Mountain” will be especially challenging for you. How will you continue to live this new life that you have discovered here? How will you honor what you have learned and felt in this place when you slide back into the routine of the previous spring? How will you hold fast to the truths of the Gospel? Who or what will be the “CAIRNS” in your life to keep you on a holy journey? And how will you become “CAIRNS” for those who haven’t had the same experience as you have this summer?

K. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

* Your child will come home from camp tired but very blessed by their experience at Rainbow Trail. The whole week campers and staff have been talking about the “CAIRNS” in camper’s lives; those people and activities that keep them close the heart of God.

Christians believe that Jesus is the ultimate cairn. When we keep our eyes fixed on him it is difficult to lose our way. Other Cairns are worship, studying the Word, praying and living in community and the gift of family and friends.

Kids come home fired up for the Lord. The question is: How do we help them continue to live the intensity of their experience here? Perhaps it is by helping them find opportunities to serve the needy and the poor, visit the sick, welcome the stranger and give themselves away for the sake of the Gospel. Only then, will they live the true joy they experienced here at camp. Encourage them to share with you how they might like to serve the world today and in the future.

* **Read Matthew 14:22-33**

Discuss how easy it is to lose our way when we take our eyes off of Jesus or when we don’t take advantage of the cairns in our lives. Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and began to sink. Maybe you could emphasize how Jesus Christ is the ultimate cairn. Keeping our eyes on Him keeps us on a path to peace and joy.

* **Discussion Activity:** Name someone who has been a living “cairn” in your life

* **Closing prayer:** Holy and Awesome God, thank you for blessing _____ (name of child) this week at Rainbow Trail. Thank you for the counselors and other campers that loved _____ (name of child) and cared for them. Thank you for showing _____ (name of child) that faith can be fun and that life can be good when our eyes are fixed on you and our hearts are filled with excitement and expectancy that you will do cool things in our lives. Help all of us, but especially _____ (name of child) to follow the Cairns in their life and to keep the fire in their hearts burning. Teach us to give what we have brought down the mountain away, opening our hands to the needy, the hungry, the lonely and the poor. This we pray in Jesus holy name. Amen.