



"YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." AND HE SAID TO HIM, "YOU HAVE GIVEN THE RIGHT ANSWER; DO THIS, AND YOU WILL LIVE."

LUKE 10:27-28



2017

BIBLE STUDY



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Breakin' All The Rules

INTRODUCTION:

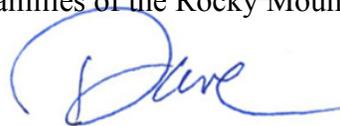
I was one of those who always followed the rules. That was easy when it was about games, getting grades, driving a car, doing it right. Give me the framework in which operate and I could not only preform, but even excel within those guidelines. But as I got older, some of the rules changed. Now it wasn't just about doing it right anymore. The unwritten rules came into play and they affected people. It wasn't as easy as it was before. My action or lack of action could actually impact someone. I was looking for guidance about how to operate. Jesus set the standard. Jesus always did everything out of love. He broke those societal rules that hurt people, left people out, or were just plain mean and gave a new standard to live by. To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

The days of this study take us from the darkness of oppressive rules to the light of "the rule," Jesus' command to love God, neighbor, and ourselves. When we follow Jesus' lead, to cross boundaries and break rules, we will live love for the sake of the world:

1. **It's Not About The Rules....:** Rules are in place to keep us safe and maintain order. But there are times when rules don't make sense – when they exclude or marginalize people. In all cases, Jesus wants us to put love above all.
2. **If the Rule is: Exclusion...Break the Rule!:** We have all experienced exclusion sometime in our life, where we have been left out. Who are those that we exclude just because of who they are? How can we be inclusive and inviting to those that are different than us?
3. **If the Rule is: I win, you lose...Break the Rule!:** We live in a world that often has "an eye for eye", win at all costs", and "I win, you lose" mentality. Vengeance and retaliation can consume us. But Jesus modeled something different for us on the cross. Instead of being bitter and angry, Jesus forgave, and showed love and compassion for all. How do we change the focus of our living?
4. **If the Rule is: I need more to be more...Break the Rule!:** We live in a world where the rule is often that we are never good enough – that we don't have the right clothes or the right stuff. Jesus, on the other hand, says "you are good enough" just the way you are!
5. **It's All About The Rule: The Rule of Love!:** As we step back into life away from camp, we are called to love God, neighbor and self. To do that, there are some societal rules that need to be broken. This is scary stuff! There is a chance we will ruffle some feathers. This kind of fathfulness takes great courage. It is out of our willingness to take risks that we will experience the new life that Jesus wants us to know. A life where love and grace rule!

Morning Watch is an important part of each day at camp. We will begin each Morning Watch with a welcome, some scriptural reading, a current song, and then move to about a half hour of God Time and reflection. We hope that this discipline of quiet time during the day is one that many will take home with them as they seek to grow in their relationship with God.

I am very excited about this study. This is going to be a challenging study. I hope this study can move campers, staff, and adult leaders to wake each morning, to think about their day ahead, and be ready to "break the rules" to act out of love throughout their day. If this happens, they will transform the lives of others, and in doing so, they will be transformed as well. I also hope this study will help you to continue to grow in your own faith journey. Thank you for the opportunity to be partners with you as we serve the youth, adults, and families of the Rocky Mountain Synod and beyond.



Dave Jarvis,
Executive Director

2017 BIBLE STUDY “BREAKIN’ ALL THE RULES”

Day 1 – It’s Not About the Rules...

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

General Douglas MacArthur once said: “Rules are mostly made to be broken.” Ha! Tell that to the cop who stopped me going 22 miles over the speed limit in Morrison, Colorado a few years ago. Without asking any questions as to why I might have been exceeding the speed limit, (I was in a rush to get to a nursing home to visit someone who was dying), he wrote me a ticket for \$221. I was wrong and I did break the rules.

Our world is driven by laws; rules that maintain order and keep people, entire populations, safe and from destroying each other. Of course we don’t always believe that rules are good or even necessary. There are secular or societal rules, there are governmental rules, cultural norms and, yes, religious or sacred rules.

Remember the story of the Israelites in the wilderness. Not long after their rescue from Egypt, the Israelites started complaining to Moses about the crummy food they were eating, the lack of water they had to drink, the sleeping conditions and the overall discomfort of the wilderness. God heard the cries of the people and showed great mercy. But their complaining didn’t stop. Tempers flared...the people became unruly.

For a string of days, even months, they camped around a mountain in the desert of Sinai. One day, after God got fed up with their moaning and groaning and their rowdy behavior, thunder and lightning struck the mountain, and out of a thick cloud, the sound of a trumpet blew so loud that it rocked the socks off all the people. Then the Lord, cloaked in fire, descended on the mountain, and the whole mountain shuddered. The Lord called Moses up to the top of the mountain and gave him the Ten Commandments and spoke these words to him: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” And as the Lord spoke, He wrote the Ten Commandments/ten rules on tablets of stone. Why did God feel a need to do that? God commanded these rules so that people would know how to live in right relationship with God and each other.

There are other spiritual laws or sacred rules that Jews follow even to this day. Judaism is a comprehensive way of life, filled with rules and practices that affect every aspect of living: what you do when you wake up in the morning, what you can and cannot eat, what you can and cannot wear, how to groom yourself, how to conduct business, who you can marry, how to observe the holidays and Shabbat, and perhaps most important, how to treat God, other people, and animals. This set of rules and practices is known as halakhah, literally translated, “the path that one walks.”

Rules regulate how we function as a coherent society. There are also rules handed down to us by our government; the people we elect to help maintain good order in our country. Federal laws generally apply to people living in the United States and its territories. Congress creates and passes bills. The President then signs those bills into law. Federal courts may review these laws and strike them down if they think they do not agree with the U.S. Constitution, or they eventually become the law of the land. There are federal laws that govern how we treat people with disabilities, how we care for and honor the environment, how we manage alcohol, tobacco, firearms and explosives and more recently, same-sex marriage laws that protect the rights of the LBGQT community. Every law serves a purpose...until it doesn’t anymore.

Even Christian organizations and congregations have rules. In my church’s constitution I can find rules about how to conduct meetings, how I, as Pastor of the congregation, should conduct myself. There are even rules about disciplining a member who has been naughty or removing a Pastor from office.

Finally, think about the rules that you must live by in your own home; rules about chores, curfews, cleanliness, internet usage, cell phone usage and limited texting, and how you treat each other. Rules are everywhere, and there is no where we can go where there are not regulations, rules and guidelines about how to live.

As much as we might like to live by the cliché “rules are made to be broken,” it would take us a thousand lifetimes to break them all. But that doesn’t mean we can’t question their validity and applicability. Some rules, when perverted, lead to oppression and marginalization. Some rules are outdated and don’t make sense anymore for our 21st century lives. Some rules are used to manipulate and diminish certain groups of people. Not all rules are good and yes, some rules need to be questioned, even broken.

The story of the Good Samaritan is a story Jesus uses to make a point; a point about love and a point about crossing boundaries; breaking rules the culture, society and religion pressed upon people in his day. In today's study we will examine the actions of all the characters. Using this story you will help your campers understand that "breakin' certain rules" leads us to love more deeply, serve more freely, and live a life of compassion rather than judgment and exclusion.

The next three day's studies, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, will walk us from the darkness of oppressive rules to the light of THE RULE, Jesus' command to love God, neighbor, and ourselves. When we follow Jesus' lead, to cross boundaries and break rules, we will live in love for the sake of the world.

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Explore the plethora of rules in our world and in our lives.
- Understand the difference between sacred and secular rules; cultural and governmental rules.
- Encourage campers to think about the rules they were raised with; the rules of their own household that parents expect they will honor.
- Give kids permission to question the rules.
- Learn about the story of the Good Samaritan; the rules in place, the character's unwillingness to break them and the reason one character did.

MORNING WATCH

Welcome: Welcome to Morning watch. May this time each morning be a blessing to you and the community that you are a part of this week. May God challenge you to see the rules in our world that need to be broken for the sake of love.

Scripture: Luke 6:6-11

⁶ On another Sabbath day, a man with a deformed right hand was in the synagogue while Jesus was teaching. ⁷ The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees watched Jesus closely. If he healed the man's hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath. ⁸ But Jesus knew their thoughts. He said to the man with the deformed hand, "Come and stand in front of everyone." So the man came forward. ⁹ Then Jesus said to his critics, "I have a question for you. Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?"

¹⁰ He looked around at them one by one and then said to the man, "Hold out your hand." So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! ¹¹ At this, the enemies of Jesus were wild with rage and began to discuss what to do with him.

Song: Guilty by the Newsboys

When did it become breaking a rule
To say your name out loud in school
When your names the only one that sets us free
When did it become incorrect
To speak the truth about life and death
When your life gave us all eternity

Even if it gets me convicted I'll be on my knees with my hands lifted
If serving you's against the law of man
If living out my faith in you is banned
Then I'll stand right before the jury
If saying I believe is out of line
If I'm judged cause I'm gonna give my life
To show the world the love that fills me
Then I want to be guilty

I'll rise up and honor you
I'll testify to all the good you do
'Cause your grace and your mercy have overtaken me
So even if it gets me convicted I'll still be on my knees with my hands lifted

If serving you's against the law of man
If living out my faith in you is banned
Then I'll stand right before the jury
If saying I believe is out of line
If I'm judged cause I'm gonna give my life
To show the world the love that fills me
Then I wanna be

Guilty by association
Guilty of being a voice proclaiming
Your ways, Your truth, Your life
I'll pay the price to be Your light,
Oh, I wanna be guilty

If serving you's against the law of man
If living out my faith in you is banned
Then I'll stand right before the jury
If saying I believe is out of line
If I'm judged cause I'm gonna give my life

Questions for God Time: Rules, rules, rules...seems like we are always butting up against the rules. Jesus butted up against a ton of rules, too. The Scribes and the Pharisees thought the rules were more important than relationships. They condemned Jesus for performing miracles on the Sabbath and blessing someone in need. Read the Scripture from your Bible and then think a little about what made Jesus “guilty.” Was it justified? Why would Jesus have broken such important rules? What was Jesus’ motivation?

Closing Prayer: Awesome God, I’m glad to be here but I have some anxiety about it, too. Please be with me as I live into this week and learn more about what it means to be your child and to be loved fully by you. Today is about rules; yours and the worlds. I want to remember that you have established rules for good reason. They keep me safe and keep me from harming others or being harmed myself. Help me to understand that some rules are a blessing and others are hurtful and oppressive. Teach me this week how to know the difference between rules I should follow and rules that can be broken for the sake of love. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Thoughts on the Story of the Good Samaritan

It’s true. Jesus is a rule breaker. There are probably rules/laws that we are held accountable to that Jesus would think rather “stupid” or “detrimental” to our lives and to relationships with those we love and people we deem vastly different from us that are hard to love. So many stories about Jesus’ interactions with people reveal a crossing of boundaries, a breaking of rules, a “thumbing his nose” at those who live so fervently by the law that they forget about love, compassion and care for the marginalized and oppressed. The story of the Good Samaritan is such a story. Two of the characters are cultural, spiritual rule followers who are more concerned about themselves than they are about the one who desperately needs their help.

Jesus set his story on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of about 17 miles. Jerusalem was where the Temple was, the center of the Levitical priesthood. The priests were the highest class of the Levites. They were supported by thousands of other Levites who served at lower levels, doing such tasks as keeping the altar fire going, lighting the incense, singing in the Temple chorus and playing musical instruments. When they were not on duty, many of these priests and temple workers lived in Jericho. They often traveled this road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Travel in those days could be hazardous. One stretch of the Jericho road was known as the “Way of Blood,” because so many people were robbed and killed there. This was where Jesus set the scene for his parable. People knew exactly the location Jesus was referring to. In Jesus’ story, the first person to see the victim is a priest. We hear the word priest and automatically think a person of compassion who would do anything for anyone regardless of their religion or race.

According to Jewish law, the priest had to be careful. If the person lying there is a non-Jew the priest could be risking defilement, especially if the person were actually dead. If he defiles himself he cannot collect, distribute, and eat tithes. His family and servants would suffer the consequences with him. Priests were supposed to be ritually clean, exemplars of the law. There would be immediate shame and embarrassment suffered by them at the expense of the people and their peers for such defilement. Having just completed his mandatory two weeks of service, he would then need to return and stand at the Eastern Gate along with the rest of the unclean. Furthermore, in addition to the humiliation involved, the process of restoring ritual purity was time-consuming and costly. It required finding, buying, and reducing a red heifer to ashes, and the ritual took a full week. The priest is in a predicament. Moreover, he cannot approach closer than four cubits to a dead man without being defiled, and he will have to overstep that boundary just to ascertain the condition of the wounded man. But rather than get involved, he passes by on the other side of the road.

The priest is followed by a Levite, a temple-worker. Levites were actually descendants of Levi, not Aaron, and they assisted the priests (Aaron’s descendants) in the temple." The road spoken of here is not only dangerous, but a very long road. It is quite likely, according to those who have walked it, that a person traveling that road could see far into the distance. The Levite, who is of a lower social class, may have been walking. He most probably saw the priest ahead of him and could have thought to himself, "If the priest may pass then so should I." Perhaps the Levite feared for his own safety. What if someone saw him with the naked and wounded person and reported to the officials that the Levite committed a crime against the injured person?

So, the Levite does the same—he passes by. Both the Levite and the Priest were concerned about religious and cultural rules; neither wanted to get their hands dirty. Such an action would have rendered them unclean.

Then along comes a Samaritan. You’ve got to be kidding me! A SAMARITAN! Jesus would have caused a stir using a Samaritan as an example of someone compassionate and even holy. Samaritans were a mix of Jew and Gentile, and the Jews did not like them. They had names for Samaritans like “half breeds” and “heathen dogs,” and considered them to be spiritually defiled. The Jews of that time did not often hear the words “good” and “Samaritan” used in the same sentence. To them that would have been an oxymoron.

But in Jesus’ story, it is this outcast who stops to help. Not only does this Samaritan help, but he goes far beyond what most people would have done. He cleans the victim’s wounds with oil and wine, then bandages them. People didn’t carry first-

aid kits back then. He probably tore up some of his own clothing to make a bandage. Next, he puts the injured man on his donkey and takes him to an inn. He takes two silver coins, a considerable amount in those days, and promises to reimburse the innkeeper for any further expense. This is an exceptional level of assistance, especially for a total stranger and someone who is supposed to be a social enemy. But the Samaritan did not let that stand in the way.

With this deceptively simple little story, Jesus impales the lawyer on his own hook. He asks him, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" (verse 36). Jesus has turned the question around. He is not asking, "Which people should I help?" He is saying, that to answer the question, you need to put yourself into the shoes (or lack thereof) of the man who was beaten and left to die. The better question is: "When I need help, who do I want to help me?" Don't you hope that the Samaritan will be a neighbor to you?

Who was a good neighbor? The answer is obvious, but the expert in the law didn't want to say the word Samaritan, so he said, "The one who had mercy on him." Then Jesus delivers the knockout blow: "Go and do likewise" (verse 37).

Remember, this "teacher of the law" was from a class of people who prided themselves on how carefully they obeyed God. For example, they would not pronounce God's name, considering it too holy to utter. They would even take a ritual bath to ensure purity before writing God's name. Along with the Pharisees, they were fastidious about observing the law in every detail. The lawyer had asked what he needed to do in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus' answer was, in effect, "You have to do the impossible." Your love for others needs to extend far beyond what humans are capable of doing.

Jesus shocks us often with his behavior, and the kingdom of God shocks our sensibilities and bursts our boundaries. It subverts our sense of what matters most. It reminds us that God loves mercy more than a "rule follower." It makes clear to us that what pleases God is not following the rules of the culture, society or even the church, but living in love with all people; even those vastly different from us.

In the kingdom of God, says Jesus, sometimes the right are wrong. Sometimes the bad are good. In the story of the Good Samaritan, told only in Luke, Jesus disses the insider and exalts the outsider, and affirms a foreigner rather than confirming the actions of the Priest and the Levite.

This wasn't the only time Jesus broke the rules by exalting a foreigner. The Samaritan woman at the well was shocked that a Jewish rabbi would even speak to her. "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

But the parable of the Good Samaritan turns all these tables and breaks all the rules. Two religious professionals neglect a fellow Jew who was almost beaten to death, while a Samaritan was "moved with mercy" to help him.

Was shocking those listening to his story the most important thing Jesus wanted from telling this story? Not at all. What he really wanted them and wants us to learn is a lesson about what living the life of God is like; about putting love above all else.

In his speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop," Martin Luther King, Jr. put it this way: "The priest and the Levite ask, 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'" Jesus concludes: "Go and do likewise." Show mercy.

Opening Prayer – Either you pray this prayer, your own prayer, or ask your campers if anyone would like to pray.

Dear God, you are awesome and holy and we love you. It's such a gift to be here today to study your Word. Help me not be afraid to speak out, to reveal my heart and to share what I know about the Bible. As I study today with other campers this day, help me to understand how important rules are when they lead me to bless others. Help me also understand that there may be rules that I may need to break for the sake of love. Bless my family at home and bless my friends, too. Amen.

Opening Questions/Starters -

Name some rules that you have to live by (at): School, Home, Church, In the World.

What's the absolute worst rule you are made to live by?

What's the point of it? Do it make sense to you?

Why is it so important to the person enforcing it upon you?

Why do we need rules?

Can you name any rules Jesus broke in his lifetime...his ministry? Who were the big rule followers in Jesus day?

What do you know about the story of the Good Samaritan?

READ Luke 10: 25-37 ²⁵ One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" ²⁷ The man answered, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" ²⁹ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. ³¹ "By chance a priest came

along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by.³² A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.³³ “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him.³⁴ Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’³⁶ “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.³⁷ The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

NOW, GO BACK TO:

Verses 25-29

1. What was the lawyer trying to do to Jesus? Was he honoring Jesus with such a challenging question or was he being disrespectful and sneaky? And why?
2. What did Jesus say we need to do to inherit eternal life?
3. Who is your neighbor? Do you think Jesus meant only the people who live close to you?
4. What question was Jesus answering when he told the parable of the Good Samaritan?

Verses 31-32

5. What would you expect from two guys who worked in the Temple; the priest and the Levite? Do you know anything about what kind of work they did in the temple?
6. Why do you think the Jewish priest and Levite did not help the wounded Jewish man? Did it have anything to do with rules? Why wouldn't they break the rules?
7. If Jesus had encountered the man beaten and robbed in a ditch on the road to Jericho, what do you think he would have done? Were religious laws/purity laws important to Jesus? Why or why not?
8. What do you know about Samaritans? Were they well respected by Jewish people? Who would we compare them to in our world today?

Verses 33-35

9. What did the Samaritan do for the wounded Jewish man?
10. Why is it significant that it was a Samaritan who helped the Jewish man? What characteristics of a good neighbor did the Samaritan have? How does this story help us understand who our neighbor is? How can we become better neighbors?
11. Who put human life and relationships over the rules?

For further conversation and reflection...what about this story makes a difference for me today?

12. When Jesus broke rules, what was his motivation? Why did he stand up to the “keepers of the Law” in his day?
13. What do you think pleases God: to follow the rules or to follow Jesus' lead to break rules that put people down, that hurt people or destroy relationships?
14. How can we follow Jesus' teachings and show love for other people? How should we treat someone who needs our help? someone who is different from us? someone who might have been unkind to us?
15. What rules do you encounter that just might need to be broken so that others are blessed?

Another story that will make the same point...A Traditional Tale - Two Monks

Two monks were walking along a river when they came upon their usual crossing point. At the crossing was a woman in tears. The older monk asked her what the problem was, and she told him that she was deathly afraid of the water and could not swim.

The younger monk looked at the woman with disdain and told the woman that they could not help her as their holiness did not allow contact with women, but the older monk suggested that she climb upon his back and he would carry her across. The younger monk followed them across, shaking his head the whole time. When they reached the other bank, the older monk put the woman down, acknowledged her thanks with a slight bow, and then the two monks resumed their path while the woman went her own way. The younger monk was obviously agitated and continued shaking his head, muttering under his breath. After about 2 miles of this, the older monk finally asked him what was wrong.

The young monk said, "We are prohibited from any contact with women, yet you carried that woman across the river on your back. You let her crawl onto you and you held her! "Terrible! Just terrible! Wait until the abbot hears of this!" The older monk gave a slight smile and said to his younger companion:

"Brother, I left her 2 miles back at the crossing. Why are you still carrying her?"

Questions for discussion

1. How is this story similar to the story of the Good Samaritan?
2. What judgment did the younger monk pass upon the older monk?
3. Which monk was deeply tied to rules?
4. And who put relationship over rules?
5. What can we learn from this story?
6. When have you experienced something in your young life that reminds you of this story?
7. What bound the young monk and caused him to miss some miles of their journey together?
8. What can you learn from this story?

ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

- Leviticus is a funny book for modern Christians. Along with Deuteronomy and swathes of Exodus and Numbers, it lays out the Law for the Israelites. But it's largely ignored by modern Christians because theologians believe that Jesus fulfilled the Law (except where He didn't) and that Paul said a lot of it didn't apply (except for the parts that did). And for all of that, many are still willing to cite Leviticus for things that they think are sinful, while ignoring it for things they don't. Spend a little time reading laws from the Book of Leviticus that are no longer enforceable nor necessary to enforce in our day and age, our culture and society. People tend to cherry-pick which of the Levitical laws (or, for that matter, all of the Old Covenant, not to mention most of the Bible) they think still apply, and which don't.

This could be a fun activity (no kidding). Pass the list around and have each camper read a couple and comment on them. Many of these seem ludicrous. They were taken seriously, however, by the ancient Jews. Some of these laws protect life but very few of them have anything to do with leading someone into a deeper relationship of love, the love we know in Jesus.

Here's chapter and verse on a more-or-less comprehensive list of things banned in the Leviticus book of the bible. A decent number of them are punishable by death.

- Failing to testify against any wrongdoing you've witnessed (5:1)
- Failing to testify against any wrongdoing you've been told about (5:1)
- Touching an unclean animal (5:2)
- Deceiving a neighbor about something trusted to them (6:2)
- Tearing your clothes (10:6)
- Giving your children to be sacrificed to Molek (18:21)
- Making idols or "metal gods" (19:4)
- Reaping to the very edges of a field (19:9)
- Picking up grapes that have fallen in your vineyard (19:10)
- Stealing (19:11)
- Lying (19:11)
- Swearing falsely on God's name (19:12)
- Defrauding your neighbor (19:13)
- Cursing the deaf or abusing the blind (19:14)
- Doing anything to endanger a neighbor's life (19:16)
- Seeking revenge or bearing a grudge (19:18)
- Mixing fabrics in clothing (19:19)
- Cross-breeding animals (19:19)
- Planting different seeds in the same field (19:19)

- Eating fruit from a tree within four years of planting it (19:23)
- Trimming your beard (19:27)
- Cutting your hair at the sides (19:27)
- Getting tattoos (19:28)
- Not standing in the presence of the elderly (19:32)
- Mistreating foreigners – “the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born” (19:33-34)
- Using dishonest weights and scales (19:35-36)
- Cursing your father or mother (punishable by death) (20:9)
- Entering a place where there’s a dead body as a priest (21:11)
- Working on the Sabbath (23:3)
- Blasphemy (punishable by stoning to death) (24:14)
- Inflicting an injury; killing someone else’s animal; killing a person must be punished in kind (24:17-22)

Deeper questions for a more advanced group

Luke 10:25-29 - Two Questions

1. v 25 - A teacher of the law comes to Jesus and asks him a question. In Jesus’ time, this man would be student of the laws of God as recorded in the Old Testament in the Bible. What is the legal expert’s purpose in asking the question?
2. What is the question? Examine the question closely. What kind of world view does the question assume? What do you think eternal life means?
3. What did the lawyer assume about how a person receives eternal life? Is this question important to you?
4. v 26 - Where does Jesus assume the answer to this question can be found? What are the scriptures (or the law, depending on your translation)?
5. v 27 - What is the answer to the question as found in the scriptures?
6. v 28 - What is Jesus’ opinion of this answer?
7. According to this verse, what is most important to Jesus - what a person knows, what a person does, how a person relates to other people?
8. v 29 - The teacher asks Jesus a second question, “Who is my neighbor?” What is his motive for asking the question?
9. Why do you think he feels the need to justify himself? What thoughts are going on in his mind? What do you think he expects Jesus’ answer to be?
10. v 30-35 - How does Jesus answer the lawyer’s second question?
11. v 36-37 - Jesus asked the lawyer, “Which of the three acted like to the victim of the robbers?” The answer was obvious, the Samaritan. How does this story answer the lawyer’s original question, “Who is my neighbor?”
12. In the conversation between the lawyer and Jesus, who is testing whom? What final test does Jesus leave for the lawyer?

IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- Theme for the day ideas (not just theme, but how to carry theme through entire day)
 - share the Eucharist – a meal that sets us free from the bondage of sin and the weight of rules we can’t keep even if we would like to
 - play Simon says – ask people to do unreasonable things
 - play games where campers are held hostage and finally set free
 - have them eat in silence...a silly rule that doesn’t benefit anyone...it would be a rule just to have a rule

OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

- There’s A Place #22, Walkin’ in the Light #28, Shine, Jesus Shine #47, Light the Fire #50, Just Be #52, Days of Elijah #63, Little Room #67, God of Wonders #75, Grace Like Rain # 83, We Lift Up #90, Courageous # 91, Big House # 95, Come Thou Fount #92, You Are Mine # 97
- Additional Scripture Story might be the woman at the well. John 4:1-30
This story is the longest conversation recorded in the Scriptures. And in this conversation, many cultural norms, many rules were broken. (1) Jews weren’t supposed to speak to Samaritans. (2) Men weren’t permitted to address women without their husbands present. And (3) rabbis had no business speaking to shady ladies such as this one. Jesus was willing to toss out the rules, but our woman at the well wasn’t.

"You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman," she reminded him. "How can you ask me for a drink?" (John 4:9). She focused on the law; Jesus focused on grace.

1. How is this story similar to the Good Samaritan?
2. Who broke the rules in this story that led to a loving relationship between Jesus and a Samaritan?
3. What was Jesus most concerned about...the rules...or sharing His love?

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

- The Library Lion, written by Michelle Knudson. We have copies in the office to use as part of Bible Study or for evening devotions.

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

- Talk about Mohandas Gandhi, India's great independence leader who first went to prison in 1922 for civil disobedience and sedition after a protest march turned violent, and resulted in the deaths of 22 people. The incident deeply affected Gandhi, who called it a "divine warning". He was released from prison after serving 5 years of his 6 year sentence, and went on to become the most famous advocate of peaceful protest and campaigning in the world. He broke rules...not for his own gain...or for glory...but for the sake of love.

Gandhi famously led Indians in challenging the British-imposed salt tax with the 400 km Dandi Salt March in 1930, for which he was imprisoned for a year without trial. Later he led the Quit India Movement, calling for the end of Britain's domination and ultimate withdrawal. He was arrested many times but never gave up. An advocate until the end, Gandhi sadly paid for his beliefs with his life when he was assassinated by a militant nationalist in 1948.

1. What other famous protestors/leaders bucked the system and broke the rules for the sake of love?
2. What would it take for you to be that kind of person of courage?
3. What would keep you from living the way Gandhi, MLK, Malala, Rosa Parks, etc. lived?

KIRBERG GAME

Marble Roll

Materials/props: One marble and one corner molding stick/camper.

Frame: Identify the marbles as people in the campers' lives, or as themselves, and the stick as support systems (other people, etc.)

Objective: Move the marbles safely from a starting point, then dropped into a small container at the end point.

You can set a time limit to accomplish this task based on age and skill level of the group, study location, etc.

RULES: The marbles may only move along the provided sticks. The marbles may never be touched or touch anything other than the provided sticks. No more than two marbles may be on one stick at any time. Anyone holding a stick with marbles on it is not allowed to walk in any direction. Campers may only walk toward the end point when there are no marbles on their stick. If any rule is violated, or if a marble is dropped, the entire group must start over from the starting point. The last marble must be dropped into the bucket within 30 seconds of the first marble going into the bucket.

The rules are inevitably broken in this activity, most often because the group wants to be successful. It is typical if a rule has been broken for the group members to see if the counselor has seen it, and if not, can the group "get away" with breaking a rule to get the desired outcome.

ADJUSTMENTS: For younger campers, have a very liberal or no time limit to complete. Allow for multiple drops of the marbles. Do not have the group restart from the beginning when there is a dropped marble or rule violation, restart from where they are. For campers with greater skill levels, have two people share one stick, they are working directly with another person and within the larger group effort.

PARENT DEVOTIONAL

- **Opening Prayer:** Holy God, as we gather together as a family to listen to your word and share our hearts with each other, make us brave and gentle; thoughtful and honest. Help us, in this time, to open ourselves in love to you and to each other. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.
- **Thoughts:** We are governed by rules. We are told how to live by our government, our culture, our society, the church and even at home. Most rules make sense and are good for us but there are rules that cause us consternation and that even create hardship, oppression and pain. During the first day of camp we discussed the concept that rules are helpful and useful for good order. Conversely, there are also rules that even Jesus broke because they were hurtful and led to domination and marginalization rather than to blessings and love. This may make you uncomfortable but I'd like for you to discuss the rules in your home; the boundaries that are drawn that every member of your family must abide by. Which of those lead to good order and are necessary for living together well? Which of the rules are really superfluous and could be broken for the sake of a deeper love between members of your family?
- **Scripture to Read Before You Answer the Questions:** John 4:1-30 – The Woman at the Well
This story is the longest conversation recorded in the Scriptures. And in this conversation, many cultural norms, many rules were broken. (1) Jews weren't supposed to speak to Samaritans. (2) Men weren't permitted to address women without their husbands present. And (3) rabbis had no business speaking to shady ladies such as this one. Jesus was willing to toss out the rules, but our woman at the well wasn't. "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman," she reminded him. "How can you ask me for a drink?" (John 4:9). She focused on the law; Jesus focused on grace.
- **Questions for Consideration:** Who broke the rules in this story that led to a loving relationship between Jesus and a Samaritan? What was Jesus most concerned about: the rules –or sharing His love?
- **Brief Activity for the whole family:** Have each member of the family write a rule on one side of a piece of paper. After you everyone has done so, pass your paper to the left. Take a moment to read and reflect upon the rule that was passed to your from the person on your right. Now, flip the paper over and re-write the rule in a positive light, i.e. The current rule is: WEEK-END CURFEW IS 10:30 p.m. The new rule is: MAKE 10:30 YOUR GOAL TO RETURN HOME EACH WEEKEND NIGHT SO THAT YOU ARE SAFE AND OUT OF HARMS WAY. Turn your demands into blessings.
- **Closing Prayer:** Teach us, O God, to be obedient to the rules that lead to life and keep us safe. Teach us also to be brave enough to break or adjust the rules if breaking them will bless our family, our friendships and lead to loving others more freely and deeply. Also, holy God, help us to pay attention to rules that oppress the marginalized and underprivileged. And then give us opportunities to change those rules that people in need might be blessed. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the great rule breaker and lover of all people. Amen

2017 BIBLE STUDY “BREAKIN’ ALL THE RULES”

Day 2 – If the Rule is: Exclusion...Break the Rule

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Jesus was the model for great inclusiveness, which was a **great** annoyance for the religious leaders and political powers of his day. He included in his fellowship those who were often excluded from religious fellowship (tax collectors, “sinners,” lepers, women, children). He desired inclusion for those who were marginalized and outcast knowing that the Kingdom of God breaks into the world in spite of society’s exclusion.

Jesus began his ministry in a religious and cultural environment where exclusion was common. Many of his Jewish contemporaries understood their status as God’s chosen people to be evidence of God’s care for them, but not for the Gentiles. Using texts from the Hebrew Bible that envisioned the *ultimate inclusion* of the Gentiles in God’s kingdom (for example, Genesis 12:1-3; Psalm 22:27-28; Isaiah 49:1-6; 56:3-8), first-century Jews rather emphasized *the exclusion* of Gentiles from God’s glorious future. Trying to accept an understanding of God’s design of inclusion was complicated with the fact that Gentile Romans dominated the Jewish people. This reality didn’t help them to honor the Old Testament promises of an inclusive kingdom.

But even among Jews, exclusion of others was often associated with a defined true piety. The Pharisees, a popular Jewish renewal movement in the time of Jesus, accepted into their fellowship only **men** who adopted priestly purity laws in daily life. The Pharisees looked down upon the majority of the Jews as “the people of the land,” the unspiritual masses. The Essenes, who gathered in Qumran near the Dead Sea, took exclusion to a level far beyond the Pharisees’ standard. Entrance into the Essene community required, not only that one be a male who practiced priestly purity, but virtual separation from all who were not part of their monastic community. Not only were outsiders unwelcome in the Essene fellowship, but also, they had nothing to look forward to from the Lord other than fiery judgment.

We’re told that “many tax collectors and sinners” were sitting with Jesus, and that many of this kind of people followed him. These were exactly the sort of people whom the Pharisees and Essenes readily excluded from their company. In fact, even ordinary Jews would have little desire to be in fellowship with “tax collectors and sinners.” Tax collectors, after all, were Jewish turncoats who made their money through collusion with the Roman imperialists. (Use Star Wars Music ☺) Sinners were people whose lives were so obviously and publicly contrary to God’s law that one should avoid all unnecessary contact with them. Yet, here was Jesus, allowing the “rabble” to follow him, and even to eat with him. Remember that the act of sharing a meal was, in the culture of Jesus, a powerful statement of acceptance and inclusion.

It appears that Jesus desired to have each person of exclusion transformed into full inclusion once more within human community. No matter how you’re wired—introvert, extrovert, socially adept or socially awkward—something in your soul longs for meaningful relationships with other humans. We long to know others and be known by them. We treasure friendships that allow us to truly “be ourselves.” Though some of us have never found this sort of community and though others have been deeply wounded by relationships, all of us still long for deep, authentic, real community. Let’s break the rule of exclusion...

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- We will explore the darkness of our world, our neighborhoods, our schools, and even our friend groups that excludes people from being in relationship with us. We will reflect that we may not even be aware of how we exclude others in our daily lives.
- We will explore the story of Jesus healing the Gerasene Demoniac in the Gospel of Mark 5: 1-20. We will explore what is here in Mark to understand the need for inclusion and how Jesus broke the rule of engaging a person who was marginalized, named as an outcast, and was seemingly insignificant and named as a nuisance to the community.
- We will explore how in “building walls” between us and those we do not see as important or who differ from us, we may miss aspects of the Kingdom of God that break into the world. When we refuse to play by society’s oppressive rules we experience the opportunity to be God’s love.
- We will explore the darkness of being the excluded one, remembering that those excluded are also children of God. We will seek to identify ways to bring the light of inclusion to those we encounter in our daily lives.

MORNING WATCH

Welcome: Welcome to Morning watch. “We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy, healing, and inclusion.” Max de Pree

Scripture: Romans 15:7: “Welcome one another, therefore just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

Song: Welcome To Wherever You Are by Bon Jovi

Maybe we're all different but we're still the same
We all got the blood of Eden running through our veins
I know sometimes it's hard for you to see
You're caught between just who you are and who you want to be

If you feel alone and lost and need a friend
Remember every new beginning is some beginning's end

Welcome to wherever you are
This is your life, you made it this far
Welcome, you got to believe
That right here, right now
You're exactly where you're supposed to be
Welcome to wherever you are

When everybody's in and you're left out
And you feel you're drowning in the shadow of a doubt
Everyone's a miracle in their own way
Just listen to yourself, not what other people say

When it's seems you're lost, alone and feeling down
Remember everybody's different, just take a look around

Welcome to wherever you are
This is your life, you made it this far
Welcome, you got to believe
Right here, right now
You're exactly where you're supposed to be

Be who you want to be
Be who you are
Everyone's a hero
Everyone's a star

When you want to give up and your heart's about to break
Remember that you're perfect, God makes no mistakes

Welcome to wherever you are
This is your life, you made it this far
Welcome, you got to believe
Right here, right now
You're exactly where you're supposed to be
And I say welcome
I say welcome
Welcome

Questions for God Time:

- (1) When have you been excluded from a group or friends or a community?
- (2) When have you felt a time of great welcoming and full inclusion to a group?
- (3) How to we break the rule of exclusion to include others?

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, I ask you to be with me today. Help me to include everyone in my cabin and village in our activities today. Help me to see if someone is on the side or feeling left out, and find a way for them to feel included and a part of our group. Please bless this day. Amen

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Context

Welcome to day 2 and ½ of this week of camp. The campers have been working to figure out the rhythm of our days at camp as well as their inclusion in their cabins, their villages, and this Bible Study group. When you get ready to have this study they will be very tired from hike day. The little ones may have hiked more today than they have in a month and the older ones may be experiencing both exhaustion and disappointment if things were different than they had expected. I am praying that your Bible Study members have been bonding and that perhaps you even had volunteers who prayed the group in and volunteered for reading the texts. Please know that the coming together to study God's word is an amazing act in and of itself. Please make sure each camper has his/her own Bible that we can give them one if they do not have a personal Bible. Keep in mind that some of our campers are "churched" meaning that they have attended church all of their lives and others came as friends to have a great week at a wonderful camp. Be aware of the language you use and watch for visual clues that your campers have no idea what you just said. Check in with "does that make sense?" or "can someone give me an example of this?" Just remember our goal is to plant seeds for faith development and the outcome of this study is up to God.

Please keep in mind that the goal is to have another adult with you in the study and you can always ask for more support if the group is having difficulties. Sometimes you will get questions in a Bible Study for which you do not know the answer. This is okay! ☺ Just let the camper know that you will ask some of the staff and pastors on campus and you will get back to the camper. Trust your gut as well in delaying a response. If you think you need time to process a question and to deliver a thoughtful answer, it is okay to tell them you will think about it and get back to them tomorrow.

Please remember to ask the campers where the books of the Bible are that you use in your study. Keep to something simple like: "Is the book of Mark in the Old Testament or the New Testament?" and help them find it in their Bibles. Perhaps give them a little history such as the fact that although the book of Mark (where we get our focus for this day of study) is the second book in the New Testament, it is the oldest of the four Gospels. Even the way that Mark opens with "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" can be tied to having the good news of being in community, being included, and always being loved.

Today we will be reviewing the rule of exclusion. It is clear that our current world can be very exclusive when we hear rhetoric of building walls, returning all immigrants to their countries even when their children are born in the United States, and excluding those who do not share our faith, our sexuality or our social status. Although it may be tough, especially with our older campers, we want to name exclusion without getting into big political arguments. We have no idea of what political conversations our campers have in their homes and we want to have this conversation on a level where campers can hear each other with compassion. Our goal for this study is to have our campers identify with what it means to be excluded and how they can break the exclusive rules by including and welcoming all as Jesus did.

Study

Welcome your campers to Bible study. Continue with the way you opened the Bible study yesterday with checking in with each other perhaps with thumbs ups, thumbs downs, and where you have seen God moments. Perhaps you have been able to ask members to open in prayer and/or get them to breathe deeply and settle themselves to prepare for Bible study.

Ask your campers: Who can tell me the definition of exclusion?

After listening to them share their definitions, share the following synonyms: Boycott, discharge, elimination, embargo, eviction, omission, prohibition, refusal, rejection, removal, segregation, separation, suspension, veto, ban, bar, blackball, blockade, cut, debarment, dismissal, ejection, exception, excommunication, lockout, ostracism, ousting, prevention, relegation, debarring, keeping out, and non-admission. Give examples if any camper looks confused.

Ask them: Tell about a time when you were included in an accepting group at school.

Now name a time you were excluded.

Why do you think people exclude one another?

Are people more likely to include or exclude others in your school?

Tell them we are going to read a story that seems like it comes from a horror movie or the transformation of the incredible Hulk and yet this is a story from Jesus' day. They will read that Jesus interacted with someone instead of excluding the person as the laws of the day determined. Ask them to open their Bibles to Mark chapter 5 focusing on verses 1-20.

Jesus Heals the Gerasene Demoniac

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasene. ² And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. ³ He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him anymore, even with a chain; ⁴ for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; ⁷ and he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." ⁸ For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹ Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." ¹⁰ He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; ¹² and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them." ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. ¹⁶ Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. ¹⁷ Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood. ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ But Jesus refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

You may need to take some time to review different translations as your campers may say: what they just read does not sound at all like my Bible! ☺

Why do you think the people acted the way they did?

Do you think this man was excluded? Why? (fear, being different, scary)

What would you do if this man came running toward you? Why?

Share with them that the focus of this text is about an excluded person being returned to community. Jesus and his disciples had just crossed to the eastern side of the lake. Almost as soon as Jesus got out of the boat this man who was filled with what the Gospels tell us is a "legion" of demons began running toward him. A Roman legion at this time was made up of around 6000 individuals including soldiers, officers, and support staff. This legion of demons made the man incredibly dangerous. As you read, he lived in the tombs on the shore long enough that Mark tells us the locals used to be able to tie him up, but now they couldn't restrain him even with chains. We can therefore assume he was very powerful. He not only terrorized people who came near the tombs, but we learn that by this time he was naked and would roam screaming through the tombs and cut himself. The tomb's atmosphere would add to the locals' sense of fear associated with the man. We indeed make horror movies about people like this. This wild, powerful, naked, wounded, demon possessed man was rapidly approaching Jesus. If the disciples

noticed, and I'm certain they did, they would have been afraid for themselves and their master. We can imagine that if Jesus had body guards like Pope Francis they jumped in front of this aggressive man to protect Jesus.

From the world's point of view, Jesus and his disciples should have been afraid and run away, but the kingdom of God has come in Jesus and our understanding of power and authority changes. And Jesus remains in community with this man and allows him to approach. Jesus knew that 6000 demons would be willing to try and fight him, but the demons know Jesus is so powerful that they are the ones who are terrified. They are so afraid that they do not even get the man to try and hide in the tombs. When the man sees Jesus "from a distance" he runs and throws himself at Jesus feet, and the demons pleaded with Jesus not to torture them. Jesus commands the demons to leave the man, and he then permits them to go into a nearby herd of pigs. The locals soon learned what was happening and came running. When they arrived, they must have noticed some 2000 dead pigs in the lake, and they also saw the once demon-possessed man dressed, seated, and in his right mind.

What would you have done seeing 2000 dead pigs in the lake and the once demon-possessed man dressed, and in his right mind?

This change scared them even more than the man did not so very long ago, and as a result they begged Jesus to leave. They had no desire to have Jesus or this newly transformed man to join them in their community.

Why do you think they wanted Jesus to leave? (They held exclusion as a protecting force.)

Jesus and his disciples were soon getting back into the boat to leave the area. As Jesus got into the boat, the man he had just freed from the demons came and pleaded with Jesus to let him go with them. We often see Jesus telling people they should be willing to set everything aside and follow him and so the man's request seems perfectly reasonable. Compare this man with those who said they were willing to follow Jesus but wanted to wait for a more convenient time. Interestingly, Jesus would not let the man join them. Instead, he told the man to go home to his family and tell everyone how the Lord had mercy on him. Mark then says he went and told folks in the Decapolis all that the Lord had done for him. The Decapolis was a region to the South, not far from the tombs where the man had been living.

Why did Jesus do this?

We can imagine Jesus refusing the man with an instructive tone of voice. Viewed in this way Jesus' words could be seen as an exclusion and yet with deep love, Jesus sees the man needs something more to complete his healing. He needs to go home. So now I imagine Jesus with deep tenderness telling the man to go home, using words that flame this man's desire to be reunited with his family. God's love is definitely amazing and it leads to the light of inclusion in the community from where he came and had previously been excluded.

This man had left home because of his demons and now that he was free, Jesus sends him back home. The man was so moved by the Lord's love in setting him free that he was willing to travel with Jesus anywhere. Now think about how Jesus expresses love to him and also to his family by sending him home. Whether his family knew where he was or not, they must have had a good understanding of his horrifying and hopeless condition. This was not simply a good marketing move for the kingdom. It was pure love. It was returning the man to be included in his community. Imagine the beautifully moving scene as this man who had been lost returns home to his family. Jesus cleansed him, and he's ready to re-enter society with a completely different viewpoint and purpose. He who had been excluded for the safety of the community was returned to be included with transformation and love.

So why is this man included now, even though he was excluded before? Was it a good reason for him to be excluded?

So who gets excluded in our world? for what reasons?

Who gets excluded in your world?

Who do you exclude? How does that feel?

How do you include people when your friends want to exclude them?

There are many people in our world who have been excluded on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status or physical, mental or other abilities, and this exclusion has not allowed folks to share fully in the life that God has given them.

Consider this story from our modern day world: Nkosi Johnson who was born in 1989 was born with HIV/AIDS inherited from his parents. In 1997, he was refused admission to a public school because of HIV status. Keep in mind that he did nothing wrong. He simply inherited an isolating illness from his parent. Despite this exclusion, he became a powerful speaker for treating HIV victims with equality and respect at a time when there was often discrimination in the form of great exclusion. Together with his foster mother, he founded a refuge for HIV mothers and their children. He posthumously received the Children's Peace Prize following his death in 2001. (Let's do the math - he was 12! Please make sure the campers do not miss this fact. They too can bring inclusion into the world) Nelson Mandela referred to Nkosi as "**an icon of the struggle for life.**" This struggle is for everyone to have a place in the world.

So dear campers what rule of exclusion do you need to break to bring the inclusive love of Jesus to others?

ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

The following quote from Rob Bell fits well with today's study:

"First, there is exclusivity.

Jesus is the only way. Everybody who doesn't believe in him and follow him in the precise way that is defined by the group doing the defining isn't saved, redeemed, going to heaven, and so on. There is that kind of exclusion. You're either in, or you're going to hell. Two groups.

Then, there is inclusivity.

The kind that is open to all religions, the kind that trusts that good people will get in, that there is only one mountain, but it has many paths. This inclusivity assumes that as long as your heart is fine or your actions measure up, you'll be okay.

And then there is an exclusivity on the other side of inclusivity. This kind insists that Jesus is the way, but holds tightly to the assumption that the all-embracing, saving love of this particular Jesus the Chris will of course include all sorts of unexpected people from across the cultural spectrum."

-Rob Bell, Love Wins

Since we are having our hike day, you may not have as much time as other days. As we are focused on the Reformation 500th anniversary, if you wish to include something about Martin Luther into the day of breaking the rule of exclusion, think about these facts:

Luther strongly disputed the claim that freedom from God's punishment for sin could be purchased with money, proposing an academic discussion of the practice and efficacy of indulgences in his 95 Theses of 1517. He felt strongly that God's grace was a gift and was not an exclusion for folks who could not afford the indulgences.

Sadly, Luther also practiced exclusion in his negative writings about the Jews throughout his career. Though Luther rarely encountered Jews during his life, his attitudes reflected a theological and cultural tradition that saw Jews as a rejected people guilty of the murder of Christ, and he lived within a local community that had expelled Jews some ninety years earlier. He considered the Jews blasphemers and liars because they rejected the divinity of Jesus. In 1523, Luther advised kindness toward the Jews because Jesus Christ was born a Jew and also aimed to convert them to Christianity. When his efforts at conversion failed, he grew increasingly bitter toward them.

IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Games during the study:

Musical Chairs-Jesus style. Use this old favorite to raise issues of inclusion and exclusion. First, play the traditional way. When the game is over, explain that you'd like to try a different version — this time the object is to make sure no one is excluded. If everyone has a place to sit, the group wins. If anyone is without a place to sit, the group loses. When playing, eliminate a chair, but not a child, every time the music stops. Students will need to figure out creative ways to pile everyone

on one chair. Afterward, discuss the difference in the two experiences: How did it feel to sit on the sidelines? Have there been other times you've been on the sidelines while other children played? How did it feel? Can you think of other games you could redesign this way?

The Tight Hands Game. This game gives campers a metaphor for discussing inclusion and exclusion. Begin by explaining that the group will act as if it is excluding someone. Have campers hold hands in a circle. One camper volunteer, the outsider, tries to get into the circle through spaces between people, while everyone else tries to keep him or her out. Caution campers to be gentle when blocking the outsider. We do not want this to turn into the WWF! ☹ When the outsider gets into the circle, stop the game and ask for another volunteer. As a variation, especially for younger campers, you can have two or three outsiders at one time. After playing several rounds, ask: What did it feel like to be an outsider? Did anyone want to let the outsiders inside the circle? Did you let them slip in? Why or why not? Have you ever felt like an outsider in school? When?

High, Low, and Name: Please see Dave Kirberg's games in the attachment to play this game.

Hunger Meal: This could be a good day for the camp to have a hunger meal to understand how many people in the world are excluded from having the nutrition they need. The camp staff can give you the directions for this meal that we usually have at lunch.

All Camp activities:

Camp dance as we all use the line dances and that allows for great inclusion.

Group scavenger hunt that must be done as a group.

The Game: Ten Second Objects

(<http://dramaresource.com/games/warm-ups/ten-second-objects>)

This is a very popular drama warm-up game. It encourages creativity, physical awareness, and helps develop cooperation in group work. It is also easy and a lot of fun! Divide everyone into small groups (4-6). Call out the name of an object and all the groups have to make the shape of that object out of their own bodies, joining together in different ways while you count down slowly from ten to zero. Usually every group will find a different way of forming the object. Examples could be: a car, a fried breakfast, a clock, a washing machine, a fire. You could make it a rule that after 10 seconds they must be completely frozen in position or they could try to make objects that use movement.

A village can also choose to have an activity to have campers have different disabilities (loss of sight, loss of a foot, hand, etc.) and how you can best work through those activities with help from the group.

OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Additional scriptures you can consider for seeing excluded people include:

Luke 5:27-32: Jesus calls and eats with Levi (Matthew) the tax collector

John 4:1-42: Jesus Talks with a Samaritan Woman

Acts 10: Peter and Cornelius; Peter's explanation of following Christ

Luke 19:1-10 and 1 John 2:5-6: Zacchaeus and Jesus going to his house

1 Samuel 16:1-13: Choosing David over his older brothers

Mark 10:46-52, 1 John 2:5-6 and 1 John 3:18: The blind man Bartimaeus

Psalm 139: We are all wonderfully made and known by God, not just the "important and included" people

Songs from the RTALC songbook:

You Are the Light of the World #53

Let's Us Break Bread Together #18

They'll Know We Are Christians #29

Hey Everybody #66

We are Walking in The Light of God #36

Shine Jesus Shine #47

We are the Family of God #10

We Lift Up #90 (great prayer for worship of inclusion)

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

The campers in this age group, especially those in middle school, should be very clear about feelings of exclusion. Ask them to name times of exclusion and how they responded, how it felt, how they can be a part of breaking the rules of exclusion to allow for inclusion.

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

The campers in this age group may indeed bring up our political world right now as it is before them on every social media sight they use. See if they can have conversations about what happens in high school and how do they perceive the inclusive or exclusive nature of the school environment they are currently in.

KIRBERG GAME

High, Low, Name

Materials/props: None.

Frame: Two ways to do this activity, one that celebrates inclusivity, grace and forgiveness, and one that keeps people in the dark, and on the outside.

Objective: Be one of the last 3 people remaining in the circle.

RULES: Have your Bible study group form a circle, and review the “Give it Up” Sequence. In one version, the members say “Oops!” after the Give it Up sequence, in the other version, the members say “You’re outta here!” after the Give it Up sequence. Teach the High, low, name sequence with the words and actions that go together. Once the group understands the words/actions sequence, begin the activity using a cadence appropriate for your group. The cadence can be kept by tapping your feet in time together. In the first version, if someone makes a “mistake” i.e.; not putting the correct word/action together, or not keeping up w/the cadence, the activity stops and every one in the group joins in the Give it Up cheer followed by shouting out, “Oops!” After several rounds of this version, switch to a “winner takes all” version. When a person makes a “mistake” the remaining group members do the “Give it Up” routine and yell, “You’re outta here!” The “loser” has to leave the group and the rest of the group resumes the activity, closing the circle to keep the others out of the activity. The activity ends when only 3 players are left in the circle.

PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Day 2: If the Rule is: Exclusion...Break the Rule.

Scripture: Mark 5:1-20

Reflection: In our study today we discussed the need to break the rule of excluding others when Jesus seeks to include everyone in the understanding of God’s kingdom. We are sure that your campers have experienced a time of exclusion. We have discussed today how Jesus wanted to include the marginalized, the outcasts, and those the rest of the world names as insignificant. The Kingdom of God breaks into the world not so much through the powerful and privileged but through those whom the world excludes. Jesus turned the world upside down by including those that the world considered unclean or a nuisance.

Family Activity: Consider with your family the people you have seen excluded from certain communities. Think about how to include others into your communities. Think about the reality that if we exclude others from our sphere of influence we may consider ourselves freed from the responsibility to care for them...out of sight, out of mind. How can we break this rule of exclusion and open up Jesus’ world of inclusion?

If you have time and wish to discuss other examples of those who have been excluded please check out:

Luke 5:27-32: Jesus calls and eats with Levi (Matthew) the tax collector

John 4:1-42: Jesus Talks with a Samaritan Woman

Acts 10: Peter and Cornelius; Peter’s explanation of following Christ

Luke 19:1-10 and 1 John 2:5-6: Zacchaeus and Jesus going to his house

Prayer:

Creator God, we are your people. We look to the future with optimism and with faith in you, as we pursue our call to provide justice and fullness of life for all people who are excluded from community in our world. We pray that every man, woman and child feel the love and support that comes from you and that they may they meet you in themselves and in one another. May we enjoy a totally welcoming community, with you as our center, joined hand in hand with our sisters and brothers. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

2017 BIBLE STUDY “BREAKIN’ ALL THE RULES”

Day 3 - If the Rule Is: I Win, You Lose...Break the Rule

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

We are learning this week to recognize rules that can, and for the sake of love and relationship, even *must* be broken. While many rules are indeed helpful and necessary to order life, some rules, we see and sense, become oppressive to people. They become part of the heavy darkness that too often shrouds our lives.

Jesus recognized this heaviness in the teaching of some religious leaders of his day: “Instead of giving you God’s Law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn’t think of lifting a finger to help” (Matthew 23:4, from *The Message*). Indeed, rules can be burdensome and actually prevent us from experiencing and sharing the life and freedom God desires for all people.

Today’s study focuses on the sorts of rules (found in various forms, both in formal rules and informal customs) that cement our hostility toward others. These are, “I win, you lose!” rules. They fortify and bolster us in opposition to others. These rules seem especially valid when others have hurt us. They enable us to exact revenge. They encourage, rather than diminish, our feelings of hatred toward others and lead us inevitably to regard others as enemies. They encourage us to be victorious *over* others, even if it means taking unfair advantage of them so that we rise to the top...and they fall.

A famous rule that we will look at is the ancient *lex talionis*, or law of retribution, that says, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Under the rule of this law, it is deemed fair to take vengeance to the same degree that one has been offended. As we will see, Jesus challenges this rule and its underlying principle of fairness. In fact, he urges his followers to break this rule. Jesus sets up the pattern himself: *If the Rule Is: An Eye For an Eye...Break the Rule.*

Another rule that seems as natural as breathing is “hate your enemies.” In fact, it’s hardly a rule; we simply *do* hate our enemies. That’s what you do to your enemies, those who oppose you in a profound way: you hate them. Here again, however, we see Jesus confront whatever is at root in hating our enemies: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Once again, Jesus establishes the pattern: *If the Rule Is: Hate Your Enemy...Break the Rule.*

Yet another form of this rule is, “Win at all costs.” We live in a culture that values competition and especially honors winners. But what happens when people attempt to win *at all costs*? What happens when winning itself is valued so highly that people cheat and steal, use inside information, and deceive others in order to win? Here again, as we shall see, Jesus takes us radically in another direction. *If the Rule Is: Win at All Costs...Break the Rule.*

Finally, in addition to the teachings of Jesus, we will look at an act of Jesus. The gospel of Luke tells what Jesus does at the very moment he is nailed to a cross. This is his “eye for an eye” moment and his enemies heap their hatred upon him to the extent that they now act to end his life. One could imagine a crucified person filled with bitterness and anger, as indeed one of Jesus’ companions on a nearby cross seems to be. But in this moment, Jesus followed another rule, the rule of love:

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:32-34.

With our aim toward the end of this week, we will see how Jesus broke rules, not for the sake of being destructive, but for the sake of living by *the* rule: the rule of love. This is a rule, a way, a pattern, and a path that expresses love for the other, *especially* the other who has hurt us badly and may be our enemy. It is a rule of love in which winning does not come at the cost of another’s loss and does not set us above others. This rule is God’s light in our darkness, light for our path.

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Explore the dynamics of vengeance. What happens within us that makes us seek retaliation and revenge? What are the rules that permit payback?
- Explore the dynamics of enmity. What makes people enemies? What are the rules that sustain people as enemies?
- Explore the dynamics of competition and the concepts of winning and losing. Discover what is at stake when we win or lose. What do we stand to gain when others lose?

- Identify and have campers share everyday examples of vengeance, enemy-hatred, and winning at all costs in their lives.
- Examine Jesus' challenge to these accepted rules and norms and explore how these dynamics can be changed by Jesus' alternative dynamic of love.
- Help campers envision ways they can "break the rules" in which we become cemented in hostility, hatred, and unfairness, by following Jesus' lead.

MORNING WATCH

Welcome: Welcome to Morning watch. You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.

Scripture: Luke 23:33-34

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

Song: **Losing** – by Tenth Avenue North

I can't believe what she said
 I can't believe what he did
 Oh, don't they know it's wrong, yeah?
 Don't they know it's wrong, yeah?
 Maybe there's something I missed
 But how could they treat me like this?
 It's wearing out my heart
 The way they disregard

This is love, this is hate...
 We all have a choice to make

Oh, Father won't You forgive them?
 They don't know what they've been doin' (oh no)
 Oh, Father, give me grace to forgive them
 'Cause I feel like the one losin'

Well it's only the dead that can live
 But still I wrestle with this
 To lose the pain that's mine
 Seventy times seven times
 'Cause Lord it doesn't feel right
 For me to turn a blind eye
 Though I guess it's not that much
 When I think of what You've done.

This is love, this is hate...
 We've got a choice to make

Oh, Father won't You forgive them?
 They don't know what they've been doin' (oh no)
 Oh, Father, give me grace to forgive them
 'Cause I feel like the one losin'

Oh, no!

Why do we think that hate's gonna change their heart?
 We're up in arms over wars that don't need to be fought
 But pride won't let us lay our weapons on the ground
 We build our bridges up but just to burn them down
 We think pain is owed apologies and then it'll stop

But truth be told it doesn't matter if they're sorry or not
Freedom comes when we surrender to the sound
Of mercy and Your grace, Father, send Your angels down

[x2]

Oh, Father won't you forgive them?
They don't know what they've been doin' (oh no)
Oh, Father, give me grace to forgive them
'Cause I feel like the one losin'
Yeah, I feel like I've been losing

Oh, Father, give me grace to forgive them
'Cause I feel like the one losin'
I feel like I've been losin'

Oh, Father, give me grace to forgive them
'Cause I feel like the one losin'

Questions for God Time:

In his life, Jesus went out of his way to help many people who had been on the margins, cast to the side in their society: the sick and helpless, hungry and poor. He touched and healed people when it was taboo to do so. While many found Jesus to be a blessing, others, especially the powerful, felt threatened by his love that included everyone. So, they decided to kill Jesus. They were filled with hatred for him and became his enemies.

At the moment of his crucifixion, Jesus had a choice, even though his life would soon end. He could die filled with bitterness and anger. He could let his mind be filled with imagining how he might get back if he'd had the chance. But he chose a different path. Commending his life to God, he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

How does his choice make you feel? Can you imagine what you might have felt? When you think of those who are your enemies, can you imagine yourself making Jesus' choice?

Closing Prayer:

Father, at the very moment his enemies hated Jesus the most by crucifying him, he shined light in the darkness by asking you to forgive them. Sometimes I feel like I'm the one losing. Sometimes I'm so angry I don't know what to do. Sometimes I think the pain of being angry is maybe even greater than the pain people have caused me. I still wrestle with this...to lose the pain that's mine. Give me grace, Lord, to forgive my enemies. Give me grace to love. Give me the grace of your viewpoint. Give me the light of Jesus in my darkness. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Consider the day...Wednesday. We're halfway through the week! How are campers relating during Bible study? Are they opening up to the themes and to one another? Are some withholding? How can you help the campers deepen their engagement? What are the group dynamics? Do some checking in to see how things are going.

Today, we will look at four texts, the last being a "core" text because it is not just a teaching of Jesus; it is a profound action of Jesus.

The texts are:

- 1) Matthew 5:38-42
- 2) Matthew 5:43-48
- 3) Matthew 2:1-23
- 4) Luke 23:26-43

The first two, because they follow one after the other in the Bible, will be considered together. They are the teachings of Jesus that break the old rules of "an eye for an eye" and "hate your enemies." In them, Jesus is bold to issue new commandments for his followers. He says, stunningly, "But I say to you."

The third text is not a teaching of Jesus but a whirlwind episode from early in his life. It is the intriguing story revolving around the murderous rampage of King Herod, who sets out to destroy Jesus by killing all the male children in Bethlehem age two and under. This is a biblical story of winning at all (even grotesque) costs.

The fourth text comes last because the event it describes comes at the literal end of Jesus' life. Jesus demonstrates great integrity as his actions speak as loudly and clearly as his words. He holds to his own teaching. As he is nailed to the cross, Jesus pleads to God to forgive his enemies. Even as he is dying, Jesus shows incredible love and compassion toward his enemies.

Matthew 5:38-42 & 5:43-48

One day, Jesus saw crowds of people gathering and surrounding him, and he went up a mountain. Soon after, his disciples, those who were following him closely for the purpose of learning from him, came to him on the mountain. He began to teach them many things. Among them were these sayings:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you” (Matthew 5:38-42).

This is one of several times in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said...But I say to you...” Jesus sets up the pattern himself: *If the Rule Is...Break the Rule*. In this case, the phrase, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” was an ancient rule. It is famously known by the Latin phrase *lex talionis*, meaning the “law of retribution.” We see it as far back as the Code of Hammurabi, a well-preserved Babylonian law code of ancient Mesopotamia, dating back to about 1754 BC. We see it also in the ancient scriptures of Israel: “Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered” (Leviticus 24:19-21). While this law allows for vengeance, it actually was intended to limit that vengeance. *Only* and eye for an eye. *Only* a tooth for a tooth.

But Jesus authoritatively challenges even the limited nature of this rule of retribution. And while the “law of retribution” was not one of the Ten Commandments, texts in this section have Jesus saying the same thing about even some of the Ten Commandments. For example, “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire” (Matthew 5:21-22). So, a significant point here is that Jesus claims authority over even the Ten Commandments. In the view of Jesus, even expressing anger at a brother or sister means breaching the commandment against murder.

So, in our text, Jesus radically and authoritatively challenges the whole “game” of retribution. While it might seem eminently fair to exact proportional punishment, it is not so in Jesus' way of love. Those who are put upon or offended are not merely prohibited from retaliation; they are commanded by Jesus to *further assist* those who have taken from them. Jesus deescalates the dynamic of retribution by subverting it. Those who expect to receive vengeance are instead met with kindness beyond imagining.

In the next text, immediately following, Jesus says, “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-48)*

There is perhaps nothing more counter-intuitive than loving your enemies. In fact, it is so counter-to-nature that it requires prayer. “Pray for those who persecute you,” and you will be children of the heavenly Father. Perfection here doesn't mean a nitpicking lack of mistakes, but wholeheartedness in our approach to others, just as the Father is wholehearted in love for his children. Whereas retribution is the expected “law of the land,” and while retribution may be fueled by hatred of those who have harmed us, Jesus commands that his followers should meet hatred with love. People should “retaliate” with unexpected kindness. Jesus' command does not leave us in a weak and passive state. People who follow Jesus *do* act when they are hurt and offended, and they act decisively and intentionally, by returning *love* for hate.

Teaching Ideas

As you read through these two passages (choosing either to treat each separately or read them together in sequence), check with campers about what they notice. What do they wonder about? One effective technique for engaging texts is to read through them twice. The second time, read more slowly and invite campers to interrupt the reading with statements that begin, “I wonder...” or “I notice...”. Don’t stop reading or engage in conversation about what is noticed, just let the listeners voice what they notice and their wonderings as you read. Then, when finished, engage in conversation.

Talk with campers how they feel about Jesus’ breaking the expected rules of fairness. Ask them to imagine the consequences of returning love for hatred, of offering help in place of retribution. Ask campers to share stories from their own lives about the dynamics of vengeance. When have they been so hurt that they wanted to act or did act in revenge? How did they feel about all that took place? When have others acted in revenge against them? Has it helped to be vengeful? How has it not helped?

With regard to the teaching of Jesus on retribution, ask the campers to consider their own hearts, their own experience: What stirs within us that makes us seek retaliation and revenge? What are the rules in life that permit payback?

Considering the text on loving enemies, ask the campers: What makes people enemies? What are the rules in life that sustain people as enemies? Who are the enemies in their lives? Have they ever experienced reconciliation with an enemy? How did that happen? What has changed about their relationship?

Finally: look in the following section, Additional Study Ideas, for contemporary, real-world examples and stories of both the rules that allow human enmity and hostility to become cemented in our lives and ways to live into the leading of Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-23

This lesson is, in fact, the entire 2nd chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. In the seasons of the church, the lessons of chapter two are typically read during Christmas and Epiphany celebrations. December 28th is a fixed feast day in the calendar of the church called “The Holy Innocents, Martyrs,” a sad and lamenting commemoration of King Herod’s slaughter of the young boys of Bethlehem.

As you explore this text, read it through with the campers quietly listening, or share the job of reading with the campers. Let the sweep of the story come over the group. While many of us, even children especially, know of the Wise Men (or Magi), picturing them laying gold, frankincense, and myrrh at the feet of the Christ child, their role in the story is deeper and more intriguing than simply presenting gifts. They are very much wrapped up in the drama of Herod’s murderous intentions. Herod seeks to use the wise men to find Jesus and they understand this after being warned in a dream to return home by a different route and avoid Herod.

Herod realizes he has been tricked and becomes enraged. He sends men to kill all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under. This is an unimaginable bloodbath, all in the effort of rooting out a little one who is purportedly the King of the Jews, whom the wise men came to honor. What could make a person do such a horrendous thing? Herod is a model of “winning at all costs,” even hideous costs.

Joseph also had been warned in a dream to flee the murderous wrath of Herod, and took his family to Egypt. Jesus escaped the fate of the other children of Bethlehem. After Herod dies, Joseph and Mary and Jesus return to Israel and settle in Nazareth, where Jesus grows up.

Teaching Ideas

Ask for the reactions of the campers to this story. What feelings does it evoke in them? Be aware that the reality of this story can be very, very disturbing to young people. Consider using the “I wonder...” “I notice...” approach.

Move on to explore with the campers the dynamics of competition in our days and in their lives. Explore what winning and losing mean. What experiences with winning and losing have the campers had? What does it feel like to win? What does it feel like to lose? Have they had interactions with those who have won? What has it felt like to interact with those who have lost?

Investigate with them what is at stake when we win or lose. What do we stand to gain when others lose? To what extent will people go to win? What are they willing to do to “win at all costs?” Inquire how eagerness to win can lead people to do things they wouldn’t otherwise do.

In the following section, Additional Study Ideas, see especially the story of Nate Haasis, a teen who chose not to win at all costs. And consider playing the Kirberg game described there.

Luke 23:26-43

I have suggested this as the “core” text of the study because it records an action of Jesus toward those who persecute him and harm him. They act to end his life; but he acts to help them. He understands that they really don’t know what they’re doing and prays God’s forgiveness for them. This story demonstrates Jesus’ integrity. Integrity happens when our words and our actions are in alignment. Jesus told his followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecuted them. He does this as his enemies rain down hatred upon him and kill him. Here we see Jesus literally doing what he commanded his followers to do: he prayed for his enemies, granting God’s loving forgiveness to them.

Notice also in the story the attitudes and words of the criminals who were hanged alongside Jesus. One of them mocks Jesus. *If you’re the Messiah, save yourself and us!* Can you and your campers imagine this fellow in terms of the earlier teaching of Jesus? How does his reaction to his own cross, his own dying, and his cynicism toward Jesus, illustrate the pattern of retribution and anger and hatred?

The second criminal rebukes the first, claiming they are justly condemned, while Jesus is innocent. He submits to the “rule” of retribution: they are getting what they deserve in return for whatever crimes they committed. With your campers, explore how this second criminal begins to enter the sphere of Jesus’ love. Imagine that he has heard Jesus’ praying and finds himself drawn into Jesus’ way. Imagine that he sees himself being embraced in God’s forgiveness as he asks Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Consider the reply of Jesus: “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Teaching Ideas

As with the prior story, let the drama unfold as it is read without much analysis. As I have already suggested, invite imagining, as if the campers were there.

Consider options for how this text, as a core text, may be an organizing story. Consider reversing this order of presentation. Would it be better to start with this text and move to the teaching texts? Or, would it be better to end with this text as a summary explanation point?

Finally, consider how all these texts go together. What is it that they address? How about this: any rule or way or expectation or calculation that expects us to maintain and justify our hostility toward those who have hurt us, or whom we regard as our enemy, needs to be challenged, broken, altered and replaced with Jesus’ path of compassion, love, and grace.

ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

A Helpful Theological Orientation

Martin Luther, in his Small Catechism of 1529, seized upon the dynamic at work in Jesus’ approach: *If the Rule Is... Break the Rule!* As Luther offered explanations to the Ten Commandments, we see this dynamic at play. Luther didn’t so much teach us to break the commandments, but to realize that merely keeping what they literally command doesn’t come close to fulfilling them.

Here are some examples:

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not murder

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life’s needs.

Here we see that the commandment is not fulfilled merely by avoiding murdering someone; the commandment is fulfilled by actually helping and supporting our neighbor in all of life’s needs.

The Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy the reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.

Here, again, it simply is not enough to avoid spreading lies and falsehoods about our neighbors. Instead, to fulfill the commandment, we are to aid them, help them establish a good reputation, and give even their questionable behavior the benefit of the doubt.

Resource for “An Eye For An Eye”

On Tuesday, January 10, 2017, a federal district court jury in Charleston, SC, decided to sentence Dylann Roof to death for his June 2015 attack on a black church's Bible study group after the panel found that life in prison offered no possibility of redemption for the 22-year-old.

Jurors took about three hours to make their decision after listening to closing arguments from prosecutors and Roof, who told the panel in a brief, disjointed statement that he continues to stand by his slaying of nine people at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The death penalty is a modern version of *lex talionis*, the law of retribution. The logic is that a murderer deserves punishment in kind. A killer is killed.

Roof's crimes were horrific. He attended a Bible study with 12 members and pastors of the church and waited until the end to kill them. Roof has written racist comments, indicating his intention to kill black people. He has stated that he has no regrets for what he did.

What is often missing from general media accounts of this story is that Roof was a member of an ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) congregation, having been confirmed in middle school. Also, two of the pastors he killed had attended an ELCA seminary for part of their ministerial training. Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, has drawn the attention of the whole church to these facts and has asked the church to engage in conversation about racism and our culpability in racist systems in our culture.

In the midst of these things, what light does Jesus' teaching shed? “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.” How can we make practical sense of these words in a world of such extreme violence and hatred? How can there be justice for those murdered and at the same time “turn the other cheek?”

In an article written not long after the murders, Michael Gerson wrote, “Forgiveness is not something soft or passive. It demonstrates spiritual maturity, strength of character, depth, discipline and steadiness. It is the sign of a determined faith, fighting against every natural human inclination. “I acknowledge that I am very angry,” said Bethane Middleton-Brown, the sister of one of the victims. But “she taught me that we are the family that love built. We have no room for hating.”

A daughter of one victim told an interviewer that everyone, including the killer, deserves a “second chance.” She made her point confidently and without bitterness. Forgiveness is also a form of freedom — a refusal to be ruled by anger or resentment. It is like laying a burden down.

Discuss the thoughts and feelings of your campers over the nature of Dylann Roof's crime, the punishment that has been determined for him, and the dynamics of both revenge and forgiveness.

Resource for Hating/Loving the Enemy

In recent years, the whole world has been engulfed in the crisis caused by refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria. Responses from the United States to this crisis have ranged from welcoming and accepting refugees to wanting to ban them from entering the country. Passions surrounding this crisis are inflamed and there is no agreement on how to proceed. In the early days of his presidency, President Donald Trump issued an executive order banning citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries and a moratorium on immigration that has been challenged in federal court. By the time camp begins, we will know more fully the shape of U.S. policy.

For our purposes, this whole crisis provides a case study in the dynamics of neighbor/enemy and how to respond. The old rule, “love your neighbor and hate your enemy,” as we have seen, is broken by Jesus who tells us to love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us. Many people view refugees as coming from a group of people who are our enemy. There is fear that along with refugees, terrorists will enter our country and wreak havoc. So, the whole group of refugees is often regarded as an enemy.

To familiarize yourself with the Syrian refugee crisis, here is a report from October, 2016, by the organization Mercy Corps, based in Portland, OR, that works with refugees.

Quick facts: What you need to know about the Syria crisis

Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, October 13, 2016

Syria’s civil war has created the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. Half the country’s pre-war population — more than 11 million people — have been killed or forced to flee their homes.

Families are struggling to survive inside Syria, or make a new home in neighboring countries. Others are risking their lives on the way to Europe, hoping to find acceptance and opportunity. And harsh winters and hot summers make life as a refugee even more difficult. At times, the effects of the conflict can seem overwhelming.

But one fact is simple: millions of Syrians need our help. According to the U.N., it will take \$7.7 billion to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable Syrians in 2016.

When did the crisis start?

Anti-government demonstrations began in March of 2011, part of the Arab Spring. But the peaceful protests quickly escalated after the government's violent crackdown, and armed opposition groups began fighting back.

By July, army defectors had loosely organized the Free Syrian Army and many civilian Syrians took up arms to join the opposition. Divisions between secular and religious fighters, and between ethnic groups, continue to complicate the politics of the conflict.

What is happening to Syrians caught in the war?

More than five years after it began, the war has killed a reported 470,000 people. Bombings are destroying crowded cities and horrific human rights violations are widespread. Basic necessities like food and medical care are sparse.

The U.N. estimates that 6.1 million people are internally displaced. When you also consider refugees, well over half of the country’s pre-war population of 22 million is in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, whether they still remain in the country or have escaped across the borders.

The situation in Syria went from bad to worse when outside parties began launching airstrikes in the fall of 2015. Each time bombing intensifies, our teams on the ground see an increase in the number of civilian casualties and families forced to leave their homes in search of safety.

In early February 2016, fighting around Aleppo City intensified. With roads into the city closed by conflict, Mercy Corps has not been able to resupply humanitarian aid to the people who depend on us. We are worried about how civilians will get food and other essentials.

The ability to provide lifesaving aid throughout the region is severely jeopardized as Mercy Corps balances the urgent need to both protect valuable supplies for unforeseen emergencies and ramp up distributions to those in need. We are stocking up supplies in areas where civilians may be cut off and strategically repositioning our staff.

Where are they fleeing to?

Many Syrian refugees are living in Jordan and Lebanon, where Mercy Corps has been addressing their needs since 2012. In the region’s two smallest countries, weak infrastructure and limited resources are nearing a breaking point under the strain.

In August 2013, more Syrians escaped into northern Iraq at a newly-opened border crossing. Now they are trapped by that country's own internal conflict, and Iraq is struggling to meet the needs of Syrian refugees on top of more than 1 million internally displaced Iraqis — efforts that we are working to support.

An increasing number of Syrian refugees are fleeing across the border into Turkey, overwhelming urban host communities and creating new cultural tensions. Mercy Corps is working in these areas as well to help families meet their urgent needs and build peaceful communities.

Many Syrians are also deciding they are better off starting over in Europe, attempting the dangerous trip across the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to Greece. Not all of them make it across alive. Those who do make it still face steep challenges — resources are strained, services are minimal and much of the route into western Europe has been closed.

How are people escaping?

Thousands of Syrians flee their country every day. They often decide to finally escape after seeing their neighborhoods bombed or family members killed.

The risks on the journey to the border can be as high as staying: Families walk for miles through the night to avoid being shot at by snipers or being caught by warring parties who will kidnap young men to fight for their cause.

How many refugees are there?

According to the U.N., about 11 million Syrians have been displaced from their homes — enough people to fill roughly 200 Yankee Stadiums. This includes about 4.8 million refugees who have been forced to seek safety in neighboring countries.

Every year of the conflict has seen an exponential growth in refugees. In July 2012, there were 100,000 refugees. One year later, there were 1.5 million. That tripled by the end of 2015.

There are now 4.8 million Syrians scattered throughout the region, making them the world's largest refugee population under the United Nations' mandate. It's the worst exodus since the Rwandan genocide 20 years ago.

Do all refugees live in camps?

The short answer: no. The U.N. estimates that only 1 in 10 Syrian refugees live in camps. The rest are struggling to settle in unfamiliar urban communities or have been forced into informal rural environments.

Jordan's Za'atari, the first official refugee camp that opened in July 2012, gets the most news coverage because it is the destination for newly-arrived refugees. It is also the most concentrated settlement of refugees: Approximately 80,000 Syrians live in Za'atari, making it one of the country's largest cities.

The formerly barren desert is crowded with acres of white tents, makeshift shops line a "main street" and sports fields and schools are available for children.

Azraq, a camp opened in April 2014, is carefully designed to provide a sense of community and security, with steel caravans instead of tents, a camp supermarket, and organized "streets" and "villages."

Because Jordan's camps are run by the government and the U.N. — with many partner organizations like Mercy Corps coordinating services — they offer more structure and support. But many families feel trapped, crowded, and even farther from any sense of home, so they seek shelter in nearby towns.

Iraq has set up a few camps to house the influx of refugees who arrived in 2013, but the majority of families are living in urban areas. And in Lebanon, the government has no official camps for refugees, so families establish makeshift camps or find shelter in derelict, abandoned buildings. In Turkey, the majority of refugees are trying to survive and find work, despite the language barrier, in urban communities.

What conditions are refugees facing outside camps?

Some Syrians know people in neighboring countries who they can stay with. But many host families were already struggling on meager incomes and do not have the room or finances to help as the crisis drags on. Refugees find shelter wherever they can. Our teams have seen families living in rooms with no heat or running water, in abandoned chicken coops and in storage sheds.

Most refugees must find a way to pay rent, even for derelict structures. Without any legal way to work in Jordan and Lebanon, they struggle to find odd jobs and accept low wages that often don't cover their most basic needs. The situation is

slightly better in the Kurdish Autonomous region of northern Iraq, where Syrian Kurds can legally work, but opportunities are now limited because of the conflict there. And language is still a barrier.

The lack of clean water and sanitation in crowded, makeshift settlements is an urgent concern. Diseases like cholera and polio can easily spread — even more life-threatening without enough medical services. In some areas with the largest refugee populations, water shortages have reached emergency levels; the supply is as low as 30 liters per person per day — one-tenth of what the average American uses.

The youngest refugees face an uncertain future. Some schools have been able to divide the school day into two shifts and make room for more Syrian students. But there is simply not enough space for all the children, and many families cannot afford the transportation to get their kids to school.

How many refugees are children?

According to the U.N., more than half of all Syrian refugees — roughly 2.5 million — are under the age of 18. Most have been out of school for months, if not years. About 35,000 school buses would be needed to drive every young refugee back to Syria.

The youngest are confused and scared by their experiences, lacking the sense of safety and home they need. The older children are forced to grow up too fast, finding work and taking care of their family in desperate circumstances.

One demographic that is largely overlooked is adolescents. Through Mercy Corps' extensive work in and around Syria, we continuously witness young adults and adolescents in crisis.

The consequence of forgetting the unique needs of this next generation is they will become adults who are ill-equipped to mend torn social fabric and rebuild broken economies. Investing in adolescents now will yield dividends for decades to come for the peace and productivity so desperately needed in Syria and the region.

Is there enough assistance to reach everyone?

With no peace in sight, Mercy Corps and other humanitarian organizations are struggling just to keep up with needs that continue to grow exponentially. U.N. appeals have been significantly underfunded every single year since the start of the crisis.

During 2016, the U.N. predicts \$7.7 billion is required to provide emergency support and stabilization to families throughout the region. As of early December, just half of this appeal has been funded.

It's essential that, in addition to funding emergency assistance, the U.N. and donor governments fund long-term programs that address the underlying causes of the conflict, build resilience and promote peaceful communities.

Resources for “Winning At All Costs”

Here's a story of someone who rejected the lure of “winning at all costs.” This is the story of Nate Haasis, a high-school quarterback. The following is an article from the *New York Times*, entitled “HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL; Quarterback Is Rejecting Mark He Feels Is Tainted,” written by David Pickernov, November 1, 2003

A week ago, Nate Haasis, the quarterback of a high school football team in Springfield, Ill., became his conference's leader in career passing yardage. Now he is winning praise for requesting that the record be expunged.

Haasis, a senior at Springfield Southeast High School, broke the record of 4,998 yards with a 37-yard pass on the final play of his team's 42-20 loss to Cahokia High School in the season-ending game last Saturday. The opportunity to break the record would never have occurred had the coaches of both teams not orchestrated a plan that enabled Haasis to shatter the mark, however.

Haasis is now asking for the disputed pass to be stricken from the record book, leaving him short of the record with 4,969 yards.

In a letter to the Central State Eight Conference's president, Chuck Hoots, Haasis wrote: "While I admittedly would like to have passed the record, as I think most high school quarterbacks would, I am requesting that the Central State Eight does not include this pass in the record books. Reaching 4,969

yards required a lot of cooperation and hard work from my teammates. I do not wish to diminish the accomplishments that were made in the last three years."

According to Barron Robinson, the principal at Southeast, a timeout was called with about 30 seconds remaining and Cahokia in possession of the ball. Southeast Coach Neal Taylor agreed to let Cahokia score a touchdown so that his team would get the ball back, Robinson said. In return, Cahokia Coach Antwyne Golliday agreed to give Haasis an uncontested chance to break the record, set by Griff Jurgens in 1998, Robinson said.

After Cahokia scored, it sent the ensuing kickoff out of bounds. On the game's final play, Cahokia's players competed with their arms in their jerseys, essentially giving the record to Haasis, Robinson said.

Taylor could not be reached for comment yesterday. He told The State Journal-Register of Springfield: "My intention was just to get Nate's name in the record book. I wasn't trying to hurt Griff Jurgens or his family. It was just an attempt to do something good. And no good came of it."

Robinson applauded Haasis for refusing to accept the record. "I am proud of what he did," Robinson said of Haasis's letter, adding: "He didn't like receiving a conference record in the manner he did. He didn't want a record that was tainted."

Robinson would not elaborate on his feelings toward Taylor, saying only, "This is a topic of concern, let's leave it at that."

Last season Haasis broke the school record for career passing yardage, and earlier this season he eclipsed the city record.

Haasis still holds the conference record with 5,006 yards, but that will most likely change in a few days. On Wednesday, the conference will meet to determine whether his request to remove the pass from the record book should be granted. The principals of each of the eight schools in the conference get one vote.

"I can't make any predictions," Hoots, the conference president and the principal of Springfield High School, said of the impending vote. "If he has asked that, and his principal and athletic director support it, it will probably pass. I can't imagine why someone would be against it."

The Illinois High School Association, which oversees high school sports in the state, will not take action until the conference votes on Haasis's request, but it has launched an investigation into the final play. "Generally speaking, we're not likely to recognize the last play," said Marty Hickman, the association's executive director.

As it turned out, the Illinois High School Association granted Haasis's request. He was stripped of the record. Haasis' decision earned his mother's pride. "I was proud that the record wasn't that important to him, that he's a kid that goes into every game with the intention playing his best and winning the game," said Sharon Haasis.

His father, Louis, agreed. "It's gratifying to know that he's a typical teenage kid, that does things we don't agree with all the time, and to try to teach him certain values, and it's good to know that some of that has sunk in," he said.

Nate Haasis was someone who loved competing and winning, but not at all costs!

*Play Kirberg Game listed on page 35

IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- 1) Have campers write down on flash paper or water soluble paper stories/examples/instances in which they are wrapped up in thoughts or actions of revenge, of hating someone for some reason (be being hated/disliked/beset by others). Pray together extemporaneously and then burn up or dissolve the paper, noting the symbolism of these painful realities consumed/washed away in God's love.
- 2) Low ropes games where "winning" includes everyone being a part of what's going on
- 3) Institute a rule for the day – no one can say "I hate" anything – if caught the have to do something – like 5 jumping jacks or hug 5 people
- 4) Hold hands as you pray
- 5) Play games where there's really no "winner" per se – but you play to have a good time. Games like:

a. Lap sit – see how big of a group you can have sit on each other’s lap at one time. The group stands in a circle facing the back of the person next to them. On the count of three everyone bends down to 1) Make a lap for the person in front of them to sit and 2) to sit on the lap of the person behind them. It takes the whole group working together in order for it to work.

OTHER SONGS, STORIES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Recorded Songs:

“More Heart Less Attack” by Needtobreathe

“The Light in Me” by Brandon Heath

Songs from the RTALC songbook:

Create In Me a Clean Heart

Humble Thyself

Shine Jesus Shine

Pass It On

We Are The Family of God

There’s A Place

Here I Am, Lord

They’ll Know We Are Christians

We Are Walking In The Light of God

Question to Ponder:

Discuss this quote, attributed to Nelson Mandela: “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

Other Bible studies in this packet might also say that younger campers will have a rather more concrete relationship to rules. Rules function as ordering principles for daily life: rules at home for daily hygiene, rules for chores, rules for bedtime, rules for doing homework, rules about remembering to say please and thank you. These are life-giving rules that help young people become responsible people that care for themselves and others, that help them honor others, and help them establish habits that will be affirmed as choices as they mature.

Nevertheless, see how much relational value and love is already present in these rules. These rules exist to help, not burden. Even so, consider exploring with younger campers how they feel about rules. Often, children at this age complain about rules; yet they also will tell you (if not in words) how ungrounded and lost they are without them.

Find out how even these rules are bent in their lives. Be attentive to how they feel when they are punished for failing to follow rules. See how easily the desire to control others can be experienced at this stage of life.

At this point in life, campers may be wary of the idea that Jesus encourages us to break rules. Be sure to assure them that Jesus is not encouraging lawlessness. He is not encouraging disorder and chaos. He is, above all, saying that people matter the most, even more than our rules. This may feel dangerous.

At the same time, consider that these young people may have a very sophisticated and even intuitive – if less articulate – understanding of the dynamics of revenge, hatred, and winning at all costs. Their sense of justice can be utterly pure. They are young but are already gifted by the Holy Spirit with the viewpoint of Jesus: call upon it, nourish it, encourage it, see it when it is in view.

Have them name someone who has treated them unjustly or whom they have seen treat others unjustly. Talk about what happened and how it made them feel. Then, immediately after the camper shares, have the group pray for the person named and for healing and forgiveness. This concrete action will help younger campers understand actual forgiveness.

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR. HIGH

Senior High students have much more life experience – some of it rather hard – in the dynamics of vengeance, hatred, and struggles over winning with grace or winning with scorched earth determination. As we saw above, Nate Haasis was a high school senior who faced the ethical dilemma of accepting the validity of his passing record.

In a heartbreaking example, last year Denver Wolf, a student at Air Academy High School in Colorado Springs, was shot to death by her father at the end of a Spring break trip they took together. News reports tell of domestic violence in the home of her parents, who had divorced sometime before the murder. After shooting Denver, her father killed himself.

As one could imagine, Denver’s violent death resulted in a tremendous outpouring of grief the community that knew and loved her. In the midst of that grief, a candlelight vigil was held at Christ the King Lutheran Church, a church in the neighborhood where Denver lived and went to school. Many students, teachers, administrators and other people from the surrounding community gathered to remember Denver and to share their heart wrenching pain.

Be aware that your senior high campers are likely touched by very difficult circumstances in their lives. On the cusp of adulthood, their lives may be more tangled up in the intricacies of vengeance and violent expressions of hatred.

Give them room to talk about personal experiences and how that has made them feel, but also what’s the lasting impact on them? How might they be able to make the world around them a better place?

KIRBERG GAME

Marble Roll (SEE MONDAY’S KIRBERG GAME)

Yes, same activity, same rules, different framing. In this version, split your Bible study group into two teams, or partner with another Bible study group. Give the instruction that the object is get the marbles into the container within 30 seconds of each other. This inevitably leads to a competition between the groups to be the first to get all of their marbles in the container, even when it is *not* said that this is a competitive activity or that the goal is to win by being first. Competition or the apparent goal of winning at all costs, leads to more rule violations and the justification of breaking the rules for the glory of winning. Conversely, do the two teams work together for the greater good? Do they partner so all members are successful and break the rule of “winning at all costs?” Secular rules say that winning is most important and valued. Vince Lombardi’s quote that, “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing,” is one example of this way of thinking. Jesus’s command (rule) is to love our neighbors as ourselves. Do we see the ‘other’ team as a threat to be beaten or defeated, or as fellow neighbors, brothers and sisters whose shared success gives glory to God?

Materials/props: One marble and one corner molding stick/camper.

Frame: Identify the marbles as people in the campers’ lives, or as themselves, and the stick as support systems (other people, etc.)

Objective: Move the marbles safely from a starting point, then dropped into a small container at the end point. You can set a time limit to accomplish this task based on age and skill level of the group, study location, etc.

PARENTAL DEVOTION

Scripture Matthew 5:38-42

[Jesus said], “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.”

Reflection

The law that Jesus quotes is the ancient *lex talionis*, or “law of retribution.” We see it as far back as the Code of Hammurabi, a Babylonian law code of ancient Mesopotamia. We see it in the ancient scriptures of Israel: “Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered” (Leviticus 24:19-21). While this law allows for vengeance, it was intended to limit that vengeance. *Only* an eye for an eye. *Only* a tooth for a tooth.

Yet Jesus confronts even this limited retribution, putting an end to the game of vengeance. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, not only don't hit them back. Turn the other cheek also!

None of what Jesus says may seem remotely reasonable when we consider the pain we have suffered at the hands of others. Our natural response is revenge. Yet, what does revenge gain us? After all, our eye will still be gone. Our teeth will still be missing. What can throw a monkey wrench into the gears of ongoing retaliation?

Only rule of love. Only when we love people more than the rules that govern us. Only when we follow the lead of Jesus.

Family Activity

Sit together at a quiet time, perhaps after a meal together. Light a candle in the center of your gathering, remembering God's loving presence among you. Read the Bible passage above and invite each person to share a story of being hurt by someone else. Explore how it felt to be harmed by another. Share what natural reactions arose within your heart and what actions may have followed. What were the consequences of those actions? When everyone's had a chance to share, discuss this quote, attributed to Nelson Mandela: "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies." At camp today, we'll hear the song, "Losing," by Tenth Avenue North. Find it on YouTube and listen together.

Close with prayer:

God of all grace, in Jesus you have given us light in our darkness. Walk with us now into the darkest places where we have been hurt by others, places in which anger swells in our hearts and our desire for revenge is strong. Help us put down the poisonous cup of resentment and anger. Heal our hurts. Help us break the cycle of revenge. Help us lead lives of love, even for our enemies. Amen.

2017 BIBLE STUDY “BREAKIN’ ALL THE RULES”

Day 4 - If the Rule Is: Need More to Be More...Break the Rule

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light...
1 Peter 2:9*

...I will not forget you. See I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands...Isaiah 49:15-16

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

They were two girls in our youth group in Minnesota and they were both outstanding soccer players...that hated to play soccer. But the message their dad gave them was clear: you are only worth my time and attention when you excel in soccer. So they played and never felt good enough. She is a friend who is 19 and the battle with eating disorders has ruled her life for 5 years now. In and out of hospitals and treatment centers, the darkness of bulimia tells her she is unlovable and the message is loud. He was a child of friends and a young man in my congregation in Colorado when at 13 a concussion with horrible side effects sidelined him and turned his world upside down. He turned to marijuana and drugs to cope. Struggling with feeling like he never really fit in and was never going to be “good enough” at life, and feeling like he was a constant burden to those around him, he died by suicide at the age of 15.

The rule of our world that says: *who you are and what you have is never enough*...is rampant and destroys lives over and over again. It leads us into debt in order to have the newest, shiniest, and best. It leads us into envy and dissatisfaction with our lives because “they” are better and have more than me. It leads us to give up our bodies and souls to the abuse and manipulation of those who tell us, “if only you will, then I will”. This rule leads to some of the darkest places of our souls – gaining hold of the very core of who we are, and telling us we’ll never be enough.

And it’s a rule that’s a lie.

Jesus proved this over and over again in places like a well in Samaria at noon in 120+degree heat, or in the middle of a crowd of children. He proved it at a dinner table and with a young man who had a lot of great stuff. In fact, Jesus’ whole ministry was about showing time and again that each person – who they were and who we are – are more than enough in him. For him.

Today, we will dare to enter the darkness and lie of “not enough” and come out the other side into the light of Jesus’ “you are more than enough in my eyes”. Into the light of freedom and love – for ourselves and then for others as well.

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Recognize the darkness in the “rule” of our society that says – who you are, what you have is never enough
- Reframe campers’ sense of identity away from what the world says and into what Jesus says
- Learn how to break the rule – break free from the darkness of “not enough” and walk into the light of freedom found living as “chosen, beloved one of Jesus”

* **Today’s Goal:** empower your campers with the love and grace of Jesus that says not only “are you ok”...but “you. are. enough”. Period.

MORNING WATCH

Welcome: (Someone reads)

Welcome to Morning watch. Today be washed in the love of Jesus for you and hear the words of his heart for you: ...I will not forget you. See I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands...Isaiah 49:15-16

Scripture:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light...1 Peter 2:9

Song: Greater by Mercy Me

Bring your tired
And bring your shame
Bring your guilt
And bring your pain
Don't you know that's not your name
You will always be much more to me

Every day I wrestle with the voices
That keep telling me I'm not right
But that's alright

'Cause I hear a voice and He calls me redeemed
When others say I'll never be enough
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world
In the world
In the world
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world.

Bring your doubts and bring your fears
Bring your hurt
And bring your tears
There'll be no condemnation here
You are holy, righteous and redeemed

Every time I fall
There'll be those who will call me
A mistake
Well that's okay

'Cause I hear a voice and He calls me redeemed
When others say I'll never be enough
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world
In the world
In the world
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world.

There'll be days I lose the battle
Grace says that it doesn't matter
'Cause the cross already won the war
He's greater, He's greater

I am learning to run freely
Understanding just how He sees me
And it makes me love Him more and more
He's greater, he's greater

There'll be days I lose the battle
Grace says that it doesn't matter
'Cause the cross already won the war
He's greater, He's greater

I am learning to run freely
Understanding just how He sees me
And it makes me love Him more and more
He's greater, he's greater

'Cause I hear a voice and He calls me redeemed
When others say I'll never be enough
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world
In the world
In the world
And greater is the One living inside of me
Than he who is living in the world.

There'll be days I lose the battle
Grace says that it doesn't matter
'Cause the cross already won the war
He's greater, He's greater

I am learning to run freely
Understanding just how He sees me
And it makes me love Him more and more
My God is greater
Then he who is living in the world

Questions for God Time:

- 1) What happens in your life when you focus only on what you want or don't have? Do you get frustrated? Do you become unhappy with what you have?
- 2) Our world tells us in all kinds of ways that we always need more and need to be more. Where do you hear or see these messages in your life?
- 3) When in your life have you felt like you weren't enough? Who in your life has made you feel like you aren't enough?
- 4) How might your life be different if you chose to believe Jesus when he says that who you are is enough? Read back over the words of this morning's song and think about how it might be to live your life believing those words.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, I often feel like no matter how hard I try – it's not enough and I'm not enough. Help me today, to choose to believe you made me just like you wanted and that in your eyes – I am enough. I. Am. Enough. Thank you, Jesus...in your name and power I pray, Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Back in the 1920's, Listerine changed the face of advertising. The company started an ad campaign that promoted Listerine as a solution for "chronic halitosis", a then obscure medical term for bad breath. Up until that time, bad breath was not culturally a catastrophe. But Listerine changed that. Instead of selling mouthwash, they sold the remedy for halitosis. For the first time, advertising wasn't selling a product – it was selling the "fix to a created need". That changed the whole face of advertising. Look in any magazine, watch TV for a while, look at the ads that pop up on your social media...it's all selling you a "cure" to your "need". Your need to be the prettiest, fastest, best, most modern, skinniest, shiniest hair, most attractive to the opposite sex...did you know you had so many needs!?

It all plays into the "rule": "Who we are and what we have is never enough". We need to have more than what we have, we need to be more than what we are. And this rule, this lie...runs rampant over our self-esteem, self-worth and self-identity.

Today, the goal is to recognize the power of this rule in our lives when we buy into it; how it makes us feel, how it makes us act. And then turn the tables on the rule/lie and give campers a handle on the truth of Jesus – the one who breaks through this rule/lie and says – you are enough, you have enough.

The main scripture for today are two stories – both about Jesus and how he helps us see past the rule/lie. In the first story a young man comes to Jesus and his focus is on following the rules. Jesus knew the true matter with his heart was his possessions...and so Jesus calls him to let go of all that he has and simply come as he is. The young can't do it and goes away sad.

In the second story, we encounter a woman and a Pharisee. One who thinks he's all that and is very judgmental and one who comes to Jesus simply as herself with a jar of perfume and her tears. The tables are turned when the one who thinks he's better than enough is left gaping at Jesus who shows us the woman is actually the one who is more than enough just as she is.

Matthew 19:16-22 - ¹⁶ Then a young man came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸ He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰ The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

I have often heard it asked – do you own your stuff, or does your stuff own you? It's a good question to ask and to be honest about.

Here, Jesus is approached by a young man, who is seemingly doing quite well. He holds his wealth lightly – seeing it as a sign of divine favor – and honestly and humbly approaches Jesus. He really wants to know what good he needs to do in order to have eternal life, the ultimate blessing on top of earthly blessings.

Jesus' reply helps us and the young man to see that he has all the moral instruction he requires. He knows what to do and how to live. He's following the rules. But with his statement/question, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" we understand this young man still felt something missing. Jesus doesn't chide him or call him out as egotistical. Rather Jesus puts his finger not to some flaw in the young man, but on the popular wisdom that regards wealth and power as signs of God's favor. (they had prosperity gospel teaching even back then!)

Jesus makes this alarming suggestion – how about poverty as a sign of God's favor and blessing? He tells the young man...if you want to be whole – go, sell all your stuff, give the proceeds to the poor. Let go and follow me. Come, let go and be with me. And the young man...is speechless. Give up his stuff? Jesus' call goes right to the bedrock of this man's life – while he says it's God, in truth, his heart is divided. To some extent he wants God, but he wants his stuff more.

His hand was firmly gripping all that stuff. And even for Jesus, he couldn't let go. But before we're too harsh in our judgment of this young man...we must ask ourselves the very question Jesus asked – Am I willing to let go of all my stuff

in order to follow Jesus? If you're like me, you immediately think of the things that wouldn't be that hard to let go. But what if the request was to let go of ALL your possessions? Could you do it? Would you do it?

Another way to look at it is this...does your stuff, or the care/upkeep of your stuff keep you from investing in relationships? Does it keep you from following Jesus? I know a couple who was intent on having a house and really nice stuff: TVs, stereo systems, furniture, bikes and snowmobiles, ATV's and ski equipment. Now – in and of themselves these things are not evil...but what they did to this couple was.

Because two things happened: 1) they got so far in debt they both had to have full time jobs just to barely scrape by with all the payments. They became so focused on making money to pay for their stuff, they no time for anything else. 2) When they weren't fretting over finances, they were almost manic about using their stuff – they “had” to go skiing, snowmobiling, ATV-ing on the weekends. Then there was always something newer, bigger, better than what they had...so they were always dissatisfied. They isolated themselves to the point where they felt like they had no friends.

Who owned who here? The stuff clearly owned this couple. It's insidious and it's real.

Jesus calls to this young man and he calls to us –do you have room for me or does your stuff take precedence in your life? If you don't think your stuff rules your life...think about your answer to these questions:

- How much time do you spend on your phone, game systems, or Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, social media or any kind? How much time do you spend using screens? Tally it up some week. Or day. Then, tally up how much time in that same time frame you spent with Jesus...learning, listening, immersing yourself in his love. Which one “wins”? (And sorry, but “camp time” doesn't count in this one! ☺ This is your life away from camp...)
- How much of what you ask for as presents at birthdays/Christmas, etc. is stuff? How much of your expendable income is spent on stuff – improving, getting the bigger, nicer, better...or working towards that?

Our honest answers here will often call us to own being that young man.

For your campers, this is so very real. They are judged constantly by their stuff. Do you have the latest iPhone? Are you wearing the right brands/styles of clothes? Look at him – he has...what? A flip phone! Hahahahahaha! Look at her...I bet those aren't real Uggs...there's no way she could afford them. Just look at her. You don't get a car when you turn 16? Sucks to be you. You know the truth of this – because you've lived it too.

Jesus' heart here is clear – it's not that the things we have are bad – but when our stuff starts deciding who's cool and in and who's not...takes all our time or when we are never satisfied with what we have...then our stuff becomes a barrier – to Jesus and to other people.

The goal with this story is to help students identify how much time/effort/focus they spend on stuff and how much more Jesus longs for their hearts. Jesus doesn't want their latest game system or iPad. He wants them.

Luke 7:36-40, 44b-48

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.

³⁷ And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸ She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.” ⁴⁰ Jesus spoke up and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” “Teacher,” he replied, “speak...

...Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹ But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Where the first story points to our relationship with our stuff...this story goes right to the heart of who is acceptable to Jesus. And it's not who the people in the story think!

Jesus is dining at the home of a Pharisee – invited by the Pharisee himself. It is important to note while Jesus and the Pharisees were often at odds, Jesus did not cast them aside. His love was for all people. And the stories around eating and who is at the table are all reflections of who gets to be on the guest list of that great final messianic banquet someday.

Jesus is eating dinner, with a bunch of men as would have been the custom in that day. They sat at low tables in a somewhat reclining position with their feet away from the table. Because they wore sandals and the roads were dusty and dirty, it was common practice for the host to provide water and a towel for guests to wash their feet with. Or in more prosperous homes, a servant would wash guests' feet for them. It was also customary to greet visitors with a kiss – like many cultures still do today. We learn later in the story, Simon the Pharisee, did none of this for Jesus. Was it an oversight? Was it intentional? We don't know, but we do know to not offer these would be a breach of etiquette.

So, Jesus is eating with a bunch of guys and here comes this woman. Her behavior is stunning. She enters a home where she knows she will not be welcome, comes directly to Jesus and weeping, uses her tears to wash Jesus' feet, her hair to dry them. Then, she anoints his feet with costly ointment.

Now Simon, is bent out of shape. He knows he didn't extend great hospitality to Jesus, but what his focus is on is the woman. And the fact that Jesus, as a prophet, should know that she's a "sinner". There is long standing tradition that marks her a prostitute but her sin is never disclosed. This tradition probably says more about the interpreter's biases than about the woman's past. Truth is what Jesus does with her and her act is way more important.

For Jesus takes this woman, as she is...in her imperfection and sin accepts her gift of love and sets her up as an example of what love does. She didn't have to change to be acceptable. She didn't have to clean up her life, make sure her beliefs were "right"...she didn't have to conform to someone else's idea of who she was or should be. She simply came, trusting Jesus would accept her as she was. He did and still does.

For the woman in the story could be any one of us.

And Jesus comes and welcomes us as we are. He takes down the rule/lie that we are not enough – that somehow we have to try harder, be better, be more than we are. And in taking down that rule, that lie, Jesus welcomes us and all people, as we are.

For campers today, this message of absolute acceptance is one few of them if any know. In our world of "you're never enough"...they will most likely have felt more of the shame, the not good enough the woman obviously felt as well. They can relate to being the one someone looks down on. They know what it's like to feel there is always someone better, more talented, more gifted, better looking, etc. And that they are lacking.

The message comes in a thousand ways from places expected and not. Parents, teachers, coaches, youth directors, pastors, siblings, friends, the kid across the classroom, the bully in the school yard are all possible sources of messages that say you're not enough. Add to that advertising on TV, social media, magazines and the messages of not enough are drilled home countless times a day, every day.

But the truth we have to share today, just like Jesus shared at that dinner table is that each of us, each camper, is enough. In Jesus and for Jesus...we are enough. You, my friend...camp staff...you are enough. Whether this is your first year on camp staff or you've been here forever...you are enough.

I would suggest you check with yourself and see how deeply (or not) you believe this for yourself. For you cannot give what you do not have. Practice in front of the mirror – saying – I am enough. Write it down or make it your screen background. Put yourself in the place of the woman in this story. Let Jesus look at you with love and remind you – you are enough.

The darkness of never having or being enough is powerful and pulls us down into it relentlessly. But we have the chance to make a different ending to the story of the young man...we can choose Jesus and his truth and light and walk into the freedom of living enough. This is the gift we want to give our campers today, too.

Actual Possible Study

Quick review:

Start with a quick review. Ask campers:

- *What have you learned or is sticking with you so far?*

- *What are the rules we've talked about breaking?*
- *Is there anything you're struggling with? Or have heard but don't agree with? Or question?*

Check-in:

Tell the group today you're going to do a check-in. Each person gets to answer each question and when they are done, they say, "I'm in" and the group responds with, "Bless you!" It helps kids pay attention but also helps everyone know when the person speaking is done.

- 1st round: What is one thing you really, really want? Like you're saving your money or hoping for, for your birthday...that thing that will "make you so happy"?
- 2nd round: Share if you had \$1million and unlimited time, what would you do?
- ***If you have a group that has a hard time paying attention or needs distractions while they talk...here are some ideas to help:*
- *have a talking stone – when you hold the rock that's your time to talk*
- *have everyone turn to a partner and share their answer with their partner...then have partners share each other's answers with the group or simply ask each person to share what they shared with their partner*
- *have everyone stand up and once they have spoken have them sit down (or vice versa)*
- *while you're walking to your bible study spot, walk for a short way then stop and ask a question. After everyone has answered, walk a short way further, stop ask another questions. Keep this going till you get to your bible study spot.*

Intro today's theme:

If the rule is need more/be more...break the rule.

Today the rule we want to break is the rule that tells us we'll never have enough or we'll never be enough. In our world today, these messages shout out to us from all directions. We hear it in advertising, we hear it from people at school, even sometimes from our families or church people. You're not cool enough, athletic enough, talented enough, smart enough. You don't have the latest gear, tech gadget, or clothes. All these tell us we're not enough. But Jesus came and not only told us to break this rule, he broke it himself...to make sure we know in his eyes we ARE enough. When we realize we have more than enough, alongside knowing we are enough, we can then live lives that overflow with love for Jesus and for others.

Getting Started:

Gotcha!

Players stand in a circle, arms out to the side. Their left palm is up with their right index finger pointing down, touching their neighbor's outstretched palm. When everyone is ready, you say "go"! The players in the circle attempt to both grab the finger of the person on their left hand and prevent their right finger from being grabbed by pulling it away (good to demonstrate this first or do a practice round). Once everyone understands, tell them you'll count down...so get ready...3...2...1...go! ... (add suspense)

If their finger is grabbed, they are out. If a player grabs a finger at the same time their finger is grabbed, they are neutral and get to stay in the game. Repeat several times until only two people are remaining. The trick is in building up suspense before "go!" because many players will jump the gun, adding to the fun.

When you get done, have everyone sit down and ask:

- *What was it like to be one of the first ones out?*
- *What was it like to be the ones in at the very end?*
- *How might we have done this differently so that everyone still got to be part of what was going on? (ONCE THE GROUP HAS COME up with an idea or two – try the game that way)*

When you are completely done with the game, say something like:

In our world, we are often made to feel not as good as others simply because we can't play a game as well, or play an instrument as well...or we struggle in school. Jesus did a lot to make sure people knew whoever they were, no matter what others thought, they were enough for him. He loved them. Completely. Wholly. And accepted them as they were. He also made it really clear that he longs to be more important than the things we have, so we'll know how much he loves us. Let's take a look at two stories that will help us see Jesus breaking the rules of "need more/be more" to be ok.

Scripture:

Divide your group into two smaller groups. Have one group take a look at **Matthew 19:16-22** and the other group look at **Luke 7:36-40, 44-48**. Give each group these instructions:

In both of these stories, Jesus wants to help others break the rules – I don't have enough and I am not enough. As your group reads your story you want to identify two things:

- 1) *Who is the main character in the story, besides Jesus?*
- 2) *What is the message Jesus wants them to hear?*

**** Remember some campers have never used a bible before, so go between your two groups, helping as needed, helping them understand as needed. Be ready not to tell them answers, but to guide them to the answers, so they can answer for themselves.**

Once the groups have their answers, have each group report back to the whole group. Then ask:

- *Do you think Jesus was sad when the young man walked away? What makes you say that?*
- *Do you think the young man realized that Jesus was more interested in his heart, than in him following the all the rules?*
- *What do you think you'd feel like if you were the woman washing Jesus' feet?*
- *Do you think the woman realized that Jesus saw her and loved her as she was? Why do you say that?*

Activity: In Order to Be Happy

Now, have everyone stand up and make a line in the middle of your space. Tell them you are going to give them a number of choices and they need to go the side of the space that fits them better. They can't stay in the middle. They have to choose one side or the other. Once they are all lined up say:

- In order to be happy:
 - o One side: I need to have new and stylish clothes
 - o Other side: I want comfortable clothes no matter if they're the right brand or not
- In order to be happy:
 - o One side: I need to have the latest style phone
 - o Other side: I want whatever my parents think is best for me
- In order to be happy:
 - o One side: I want to be in the "in crowd" at school
 - o Other side: I want a close group of friends whether they're "popular" or not
- In order to be happy:
 - o One side: I have to excel at lots of things
 - o Other side: I am OK to be who I am

Now have everyone sit down. Hopefully there was some discussion going on as people decided which side to choose. But now, say something like:

We all have ideas about what will make us happy. And often what we think will make us happy is defined by groups around us – like the cool kids, the athletic kids, the kids who get in trouble, etc. But often even when we think those things will make us happy – they don't, because there's often this fear that we will either lose what we have or someone else will have something better. And so we end up feeling left out, not good enough, and alone.

Next I have a question I want you to answer really honestly. Remember that what we talk about here in this group stays in this group. We won't talk to anyone else about what we hear or say. Can everyone agree to that? Thanks. My question is:

Have you ever felt not good enough? If so, where were you and what happened? I'll go first...

(share honestly and age appropriately...if you have questions about what appropriate, ask one of the directors before you share). After you share, give time and space for others to share. This is one place where sometimes having a talking stone or stick that the person who is sharing holds while they're talking and then when the next person is ready they take the stick. Gives the person talking something to hold onto, which gives a measure of safety.

****This is a question that could open up all kinds of thing, especially since you've been together all week and hopefully your group has gotten to the place of trusting each other. If people cry, let them know it's OK...and sit quietly with them. Let feelings and empathy run deep here. This is a place to acknowledge the hurt of not feeling enough...**

When everyone has had a chance to share...ask the group to grab hands and pray something like this:

Jesus, we come to you now, knowing we have all felt like we're not enough at times. We've been hurt and our hearts broken. We know you are here and we choose right now to believe in your love for us. So, thank you, Jesus for walking with us always. In your name we pray, Amen.

Break the Rule...You ARE Enough

This is a two part activity...but it's important you do both parts!

Part 1: Break the Rule...shatter the darkness

Have each person find a stone. (it should be big enough to hold, small enough to throw). Once everyone has found a stone stand in a circle with each person holding their stone cupped in their hands. Then say something like this:

When we live in the darkness of the rule "need more/be more", the rule that tells us we'll never have enough or be enough...it is like carrying a stone around our necks. It gets heavy and it's a burden. It pulls us down and keeps us from living the life Jesus longs for us to live with him. So, we are going to symbolically break the rule. We're going to do this by saying: I'm going to break the rule of not good enough". First, each one of us will say it individually. Then we're going to say it as a group, again and again and we're going to get louder and louder. When we're really loud I'll count to 3 and then we'll all break the rule by throwing our stones as far away from us as we can. I'll go first.

After each person has made his/her individual statement then start chanting together as a group getting louder and louder. When it feels right – count to three and as a group throw your stones as far from you as you can. After you throw the stones – start high fiving your group and cheering!

(if you are close to buildings or structures, make sure to remind your campers to throw their stones away from such things).

Part 2: You Are Enough...step into the light

Now, pull your group back together, either sitting or standing – whatever feels right. Say something like:

That was awesome! And you all are fabulous! Way to go! Let's keep breaking that rule, right? Each one of us is good enough just as we are. If you remember nothing else from today – remember that. You are good enough just as you are. And I want you to remember that. So here's what we're going to do. I'm going to come to each one of you individually and I have something I want to give you. To help you remember that you are enough.

At this point, go to the first camper, ask them if you can put your hand on their heart or shoulder and say: (make sure you look them in the eyes as much as possible)

(CAMPER NAME)...child of God. You are chosen by Jesus. He will never forget you or leave you. Your name is written on the palm of his hand and his love is written on your heart. In his eyes, you...are...enough. Just as you are. Walk out of the darkness into the light of his love for you. You are enough.

After you have said this to the camper, give them their "I Am Enough" sticker or button, and share a hug, handshake, high five, whatever feels right in that moment.

Closing Prayer

Gather everyone together again in a circle and tell them you are going to pray out. If there is time, encourage each of them to pray their own petition (you can either use the squeeze prayer method, where you hold hands and when you're done praying you lightly squeeze the hand of the person on your right or you can popcorn prayer style it where kids just speak whenever they want to). Make sure you close the prayer time.

Supplies you need for this study

- "I am enough" stickers or buttons
- cards that have the words of blessing written on them – so you can read off the card:
CAMPER NAME...child of God. You are chosen by Jesus. He will never forget you or leave you. Your name is written on the palm of his hand and his love is written on your heart. In his eyes, you...are...enough. Just as you are. Walk out of the darkness into the light of his love for you. You are enough.
- blank pieces of paper for campers to write their words of encouragement on (if you choose to do this activity)

ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

* **If you have a group that is more active...**make a bigger deal about finding stones. Maybe

you do some of the walking and sharing as you go looking for stones. For example, you could say:

- *We're going to go for a walk now. While we're walking I want you to find a stone. Big enough to hold in your hands, but small enough so you can throw it. While we're walking I want you to think about times when you've felt like you weren't enough (or I want you to think about ways people make others feel like they're not good enough). Each time someone finds a good stone, we're going to stop and share one idea someone has thought of.*

Then go walking. When you're done walking you could then go into the last activity.

***If a particular group needs to work** on the idea that they have way more stuff than they "need" – have them each sit down and make a list of all the things in their bedroom. Including clothes in the closet, things in drawers, etc. Have them be specific – like 5 pairs of jeans, 15 pairs of shoes, etc. Then have them guess what each item costs. Write it down, then add up and see what the dollar amount is that's investing in just their room alone.

***If the study isn't going well...or campers are shy about talking about times/people who have made them feel like they're not enough...**it can help to "de-personalize" it. So take your group and say something like:

- *OK... we're going to make a list of different ways people can make others feel like they're not ok...or not good enough. One example might be if a coach will never put someone in to play that would make them feel like they weren't good enough. What are some other ways people can make others not feel good enough?*

***If your group is talkative**, you might want to cut out one or both of the game activities and allow them time to talk. You can always add a game back in if you end up with extra time.

***If you end up with extra time...**give everyone in the group a sheet of paper – then have them write their name on the top of the page in big letters. After everyone is done, tell everyone to hand their paper to the person next to them to their right. Then tell them: *now what you get to do is write something affirming to the person whose paper you now hold. Maybe it's something you've noticed about them this week. Or it's a talent they have, or something special about them for you. What you write is up to you it just has to be affirming for the person. When you are done with the sheet you have, pass it to the person on your right and do the same thing for the person whose paper you now hold. We'll do this until everyone's sheets have been all the way around and you are holding your own sheet of paper again.*

Once everyone has their own sheet again, give everyone a chance to read what's been written. Then say something like: Isn't it great to have a reminder of how awesome this group thinks you are? You can keep these someplace you'll see them on those days when it's hard to remember that you're awesome!

****variation on this idea** - Give each camper a piece of paper to tape to their backs. Then ask the group to circulate and write one thing they like about each person on his/her piece of paper. (Reminder: this is not time to be funny or mean – but sincere and honest) Allow time for everyone to write on every sheet, then give time for each to sit and read their own paper.

IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

*** We Need Each Other** - At one meal – take yarn and tie each person's right hand to the left hand of the person next

***Arts and Crafts** – campers could paint stones with the words, I am enough

***Cabin Videos** – centered around the theme – I am Enough. Or Jesus loves me as I am.

***All Camp:** Play games where people need to work together:

- **Clumps:** Start by instructing the entire group to stand in the center of the area. Tell them to move around at random, provide music. Call out a category for students to clump together

(suggestions below). Everyone should then scramble to form “clumps” of likeness. When the clump is formed, sit on the ground/floor. After all clumps have been formed, ask everyone to stand and mingle again.

Suggested Categories: Color of hair, favorite class, grade in school, favorite sport, age, branch of the military, school you attend, favorite music artist, type of footwear, color of eyes

- **Grog:** you take apart a flashlight and hide the parts through the area of play. One camper is the Grog, which is a monster that can freeze you in place by tagging you. Everyone has to work together to find the flashlight parts, assemble the flashlight and shine it on the Grog to “defeat” it.
- **No Rules Game**
The basic idea is to create rules within your group that you know will be broken. You'll chose a person to begin, then move clockwise, with each person adding more rules. Each person creates a rule, and a consequence for breaking the rule. Again, make the rule something you think will be broken. An example could be: In our group, your feet can never touch the ground, and if they do, you have to stand up on your chair and cluck like a chicken. Or: in our group, you cannot use the word “and,” but if you do, you have to run up to someone in another group and give them a hug. Your group should be self-monitoring—you enforce your own rules. If someone's gone from your group carrying out a consequence, continue creating rules. It doesn't matter if they don't know the new rules—they still have to live by them. Ready? Go! (Play for approx., 5 minutes, or until the area begins to get loud and a bit chaotic).

* **Worship/all camp**

Could be different stations around the camp like:

- o **Prayer Path** – use the labyrinth and have campers walk the labyrinth in silence. In the middle have campers stop and thank God for the good things about themselves. After they say a prayer then can walk silently back out of the labyrinth. You could also have an entire group walk the paths together holding hands or being tied together so everyone has to get through together. In the middle a leader could pray in thanks for each person and who God has created them to be.
- o **Play-doh or Clay prayers** – at this station provide a variety of colors of clay or play-doh. Invite campers to create a mini-sculpture to represent a particular prayer, need, joy or concern. Each group's sculptures could be grouped together. When everyone is done a prayer is said by a leader for all the prayers represented there.
- o **Water prayers** – At this station provide a large bowl or tub and a pitcher of water. Provide instructions for groups or each person to offer a silent prayer and pour a small amount of water into the bowl/tub. As each person prays his/her water prayers are mixed with those of others as the bowl fills up.
- o **Mural prayers** – Tape a large sheet of paper to a wall and provide markers and crayons. Have campers use this canvas to create a mural of prayers on a particular topic (such as peace, or hurt or when I feel I'm not enough). Or it could be a graffiti style allowing individuals to creatively represent their prayer in words, pictures, symbols, poetry, etc.
- o **Braided prayers** – set out colorful strips of cloth and a length of rope tied between two trees. Invite campers to take three cloth strips to represent three things they want to pray about. Tie the ends of the three strips to the clothes line and then braid the three together, all the while praying on a given idea or anything the person wants to pray for. This could also be done with ribbons. OR...you could give each camper one strip have them tie it to the rope and then make knots in their strip for each of their prayer requests.
- o **Pipe cleaner prayers** – Invite campers to take several pipe cleaners and form a shape or design that communicates a prayer concern. Ask them to add their creation to those of others and to spend time thinking about all the prayers they see present.

OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

* **Songs from the camp song sheet**

- #9 Shut de Door
- #25 Psalm 25
- #28 Walkin' in the Light
- #43 Isaiah 43
- #46 Dance with Me

- #47 Shine Jesus Shine
- #49 Messiah
- #67 Little Room
- #70 Breathe
- #83 Grace Like Rain

*** Other new songs (list titles and source)**

- Right Where I Belong <https://www.youtube.com> – Todd Smith
- Sound of the Saints - Audio Adrenaline

*** Additional scriptures**

- John 4:7-42 – Jesus and the Samaritan Women at the well
- Matthew 19:13-15 – Jesus blesses the children
- I Peter 2:9 – But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- Isaiah 49:15-16...I will not forget you. See I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands
- Galatians 5:14 – For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”

*** Any supporting stories (list source)**

Loving people is messy. Sometimes, in order to love someone with the grace-upon-grace love of Jesus it means breaking the rules. People are dying, literally, as they wait for us to break some of the rules in order to love them.

When LGBT kids are committing suicide because they fear coming out to their parents will result in being rejected, it might be time to break some rules. I’m not talking about commands. Even if you think homosexuality is not God’s intended design, you can still walk across the room and give someone a hug. It might break some cultural rules in your church, but maybe that’s a rule that needs to be broken.

When boys are shooting up schools (and yes, it is predominately boys who do this), it might be time to break some rules. We groom our boys to be men by telling them to man up. We encourage them to hide their emotions so they don’t appear weak. We implicitly communicate that the only safe emotion for them to show is anger. And we are surprised when they get violently angry? Maybe it’s time to break a rule so our young boys can learn to be human.

When women are objectified through a pseudo-holiness reminding them that “modest is hottest,” it might be time to break some rules. When they are blamed for seduction by men who fail to take responsibility for their minds, it might be time to break some rules. The only way to stop objectifying women is to treat them like human beings.

When people suffocate in the pews under the weight not being able to express their doubts because their afraid of judgement, its time to break some rules.

When children aren’t allowed in sanctuaries because they might cry, it’s time to break some rules.

The question should always be before us. Do we love our rules more than we love people? Because if we don’t, then we should be willing to break them. Wouldn’t we run a red light in an emergency?

And isn’t that the kind of love that changes the world? The love that breaks all the rules? Isn’t that the kind of love Jesus shows us? Doesn’t the cross break all the rules? Doesn’t an all holy God who can’t stand sin break all the rules when he takes on flesh so he can touch a bunch of dirty sinners?

<http://natepyle.com/you-might-have-to-break-some-rules-to-love-someone/>

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

*** For Younger Campers...**

- **Scripture reading:** You might need to give more help to the different groups helping them understand the stories...or you might read both stories as a whole group instead of dividing into groups.

- **Another idea...** would be to learn the stories well enough that you could tell them (not just say the words, but use voice inflection and build suspense, etc so they actually want to listen what's happening next) and then ask the questions without sitting and reading through both stories
- **When you get to the “have you ever felt not good enough” question...** you might need to help them explore times when they felt left out, or if they tried something and weren't good at it. You could also ask them if they've ever felt like they didn't fit in. These questions get at the same thing, but they are a little more concrete for your campers who think more concretely than older campers.
- **With the throwing the rocks...** you might just have them say – I'm good enough - as they throw their rock. Instead of the longer, “I'm going to break the rule.... etc. It's easier and it still gets to the point. But again a more concrete idea for the younger ones.

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

* For Older Campers...

- **Let them wrestle** with the text a bit more. Don't give them answers. You could also do the actual text study Lectio Divina style. (Don't be afraid of this with high schoolers – they have amazing abilities to do this style of Bible Study)
This is an ancient practice involving letting scripture speak to you. It empowers people and helps them realize that the Spirit speaks to us all – not just counselors or leaders or pastor or youth directors. But the Spirit speaks to them as well.
Here's how it works:
 - Make sure each person in the group has something to write with and write on.
 - Tell your group you are going to read a passage from scripture. They are to listen. Notice what jumps out at them – what words or phrases catch their interest.
 - After you have read through the passage there will be a time of silence for people to think about what they just heard and to write down what caught their attention, if they had any questions, write those down too.
 - Then you will read the scripture again and they will listen again. In the silence that follows they can write down anything else that caught their attention/came to mind. Ask if there are any questions now.
 - After everyone is ready – do exactly what you said you would. Read the text, leave some silence (like at least a minute or two – it's ok if no one is writing, let them think about, swirl around their hearts and heads. Then read the text again and then again the minute or two of silence.
 - Next have group members share what caught their attention, what did they hear? What questions or thoughts did they have? You don't have to be able to answer questions, but you can mull them over as a group. Be prepared for some profound thoughts and ideas!
- **When it comes to the “have you ever felt not good enough” question** – it's really important to go over the agreement of confidentiality with the group so everyone knows they are safe. Make sure there's no judgment in comments made back to someone who has shared – or from you. This is a feeling high schoolers know well. This is a time when you can be candidly honest about your own experiences. Also make sure you take time with this one...this could be one of the most powerful discussion you have all week.
- **When it comes time for the step into the light...** you can do the blessing and encouragement yourself, but then have the group lay hands on and pray for each person, letting everyone say a prayer for the person being prayed for. This too, is a profound experience for many. ****A Note:** if you chose to do laying on of hands – be sure to ask the person if it's OK for everyone to touch them. If they aren't comfortable with that, just have everyone stand around the person in a circle.
- **With the step into the light exercise,** you could also, instead of doing all the blessings yourself, you could do the first one and then have the campers do it for each other...with the last camper blessing you.

KIRBERG GAME

Blade of Grass, aka Human Support.

Materials/props: None

Set-up: Teach the campers the following safety sequence words:

Camper: "Am I safe?" Group: "Yes, you're safe."

Camper: "Will you support me?" Group: "Yes, we'll support you."

RULES: Do not allow group members to joke or tease during this activity or when doing the safety words or sequence. Have the group form a circle and teach them the physical safety procedures. Make sure they understand that at anytime, the person taking the act of courage must feel safe and the rest of the group honors them with appropriate behavior. A volunteer steps into the middle of the circle and initiates the safety words when the group is ready. The person in the middle, if they wish to, shares messages they have been given, that tells them, "You are not good enough." They then tightly hug themselves and stay as stiff as they can, moving from their ankles only. The members of the group in the circle around the volunteer, slowly and carefully "pass" or move the volunteer around the group while saying affirming messages to the volunteer that she/he is always "good enough" in God's eyes. After a couple of times around the circle, the counselor stops the activity and asks the person in the middle if they would like to share anything about their experience.

ADJUSTMENTS: The person in the middle may choose to not be passed around the group, or choose not to share old messages of not being "good enough." The person may ask the group to share positive messages only.

PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Luke 7:36-40, 44b-48

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.

³⁷ And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸ She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak...

...Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The rule of our world that says: *who you are and what you have is never enough*...is rampant and destroys lives over and over again. It leads us into debt in order to have the newest, shiniest, best, it leads us into envy and dissatisfaction with our lives because "they" are better, have more than me. It leads us to give up our bodies and souls to the abuse and manipulation of those who tell us, "if only you will, then I will". This rule leads to some of the darkest places of our souls – gaining hold of the very core of who we are...and telling us we'll never be enough.

That rule is a lie.

Jesus proved this over and over again in places like a well in Samaria at noon in 120+ degree heat. Or in the middle of a crowd of children. He proved it at a dinner table and with a young man who had a lot of great stuff. In fact, Jesus' whole ministry was about showing time and again that each person – who they were and who we are, are more than enough in him. For him.

Today we dared to enter the darkness and lie of "not enough" and come out the other side into the light of Jesus' "you are more than enough in my eyes". Into the light of freedom and love – for ourselves and then for others as well.

I encourage you to think about the ways in which you live out this rule or live in the shadow of this rule, for it isn't just happening to our children. Identify the rule in your life and then ask yourself – what could it look like and/or feel like to break this rule out of my life? Be honest. Then be courageous enough to hear Jesus' voice – you...are...enough.

Family Activity

- As a family, talk about this rule – and be honest with your children about how it impacts your life. Then brainstorm ways you can break this rule within your family. Set out some goals for the whole family. Then be sure and celebrate when you reach your goals.
- Go out of your way to authentically build up your children. Let them know you love them just because they are who they are. Take them out for a special treat – a favorite restaurant, a movie, time outside. But talk with them – not just once but regularly. Be a safe place in their lives where they can talk about who and what makes them feel inadequate. Teach them that you are a person and place where they will always be loved just for who they are.

Prayer

God of potential and possibilities, your love for us is so great and I thank you for that unchanging force in my life and the life of my child(ren). Too often we buy into the lie of the rule “you must always have more and be more than you are”. Help my heart center in yours and listen to your voice. The voice that tells me I am enough just as I am. Then give me the strength and courage to be a person of blessing and safety in my child(ren)’s lives and the lives of all youth I know. In your name and power, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

2017 BIBLE STUDY “BREAKIN’ ALL THE RULES”

Day 5 - It’s All About The Rule: The Rule of Love

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

* This week we’ve been focusing on “Breakin’ All the Rules and Following Jesus’ lead.” Day one set the foundation for our journey, making us aware that there are both rules which need to be honored and rules which need to be broken. The key is our Lord’s call to love God, neighbor and self. When rules help us to do so, we follow them joyfully. When rules prevent us from doing so, we are called to set them aside, and follow Jesus’ lead, loving God, neighbor and self.

During the subsequent three days, we considered three concrete, specific instances that call for rule breaking. Specifically, we turned our attention to those unwritten rules which determine how we experience friends, relationships and peer groups. When others are excluded, when we hate our enemies, when we respond to injury with injury, when we attempt to win at all costs, when we think we’re not good enough... these are specific instances when the commonly accepted rules and behaviors of our time prevent us from loving God, neighbor and self. When this is the case, our commitment to God’s love calls us to break the rules, and follow Jesus’ lead.

It must be acknowledged, however, that this can be a difficult path to walk. When we break rules that others are following, we’ll ruffle feathers at best... offend and provoke at worst. Jesus broke many rules, and he was executed by authorities who were threatened by his actions. His followers broke rules, and faced persecution, with many of them losing their lives. Countless saints throughout history have broken the rules, stood up for love of God, neighbor and self, and have paid a heavy price for their faithfulness. Our lives may not necessarily be at stake, but we too may pay a price for breaking the rules in our efforts to follow Jesus’ lead.

There are two significant implications of this:

(1) First: this sort of faithfulness takes courage and commitment. Consequently, it is important for us to stay grounded in the gifts of our faith, if we are to have the courage to continue faithfully. Daily prayer and Bible study; weekly worship with God’s people; participation in a youth group; investment in a small group of faithful friends; through these and similar commitments, God will strengthen and inspire us for a life of faithfulness.

(2) And, second: here is the good news. Although difficult, the willingness to take risks and make sacrifices as we follow Jesus’ lead, opens up the possibility of experiencing new life. As we commit ourselves to love of God, neighbor and self, we experience the life Jesus wants us to know. A life where grace and love rule. A life where all are honored, respected, and nurtured as children of God.

* A story from St. Mark about Jesus will lead us through this conversation. We’ll gather with Jesus, Peter and the others as they make their way through the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and hear Jesus invite them (and us) to “deny self, take up the cross, and follow.” [St. Mark 8:31-35]

Breakin’ the rules and following Jesus’ lead is not always an easy way to live. But the God who calls us to this, promises to empower our faithfulness, and assures us that it leads to the kind of life Jesus wants us to know.

* First, a word about Christian faith.

We live in a time when American Civil Religion is on the rise. Often masquerading as Christian faith, this system of belief is closer to the antithesis of Christian faith. It holds that God wants us to follow success with success; that faith’s purpose is to make an already good life even better; that God has a preferred plan for our lives which includes success, accomplishment, acclaim and prosperity. It takes a variety of forms in today’s society, most of which have to do with self-indulgence and self-advancement.

Kenda Creasy Dean, in her 2010 book, Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church, puts it this way:

After two and a half centuries of shacking up with “the American dream,” churches have perfected a dicey codependence between consumer-driven therapeutic individualism and religious pragmatism. These theological proxies gnaw, termite-like, at our identity as the Body of Christ, eroding our ability to recognize that Jesus’ life of self-giving love directly challenges the American gospel of self-fulfillment and self-actualization. Young people in

contemporary culture prosper by following the latter. Yet Christian identity, and the “crown of rejoicing” that Wesley believed accompanied consequential faith born out of a desire to love God and neighbor, requires the former. Christian faith calls us to a life of loving service, following in the footsteps of our Lord; contemporary society teaches us that life is all about grabbing as much as we can get for ourselves; and most of us are influenced more profoundly by society than by faith. The faith most teenagers exhibit is a loveless version that [the 2003-2005 the National Study of Youth and Religion] calls Christianity’s “misbegotten stepcousin,” Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, which is “supplanting Christianity as the dominant religion in American churches.” (pages 5-7)

The pervasive nature of American Civil Religion, or in Dean’s depiction: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, leads to many of the culture rules and norms that harm and do violence to our neighbor. When the essence of life has to do with improving our own lot – taking care of ourselves first (our selves, our families, our tribe, our nation...) – prospering even as others struggle – it usually plays out to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others. In a survival-of-the-fittest culture, we become our own god, and the results are predictably disappointing. Success is never enough. Accomplishment is temporary at best. Acclaim is a fleeting experience. Prosperity is never as much as it promises to be, or that we hope for it to be.

On the other hand, Jesus models for us a life of selfless service and sacrifice to others. As Paul and Timothy wrote to the Christians in Philippi, likely quoting one of the first Christian hymns:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. [Philippians 2:1-8]

This life Jesus not just lives, but commends to us. We are called – even commanded – to live with the same love that shapes his life: a love from God which fills us, redeems us, puts us at peace and empowers us to love others. Setting aside selfish ambition and conceit, not looking to our own interests, we are called by our Lord to live for others. Here is the essence of Christian faithfulness.

There may be social norms, expectations and rules that would persuade us to live in other ways – but these ways only lead to darkness and disappointment. If the rule is self-indulgence and self-advancement, break it. If the rule is consumer-driven therapeutic individualism, break it. If the rule is religious pragmatism, break it. If the rule is self-fulfillment and self-actualization, break it. If the rule is selfish ambition and conceit, break it.

Instead, the love of Jesus puts us at peace with God and with ourselves, and the call of Jesus instructs us to live with humility, looking to the interests of others. When social norms, expectations and rules make this possible, we obey gratefully. But when they prevent us from loving God, neighbor and self, we are to break the rules, and follow Jesus’ lead instead.

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

* Each Bible study group will create a list of rules that influence their lives (social rules, religious rules and unwritten rules). They will identify which of those rules Jesus is calling them to break, and gather them together with suggestions from all of the other Bible study groups.

* Campers will discuss the challenges and dangers inherent in breaking rules that others might be committed to keeping.

* Each camper will create a list of resources that God has put in place to deepen our faith, strengthen our resolve, and empower us to stand up for what is right and true, even when few others are willing to do so.

* Counselors are encouraged to help each camper head down the mountain with a list of rules to break, and a plan to stay connected with God and other faithful friends.

MORNING WATCH

Welcome: Welcome to Morning watch. I hope you've had a restful night, and are ready for our last full day at camp this week. We've been talking about rules that no longer help us to love God, neighbor and ourselves – rules that need to break, for something new to emerge. In this morning's song for meditation, Mark Brinkman relates this to the resurrection of Christ. When we're stuck in old patterns that don't work, we're stuck in the darkness of those first two days after the death of Christ. But when we step away from the darkness of what doesn't work, and walk into the new light of what Christ has done, we find ourselves living from the third day on. Let's listen together.

Scripture: Mark 8:34-35

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."

Song: The Third Day On by Mark Brinkman

The sky was black as midnight in the middle of that day
They laid our Lord and Savior in a grave
On that first day they walked away and thought all hope was gone
What would life be like from that day on?

The second day abandoned, lost, and all alone
They wandered like a child without a home
But thanks to God our Father the stone was rolled away
He gave us life beyond the second day

From the third day on Christ is risen
From the third day on hope is alive
From the third day on we are forgiven
Make sure you're living from the third day on

Are you living your life in that first or second day?
Are you holding on to things that fade away?
Put your faith in Jesus, He's God's eternal Son
And live your life from the third day on.

The first day brought us darkness, the second doubt and strife,
The third day brought the good news of the risen Christ.

Questions for God Time:

1. What darkness exists in my life?
2. What rules or habits keep me stuck in that darkness?
3. What might God want me to change, so that I could be open to the new life (and light) that comes from Christ?

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the promise of new life. Fill my heart with the light of Christ. Help me to put my hope in the promise of the resurrection. Strengthen me as I seek to walk away from a past that doesn't work, into a future that is filled with faith and joy. I pray this in the name of the one who invites me to live from the third day on, Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY

* The purpose of this day-five study is threefold: (1) to reflect on the first four days of our study, and remember what we have learned, with the hope of deepening our understanding of the conflict between the life-taking rules which bring darkness to our lives, and the life-giving call of Jesus to love God, neighbor and self which brings light to the world; (2) to explore how difficult it can be to break rules that others are willing to follow and obey; and (3) to commit ourselves to the practices of our faith, through which God can strengthen us for this task.

* By this time of the week, campers have been talking a lot about breaking rules. It will be important to help them remember that on day-one we acknowledged how some rules are important and necessary – they maintain order and keep people safe. Christians are not anti-nomian (a Greek word, from “anti” meaning against, and “nomos” meaning law). Certain laws are necessary, for believers and non-believers alike, so that we can live well together. The challenge for Christians is to discern which rules to follow and which rules to discard. The operative question is: “Does this rule / expectation / custom / habit / practice make it easier or harder to love God, neighbor and self?”

* In a prominent, powerful, prosperous society, the tendency is to support the rules that make us more prominent, powerful and prosperous. Jesus calls us in a different direction: to love God, neighbor and self, even if there is (and there often will be) a cost to this love; even if it makes us less prominent, less powerful or less prosperous. This attitude is one that will be opposed, sometimes with great strength, by those who are committed to the prevailing values of society. Those who break these rules and seek to live in a different way – in a contrasting way – must be prepared to suffer the cost. This calls for courage and commitment.

* Today we’ll want to help each camper identify a rule or two they need to break, and the resources they’ll need to stay courageous and committed to do so.

A Proposed Structure for the Study

* Gathering – find a suitable place for the group to gather; a place where they are least likely to be distracted, and where they can talk with each other confidentially without being heard by others. As they take their seats, make sure they have a Bible, a pen or pencil to write with, and some notepaper. (They might want to use their morning watch booklet.)

* Highs and Lows – have each camper share one of the best or worst things that happened to them today.

* Opening Prayer – if campers share items of significance in their highs or lows, include this in the opening prayer. Thank God for this place, and for the opportunity to learn about our faith. Ask for God to be near us in the darkness of our most challenging times, and to inspire us to bring light into the world by following Christ’s lead,

* Summary of The Week’s Study – invite one or more of the campers to summarize what they have learned so far. What do they remember about day one, and how some rules maintain order and keep people safe, while other rules lead to oppression and manipulation? What do they remember about day two, and how rules can cause us to exclude others? What do they remember about day three, and how vengeance and enmity can play a destructive role both in relationships and in personal wellbeing? What do they remember about day four, and the destructive message that we are not good enough, or that we “need more” to be of any worth?

* Introduction of Today’s Theme – So this week we have been talking about breaking rules. In fact, every day we have discussed a number of rules that don’t seem to be very helpful. Rules that make it harder to love God, love our neighbor or love ourselves. Some of these rules are rules of society. Some are religious rules. Some are those unspoken rules that determine how we behave in friendships or groups. Let’s take a minute to see how many of these rules we can come up with. What rules shape your life, whether they are helpful or not? What are you required to do by the government, by your faith tradition, or by the habits and behaviors of your friends and neighbors?

[Make a list of these rules. You may want to draw two vertical lines on a page in your notebook, and label the three columns like this: Government | Faith | Unspoken. Once they have exhausted their ideas, continue with the next paragraph.]

[suggestion to Bible study leaders: you may want to be keeping a record, throughout the week (even throughout the summer) of rules that occur to you as candidates to be broken. Then, as campers try to come up with ideas, you can throw in a few of your own suggestions, and keep the momentum going.]

Some of these rules are helpful for us, and actually can make our lives better. But some of these rules can lead to harmful situations. I want each of you to point out one rule here on this page that you think can prevent us from loving God, our neighbor or ourselves.

[Provide a moment or two for them to think, and then invite each of them to choose one rule. Tell them that every Bible study group will be contributing suggestions today, and their suggestions will be used during this evening’s program.]

* Now let's talk about the rules you pointed out. Which one should we talk about first? [Let the group decide.] If we follow this rule, what harm might follow? If we break this rule, what good might take place? If we break this rule, who might become upset with us? What price might we have to pay? Will friendships be strained? Will our reputation suffer? And here is the important question: is breaking this rule important enough to us that we are willing to pay that price?

[ANSWER: If obeying the rule prevents us from loving God, neighbor or self...]

* **Almost Infinite Circle** (Kirberg Games) – sometimes we become aware that the old rules aren't working anymore, and we need to abandon them. Often it means that a new rule must be revealed to us, in order that we might accomplish what needs to take place.

* **Today's Key Bible Story** – With this in mind, it is time to focus on a story about Jesus. Let's open our Bibles to St. Mark's 8th chapter. Jesus has just fed a crowd of about 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. (And there were seven baskets of leftovers when everybody had finished eating!) He had another fight with the Pharisees. He healed a blind man in Bethsaida. Most of his ministry, up to this point, had to do with helping people, healing people, feeding people, teaching people... Now, while he and his followers are travelling through the villages of Caesarea Philippi, he begins to teach his disciples about what is about to happen to him.

Let's have someone read verses 31-33.

^{8:31} Then [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Some questions to ask:

1. These disciples love Jesus very much. What must it be like for them to hear him talking about suffering and rejection and death?
2. Does Peter's response seem out of line? Or might you or I have responded the same way?
3. Why does Jesus react to Peter in such a strong way? He actually calls him Satan!
4. It seems like this is very important to Jesus. Why do you think this is the case?
5. Does it sound here like Jesus is open to any other possibility? Or is he absolutely certain that death and suffering are in his future?

Who would like to read verses 34-35?

^{8:34} He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."

Some questions to ask:

1. Did you notice, when Jesus starts talking to the whole crowd, how he stops talking about himself? Who is he talking about now?
2. How does Jesus describe what it looks like to be a follower of his?
3. How does this compare to what our culture values?
4. If we are to do what Jesus suggests (denying ourselves, being willing to suffer, living like Jesus lived, being willing to die for what we believe...) what rules of U.S. culture and society will we be breaking?
5. Tell me what there is in common between the theme of this week ("Breakin' all the rules; Following Jesus' Lead") and what Jesus says in this passage ("For those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it").

As you can see, Jesus commends to us a life that is quite different than what our culture might think of as the best life. In your own words, how would you describe what Jesus envisions for us?

[possible answers: sacrifice, suffering, focusing on others, taking risks for what we believe...]

Does this sound easy or hard? Do you think you could do it on your own? Well guess what: there's good news. You don't have to do it on your own. God wants this to go well for you. And God wants you to experience this as a blessing, not a burden. Actually, that is one of the reasons we have churches. They are God's way of providing us with the support and encouragement we need to help us stay faithful when it gets hard. What are some ways that churches provide this for us?

[possible answers: churches encourage us to participate in daily prayer and Bible study, weekly worship with God's people, participation in a youth group, investment in a small group of faithful friends...]

And listen to this: these things aren't just what we have to do if we're going to be in a church. (Like some new rule that we have to decide whether or not to obey...) No: these are the ways God will strengthen and inspire us for a life of faithfulness. These are not obligations. They are gifts. And if we allow these gifts to be part of our lives, our lives will be much richer, much more meaningful, than we ever could imagine.

It's the puzzle (or paradox) of faithfulness: those who give, will have plenty; those who serve will know freedom; those who take risks will live better. It doesn't make sense from the world's point of view, but it makes sense for people of faith. We are not intended to hang on (with a death grip) to everything we've ever received. We are intended to enjoy it, be thankful for it, share it, and use it to bless the world as it has blessed us.

* So let's do a little exercise here. Take out a piece of paper and draw a line down the center. On the left side of the page, list some rules in your life that prevent you from fully loving God, neighbor and self (rules you think Jesus might be encouraging you to break). On the right side of the page, list the practices you will adopt, or the friendships you will nurture, so that God can support you when this gets hard.

[If campers are having difficulty getting started, you might want to give them an example. Have someone suggest a rule they think might need to be on their list. Invite the group to brainstorm with that person why that might be hard, who might oppose them, and how they can stay strong for the effort.]

Ask them to keep these pages in a safe place, so they will be sure to have them once they get home. If you have campers from the same congregation, you might encourage them to set a time, a week or two after camp, to get together and talk about what they plan to do. If not, you might encourage them to reach out to their youth minister or pastor to talk about these ideas.

Conclude by sharing this with your campers:

We have been talking this week about rules that we should break. We have been talking this week about what it looks like to follow Jesus' lead. But let's be clear: we aren't proposing that you break rules to make life easier for you. We aren't proposing that you break rules because they are an inconvenience to you. We are proposing that sometimes, to be agents of Christ's love in this world, we have to break rules that prevent us from doing so.

Jesus calls us to love, no matter what the rules say. Jesus calls us to serve, no matter what people of our status usually expect. Jesus calls us to compassion, when many others don't seem to care. When there is an absence of love, service and compassion, Jesus calls us to become "change agents." Just as we have been changed by experiencing God's love, Jesus calls us to change the world by sharing this love with everyone who surrounds us.

As we close our study today, I have a gift for you. It is a necklace, with a triangle on it. The triangle, or delta, is a symbol for change. This necklace is a reminder to you of your time at camp, but more importantly it is a reminder to BE the change you learned about at camp. It will help us all recall that we have been changed by Christ — and that each of us is called to make a Christ-like change in the world around us.

* Closing Prayer – For a closing prayer, have each camper place their triangle necklace around their neck. Have them place one hand over the triangle, and put the other hand into the center of the circle, touching the hands of the other small group members. Inform them that they are now going to pray a blessing upon each necklace. Pray that they will have a profound and lasting experience of God's love and grace. Pray they might become vehicles in this world of that same love and grace. Pray that where there is pain, fear, hatred, suspicion or other signs of our brokenness, God will empower them to live as change makers in this world, bringing love and compassion and hope and peace into every relationship and every experience. And pray that each of them will find a community of Christians back home, through whom God can work to strengthen them for the task. You might want to conclude the prayer as we often conclude worship back home: "God in peace. Serve the Lord." "Thanks be to God."

ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

* Read St. Luke 10:27-37. In this passage, which provides the theme for our week's study, a lawyer asks what he needs to do to experience eternal life. Jesus instructs him to live as a neighbor, becoming aware of and caring for the needs

of those that surround him. The man's question seems to address something that is very "other worldly" but Jesus' response calls him to something that is very earthy and concrete. How does our commitment to something as practical as neighbor love help us to experience eternal life? What do these two concepts have in common?

* Read St. Matthew 13:51-52. Here Jesus describes the kingdom of God as including what is old (perhaps like rules and customs that continue to bless us?) and what is new (perhaps like rules and customs that have replaced what is no longer effective?). What, in our lives, fits into these two categories? What old realities have been discarded because they no longer seem to serve us well? What new realities have blessed us in ways that we may not have previously imagined?

* Discuss which rules / expectations / customs / habits / practices are hardest to abandon. Are there cherished ways of behaving that we know in our hearts are not helpful, but we just can't face doing away with them? Are there practices which are supported by so many others that it becomes difficult for us to imagine stepping away from them? How can we hold conversations where we learn from one another, in the search to discover whether or not we imagine God might want us to make some changes?

IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

* At some point during the evening program – round-up, all camp, or evening worship – the "rules to break" lists from the Bible study groups should be recognized. They could be written on bricks or wooden blocks, collected throughout the summer, and fashioned into a wall somewhere on site. The wall might be symbolic of the darkness that keeps us from the life Jesus wants us to know. They could be written on paper, and consumed by fire, symbolizing our desire to do away with them altogether, and the darkness associated with them. Counselors could agree on an approach that might be consistent throughout the summer. Or the Villages of the Day could decide for themselves the best way to consider these rules each week.

* Low Ropes / High Ropes – if your group is involved in these activities today, you might talk about how much easier it is to make it through the exercise when the group supports one another. Similarly, breaking old rules and committing ourselves to new ones can be hard when we are attempting it on our own. The transitions can seem insurmountable. The opposition can seem strong. But with the support of a group, it becomes more achievable. Working together on the ropes is like being involved in a church, a youth group, a circle of faithful friends. Think about how you can commit yourselves to these structures once you get back home.

OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

* Songs from the camp song sheet

- 6. Thy Word
- 10. We Are the Family of God
- 20. Friends
- 28. Walkin' in the Light
- 36. We Are Walkin' in the Light of God
- 53. You Are the Light of the World

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

* Rules Change – think of rules that you might have had at home 5 years ago, when you were so much younger. Maybe you weren't able to go outside by yourself, or use electronic devices, or sleep over at a friend's house, or ride a bicycle in the street. Those rules were appropriate then. Now you are bigger, more responsible, and those old rules don't fit. It doesn't mean you don't do what is right anymore. It just means that you need new rules, more appropriate to your life right now, to guide you. Sometimes that happens with rules in our world – in our neighborhoods. Things change, and we make changes to respond to the new way that things are.

IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

* Arbitrary Decisions – there is always a danger when we begin to change rules. The danger is that we convince ourselves to do it not because it is right, or because it is what God wants, or because it helps us love God, our neighbor and ourselves better. Sometimes we do it just because we want to, and then convince ourselves that we are acting on higher principles. How can we evaluate our desire to make rule changes, with the hope of making sure we're doing so for the right

reasons? Are there people who will listen to us, and give their honest advice? Parents? Teachers? Advisors? Youth Ministers? Pastors?

KIRBERG GAME

Almost Infinite Circle

Materials/props: A piece of P-cord/person, about 4 feet in length, with a tied loop at each end.

Objective: Get out of an apparently impossible situation.

RULES: Each person places the end loops over their wrists. The cord must stay over each wrist at all times. The cord must remain tied at all times. The cord may not be untied, cut, burned off, or in any other way be removed during the activity. It may not be removed by another person, or exchanged with the person you are working with.

PARENT DEVOTIONAL

* Scripture – St. Mark 8:31-35

* Reflection on the day's study from camp – today at camp we are reviewing our week together, and remembering what we have learned, with the hope of deepening our understanding of the conflict between life-taking rules (which bring darkness to our lives), and the life-giving call of Jesus to love God, neighbor and self (which brings light to the world). We will then explore how difficult it can be to break away from rules that others are willing to follow and obey. There is a promise, though. Through the practices of our faith – prayer, Bible study, worship and fellowship – God can give us the courage and the commitment we need to persevere, even when others might oppose our efforts. At the end of the day, our campers will identify rules in their lives that prevent them from loving God, neighbor and self. They will also explore opportunities in their lives for God to strengthen and encourage them as they discover new ways to live faithfully.

* Activity for the family – have one family member log on to <http://www.mrgym.com/Cooperatives/GameAlmostInfiniteCircle.htm> and learn the rules for “Almost Infinite Circle.” Invite other family members to pair up and see if they can figure out the puzzle together. The solution has to do with abandoning the rules which usually first come to mind (and which won't ever work), and adopting new rules that will work.

* Closing prayer – Dear God, help us commit ourselves to reforming the ways we love you, our neighbor and ourselves. When rules, habits and customs cease to be effective, give us the courage and strength to acknowledge this and make changes in our lives and in our faithfulness. Guide us with your Holy Spirit, that we might always be growing in faithfulness, following Jesus' lead in all that we say and all that we do.