



2020 BIBLE STUDY

2020 BIBLE STUDY
2020 VISION: SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS GOD DOES

We are very grateful to the following individuals for their work in writing the
2020 Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp Bible study.

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2020 VISION: SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS GOD DOES

INTRODUCTION:

As the year 2020 was approaching, we began to see a lot of events and conferences around the country that were using “20/20 Vision” as a part of their theme. 20/20 vision is considered perfect vision. As we contemplated our Bible Study theme for this year, we began to play with 20/20 vision as well. When the study actually started taking shape, the real essence and power of this study came through, focusing on helping our campers seeing people in the same way that God sees us.

The entire study centers on the concept that God created all and EVERYTHING that God has made is inherently good. Not only good, but very good! This is day one. We spend the next three days learning to see the people in our lives in the same light that God sees them. The last day centers on choosing to see this good in the world and living into seeing ourselves and others the same way that God does... as exquisitely gifted and unconditionally loved children of God:

1. **GOD SEES GOOD:** In the beginning, God created all and saw that it was very good. God sees each of us as God has created us: exquisitely gifted and unconditionally loved children of God, sharing life together. The opportunity we have in this vision is that *I* can see and *we* can see the good as God sees.
2. **I SEE WHAT GOD SEES IN “US”:** Each of us is surrounded in life by family members and close friends with whom we have relationships. In time, we come to know their strengths and their weaknesses; their beauty and their brokenness. We can choose to view them critically, focusing on their weaknesses and failings, or to view them as God does, focusing on their goodness and beauty.
3. **I SEE WHAT GOD SEES IN “ME”:** God has shaped and molded each individual uniquely, so that, as we each embrace our God-given gifts and potential and live into and through them, each person can find great joy, but also impact the world for good.
4. **I SEE WHAT GOD SEES IN “THEM”:** If we see only the good in ourselves or in those easy to love, we are missing one important component to seeing as God sees. You and I are called to love the “thems” in our lives; the people who are dramatically different from us; the people who are not easy to love and even more difficult to see as “good;” and the people with whom we disagree.
5. **I CHOOSE TO SEE GOOD:** Choosing to see the good in others can actually encourage more compassion and generosity. It breaks down the barriers between people. To see the good God sees, we must also practice seeing good in the world around us. To see the good in others is to love. To love is a gift from God and it changes me and it changes our world.

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 in a new way. I hope this study can move campers, staff, and adult leaders to wake each morning, to think about their day ahead, and live a life that impacts others in the name of Christ 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 people of the Rocky Mountain Synod and beyond.


Dave Jarvis,
Executive Director

2020 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
2020 VISION: SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS GOD DOES
DAY 1 – “God Sees Good”

INTRODUCTION TO THE WEEK

The theme for this week is, “2020 Vision: Seeing Ourselves and Others as God Does.” Each day we will dig deeply not only into how God sees us and others, but we’ll especially dig into the invitation *for us* to see as God sees. There are a lot of competing visions or ways to look at ourselves, others, and life itself. This week we will ask and explore together: What does God see? What if *I* were to see as God sees? What difference will that make in our lives?

The study will begin with the strong claim that *God Sees Good*...that God sees each of us as God has created us: exquisitely gifted and unconditionally loved children of God, sharing life together. The opportunity we have in this vision - and the daily exploration we will embark upon this week - is that *I* can see, *we* can see, as God sees. As the week progresses, we will explore the themes: I See What God Sees in Us; I See what God Sees in Me; I See What God Sees in Them. Finally, we will be encouraged and invited to make the choice back home: I Choose to See Good! Our overall biblical theme for the week is 1 Peter 4:10: “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” We are graced – manifoldly, diversely, richly. We are gifted – uniquely, for none of us is exactly like anyone else. We serve one another with our gifts – honoring in both ourselves and others the grace and love with which God sees everyone.

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

On this first day of the week, we make a bold claim and set the tone: *God Sees Good*. We will see this claim in Scripture, primarily exploring chapter one of Genesis. We will also reference chapter one of the Gospel of John; the story of the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt as recounted in the book of Deuteronomy; and the giving of the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus. As you will see below in the Scripture Study section, the Genesis text will be core, and depending upon the dynamics of your group as well as their age level, you may feel like incorporating one or more of the secondary texts into your study.

The Bible begins with the book of Genesis. In chapter one and the first three verses of chapter two, we read the first of two creation stories. In this story, we see that God takes a formless, watery, chaotic mess, sweeps over it with a “wind from God,” and fashions the world over seven days. Peppered throughout this story is the statement that “God saw that it was good.” The first thing God does is speak: “God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” The next thing that happens is that God sees: “God saw that the light was good.” One pictures a painter making the first brushstrokes or a sculptor cracking into marble or a musical composer jotting down the opening notes of a symphony – and then pausing and standing back to take a look. “Yeah, that’s good. That’s, that’s, that’s...good. I’ll keep going.”

Finally, on day six, God creates humankind...*in God’s own image*. God blesses these human beings and commands them to be fruitful and multiply. This, it turns out, is not a static

sculpture or a painting. It is a living, breathing, dynamic, juicy, growing community of all that is. At the end of this day, God stands back once again and takes a look, and this time it is total and it is emphatic: “God saw everything that God had made, and *indeed*, it was *very* good” (we get added an “indeed” and a “very”). God is pleased and excited...and exhausted. God beholds the finished work (which is, of course, not really finished, because this work is dynamic and *juicy* thriving and growing), and then God rests from all the work that God has done. God sees the enormous importance of this entire day of rest, after this freight train of speaking and making and fashioning, to make it a hallowed and holy day. This a day of rest is, in and of itself, important enough to be part and parcel of all that has happened and will ever happen.

Most people regard this story from Genesis as an origin story, the origin of the world we live in. Christians have argued endlessly about whether this story is to be taken literally or metaphorically. In this age of science, in which cosmological data is accessible to scientists and various theories of the origin of the universe are put forth, there is often a sense of opposition between science and faith. These questions and debates can be fun, or agonizing, but they can also be distracting.

What if this story is not primarily, in the end, about the origin of things, but instead inaugurates a story of God’s good character and of the goodness God saw in creating the world as it plays out in our lives in partnership with God and one another? What if something other than the question of the origin of things drives this story. What if there is another light that gives clarity to this story?

A few biblical texts help us see that although the creation of the world comes first in the ordering of the Bible, the first *experience* of God the ancient Israelites tell about is redemption. In Deuteronomy 26:5-10, we hear an early story of Israel’s experience of God:

You shall make this response before the LORD your God: ‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me.’ You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God.

In this, we hear the story of the creation of a people: God saw the oppression of the Israelites, slaves in Egypt, and with power, signs, and wonders, rescued them from this plight and brought them to a new and blessed land.

And, most importantly, we see that before Israel thought of God as Creator, it thought of God as Redeemer. The *Redeemer*, we find, is Creator.

In the account of the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus, there is not merely a listing of commands. Instead, the God who commands Israel, in the way God sets before them, first reminds them “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery . . .” Then, after this reminder, God commands, “You shall have no other gods before me.” The God who gives commandments for life and wellbeing is first and foremost the God who saved them.

In the New Testament Gospel of John, we hear an echo of the Genesis account, but we also hear that the “beginning” is not so much a moment in time, but an architecture of God’s being that underlies all reality and enters into time.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

It was God’s plan, not only in time, but for all eternity, to fill all that is and would come into being with unquenchable light and life. John says, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” This Word that became flesh, according to John, is Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, is God’s assurance that the promises and claims of Genesis – that this creation and all that is in it is good - are still and ever will be valid promises and claims.

In the midst of the darkness of this world, it remains that the light shines in the darkness and does not overcome it. When God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, God pledged to speak this light into all, forever.

So, God sees good! God creates the goodness of all that is. The world, matter, us, our communities: all that God made is inherently good. As with the teeming seas and skies of Genesis, God continues to fill our lives with gifts. God continues to draw us into relationship with others. We are called to see ourselves as God sees us: beloved, gifted children. We are called to see others - both those who are easy to love and those who are hard to love - as God sees. We are called not merely to stand back and behold all that is good, but to take on God’s perspective of all reality and enter into it without fear: building relationships and reconciling with our enemies; deepening our appreciation and honor of those who are different from us, whose gifts we may not at first recognize without seeing as God sees. And, fundamentally, seeing *ourselves* as God sees us: as endlessly loved, cherished, and filled with grace and gifts and love.

Yes, there is much darkness in the world. We can acknowledge that. We can own up to our own part in it. We can, and need, to lament it. We sorrow over it. But, in the light of God, who sees the goodness worth dying for, we see that the darkness cannot and does not overcome the light. From beginning to end, God sees good. And we can too. And this will make all the difference in the world.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Help campers understand that God is good in character.
- Help campers understand that *all* that God created is good.
- Help each camper understand that they are exquisitely gifted and unconditionally loved by God.
- Introduce the idea that we truly can see ourselves and others as God sees us.
- Point campers to how the week's daily themes will relate to today's theme.
- Staff goal: Contemplate how you see yourself; compare and contrast this with the idea that God sees you as good. If you experience challenges and disappointments, do you tend to judge yourself "a failure?" Do you doubt the voice of God who calls you "beloved child?" Or do you trust this voice? Why? Do you equate "yourself" with your achievements?

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLCC and a new day of your life. May you see as God sees. May you see the good in God's creation, the good in others, and the good in yourself. "Here on the pulse of this new day, may you have the grace to look up and out and into your sister's eyes, into your brother's face, your country and say simply, very simply, with hope, Good Morning." ~Maya Angelou

Introduction to the Day

There are lots of ways to view oneself, others, and the world around us. Sometimes we worry about what others think about us. We worry about how our parents or guardians see us. We may try to please friends or teachers to influence how they see us.

But how *God* sees us matters more than anything. When God created the world, God saw that it was, indeed, very good. All of it! God has created us, too. God sees you and me as very good indeed. Sure, we have problems and sometimes cause problems. But that doesn't change how God sees us. In God's eyes, we are forever God's beloved children. There is nothing we can do to make God love us any more, or any less, than God already does. When God sees us, God smiles! God invites us to also see others as good, gifted, and loved.

Why we Chose the Passage and Scripture

...you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you. – Isaiah 43:4

This passage from the prophet Isaiah is a simple, clear reminder that God maintains a loving and encouraging view of every one of us. God loves *you*. *You* are precious in eyes of God.

Song: "Give Me Your Eyes" by Jason David Ingram and Brandon Heath

*Looked down from a broken sky
Traced out by the city of lights
My world from a mile high
Best seat in the house tonight
Touch down on the cold black-top
Hold on for the sudden stop
Breathe in the familiar shock of confusion and chaos
All those people going somewhere, why have I never cared*

*Give me your eyes for just one second
Give me your eyes so I can see,
Everything that I keep missing,
Give your love for humanity.
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted
The ones that are far beyond my reach.
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten.
Give me Your eyes so I can see.*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

*Step out on the busy street.
See a girl and our eyes meet.
Does her best to smile at me.
To hide what's underneath.
There's a man just to her right
Black suit and a bright red tie.
Too ashamed to tell his wife he's out of work, he's buyin' time.
All those people going somewhere, why have I never cared.*

*Give me your eyes for just one second
Give me your eyes so I can see,
Everything that I keep missing,
Give your love for humanity.
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted
The ones that are far beyond my reach.
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten.
Give me Your eyes so I can see.*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

*I've been there a million times
A couple million lives
Just moving past me by, I swear I never thought that I was wrong*

*But I wanna second glance so give me a second chance
To see the way you've seen the people all along*

*Give me your eyes for just one second
Give me your eyes so I can see
Everything that I keep missing
Give your love for humanity
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted
The ones that are far beyond my reach
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten
Give me Your eyes so I can see*

*Give me your eyes for just one second
Give me your eyes so I can see
Everything that I keep missing
That I keep missing
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted
The ones that are far beyond my reach.
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten
Give me Your eyes so I can see.*

*Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah*

Questions for Consideration

- What are the ways I see myself?
- How do I see people it's easy to love?
- How do I see people it's hard to love?
- How can I begin to see myself and other people as God sees them?

Closing prayer

Loving God, the earth is drenched with your goodness! You made all things good and you recognize in all things the goodness in which you made them. You made me good, and you recognize in me the goodness in which you made me. Help me to see myself and others as you see: as precious and loved in your sight. Amen.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

The primary biblical text we will explore in this study is Genesis 1:1 – 2:1-3, focusing on the statements “God saw that it was good.”

Secondary texts to explore are:

- Deuteronomy 26, focusing on verses 5-10
- Exodus 20:1-17, focusing on verses 1-2
- John 1:1-18, focusing on verses 1-5, 14

Please refer to the introduction for the basic outline and key ideas of this Bible study. The main movements, with some additional comments, are as follows:

1. In the creation account of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, God “sees” that the creation is good.

This Genesis account asserts the undeniable goodness of creation, of which we are a part. We are, indeed, very good. Nothing, not even our sin and brokenness, can ruin the essential goodness of our being created in God’s image.

In the introduction above, we referred to the first word God spoke into the formless void: “Let there be light.” (Incidentally, in the Genesis account, God does not make “something out of nothing.” Rather, God’s creating activity brings an orderly world out of an original chaos, depicted as a watery abyss). When God speaks this word, there is light. This light, not yet identified as the sun, is separated from the darkness, and so the first ordering is evening and morning, the first day. And the text next shares: “And God saw that the light was good.” The introduction also shares that at the end of day six, when God makes human beings in the image of God, God once again, and more emphatically, declares the goodness of everything that God has made: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (v. 31). Several more times in the intervening material, like a repeating litany, the text says, “And God saw that it was good.”

Are you curious that God evaluates the creation as it unfolds? Earlier, I suggested that God “stands back” and takes a look at the work in progress, much like a painter or sculptor or composer. One might assume that perfection might be inevitable. But, that’s not assumed. The evaluation continues.

Indeed, the Old Testament scholar Terrence Fretheim comments:

And, then, at the end of each day, God makes an evaluation of what God has observed: it's good. The word "good" includes a range of meanings, but one sense of the word is aesthetic -- like looking at Rembrandt's Jeremiah or hearing Mozart's clarinet concerto. Yes, that's just right!

This evaluation “good” is not taken away when sin enters the world. Sin negatively affects the life of human beings, certainly, and through them the life of other creatures. But nowhere does the Scripture take away the evaluation “good” from any creature. In fact, many texts in the wake of sin will reinforce that evaluation. With respect to human beings: “you are precious in my sight, and honored” (Isaiah 43:5) and “crowned...with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5). (Cited at http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1097).

This sense that “good” is not taken away even when sin enters the world is absolutely central to understanding ourselves and our neighbors. Never is the fundamental dignity of the human being – both male and female (here not a statement of a rigid binary, but rather of equal dignity) – created in the image of God destroyed. Goodness is our birthright and our homecoming. God sees good.

2. Even though this story depicts the origin of things, this is not a scientific account. It is the story of the profound relationship and promise God shares with human beings and all creation.

Fundamentally, this is a story of relationship and promise between God and human beings and the world we inhabit. It is a story of relationship and promise in the guise of origins. It is a story of a process of creating, of the ongoing ordering of chaos, in which God fills God’s creatures with gifts that enable them to share in partnership in the ongoing work of creation, of bringing delightful order out of chaos. This story of creation wells up from the remembrance and celebration of God’s saving acts, foremost in the story of the Exodus, God’s liberating the Israelites from the bondage of slavery.

In the history of the ancient Israelite people, their story begins not with the account of creation, but with their redemption. As theologian Martin Dominic Henry writes, “...the Israelites experienced the shortcomings and painfulness of existence, and in consequence perceived God first and foremost as a redeemer and only subsequently as a creator, and not vice versa.” (cited in “Karl Barth on Creation,” *Irish Theological Quarterly*, September 2004).

The passage from Deuteronomy quoted in the introduction is widely regarded by biblical scholars as an early creed in story form. A creed is a statement of belief, and the belief stated here is in the redemptive power of God that freed the Israelites from slavery. Scholars suggest that the setting of Deuteronomy 26 is a liturgy for the presentation of first fruits on the occasion of a harvest pilgrimage festival.

In story form, verses 5-10 form the confession of faith. God is the redeemer of Israel, who provides sustenance and goodness in the form of the harvest. From the perspective of this faith in God as redeemer, Israel reads back into the origins of all that is, the saving love of God who holds Israel and the whole creation as precious in God’s sight. Everything is imbued with God’s goodness and God’s permanent, faithful regard, God’s *seeing*, of all things as essentially good.

Likewise, another formative and definitive biblical text, the giving of the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus, shares this same insight. Many of us learn that the first of the Ten Commandments is, “You shall have no other gods before me.” But in Jewish tradition, the first commandment is what sounds like an introduction: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the house of slavery.” What is being commanded? Well, nothing in the sense that a commandment is a word of what we are to do. The “first commandment” is the act of remembering the God who saves, who will issue instruction for the people of God.

The God who saves is the God who gives the path of life. The God who saves is the Creator of the worlds and of God's partners in the ongoing work of creation.

3. From the perspective of the Gospel of John, the “beginning” is not the launching of the world in time, but the very structure of God’s own self and the entry of God into human history in Jesus of Nazareth.

As stated in the introduction, the beginning of the Gospel of John echoes the beginning of Genesis. Both start out, “In the beginning.” Whereas Genesis speaks of the beginning of the ordering of chaos that results in the world of light, and earth and sea, and light and darkness, and animals of all kinds and human beings made in God’s image, John’s gospel speaks of “beginning” in a mystical way. “Beginning” in John’s gospel is “*arche*.” In ancient Greek philosophy, “*arche*” is the first element and first principle of existing things. It can mean an “underlying substance” or the root of all things.

The **New Revised Standard Version** of the Bible renders John 1:1 thus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This drives at the sense that the Word, which later John describes as becoming flesh in Jesus, is a dynamic part of the being of God that underlies and is the root of all things. The biblical translation known as The Message gets at this in a slightly different way: “The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word.”

In view of this, we say simply that it was God’s plan, not only in time, but for all eternity, to fill all that is and would come into being with unquenchable light and life. And Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, is God’s assurance that the promises and claims of Genesis – that this creation and all that is in it is good - are still, and ever will be valid promises and claims.

Suggestions for the Actual Study

There is a lot of complex theology in the above comments. The point of the study is to make this real and accessible for the campers. In the sections below on adjusting for age levels, I will invite you to use less material for younger groups, and potentially more for older, more mature campers.

Let’s return to the theme of the day: God sees good. This is the tone to set. I encourage you to set a tone for the Bible study that conveys the spirit that God creates us as good, sees us as good, and gives us hope for what is good for our lives with others in this world.

Some practical and important things:

Setting the tone for the study

- Today is the first Bible study of the week. Today begins the pattern of daily meeting. Each day, the Bible study hour is a gift to you and your campers. Please think of this and set this as sacred time for you and your campers.

- Find a place that is apart from the hustle and bustle of the camp. Don't set up in the middle of the mall, where everyone will be easily distracted. Find a place apart (but not so far away that it takes too much time to get there and back). Is it far enough away from other groups?
- As you begin, gently and assertively bring the attention of the campers to this moment.
- After gathering campers' attention, consider inviting everyone into a moment of silence. Experiencing silence can be uncomfortable when we're used to a barrage of impulses. Try a bit of silence.
- After a moment of silence, have a brief time of prayer. Model a comfortable prayer that conveys trust in God's love and goodness. Use a calm voice and draw upon your own engagement with this material: you, their counselor, are a beloved, gifted child of God who believes that God sees you as good in God's eyes. Practice this: see the campers as God sees them.
- Consider inviting campers to take turns briefly sharing their experience of camp so far. What have they enjoyed the most or the least? Give them a safe space to share, or to refrain from sharing. Don't let this go on too long.
- Affirm to them that Bible study time is important. It's a time for sharing and digging into the study. It's not "blow-off" time. Share with them a positive experience of your own in Bible study either at RTALC or somewhere else.

Spend some time in introductions

- Some of your campers will be from the same group or congregation, and others will have just met.
- Consider playing a name game or a game sharing personal interests. Play **All My Neighbors**; **Rock, Paper, Scissors Royale**; or **Name and Action**. See Appendix A.

Begin the study

- Introduce the theme of the week: *2020 Vision: Seeing Ourselves and Others as God Does*.
 - Ask campers if they know what "2020 vision" is. Of course, this is a play on words: the year 2020 and the concept of 20/20 eyesight. 20/20 vision technically means you can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at that distance. If you have 20/100 vision, it means that you must be as close as 20 feet to see what a person with normal vision can see at 100 feet.
 - God sees us clearly. God sees us as good. We will explore this in reading the texts.
 - Introduce the idea that our Bible studies will help us see as God sees: ourselves and others. If we see ourselves and others as God sees, this can make a huge difference in our lives. We will be sharing our gifts and honoring and experiencing the God-given gifts of others.
- Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3. This is longish text, so consider breaking it up by inviting campers to share the reading. Use these breakpoints: verses 1-5; 6-8; 9-13; 14-19; 20-23; 24-25; 26-27; 28-31; 2:1-3.

- Before reading, invite the campers to notice how many times they hear, “And God saw that it/*something* was good.” Ask them if they remember when this was mentioned in the text. What was it in response to?
- If you sense there is time, consider reading the text a second time, with you reading it through the second time. Read it slowly and invite the campers to gently interrupt the reading by saying, “I wonder...” or “I notice...”.
- After the reading, after the noticing and wondering: ask the campers how they think God sees all that God made?
- Invite them to share how they see themselves and others. Gently probe with open-ended (but not personally challenging) questions. How have they seen themselves? What are ways that others see them that are concerning or even encouraging? Do they try to measure up to others’ expectations? Do they like who they see in the mirror? What does the voice in their head tell them about themselves?
- Bring the conversation about this text back to the core idea that God sees us and the world as good, because God is good in character and made all things good.
- Invite the campers to idea that we, too, can see good. Not only in those it’s easy to love and get along with, but also in those it’s hard to love and get along with.

If appropriate for varying age groups/maturity levels, explore further texts.

- Introduce Deuteronomy 26:5-10. Read the section or have a camper read the section. Explain that this is a story that shares and summarizes ancient Israel’s memory of the Exodus, when God rescued them from slavery in Egypt.
- For a summary of the Exodus, see the Additional Study Ideas section below.
- Share that the people’s memory of the Exodus is central to their life. That experiencing God’s saving love shapes everything they think and do. It is the assurance that they are loved and precious in God’s sight.
- Share the idea and engage in conversation about the idea that Israel’s experience of salvation shaped how they saw and thought about all other things, including the creation of the world.
- In support of this, read Exodus 20:1-1. Here the God who gives these commandments first reminds the people that this is the God who saves and loves them. That’s the foundation of their experience.

Close the study by reading Isaiah 43:4 – *You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.* This was the text in Morning Watch. Read this and let the hearing of this settle for a moment among the campers.

Introduce the journals that we will start using during the week and that they will continue to use once they return home. Then introduce the daily meditation and journaling time that we will use to close out our study each day.

Journaling for today:

For journaling today, use the Meditation and Journaling Guide in Appendix B. Following the meditation, have your campers list in their journal five (5) things they saw as good in God's creation.

Close in prayer.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

If you choose to engage the Deuteronomy and/or Exodus texts, it will be helpful for you to engage the story of the Exodus. This is the foundational story of ancient Israel's experience of God: as rescuer, liberator, and savior. Again, the idea is, in reference to Genesis and creation, that Israel experience God first as redeemer, and then also as Creator. The relationship and promise that defines our relationship with God is the very structure of the creation story.

A summary of the Exodus (from Wikipedia):

Jacob's sons and their families join their brother, Joseph, in Egypt. Once there, the Israelites begin to grow in number. Egypt's Pharaoh, fearful that the Israelites could be a fifth column, forces the Israelites into slavery and orders the throwing of all newborn boys into the Nile. A Levite woman (Jochebed, according to other sources) saves her baby by setting him adrift on the river Nile in an ark of bulrushes. The Pharaoh's daughter finds the child, names him Moses, and brings him up as her own. But Moses is aware of his origins, and one day, when grown, he kills an Egyptian overseer who is beating a Hebrew slave and has to flee into Midian. There he marries Zipporah, the daughter of Midianite priest Jethro, and encounters God in a burning bush. Moses asks God for his name: God replies: "I AM that I AM", the explanation of the name "Yahweh" as he is thereafter known. God tells Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Hebrews into Canaan, the land promised to Abraham.

Moses returns to Egypt and fails to convince the Pharaoh to release the Israelites. God smites the Egyptians with 10 terrible plagues (Plagues of Egypt) including a river of blood, many frogs, and the death of first-born sons. Moses leads the Israelites out of bondage after a final chase when the Pharaoh reneges on his coerced consent (Crossing the Red Sea and Yam Suph). The desert proves arduous, and the Israelites complain and long for Egypt, but God provides manna and miraculous water for them. The Israelites arrive at the mountain of God, where Moses's father-in-law Jethro visits Moses; at his suggestion Moses appoints judges over Israel. God asks whether they will agree to be his people. They accept. The people gather at the foot of the mountain, and with thunder and lightning, fire and clouds of smoke, and the sound of trumpets, and the trembling of the mountain, God appears on the peak, and the people see the cloud and hear the voice [or possibly "sound"] of God. God tells Moses to ascend the mountain. God pronounces the Ten Commandments (the Ethical Decalogue) in the hearing of all Israel. Moses goes up the mountain into the presence of God, who

pronounces the Covenant Code (a detailed code of ritual and civil law), and promises Canaan to them if they obey. Moses comes down the mountain and writes down God's words and the people agree to keep them. God calls Moses up the mountain where he remains for 40 days and 40 nights. At the conclusion of the 40 days and 40 nights, Moses returns holding the set of stone tablets.

God gives Moses instructions for the construction of the tabernacle so that God could dwell permanently among his chosen people, as well as instructions for the priestly vestments, the altar and its appurtenances, the procedure for ordaining the priests, and the daily sacrifice offerings. Aaron becomes the first hereditary high priest. God gives Moses the two tablets of stone containing the words of the ten commandments, written with the "finger of God".^[8]

While Moses is with God, Aaron makes a golden calf, which the people worship. God informs Moses of their apostasy and threatens to kill them all, but relents when Moses pleads for them. Moses comes down from the mountain, smashes the stone tablets in anger, and commands the Levites to massacre the unfaithful Israelites. God commands Moses to make two new tablets on which He will personally write the words that were on the first tablets. Moses ascends the mountain, God dictates the Ten Commandments (the Ritual Decalogue), and Moses writes them on the tablets.

Moses descends from the mountain with a transformed face; from that time onwards he has to hide his face with a veil. Moses assembles the Hebrews and repeats to them the commandments he has received from God, which are to keep the Sabbath and to construct the Tabernacle. "And all the construction of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was finished, and the children of Israel did according to everything that God had commanded Moses", and from that time God dwelt in the Tabernacle and ordered the travels of the Hebrews.

Taking a Look at Gnosticism

Gnosticism was a prominent heretical movement of the 2nd-century Christian Church, partly of pre-Christian origin. Gnostic doctrine taught that the world was created and ruled by a lesser divinity, the demiurge, and that Christ was an emissary of the remote supreme divine being, esoteric knowledge (gnosis) of whom enabled the redemption of the human spirit.

In Gnosticism, there is a general denigration of matter and the human body. Matter is regarded as evil and the human body is a deterioration of pure spirit.

It seems that Gnosticism, in some form, is always "in the air." It may be that the impulse to denigrate the body, to see it as essentially flawed, is part of what is at the root of our difficulty in believing that God made us good. In the biblical vision, the real God, not a lesser divinity, is the maker of matter and our bodies, and declares the world to be good, not evil.

For a fuller take on Gnosticism, here is a portion of an article on Gnosticism by Michael Williams from the online Encyclopedia Britannica. (available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/gnosticism>)

Gnosticism, any of various related philosophical and religious movements prominent in the Greco-Roman world in the early Christian era, particularly the 2nd century.

The designation *gnosticism* is a term of modern scholarship. It was first used by the English poet and philosopher of religion Henry More (1614–87), who applied it to the religious groups referred to in ancient sources as *gnostikoi* (Greek: “those who have *gnosis*, or ‘knowledge’ ”). The Greek adjective *gnostikos* (“leading to knowledge” or “pertaining to knowledge”) was first used by Plato to describe the cognitive or intellectual dimension of learning, as opposed to the practical. By the 2nd century CE, however, the name *gnostikoi* had been adopted by various Christian groups, some of which used it positively as a self-designation, though others criticized the practice as a presumptuous claim of exclusive access to truth.

Consensus on a definition of gnosticism has proved difficult. The groups conventionally classified as gnostic did not constitute a single movement with relatively homogeneous organization, teachings, and rituals. Even the self-designation *gnostic* is problematic, since it is attested for only some of the traditions conventionally treated as gnostic, and its connotations are ambiguous. Whereas some researchers argue that the term *gnostic* should be restricted to the sects or schools that called themselves by that name, others extend the category to include additional religious movements that allegedly shared various distinctive features. Still others treat gnosticism as a world religion that existed from antiquity to early modern times—surviving, for example, in the mythology and ritual of the Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran

Many of the so-called gnostic groups are characterized by a mythology that distinguishes between an inferior creator of the world (a demiurge) and a more transcendent god or order of being. Another frequently encountered theme is that there is a special class or race of humans that is descended from the transcendent realm and is destined to achieve salvation and to return to its spiritual origins. Salvation is understood as a revelation that reawakens knowledge (*gnosis*) of the race’s divine identity; in contrast, the traditional Christian emphasis is on redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although the myth of a demiurge and the theme of reawakened awareness of divine origins have parallels in Platonic and Neo-Pythagorean philosophy—and in fact were partly derived from those traditions—it is often asserted that in the gnostic myths there is a far sharper dualism, involving a much more negative attitude toward the inferior creator god, the material cosmos, and the human body.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Good Burger
“Good Dog!” Day
Good As It Gets

“Mmmmm...that’s good!”
Good Morning America

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

**God of Wonders
Every Move I Make**

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

Campers this age, and in the context of the first day, may wish to have a simpler study. Campers at this age may be less self-conscious than middle schoolers. In fact, they may still hold themselves in more positive regard with respect to God's perspective on them. Some of the doubts that creep in with the onset of adolescence may not be present.

Where there is a healthy view of one's self based on a sense of God's love for them, affirm that and encourage them to continue to see this. Help them share thanks to God in prayer.

Yet, be aware of any in-creep of destructive views of self among your campers.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

Senior high campers will have a complex sense of self. One dynamic will be their use of social media to determine self-worth. Be attentive to this in yourself and share with them the blessings and pitfalls of social media usage.

Also, senior highs may be able to add complexity to their understanding of God by engaging the secondary texts. The main idea here, again, is that ancient Israel's experience of God's salvation led them to see God first as Redeemer, and then as Creator.

Perhaps engage them in conversation about the relationship between the biblical story of creation and the accounts of the origins of life that science teaches. Introduce the idea that these conceptions don't have to be at war. Explore the nature of "truth." Can both these stories be true?

Some of the ways people tend to experience themselves as "not good" is in their sexuality. There is much condemnation of human sexuality in general. Society seems split: on the one hand our media and our consumer values tend to sexualize things, and on the other we also hear a message of shame about our bodies. This is a terribly complex and often destructive message. Be ready to hear signals of these things. In the goodness in which God created us, our sexuality is a good gift of God. I think it is appropriate to share that. Be attentive to some who may benefit from a deeper talk about these things, and attentive to people who may be in despair about some aspect of their sexuality.

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Genesis 1:31 & Isaiah 43:4

Reflection: Throughout the days of creation, God takes a step back, like a painter or sculptor, and declares the work in progress “good.” On the sixth day, God creates humankind in God’s own image, blesses them to be fruitful and multiply, and declares: “That’s *really* good!” In being fruitful and multiplying, human beings become partners with God in the ongoing work of creation.

On this first day of camp, your camper heard that she or he was made in the image of God and is beautifully and wonderfully made. Nothing, not even our sin and brokenness, can take away our God-created goodness. God fills each of us with exquisite gifts for the building up of our shared life with others. And, we are invited to see as God sees: indeed, we are very good!

Activity: At meal time, take a moment to be silent together. Then share what it feels like to have your camper away from home. What feelings do you notice?

Now, take a moment to converse about or write down some of the ways you see yourself and why you think that’s the case. What does the voice inside your head say about you? When you look in the mirror, do you see who you want to be? Do you worry about how you measure up in the eyes of others?

Then, read this verse from Isaiah: “You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.” (43:4). Then ask, “What would it take to see myself and others as God sees: good, and precious and honored and loved?” I invite you today to try on God’s glasses. Let God’s vision of you be yours.

Prayer: Loving, creative, good God: in fashioning creation, you have made something very, very good indeed. We, our family, and our neighbors – whether they are easy to love or hard to love – are part of this goodness. Let us live by your verdict: we are precious in your sight, and honored, and loved. Help us to see as you see. Amen.

2020 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
20/20 VISION: SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS GOD DOES
DAY 2: “I See what God Sees in “Us””

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Yesterday, we took a close look at how God sees things. As each day of creation draws to a close, after speaking into being what before had not existed, we read that “God saw that it was good.” [Genesis 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25] Having created a good world, and loving the world wholeheartedly, God chooses to see the good in the world, in us, and in others.

Today we will explore what this means for us, and for those who might be considered to be “in our inner circles.” Each of us is surrounded in life by family members and friends with whom we have relationships. Some of them are especially close to us, and there are others with whom we have more casual connections. The closer we are to people, the more intimately we know them. In time, we come to know their strengths and their weaknesses; their beauty and their brokenness. This presents us with a choice: we can choose to view them critically, focusing on their weaknesses and failings, or to view them as God does, focusing on their goodness and beauty.

In one of the Bible verses that precedes this summer’s theme verse [1st Peter 4:8-10], the author encourages us to have the same intention as Christ had, living “for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God.” [1st Peter 4:2] How does our faith, and our desire to live in a Christlike manner, allow our lives to be shaped by the will of God and impact the way we see those who are close to us?

We might learn about this from the twelve closest followers of Jesus. His disciples, or apostles, are very much human people. They each have their own array of strengths and weaknesses. They each have moments of faithfulness and moments of sinfulness. They aren’t extraordinarily talented people, with gifts and abilities that clearly would be of great help in the founding of a new faith movement. It would have been easy to reject them all, and look for a more gifted and capable group to serve as Jesus’ most important co-workers. But Jesus sees the good in them. He helps them move past their missteps, and eventually empowers them to step up and become faithful and effective leaders of the early Christian church.

An example of this is found in John 21:15-19. A well-known story about St. Peter has to do with when he denies Jesus three times, as Jesus is being crucified. A less well-known story takes place after the resurrection, when Jesus offers Peter three opportunities to express his love for Jesus. After each of these opportunities, Jesus commissions Peter to tend his flock. It is a stunning change in direction for Peter. It transforms him in more ways than we probably know. Humbled on Good Friday, Peter probably wouldn’t have been surprised had Jesus kicked him out of the group of apostles. But Jesus here overlooks all of the ways Peter has fallen short, and focuses instead on his belief that Peter can still be a strong and faithful leader for the church.

It is a reminder to us of how powerful it can be when someone overlooks our faults and appreciates our goodness. It also reminds us of how, when we do this for others in our inner circle, it can make a profoundly positive impact on their lives. Seeing the good in others is a spiritual practice. As we commit ourselves to this practice, we align ourselves with God, and work with God to affirm and encourage others.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Each camper will identify those who are close to them, in their inner circle of family and friends
- They will explore how easy it is to be critical of those we know best – how easy it is to focus on the negative.
- They will reflect on the previous day’s theme: that God chooses to see the good in all that has been created.
- They will consider how a commitment to faithfulness includes choosing to see others as God does.
- They will be encouraged to think of this as a call from God: not only seeing the good, but actively looking for the good, helping friends and family members to appreciate their own giftedness, and put it to work for God’s purposes.
- Staff may want to help each camper articulate how this plays out in their family, their neighborhood, their school, their church’s youth group, their RTALC cabin group, or their village. How do they look at the people who are in their inner circle? Are they able to look past brokenness and weakness, and see the good and beauty in each person? The God created good and beauty in each person?
- Staff members would also be advised to consider their own circle of influence, at camp and beyond, to consider how they might work with God to help others live into the call to appreciate their own giftedness, and put it to work for the good of all.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTALC and a new day of your life. May you see as God sees. May you see the good in God’s creation, the good in others, and the good in yourself. “Here on the pulse of this new day, may you have the grace to look up and out and into your sister’s eyes, into your brother’s face, your country and say simply, very simply, with hope, Good Morning.” ~Maya Angelou

Introduction to the Day

God looks at all creation, including us and others, and exclaims with passion and purpose, “This is good! Throughout the day today we will explore what this means for those whom we think of as being “in our inner circles.” Each of us is surrounded in life by family members and friends with whom we have relationships. Some of them are especially close to us, and there are others with whom we have more casual connections. In each instance,

God calls us to see them as God sees them, refusing to focus on their weaknesses and failings, choosing instead to focus on their goodness and beauty.

Why we Chose the Passage and Scripture

To help us explore this theme, we will study how Jesus sees Peter, the acknowledged leader of the twelve apostles. Peter had his own weaknesses and failings. (You might remember that on Good Friday, Peter denied three times that he even knew Jesus!) For many people, this would have been more than enough reason to dismiss Peter from the Apostle band altogether, but Jesus chooses, instead, to see the good – to see the potential – in him. We pray that Jesus might teach us to do the same for people who are close to us today.

Read: John 21:15-19

Song: “You Say” by Lauren Daigle

I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough
Every single lie that tells me I will never measure up
Am I more than just the sum of every high and every low
Remind me once again just who I am because I need to know

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
And you say I am held when I am falling short
And when I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours
And I believe (I)
Oh I believe (I)
What You say of me (I)
I believe

The only thing that matters now is everything You think of me
In You I find my worth, in You I find my identity

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
And you say I am held when I am falling short
And when I don't belong, oh You...

Questions for Consideration

- Who has been most helpful in identifying what is good about me?
- What unique gifts, abilities and interests do I have that I see as a good gift from God?
- What unique gifts, abilities and interests have I seen in those close to me (family members, friends, cabin mates...)?

- How could I encourage them to be aware of their gifts, be thankful to God for them, and working to make use of them in service to others?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for seeing the good in each of us. Help us to learn from your example, choosing to see the good in ourselves, as well as in those who closely surround us in this life. May our appreciation of them be a source of support and encouragement. And together, may we strengthen each other to do your will. Amen.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Background Information for the Study

A common scriptural theme is that God rarely chooses the best and brightest to play key roles in the story of our faith. Moses, self-conscious about his ability to speak before others, is sent to Pharaoh to demand that God's people be set free from slavery. Israel, a small and relatively insignificant military force, is able to defeat mighty opponents in the conquest of the Promised Land. David, a ruddy, young shepherd boy, is chosen over his more experienced brothers to be anointed as the successor to King Saul. Jonah, who despises the people of Nineveh and hopes only for their destruction, becomes an agent of God's grace and salvation for their entire nation. Peter, who so often is impulsive and misguided, is chosen to be the primary leader of the early church. James and John, disciples who sometimes seem more interested in their own gain than in the ministry of Jesus, are instrumental in shaping the life of the early church. Paul, a persecutor of the early Christian movement, becomes one of its most effective evangelists.

It would be easy to view these Biblical actors as weak and/or unsuited for the ministry to which God calls them. But God is able to see the good in each of them and, despite their failings, is able to work through them and make ministry happen.

This is particularly true with the twelve apostles of Jesus. They are often referred to as disciples. (Greek: μαθηταὶ – mathetai – for “one who learns from another by instruction; disciple, pupil.” *Greek-English Lexicon*, Louw, & Nida). In this study, we refer to them as apostles (Greek: ἀποστόλος – apostollos – for “one who is sent with a message; messenger.” op. cit.). Despite their considerable deficiencies, the apostles are sent out by Jesus to bring news about the kingdom of God to all who will receive it.

St. Matthew provides a list of the apostles: “Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas

and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.” [Matthew 10:1-4]
(St. Mark’s list is similar; St. Luke omits Thaddaeus and includes, instead, Judas son of James.)

Some of these apostles are better known than others, so in this study we will take a look at one of the best known of them: Peter, the fisherman, who left his work on the Sea of Galilee to follow Jesus. In the Gospels, we learn the following about him:

- Peter walks on water. [Matthew 6:22-33]
- He names Jesus as “Messiah, the Son of the living God.” [Matthew 6:13-20]
- He falls asleep while Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. [Matthew 26:36-46]
- He tries violently to prevent Jesus from being arrested. [John 18:1-11]
- He goes to the tomb on Easter morning and doesn’t know what to think. (Luke 24:1-12)
- He refuses, at first, to let Jesus wash his feet. [John 13:1-11]
- Most seriously: he denies knowing Jesus three times. [Mark 14:66-72]

Even though Peter is far less than perfect, and Jesus has numerous opportunities along the way to “demote” him to being just an average apostle (or removing him altogether from the group), it is worth noting that Jesus honors him in the following ways:

- He takes Peter (with James and John) up a mountain where they see Jesus transfigured with Moses and Elijah. [Matthew 17:1-8].
- He takes Peter with him (again, with James and John) when he raises the daughter of Jairus, a synagogue leader. [Mark 5:35-43]
- Most profoundly, after the resurrection Jesus meets with Peter, who had denied him three times on Good Friday, and much to everyone’s surprise, he doesn’t declare Peter as unworthy to continue being part of this the band of apostles. Instead, he redeems Peter three times. St. John tells this part of the story:

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.” [John 21:15-19]

In this moving scene, Jesus clearly focuses not on Peter’s shortcomings and missteps, but on the goodness within him, and the possibility that the Holy Spirit might work through him to provide strong and faithful leadership for the early Christian Church. Correlating with the three times Peter denies Jesus, Jesus invites him to profess his love, and confers on him the call to care for his flock.

Today's Bible study will focus on this story as an instance when Jesus (whom we understand to be the fullness of God in human form) sees in Peter what others might not have seen. One of those who found a place in Jesus's "inside circle," it would have been easy for Jesus to focus on Peter's faults, and choose someone more promising to become a leader among the apostles. But Jesus is able to see what many others can't. He affirms his appreciation for Peter, and that affirmation restores Peter, encourages him, and inspires him to serve in ways he otherwise may not have been able to do.

In this Bible study we will reflect on Jesus' and Peter's experience, and what this says about how God sees us. We will also consider how we might see in others what God sees in them.

Possible Bible Study Outline

It should be noted that this day is typically hike day for our older campers. Your study will be done in the evening after dinner. Your campers may be a little tired. Nonetheless, these studies have often been some of staff's best studies of the week. Lean into it!

Make connections

- Start each Bible study session by checking in with each other. Especially at the beginning of the week, when campers are still getting to know each other, it is important to build a sense of connection between them.
- Ask how their hikes went and if they made any new friends today.
- You might ask them to share what they are most looking forward to as the week plays out.
- You might invite them to name out loud the best and worst things that have happened since they arrived at camp.
- You might have one or two of them summarize for the rest of the group what they learned from yesterday's lesson about how God sees us.

Opening Prayer

Offer a prayer, in your own words, asking that we might learn to see each other in the ways God sees us. Invite God to help us appreciate what is special about those we love, encouraging them and strengthening them for the role God wants them to play in the world.

Introduce the Theme of the Day

Today's theme is "I See what God Sees in Us." By "us" we mean you, and me, and those whom we find it easy to love. Let's think, for a moment, about the people in our lives. Picture in your mind the members of your family. Now think about your closest friends. Now those you know, where you might not be super close with them, but are friendly with each other. Also imagine, for a moment, people you don't even know, whom you admire – maybe even people who interest you enough that you would like to meet them one day. *[If paper and pencils are available, you might encourage them to draw four concentric circles, labelling them Family,*

Close Friends, Additional Friends, and Others. Have them write the names of people who fit in each of these circles.]

As we get to know people we learn a lot about them. With all of these people you just imagined in mind, let's talk about some of the things we know about them. What do you know about those who are in your "inner circle?" *[Again, if paper and pencils are available, you might encourage them to make a list of positive and negative attributes of people they know well. If campers are slow to respond you could give them some examples: she always has kind words to say; he becomes cranky when he's tired; he is funny; she is a good student; his sarcasm can sometimes hurt people's feelings; she never gives up when things get hard; he pays attention to those who are feeling left out; she doesn't want anything to do with people who aren't popular; he is a great musician; she has a very strong faith...]*

As you think about what you know, there are both good and bad things about people who are close to you, aren't there? Is it easier to come up with the good things or the bad? How do you feel about them when you only think about the bad things? How do you feel about them when you only think about the good things?

We learned yesterday that when God sees us, and all that is good and bad about who we are and what we've done, God's focus is on the good that is within us. This is good news for us: it reminds us that God loves us enough to think well of us, and be glad for us. This is also an opportunity for us: we have the chance to decide what we will focus on when we think of those who are close to us. Of course, if we dwell on the negative, this will have a negative effect on our relationships. But when we dwell on the positive, our love of and appreciation for them will grow, and we'll be in a stronger position to support and encourage them.

Ask:

- * Tell us more about the new friends you made on your hike today. They can be campers, staff, or adult leaders.
- * What were the positive things you noticed or appreciated about those people?

Consider the Bible text for the day: Luke 22:54-62

Jesus encounters this when he works with those who are close to him. Probably one of his closest friends and supporters is a man named Peter. He is one of the first to follow Jesus. He is faithful to him in many ways. But Peter makes a lot of mistakes, and draws a number of wrong conclusions. He is impulsive, and occasionally says things or does things he will later come to regret. One of the worst examples of this takes place on Good Friday, as Jesus is being arrested, mistreated, and crucified. St. Luke tells this part of the story. Have one of the campers read St. Luke 22:54-62.

Then they seized [Jesus] and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are

one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, “Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about!” At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly. [Lk 22:54-62]

What does this story tell us about Peter? What might Jesus have been thinking as Peter denies him three times? When Jesus turns and looks at Peter after the third denial, what do you suppose Peter is thinking and feeling? Peter never has a chance to speak with Jesus again before he dies. What must it have been like for Peter to think that he can never ask Jesus for forgiveness? How might this make him feel about himself?

Jesus seems to have identified Peter early on as a leader among his followers. We wouldn't have blamed him if, after this incident, he concludes this was a mistake, would we? Do you think there might have been someone stronger or more faithful or more loyal than Peter? Someone Jesus could have chosen instead of him? Let's think about this.

A Current Example: Job postings

Many people in the workforce have, at one time or another, gone looking for a job. Often a first step is looking at job postings. These are descriptions of what a company needs to have done, and what kinds of strengths and abilities a successful candidate might need to have. For instance, a fast food restaurant looking for a new manager might advertise that they are looking for someone with:

- Honesty, integrity, and a strong work ethic
- A clear focus on details
- Good inter-personal skills
- The ability to inspire and encourage employees
- Both strength and compassion in holding employees accountable
- Skill in managing disagreements, and helping staff members to move forward together
- Confidence in problem-solving and responding to unexpected circumstances
- Ability to communicate clearly and effectively with supervisors and the public

If you were Jesus, and you were advertising for apostles – maybe even for a lead apostle to replace Peter – what sorts of strengths and abilities would you want your closest followers to have?

[If there is time, have your campers create a job description for “Lead Apostle to Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.” Encourage them to think about the best, strongest abilities someone would need in order to thrive in this position.]

How does Peter measure up to the job description your group developed? Looking at the situation from a human point of view, do you think a manager who knew what Peter had done would have hired him as a lead apostle?

Consider the Bible text for the day: John 21:15-19

Let's reflect on how this story ends. Each of the Gospel writers deals with the resurrection in a unique way. St. John remembers a time, after the resurrection, when Jesus meets with his disciples on the Sea of Tiberius. Peter has decided that it is time to go back to fishing. So he and a number of the others do just that, but fish all night and catch nothing. After the sun comes up, they see Jesus standing on the beach and don't recognize him. He helps them to catch an amazing number of fish in an amazingly short amount of time. They then go to shore, where he has cooked them breakfast. After breakfast, St. John tells us what happens. Have one of the campers read St. John 21:15-19.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me." [John 21:15-19]

When the reading is finished, invite the campers to think quietly about this story for a full 60 seconds. After this time of quiet, ask them what they noticed in the story. You might prompt them by asking them what Jesus sees in Peter. If necessary, pose these questions to them:

- What do you think the other apostles are thinking about Peter, and the way he let Jesus down on Good Friday?
- Why does Jesus overlook Peter's faults, and appreciate his abilities?
- What does this tell us about how God sees us?
- What impact do you think this exchange has on Peter's life and ministry?
- What does this tell us about how we might see those who are close to us?
- What does this tell us about how we might impact the lives of those who are close to us?

A Pastor Friend Tells a Story

This is a true story. You can feel free to share it with your campers. Perhaps it will help them see the positive influence we can have on our friends and family when we share with them the good that we see in them.

A pastor once told me about a friend of his. They were students together when they were preparing to become pastors. The school they attended had a strong academic focus, and the students in their program were working to earn a Master of Divinity degree. The problem was: his friend just wasn't a very good student. He hadn't earned terrific grades in high school or college, and he wasn't excelling at seminary either. My pastor friend loved him, and appreciated him, but really wondered if he was suited for graduate work. There were

times when he thought this friend simply didn't have what it takes to become qualified to serve as a pastor in the Lutheran Church.

They had a professor, though, who saw things differently. He could see that this friend had a strong faith in Christ. He saw him as a very compassionate young man, who cared deeply about other people. He knew in his heart that if this friend could get through seminary, he would go on to be a faithful and effective pastor.

And, in fact, he did. He graduated from seminary, was awarded a Master of Divinity degree, and spent more than 35 years in congregational ministry, mostly in rural North Dakota. He understood his parishioners, and loved them well. He may not have had the gifts for academics, but he certainly had the gifts for ministry. Because this professor was able to look past the bad and focus on the good, he was able to encourage him in a way that strengthened him to graduate from seminary and pursue the call of serving as a Pastor.

In another context, this same professor once said, "It is a very easy thing to see and point out another person's weakness. But it is a much harder thing to see and point out their goodness; their potential; their possibility."

As followers of Jesus, and children loved by a God who sees what is good in us, we are all called to do what is hard: to see the good in those who are close to us, to share with them how much we appreciate them, and to help them to become all that God is calling them to be.

Journaling for today:

For journaling today, use the Meditation and Journaling Guide in Appendix B. Following the meditation, have your campers list in their journal five (5) things they saw as good in the person that is a friend, loved one, or mentor.

Closing Prayer

Thank God for this time of study and reflection. Ask God to stir us in ways that help us see the good in those close to us. And pray that the Holy Spirit might strengthen us for a life of encouraging others, and helping them pursue the life to which God is calling them. Amen

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

"Seeing the Good in Others" as a Spiritual Practice

Athletes are familiar with the importance of practicing. So are musicians, actors, artists, and professionals of all sorts. With practice comes proficiency. In many cases, practice can lead us from unconscious incompetence (I'm not even aware of it, and I'm not good at it) to conscience incompetence (I am aware that I'm not good at it) to conscience competence (If I stay aware, I can be good at it) to unconscious competence (I'm not even aware of it, and I'm good at it). Over time, something that initially is very difficult for us can become a natural behavior.

The same is true with Spiritual Practices. As we practice seeing the good in others, it may at first seem difficult, and we may not think we are very good at it. But over time practice pays off, and it becomes a strength. We can find ourselves aware of the goodness in others, and encouraging it in them, sometimes without even trying.

What other Spiritual Practices might we adopt, so that our faithfulness becomes more and more constant and natural? As we give ourselves over to these practices, we grow in our ability to live in a Christlike manner.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

* Today is hike day. At the beginning of the hikes, leaders might invite each hiker to pay attention to another person in their group. Observe how they contribute to the group's experience. Observe how they connect with the creation that surrounds them. Observe how they support and encourage other hikers. At the end of the hike, before the group breaks up, have each one share with the group what they saw in the individual they were assigned to observe.

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

Songs from the Camp Song Sheet

- * 7: The Rock
- * 8: Jesus, Remember Me
- * 11: More Precious than Silver
- * 20: Friends
- * 21: Fill My Cup
- * 42: Your Everlasting Love
- * 65: Little Room
- * 121: Psalm 121

* For additional conversation, thought could be given to these Bible passages, and how Jesus is able to see the good in someone whom others see as only bad:

St. Matthew 9:9-13 – Jesus, eating with tax collectors and sinners (like Matthew)

St. Luke 10:1-10 – Zacchaeus (a rich tax collector, understood to be a sinner by his neighbors)

St. Luke 23:32-43 – The criminal on the cross who asks Jesus to remember him

St. John 4:1-42 – the Samaritan woman at the well

St. John 8:2-11 – the woman accused of adultery

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

* Take turns having each camper sit in the middle and having each of the other campers lift up a different positive thing about that camper in the middle. Then have the next person sit in the middle and continue the process until all have gone.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

* Have campers participate in a simple spiritual gifts analysis process. The ELCA has one that might be useful for high school campers – perhaps even middle school campers.

Download it at:

www.elca.org – Congregations and Synods – Faith Practices – Spiritual Renewal – Finding Your Spiritual Gifts

Invite campers to think about the gifts and abilities God has entrusted to them. Help them to see that they are gifted, and have something to offer.

* As we move into our middle school and high school years, many of us are struggling to understand and appreciate just who we are. Sadly, during these same years, unkind comments and behaviors from peers can have a devastatingly negative impact on us. Talk about ways campers can connect with similar aged youth back home (people they trust), and commit to regular times of gathering to share words of appreciation and encouragement with one another.

* Keep a journal of those times when someone says something kind or appreciative. In my office, I have a box that contains every thank you note that I have received in the past twenty-one years. When I am feeling down, often just looking at this box (without even opening it up and reading cards) can lift my spirits, and help me feel better about myself. Having and updating a journal of blessings can serve a similar purpose. Encourage campers who struggle with their own sense of goodness to adopt this practice when they get home.

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: John 21:15-19

Reflection: Today’s theme is “I See what God Sees in Us.” Yesterday we explored how God sees us: looking beyond all that is broken, and seeing the good in us. For the rest of the week we will imagine what life might be like if we try to do this as well: seeing the good in ourselves and others.

Throughout the day we will explore what this means for those who might be considered to be in our “inner circles.” Each of us is surrounded in life by family members and friends with whom we have relationships. Some of them are especially close to us, and there are others with whom we have more casual connections. In each instance, God calls us to see them as God sees them, refusing to focus on their weaknesses and failings, instead choosing to focus on their goodness and beauty.

To help us explore this theme, we will study how Jesus sees Peter, the acknowledged leader of the twelve apostles. Peter had his own weaknesses and failings, even denying three times on Good Friday that he knows Jesus. But Jesus chooses, instead, to see the good – to see the

potential – in him. We pray, today, that Jesus might teach us to do the same for people who are close to us.

Activity: Have the entire household gather together and identify the goodness in each individual present. What special gifts, abilities and inclinations does each one have? How does each one contribute to the family? What does each one do to make another smile? How does each one lift up others who are struggling? After these gifts, abilities and inclinations are identified, make a family plan to return to this list from time to time, and give thanks to God for the goodness we experience in one another.

Prayer: Gracious God, we know you see the good in us. Help us to see the good in each other. Help us to encourage the good in each other. Help us to be a blessing to each other, as we work together to do your will. Amen.

2020 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
20/20 VISION: SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS GOD DOES
DAY 3 “I See What God Sees in ”Me””

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

I have always wanted to be great. From the time I was little, I wanted to do great things. For a while in 3rd grade I was going to be the world’s greatest dog handler. And to that end I put our poor family dog through “his paces” so many times it’s a wonder he still wanted to hang around me! Then in 4th grade, I had a fabulous teacher and I decided I wanted to be a great teacher. And so, a corner in our basement became my schoolroom. A teacher’s desk, a student’s desk and a blackboard (you know...like whiteboards, but you used chalk instead of markers ☺) and I was set. I made lesson plans, taught on the board...yep I was gonna be great!

In middle/high school I discovered I could sing pretty well. So, in my secret dreams, I wanted to be Amy Grant (one of the only popular Christian singers at that time). I dreamed of singing on stage, all the lights on me, and a crowd out there thundering their applause. I wanted to be great in school – high grades, top of my class, successful. And I worked hard at that, too. A college degree, years in youth ministry and eventually ordination and being a pastor. In the midst of it all – I have a secret longing to be great.

But there’s one problem. I often don’t see myself as great. I learned early on I could always find people who were better than me at anything I tried to do. And then the bumps and bruises of life led me to believe I wasn’t great really, at anything. I started living in fear...that one day the people around would suddenly find out I wasn’t a great leader, a great person, a great preacher, a great writer...they would discover that and I would be tossed out. I would lose out – because someone else could do it better than me. I let the circumstances and people around me define my worth, my “greatness”. And I forgot something really, really important:

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother’s womb.

I thank you, High God - you’re breathtaking!

Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration - what a creation!

You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body;

You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.

Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;

all the stages of my life were spread out before you,

The days of my life all prepared before I’d even lived one day.

Psalm 139:13-16 The Message

I forgot that my God created me from the very first. And God created me to be me. Not anyone else. God shaped and formed and still shapes and forms me all my life. And when God looks at me – what is seen is beauty, gifts, talents, a heart and soul like no other. Created unique yet in the image of God – God sees me and say – Wow! What an amazing child of mine! How I love her just the way she is! No...gosh I wish she were better at singing more talented at writing. No...if she worked a little harder she could be a better teacher, preacher, sister, daughter, friend. No...God sees me...smiles, embraces me and says – you are good.

When I look in the mirror and judge by the world's standards – I fall short. When I compare myself to others – I fall short. When I listen to the media, the fashion world, sometimes even the people in my life...I fall short. So many of us find ourselves basing our self-worth on how others see us and on our accomplishments, feeling shame from our past, defining our value based on our looks/being accepted by certain people or setting unrealistic standards for ourselves. But it doesn't have to be this way. If only we would see ourselves as God sees us!

For in God's eyes – I'm just how I'm supposed to be. A little sarcastic, a compassionate and loyal heart, a leader that longs to lift others up and help them live into their potential. Someone who loves a good laugh and a good beer or glass of wine with friends. Someone who loves people, but needs time alone. Someone who loves to help others, but also loves to spend time curled up on the couch with a good book and my cat on my lap. A singer, a preacher, a teacher...creative and at times courageous. Someone who sees how life can be different, better and is willing to work to make it so, especially for others. Someone who can be strong and who cries when children's voices tell the story of Jesus. Well, ok let's be honest – who cries at a whole lot of things. I am who I am and I am learning each day to live more and more embracing who God has created me to be.

*For we are God's masterpiece.
He has created us anew in Christ Jesus,
so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.
Ephesians 2:10 New Living Translation*

Today, we are going to take a look at ourselves – and in doing so, help campers see themselves as the masterpieces God has created them to be. Even when the world tells them they are less than, we are going to help them embrace God's vision of greater than. Using the stories of Zacchaeus and the women caught in adultery, we will see how Jesus sees past the brokenness, the labels, the cultural standards and sees the beauty of each person for who they are – giving them worth because they are his and are loved. We'll explore how God has shaped and molded each individual and placed them in a specific place and time, so that, as we embrace our God-given gifts and potential and live into and through them, each person can find great joy, but also impact the world for good.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Discover for the first time or anew, how God has shaped and gifted each person, learning to embrace who each one is and seeing each other as masterpieces of God's work. That God looks at each of us and says he/she is very good!
- Reaffirm and give thanks for each person as God has created them
- Help campers visualize how they can use who God has created them to be to make a difference in the world around them.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLC and a new day of your life. May you see as God sees. May you see the good in God's creation, the good in others, and the good in yourself. "Here on the pulse of this new day, may you have the grace to look up and out and into your sister's eyes, into your brother's face, your country and say simply, very simply, with hope, Good Morning." ~Maya Angelou

Introduction to the Day

Today we are...beloved children of God. Created as masterpieces in God's image. We are unique. We are gifted, amazing people molded into being by God and placed in a particular time and place so we can impact the world by living courageously into the world with who we are. When we listen to God's voice, instead of the world's voices, we find our self-worth in the Creator who embraces us and sends us. And we can discover with excitement how we are created to change the world around us, by being who we are created to be.

Why we Chose the Passage and Scripture

Today's scripture reminds us God created us from the beginning as a work of art with gifts, talents, passions, heart and soul that make us unique.

Psalm 139:13-16 – I am fearfully and wonderfully made

Song: "This Is Me" - Greatest Showman

I am not a stranger to the dark
Hide away, they say
'Cause we don't want your broken parts
I've learned to be ashamed of all my scars
Run away, they say
No one'll love you as you are
But I won't let them break me down to dust
I know that there's a place for us
For we are glorious

When the sharpest words wanna cut me
down
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown them
out
I am brave, I am bruised
I am who I'm meant to be, this is me

Look out 'cause here I come
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies, this is me
Oh-oh-oh-oh....

Another round of bullets hits my skin
Well, fire away 'cause today, I won't let the
shame sink in
We are bursting through the barricades and
Reaching for the sun (we are warriors)
Yeah, that's what we've become (yeah, that's
what we've become)
I won't let them break me down to dust
I know that there's a place for us
For we are glorious

When the sharpest words wanna cut me down
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown them
out
I am brave, I am bruised
I am who I'm meant to be, this is me
Look out 'cause here I come
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies, this is me
Oh-oh-oh-oh....

This is me
and I know that I deserve your love
'cause there's nothing I'm not worthy of
(Oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh-oh-oh, oh, oh)
When the sharpest words wanna cut me
down

I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown them
out
This is brave, this is proof
This is who I'm meant to be, this is me

Look out 'cause here I come
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies, this is me
When the sharpest words wanna cut me
down

I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown them
out

I'm gonna send a flood
Gonna drown them out
Oh - This is me

Source: [LyricFind](#)
Songwriters: Justin Paul / Benj Pasek This Is Me lyrics © Kobalt
Music Publishing Ltd.

Questions for Consideration

- When you look in the mirror, or see a picture of yourself, what do you see?
- What positive messages have you heard/do you hear about yourself from other people? (parents, teachers, coaches, friends, etc) What negative messages do you hear about yourself?
- What are easier to remember and/or believe – the positive about yourself or the negative? Why do you think that might be so?
- What are some of the fears and doubts you have about yourself?
- Take some time and think about the things you love to do. Think about the things you're good at. Spend some time thanking God for these things.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, it's so hard to believe you see me as a masterpiece – someone unique and beautiful. I confess I am often filled with doubts about who I am because I hear all the voices that tell me I'm not OK. Help me start today, shutting out the voices that would say otherwise and claiming who I am as your child. Help me start believing what you say – that I am gifted, loved, unique and awesome. In your name, Jesus, I pray, Amen.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

One of my favorite worship songs in our church right now is Hillsong Worship's "Who You Say I Am". (see full lyrics in Extra Resources section). My favorite lines say this:

Who the Son sets free is free indeed, I'm a child of God, yes I am...

*I am chosen not forsaken, I am who you say I am
You are for me not against me I am who you say I am*

They are beautiful truths, but do you know what I love best about this song? Every time we get to the line, “I’m a child of God, yes I am!” you can hear the voices of a couple of our younger ones basically shout out “YES I AM!”. It used to be only those couple of voices – but the more we sing the song, the more voices join in proclaiming those words loudly – YES I AM! What an incredible statement to make and claim!

Each one of us is made in the image of our God. You are made in the image of our God. Whether you believe that or not, doesn’t make it any less true. Way back in Genesis, God created humankind and saw that...”indeed, it was very good.” (Gen 1:31) God’s opinion of creation – including you and every camper at RTLK this summer – has not changed. But we have a hard time believing this. Oh we might believe it for others, but we have a hard time really embracing for ourselves, don’t we? Why is that?

I think it’s because we often struggle, and, and because of that, we struggle to like others. We play the comparison game so often and seemingly lose, because we mess up. Then we project onto God characteristics that are not God. For instance, as I was growing up words that cut me to the quick from my parents were “I’m so disappointed in you”. I hated hearing those words. I love my parents and the last thing I wanted to do was to disappoint them. I don’t even remember when that concept of “disappointing” God came into my vocabulary and heart – but it has stuck there for a long time. And it’s been reinforced in a number of different ways. Don’t want to disappoint God – have an at least 30-minute Quiet Time every day studying scripture – preferably in the morning (it’s better then, right?!?!). Don’t want to disappoint God? Follow all the commands, serve the poor, give away your money to good causes. Don’t want to disappoint God? Always put God first. Always.

The problem with not wanting to disappoint God is captured in the on-going questions – At what point does the scale tip into disappointment? How do I know I’m not disappointing God? What if I try, but I miss a few days...have I then failed beyond hope? The truth of my life is I’ve let God down. Surely God must be beyond disappointed with me. And if that is so – can I ever be good enough so God isn’t disappointed in me? These questions delved so deeply in my soul that I started living with this thought lodged in my heart that God was always just a bit disappointed in me.

The damage that little projection onto God’s character has caused in my life is incredible. Because it undermines all that God actually tells me. It undermines that God’s feeling towards me is love. And it undermines the relationship between God and me. Who wants to hang out with someone you are constantly disappointing? Not me.

But here’s truth in the midst of this – God might be disappointed **FOR** me – when I make poor choices that cause my life to go awry, because God’s desire for me, for each of us is a life of the best – filled with abundance, joy and fulfillment. So disappointed **FOR** me - not disappointed **IN** me. And when I embrace that truth, then I can look at God and begin to trust that God delights in me. That God truly loves me and created me to be who I am. Make sense?

During today's study we want to help campers see two very important things: 1) God sees us as masterpieces, created in God's image, and 2) God loves each one of us *as we are!* We want to celebrate who each camper is – the beauty that is them. And we want to help them see their God as a loving God who always sees past the brokenness, the poor decisions and sees the awesome child of God they each are. Today is a day of identity...identity steeped in who and whose we are!

The texts we will use today offer us a reminder of who we are and also let us see glimpses of how Jesus chooses to see people – as good...no matter what the circumstances of their lives.

First – who we are: Psalm 139:13-16

*Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God - you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration - what a creation!
You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,
The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day.
Psalm 139:13-16 The Message*

To put these verses into context...this is a psalm attributed to King David. The first 12 verses recognize that God is everywhere and with us in everything. No where we can go takes us out of God's presence. This is important to understand – we are always in the presence of God. Always. It's just a matter of do we recognize this or not?!? God is always present – we simply have to/get to choose to recognize and welcome his presence.

And why is God always, always, with us? Verse 13-16 tell us the why: For it is God who has formed every little part of us. Every cell, DNA, characteristic, passion, talent – God put us together. Fearfully – as in awe filled – not fear as in scared. We are made, awe-inspiring, awe-filling children of God. We have never been hidden from God and we never will we. God is always with us because God loves us. Doesn't mean life will always be perfect, but it does mean God takes delight in us. Finds joy in us. Loves us passionately!

For kids today, actually I think for many of us today – this is too amazing to actually fathom...and thus believe. We might say we believe God loves us and is for us – but we live secretly harboring the thought that God doesn't. We live in a place of fear instead of grace. A place of judgement instead of love.

So what would it mean for us – to let go of all the human stuff we've laid on God – that God's angry or disappointed or turning away, or...or...or...and instead embrace the truth that God is love and that love is for us? What might it mean for our lives to choose to see ourselves as God sees us? It means our lives could change! I've been working on this for a while. Every time the tape that says God is disappointed in me starts running in my mind – I shut it off and remind my heart, I am a beloved child of God – awesomely made – YES I AM!

This is my identity. This is your identity. This is every camper's identity – to our very cores. If we can't believe this – it will be hard to see the rest of today as truth. So say it again and again – until you start to believe it – I am a child of God – yes I am!!!

Next: Luke 19:1-10, John 8:1-12

Here are two stories which open our eyes to the way Jesus sees people: Zacchaeus and the women caught in adultery, both are told by the world's standards they are not loveable. Each is an "outsider" and labeled as unworthy, unfit. But Jesus, looks past the circumstances, accusations, the actions and says, "Child of God! I see you, and love you, you are worthy!"

Luke 19:1-10 The Story of Zacchaeus

In the previous chapter, Jesus has been teaching about what it means to be part of the kingdom of God: to persevere, to be humble, to be like a child, to make following God THE most important thing, above riches and comfort. And then he heals a blind man along the road. Again and again upsetting the world's view of who is acceptable, who's in the "in" crowd. Then Jesus enters Jericho.

Luke 19:1-2: *Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich.*

As he enters Jericho, our story starts. Zacchaeus, is a tax collector and rich. Both things that put him at odds with others. Tax collectors were hated because they were often Jews seen as collaborators with the Roman government and because many of them became individually wealthy by charging more tax than the government did – and then keeping the different for themselves. Yeah...not really a people pleaser activity! As Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, we can assume he was good at what he did. Probably also not winning himself points in the people popularity contest!

Vs 3-4: ³ *He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.*

Zacchaeus, clearly knows about Jesus, because as Jesus enters town, Zacchaeus, like everyone else is jostling for positions to be able to see. As one whose legs aren't that long – I understand the dilemma. I detest sitting in the back of anywhere because as soon as anyone stands or a tall person sits in front of me – I can't see. So in the moment – my heart is with Zacchaeus. But Zacchaeus is resourceful – he didn't get to be chief tax collector sitting at home!

Something to note though...liked or not, Zacchaeus has social standing in the town. And he was wealthy. Both of these things make what Zacchaeus did astounding. No respectable man would *run* ahead – let alone climb a tree! It just wasn't done! But Zacchaeus doesn't seem to care. What he wants most is to see, just see Jesus. But then...the story flips.

Vs 5-7: ⁵ When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” ⁶ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷ But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.

People aren't happy. This collaborator, this thief has gotten Jesus' attention. And Jesus doesn't just say hi or wave – he invites himself over to Zacchaeus' home! In spite of everyone's opinion, in spite of Zacchaeus' reputation and character flaws, Jesus sees past all that and sees a child of God. Jesus knows while Zacchaeus' life might not be reflecting the Creator's image, the man is still created in God's image. And so he is worthy. Isn't it just like us though – when someone gets something we'd love to have – we get jealous. Hurl out insults. It's like the crowd is a bunch of Jr highers! ☺ Mean and picking on someone they've decided they don't like.

But Zacchaeus...simply sees Jesus and hears the invitation. Jesus wants to be with him. Jesus sees worth in him. And Zacchaeus by seeing himself through the eyes of the Savior and Creator, Zacchaeus sees the good in himself. And his whole life changes.

Vs 8-10: ⁸ Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” ⁹ Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

How amazing – when Zacchaeus sees his worth in Jesus' eyes – his whole attitude changes. Not only is he willing to give back to those he cheated – he's giving more! And don't lose sight of the fact that in order to give back, Zacchaeus will have to face those he cheated. There's no check or bank draft he can send. But he will do it, because he has seen his worth and in that can then see the worth of others. If we are going to learn to love those around us, we must choose to love ourselves.

John 8:1-12 Story of the Woman Caught in Adultery

In this story we see once again, someone people have decided is not OK. We see a beloved-made-in-the-image-of-God person trashed by others. Told they are “less than”. Made to feel unloved, unwanted. Whose very life is in danger because of people's opinions and choices.

Vs 1-4: Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ² but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³ As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. ⁴ “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”

Here we have a number of things going on:

First – Jesus is sitting down. I know this seems unimportant. But google “woman caught in adultery” and you will almost always see Jesus standing with the woman groveling at his feet. I point that out – because imagery matters. Jesus was sitting down. And there was a whole crowd

there watching. Separate from Jesus or the teachers of the law. So again, the depictions we often see is the whole crowd was a part of the “stoning crew”. Not so.

Second – the teachers of religious law have “caught” the woman in the act of adultery. Ever wondered how they did that? Hmmmmm... They aren’t worried about this woman. I would say they’re not even worried if they’re right. Because the law that is quoted, from Deuteronomy 17:22, says this: *22 If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.* So the law really states both should die. If this woman is caught in the very act – the guy had to be there too. So this isn’t about justice at all.

Third – the teachers of the law brought this woman in the midst of the crowd to simply, hopefully, catch Jesus at something wrong. They had no compassion for the humanity of the person they were “using”. There is a lesson here for us as well. How often have we thrown someone under the bus, or hurt someone as we try to make ourselves “better”? Before we condemn others, we must take stock of our own actions. Which is exactly what Jesus has everyone do.

Vs 7-9: *7 They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” 8 Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. 9 When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman.*

Interesting, isn’t it, that it’s the oldest accusers that slip away first? Maybe then recognized wisdom before the younger ones?! But they all walk away. And Jesus...Jesus looks at the woman and sees the person. Not the “crime”, not the sinner – he sees the person. And he asks:

Vs 10-11: *10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” 11 “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”*

Jesus doesn’t condemn. Jesus doesn’t judge. Jesus sees – and loves. I have heard pastors/others put an emphasis on the command Jesus gives – go and sin no more - like he’s reprimanding her. Put a little disappointment in his tone and there you have it. But I think of it more as Jesus being disappointed for her. While she was being used by the others to further their own agenda, she also was making choices in her life that didn’t bring life and light. So, I think Jesus is disappointed *FOR* her. Which is totally different. His tone in my mind is kind of wishful – please, don’t sin – don’t keep breaking your life. There’s so much more for you! As we hear Jesus’ desire for this woman’s life, we can hear his desire for our lives as well. Children of God – please don’t choose sin - don’t keep breaking your life. There’s so much more for you!

For Today...

In both of these stories – Jesus sees the God-image person he loves. And calls them into a better version of themselves. Not to please him. Not to earn his love. Not to make them “right enough” for him. But so their lives can be filled with the joy of living and their hearts be transformed by God’s love. As Jesus wished it for them – so he wishes it for us, too!

And so that is our call today. To help campers see themselves as made in the image of God. Just right. Just as God desires. And they do have gifts. And they do have passions. And they do have hearts. And they do have immense potential. And yes, for some if not all of us, life has thrown some curve balls. Life has bruised and broken us. People have bruised and broken us. But that's not the whole story.

Because Jesus tells us the whole story includes seeing ourselves as God sees us – as good. With all our gifts, passions and talents. With all our quirks, issues, and habits. With our good decisions and our not so good ones. God sees us and says – You are good!

**Something to note – in the study below, it could feel like you're saying the same thing again and again. You are. On purpose. Because when we hear critical, negative things about ourselves we tend to internalize them immediately – true or not. It takes hearing the positive many times before we begin to internalize that. Repeat, today...repeat, repeat, repeat. Your camper might get to the point where they roll their eyes or think OMGosh you've said that a thousand times! Your reply should be – Yep! Until we all believe it, I'm gonna keep saying it! ☺

Actual Possible Study

- Review: Do a quick review of what campers have learned so far...possible questions:
 - Do you remember Monday when we talked about God in Genesis and the story of creation. What did God say about what God created?
 - Yesterday we talked about the good in those we like/love. Have you noticed anything amazing about the people in this group? Anyone notice someone else being kind or doing something great?
- 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.
 - What's been one thing you've learned this week? (either about you or about God)
 - What's been one of your favorite things that has happened this week?

**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 the partner's share each other's answers with the group or simple each person 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:

Finger print comparison: *supplies needed – ink pad and a half sheet of paper for each person in the group, writing utensils, somethings hard for kids to press on (like their bibles for instance), wet wipes*

Have your group sit in a circle fairly close together. Tell the group:

Today we're going to start our time together by having a little fun. I have an inkpad here we're going to pass to each person and then set in the middle. I want you to take your pointer finger and press it onto the inkpad as it comes around. Then I'm going to pass pieces of paper around. On every sheet, I want you to put your fingerprint in the exact same place. By the time we're done there will be a sheet for each person. If the ink on your finger runs out – just pick up the ink pad, re-ink your finger and then set the ink pad back down in case someone else needs it. *(When campers are done finger printing, give them a wet wipe or something to wipe the ink off their hands)*

Once everyone has a sheet with everyone's finger prints on it...have campers look at the prints.

- What do they notice? (everyone's is different, some people have lots of lines, others not as much, some have curves in different places than others, etc)
- Did you know that every single person's fingerprints are unique? They are!
- Can campers tell whose is whose print? For fun they could try and guess – and then write each person's name by their print.

Say to the group something like this:

When God started creation – God saw everything created and said this is indeed very good. As God still creates each day, God continues to look at each of us and delights in us. God created us with our gifts, talents, quiriness, likes, dislikes – all of it and says we are great!

- Do you believe that?
- What makes that hard to believe sometimes?
- Think about this for a moment... Sometimes people do things intentionally that make us feel way less than great. Other times, people don't even know they've done or said things that make us feel like we're not great at all. What or who are the voices you hear that tell you you're not great?

(You can give an example or two from your own life to get things started, but give time for campers to answer. A question like this may take a little bit for campers to open up and answer. Be OK with silence! They'll get there!)

- What are some of the things that have been said to you or about you that have bruised your heart, made it hard to believe that God (or anyone) sees you as great?
(Again – be OK with silence! This may take time...but they'll get there.)
(Be sure to affirm campers with things like – yeah, that's really hard to hear, or they were really cruel/mean weren't they, I'm so sorry someone said that to you, etc)

Be sure to recognize and honor all the negative messages campers hear. Maybe pause for a moment when everyone's done sharing and have the group either hold hands or sit close together. Let them feel each other's presence. Remind them that even when the messages in this world are mean, cut to our hearts, are hard to hear and beat us down...God still looks at us with

love. It doesn't make the bad go away – but if we can remember God loves us, as we are...it can help.

Psalm 139:13-16

Tell campers you want to read something to from the book of Psalms. Tell them not to worry about finding it in the bible right now – just listen. Then read:

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb.

I thank you, High God - you're breathtaking!

Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration - what a creation!

You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body;

You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.

Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;

all the stages of my life were spread out before you,

The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day.

Psalm 139:13-16 The Message

- Ask campers what they heard...what stuck out for them.

Now ask everyone to stand or sit up straight and stretch their arms out to heaven – like they are worshipping God. And have them repeat the verses after you line for line, or bit by bit.

- Ask what it felt like to say that to God. Do they believe what they said?

Seeing Ourselves as a Child of God full of potential

Recognize that sometimes it hard to see ourselves the way God sees us, but today we're going to spend some times looking at who God created us each to be. We're going to celebrate the awesome creation we each are and learn more about each other along the way.

Hand out the “This is Me” inventories/sheets (I'll find this or create it)

Give everyone their sheet and then instruct them to fill it out the best they can. They should be honest – even if it feels like “bragging”. This is not how they “wish” they were – but how they are. Give everyone a chance to fill in their sheets. Once everyone has completed the sheets – give each person a chance to share what they have down. You can set the example by going first. *(Each week you should do this with your group, so they feel like you're a part of this with them) (If there are places you and/or the group can reaffirm what the person is saying – like – yeah that's really you, or I see you doing that, etc – do so.*

Once everyone has shared – say something like this:

Isn't it amazing how different we each are! (Point out something from each person's sheet).

Think about it – God created each one of us to be who we are. God gave you the gifts and talents you have, the things you like and don't like...it's all part of you and God sees you and says – child of mine – you're great!

I know it's hard to believe that sometimes, when the voices in our worlds seem so loud and say something different. But if we understand that everyone is seeing us through their own judgements, opinions, jealousies, etc...then we can understand their views aren't always correct.

When we let God define who we are – *God always speaks truth*...and God looks at you with love – always!

Let's look at a couple of examples...**turn with me to Luke 19:1-10**. Let's read the story and see what Jesus does. Have one person read or each person read a verse. Ask the following questions:

- Who was Zacchaeus? What did he do?
- Did the people like him? Why do you think they didn't like him?
- What did Jesus do? How was that different from what the people did?
- What did Zacchaeus do as a result of Jesus seeing him and coming to his house?

Comment: Jesus didn't see the cheating tax collector...Jesus saw someone loved by God who had lots of potential. And so Jesus didn't cross him off – but rather invited him into something better!

OK let's look at one more story: **turn with me to John 8:1-12**. Let's read this story and see what happens. After the group has read the story ask:

- Who was the woman? What did she do? (*You might have to explain that adultery is sleeping/having sex with someone else's spouse – remember to be age appropriate! ☺*)
- Did the people like the woman? Why do you think they brought her to Jesus?
- What did Jesus do? How was that different from what the people did?
- What did Jesus tell the woman to do?

Comment: Jesus didn't see the woman doing bad things. Jesus saw someone loved by God who had made some poor choices, but who still had lots of potential. So Jesus, didn't write her off, he didn't let her be used by the other people to make a point – instead he invited her into a life that would bring joy to her.

Often we see ourselves not as God see us, but as the imperfect, not as we would like to be, “less than” person others tell we are. Which is actually really sad. Just like Zacchaeus and the woman – when Jesus looked at them, he saw people loved by God – the same is true for you. Jesus looks at you and loves you. Period.

Ask: How might your world change if you chose to believe how God has created you is good? How might you change the world if you chose to be you in the world? How might you change the world, using who you are, where you are, to be an agent of God's love in the world?

Journaling for today:

For journaling today, use the Meditation and Journaling Guide in Appendix B. Following the meditation, have your campers list in their journal five (5) things that they can imagine God sees as good in them.

Closing

In closing today – have your group stand in a circle and have each person pick four words they like that describe themselves. Have each person say I'm (name) and I'm (four words) and I'm a child of God Yes I AM!!

After each person has proclaimed who they are...have the whole group shout together – I’M A CHILD OF GOD – YES I AM!!!

Then pray the group out for the day!

A suggestion – you might want to have each person take their fingerprint sheet and throughout the rest of the week have them watch each other and notice good things. When they see something good – have them write it down by that person’s finger print. Then perhaps at cabin devos or the last Bible study time – campers can share with the others what they have seen in each other this week.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

- * **Try It On at Camp**...if need to make the lesson more visual/active...after you’ve completed the study brainstorm ways your group could use the talents of your group to bless others at camp. Make a plan and carry it out!
- * **If the study isn’t going well**...too often in Bible study time we think the scripture is the most important thing. While it is very important – sometimes scripture can make a bigger impact if you do activities first – then let the scripture drive the point home. Don’t worry so much about having the “read out of the book/ask questions time” today at the expense of the activities.

If one activity isn’t going well – shift to a different one. Or have them all stand up – do some jumping jacks, turn arounds, jump up and downs and then have everyone sit back down. Sometimes – kids just need to move so they can focus.

Sometimes, activities like today’s make kids uncomfortable because they have been taught that bragging is bad. Help them see they aren’t “bragging” in a bad way, they’re simply seeing how God created them.

* **Another idea:**

For a group that needs to be more active you might try this:
Have each person find 5-10 stones that represent things about them. Things they’re good at, or like. Then have each person hold one of their rocks and go around the circles and name that one thing the rock stands for. Once you’ve been all around the circle, have everyone put their rock in a pile in the middle. Then do the whole thing over again, until all the rocks are in a pile in the middle.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- **Backwards/Opposite Day** – seeing how God sees not the world
Make everything backwards – supper for breakfast, everyone wears shirts inside out/backwards

Do the day's schedule in reverse

Do worship backwards – start with the benediction

Play games backwards like:

Kickball (kicker at pitcher's mound or run the bases backwards – 3rd base is 1st, etc)

Sardines – backwards hide and seek – instead of everyone hiding and one seeking – 1 person hides and everyone seeks. Once you find the person who is hiding you hide with them!

Elimination – start with two people and when the ball is missed another person is added to the team until everyone is in and the team with the most people wins!

- **Golden Globes Day – we win when we see each other for who we are**

Give awards throughout the day to people caught doing great things – could happen randomly where you grab whoever is close by and proclaim loudly to everyone present the award that person is receiving.

Have dinner be a “dress up” affair complete with awards given to certain staff celebrating who they are

- **Under Construction Day – everyone is a “work in progress”**

Meals – you have to build your meal – build your own sandwich, create your own eggs (give scrambled eggs with fixins in separate bowls, etc)

Construction hats/gloves safety tape, work zone signs for decorations

All camp could be competitions around building things – towers out of rocks, buildings out of popsicle sticks, clothes out of duct tape

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

*** Songs from the camp song sheet**

- #45 Dance with Me
- #23 Here I Am, Lord
- #67 History Maker
- #24 I'll Do My Best
- #59 Jesus Lover of My Soul
- #69 Open the Eyes of my Heart
- #9 Wounded Soldier

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

- You Say – Lauren Daigle - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIaT8Jl2zpl>

Lyrics/chords: <https://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/tab/lauren-daigle/you-say-chords-2426329>

- Wonderfully Made – Ellie Holcomb - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrwSvQx3Xqs>

Lyrics/chords: <https://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/tab/ellie-holcomb/wonderfully-made-chords-1951873>

- I Am Who You Say I Am – Hillsongs Worship -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKw6uqtGFfo>

Lyrics/chords: <https://www.worshiptogether.com/songs/who-you-say-i-am-hillsong-worship/>

Who You Say I Am – Hillsong worship

Who am I that the highest King would
welcome me?
I was lost but He brought me in, oh His love
for me, oh His love for me

Who the Son sets free, oh is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes I am

Free at last, He has ransomed me, His grace
runs deep
While I was a slave to sin Jesus died for me,
yes He died for me

Who the Son sets free, oh is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes I am

In my Father's house there's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes I am

I am chosen not forsaken, I am who You say
I am
You are for me, not against me, I am who
You say I am

I am chosen not forsaken, I am who You say
I am
You are for me, not against me, I am who
You say I am
I am who You say I am, I am who You say I
am

Who the Son sets free, oh is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes I am
In my Father's house there's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes I am (repeat)

I am chosen, not forsaken, I am who You
say I am
You are for me not against me
I am who You say I am (repeat x3)

Oh, I am who You say I am, Yes, I am who
You say I am

Who the Son sets free Oh is free indeed
I'm a child of God, Yes I am
In my Father's house, there's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes I am!

*Songwriters: Ben Fielding / Reuben Morgan
Who You Say I Am lyrics © Capitol
Christian Music Group*

Any supporting stories (list source)

Kids using their gifts and passions to change the world:

<https://www.rd.com/true-stories/inspiring/most-inspiring-stories-kids/>

- Abbie Weeks, 18, of Centennial, Colorado, created a nonprofit that provides solar energy to underprivileged communities. Her team has installed solar electricity for a school at Nyaka AIDS Orphans Project in rural Uganda and is currently working to do the same for an elementary school on the Pine Ridge Native American Reservation in South Dakota. Abbie's group, which she launched three years ago, has also replaced her high school's cafeteria styrofoam trays with reusable ones and convinced town officials to place a fee on single use plastic bags.

- Gitanjali Rao - One of the most brilliant heroes to come out of the woodwork as a result of the Flint, Michigan, water crisis is 11-year-old Gitanjali Rao, who invented a device that can detect lead in drinking water—and she did it as part of her science fair project. She'd been keeping tabs on the town's progress and watching her parents test their own water and shaking her head, as it were - there had to be better methods out there. No? Alright, well, then she'd invent one. Her three-part device could be the next big thing in water purification, and help keep thousands healthy.

- Jahkil Jackson, 9, of Chicago, founded "[Project I Am](#)" to help the homeless in his hometown. Within the last year, he's compiled and distributed more than 3,000 "Blessings Bags" filled with toiletry items, a

towel, socks, and light snacks. He has organized donation drop-off sites and bag-stuffing parties where community members, family, and his fourth-grade friends help him create the bags. He has also established partnerships with homeless shelters and other relief agencies, where he distributes each of his bags and spends time in conversation with the recipients. A frequent public speaker, Jahkil challenges children to find their passion and use it to make a difference. "When I speak to other kids at schools and community centers, I always say, 'Don't wait until you are an adult to be great,' Jahkil says. "'You can be great now!'"

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/inspirational-stories/g5188/kids-who-changed-the-world/?slide=6>

- When Nicolas Lowinger was a tween, he met a brother and sister experiencing homelessness. The pair took turns going to school because they shared a pair of shoes. Nicolas gave the boy a pair of basketball sneakers, and thus kicked off an organization that would come to be known as Gotta Have Sole, through which footwear has been donated to over 99,000 children in homeless shelters.

- Jaylen Arnold - After being diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome, Asperger's and OCD, Jaylen was bullied by peers for being different. He found that the anxiety he suffered as result of the bullying worsened the symptoms of his disabilities. That's what led Jaylen to found the Jaylen Challenge Foundation, which has educated more than 100,000 kids on recognizing bullying behavior and understanding each other's differences.

- Ann Makosinski - Makosinski was 15 when she invented a flashlight powered by body heat for the Google Science Fair in 2013. In doing so, she found a way to reduce waste (single-use batteries getting dumped in landfills) and provide light to people who can't afford electricity in their homes. She also invented the eDrink, which cools your hot beverage by turning the excess heat into electricity that can charge your devices. Her inventions have gotten her worldwide recognition including an appearance on the "Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon" and several brand partnerships.

Cracked Pots - <https://toastfinder.com/cracked-pots-inspirational-story-about-being-yourself/>

A water bearer had two large pots, one hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot always arrived only half full. For two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, fulfilled in the design for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was unable to accomplish what it had been made to do. After two years of enduring this bitter shame, the pot spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself and I apologize to you." "Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said. The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and was cheered somewhat. But at the end of the trail, it still felt the old shame because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the pot apologized to the bearer for its failure. The bearer said to the pot, "Did you not notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, and not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we've walked back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has flaws. We're all cracked pots. But if you let these flaws shine and try being yourself, then you can use your flaws to make the world more beautiful. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you, too, can bring something beautiful to this world.

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

Most of this study will work well with Juniors. I would suggest taking some of the questions and morphing them into age appropriate – examples:

- Think about this for a moment... Sometimes people do things intentionally that make us feel way less than great. Other times, people don't even know they've done or said things that make us feel like we're not great at all. What or who are the voices you hear that tell you you're not great?

Instead of assuming Juniors hear those voices that tell them they're not great, ask instead something like: Have you ever had anyone say something to you that makes you feel like you're not good enough or can't do something?

- What are some of the things that have been said to you or about you that have bruised your heart, made it hard to believe that God (or anyone) sees you as great?

Have you ever had anyone say things to you that made you sad or made it hard to believe that they or God loves you? If so, would you be open to sharing about that?

Have you ever said anything to someone else that might have made them feel bad about themselves? What did you say? What happened? How did it make you feel?

- Ask: How might your world change if you chose to believe how God has created you is good? How might you change the world if you chose to be you in the world? Using who you are, where you are to be an agent of God's love in the world?

Think about the things you like to do, things you're good at or care about. How might you be able to impact those or the world around you by being you? How might you show God's love to others?

**One other place – when you do the “This is Me” sheets – be sure to use the one designed for Juniors.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

- This study will hold well for sr highs – but be aware, they have experienced more heartache and pain in life than younger kids. Their images have often been beaten and bruised by others – figuratively and in real life. If they chose to open up about that pain – please hold it. Make time for it. I know Bible Study is only supposed to be an hour long – but if you're group goes deep – honor that. Also – honor those kids for whom life has been pretty good. We don't all have to have deep dark hurts. If kids choose to share – honor that. But also bring closure to that part of the study. A good way to do that is to pray.

- It also might take this group longer to see the beauty in themselves. They know they're not good at things, they've been told they didn't make the cut, or they've failed a test. You might have to draw out of them what they are passionate about or what they are really good at – especially if they think they aren't good at anything. Help each camper come up with at least one thing they are good at and/or passionate about. It doesn't have to fit the “church mold” – meaning it doesn't have to have anything to do with faith or following Jesus, etc. Whatever they are passionate about – help them see that as a child of God it can be used for good. (For example

one of the boys in my youth group is passionate about nuclear physics...I mean really passionate. When he was recently home from college I got to affirm the difference he'll be part of in this world as he's scored an internship in a nuclear medicine lab for the summer. Every passion, every gift – can be good!

- With the last question in the study: (Ask: How might your world change if you chose to believe how God has created you is good? How might you change the world if you chose to be you in the world...using who you are, where you are to be an agent of God's love in the world?) Have them get concrete. Think of real things they'd actually do. Write them down. Challenge them to really live this way – specifically. Help them envision what it could be like to be them – and like it!

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Psalm 139: 13-16

Reflection: Today we reminded ourselves that we are...beloved children of God. Created as masterpieces in God's image. We are unique. We are gifted, amazing people molded into being by God and placed in a particular time and place so we can impact the world by living courageously into the world with who we are.

Unfortunately, too often we listen to the voices of this world – some who speak intentionally and others unintentionally – but these voices that lead us to believe we're not enough. We're not gifted. Who we are isn't OK. And our identity is stripped away.

But like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-12) Jesus looks through the dents and bruises, the shortcomings and sees the beloved child of God. When we listen to Jesus' voice, instead of the world's voices, we can find our self-worth in the Creator who embraces us and sends us. And we can discover with excitement how we are created to change the world around us, by being who we are created to be where God has placed us in our families, our schools, our world.

Activity: Take time around a meal table or go out for a special drink at Starbucks or head to a place that is special for your family. Talk with each other about:

- ways you are similar to each other
- ways you are different from each other
- talents and passions each person has

Talk about the “voices” each of you listen to that has beaten down your self-image (be real. be honest.)

Brainstorm together either:

- a way your family can utilize together who you are to bless the world and/or people around you

- a way each person would like to step into being who they are a little more. Then commit with actions steps how the family will support each person as they step out. Hold the family to these – and set up a time to check in with each other around how it's going. This takes some time and intentionality – but think about the benefits of helping your whole family learn more about each person in the family!!

Prayer: Gracious God, we know you see the good in us. Help us to see the good in each other. Help us to encourage the good in each other. Help us to be a blessing to each other, as we work together to do your will. Amen.

2020 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
20/20 VISION: SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS GOD DOES
DAY 4: “I See What God Sees in “Them””

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Not long ago, there was a story on the CBS morning news show about color blindness. A young boy, Tate Remiger had been color blind all his life. Imagine never seeing the beauty of color around you your whole life; never seeing the colors of God’s amazing creation; never seeing the color of your friend’s hair or eyes; never seeing the color of your own hair or eyes.

Recently, Tate received a special pair of glasses that colored every dark corner of Tate’s world. His whole life changed. He cried when he received the glasses and he wears them 24/7. Tate never wants to be without those glasses again.

While it might not seem relevant to our study today, I think the stats on color blindness are astonishing. So many people in our world cannot see the beauty and goodness of the created order. Color blindness affects one in every 12 males and one in every 200 females. When they can get those colors turned on, it opens up a whole new spectrum of possibilities. Tate’s glasses are designed to bring color into a drab world. They allow the colorblind to see the vivid hues they've been missing.

Wear glasses for colorblindness and you will see color. Wear 3D glasses and you will see depth in movies and pictures that you couldn’t see without them. In so many ways, God brings life, color, and depth to our drab world. It is God’s love that makes all love possible. It is God’s 20/20 vision that makes our 20/20 vision possible in terms of how we see ourselves, those we love and others that challenge our sensibilities to love. God sees good. God sees good and giftedness and power in you. God sees so much good, giftedness and power in your cabin mates and campers. God sees good and giftedness and power even in those we struggle to love.

Over the past few days we’ve worked hard to help you claim your own gifts and goodness and to see the gifts and goodness in your circle of friends. You and the campers have been challenged to see each other as God sees you. God sees good even if when we are at our worst. God sees good when we are at our best. The cross of Christ is like those special glasses that help Tate see color. Through the cross all are revealed as beautiful, colorful, blessed and gifted again and again.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus declares: ⁴³ “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

C’mon Jesus. Really? Love your enemies. What about those people who have hurt us so deeply that we can’t even look at them; people that have abused us or belittled us? Some days it feels like that is totally out of the question. But pray for those who persecute you. Maybe we can do that. Maybe we don’t have to like everybody. But asking God to bless them might just make a difference in their lives; certainly, it will make a difference in mine. My prayers for “them” could just soften my heart towards them and others I refuse to love. Praying for our enemies could one

day turn those people into our friends but if our prayers don't do that, for sure our prayers will work in us a change of heart and attitude.

So, the mandate is pretty clear. We are called to see the good in others, love our enemies and pray for them, too. If we see only the good in ourselves or in those easy to love, we are missing one important component to seeing as God sees and it is quite likely the most difficult component of all. You and I are called to love the "thems" in our lives; the people who are dramatically different from us; the people who are not easy to love and even more difficult to see as "good."

Seeing the good in others is indeed a spiritual practice. But sometimes, spiritual practices become spiritual practices after we work to make them habits first. Sometimes seeing the good in others is so incredibly difficult that considering it a holy endeavor is at first impossible. Seeing the good in "them" will take a whole lot of conscious effort. Some used to say that it took 21 days of repeating an action to form a habit. In a study published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Phillippa Lally, a researcher and her research team decided to figure out just how long it actually takes to form a habit. The study examined the habits of 96 people over a 12-week period. Each person chose one new habit for the 12 weeks and reported each day on whether or not they did the behavior and how automatic the behavior felt.

At the end of the 12 weeks, the researchers analyzed the data to determine how long it took each person to go from starting a new behavior to automatically doing it. On average, it takes more than 2 months before a new behavior becomes automatic — 66 days to be exact. And how long it takes a new habit to form can vary widely depending on the behavior, the person, and the circumstances. In Lally's study, it took anywhere from 18 days to 254 days for people to form a new habit.

So, you see, loving one's enemies and seeing them as God sees them will take time and effort. The choice to see as God sees is obviously yours. But if we truly want to live as God has called us to, then putting on those cross shaped glasses is vital to how we see each other and God's beloved world.

We can be a statistic...one in 12 or one in 200 that will never look at others and see the color, beauty and good in them. But as children of God, claimed for goodness in the waters of our baptism, I pray we'll be a statistic on the "goodness and God's 20/20" vision and clarity chart.

The main focus of today's Bible Study is the story of Jonah. Jonah had a bit of a chip on his shoulder. Many believe that he didn't want to go to Nineveh because he was afraid – afraid of what the Ninevites would do to him. Who could blame him for that? But if you read Jonah 4 you will come to understand the primary reason Jonah doesn't want to go to Nineveh. God saw good in a people that were not necessarily nice to Jonah or the Israelites. God showed mercy to the Ninevites, so Jonah, a little too big for his britches tells God, "I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." Then Jonah asks God to take his life from him, saying "it is better for me to die than to live" because Jonah couldn't stand the thought that God was going to forgive wicked Nineveh. Jonah would rather be dead. He sees his hatred for the Assyrians as superior to God's love for them. He sees evil and sees a nation that deserves judgement. But God sees good in the people of Nineveh even though they may have deserved God's punishment. That doesn't mean that God overlooked their sinfulness, but it does mean that God saw through it. God saw the potential in a people that seemed lost.

The book of Jonah communicates a beautiful aspect of God's character: God sees good. God sees every person as worth God's energy, love and grace. The fact that God would forgive the Ninevites of all the atrocities they had committed and look past them to the good that lived in those people tells us that God is always seeing the good in us, too. And because God sees good, we are called to see good in the "thems" of our lives as well.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Using the story of Jonah and the city of Nineveh campers will come to understand the character of God.
- Accompanying the story of Jonah is the story of Peter from the book of Acts. From that story campers will again be reminded of the expansiveness of God's love, mercy and 20/20 vision; vision that clearly sees the good in all people and nations.
- Through this study campers will hear once again a mandate from Jesus to love their enemies and see good in those who might be hard on them.
- Campers will grow in their knowledge of what it means to love the unlovable.
- Campers will understand the need to practice seeing the good in others and find things even in their enemies worth loving.
- Campers will know what it means to see others as God sees them...God's 20/20 vision of mercy and love.
- Campers will comprehend that prayers for one's enemy can both soften their heart toward the "thems" in their lives and maybe even change the heart of the enemy.

The Goal and the challenges are to bring campers to an understanding of their responsibility to see the good in others, those they have difficulty loving. They are to see in others the good that God sees in them.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLK and a new day of your life. May you see as God sees. May you see the good in God's creation, the good in others, and the good in yourself. "Here on the pulse of this new day, may you have the grace to look up and out and into your sister's eyes, into your brother's face, your country and say simply, very simply, with hope, Good Morning." ~Maya Angelou

Introduction to the Day

Today's theme is "I See what God Sees in Them." Today is a day that you will be challenged to see the good in people that aren't necessarily in your circle of friends; in people that may not be easy to love and befriend. God sees good in all people. Your challenge today is to try to do the same. Everyone is a person of worth.

Why We Chose the Passage and Scripture

Read I John 4:11-12 and 17-18 from the Message

¹¹⁻¹² My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love! ¹⁷⁻¹⁸ God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us.

Song: “Speak Life” by Toby Mac

Some days life feels perfect
Other days, it just ain't workin'
The good, the bad, the right, the wrong
And everything in between

Yo it's crazy, amazing
We can turn our heart through the words we say
Mountains crumble with every syllable
Hope can live or die

So speak life, speak life
To the deadest darkest night
Speak life, speak life
When the sun won't shine and you don't know why
Look into the eyes of the broken hearted
Watch them come alive as soon as you speak hope
You speak love, you speak
You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh
You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh

Some days the tongue gets twisted
Other day my thoughts just fall apart
I do, I don't, I will, I won't
It's like I'm drowning in the deep

Well, it's crazy to imagine
Words from my lips as the arms of compassion
Mountains crumble with every syllable
Hope can live or die

So speak life, speak life
To the deadest darkest night
Speak life, speak life
When the sun won't shine and you don't know why
Look into the eyes of the broken hearted
Watch them come alive as soon as you speak hope
You speak love, you speak

You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh
You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh

Lift your head a little higher
Spread the love like fire
Hope will fall like rain
When you speak life with the words you say
Raise your thoughts a little higher
Use your words to inspire
Joy will fall like rain when you speak life with the things you say

Lift your head a little higher
Spread the love like fire
Hope will fall like rain
When you speak life with the words you say

So speak life, speak life
To the deadest darkest night
Speak life, speak life
When the sun won't shine and you don't know why
Look into the eyes of the broken hearted
Watch them come alive as soon as you speak hope
You speak love, you speak
You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh
You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh

You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh
You speak life, oh oh oh oh oh

Some days life feels perfect

Questions for Consideration:

- What does it make you feel to be fully known by God?
- When you think of God knowing you fully, do you worry about the things that you've done wrong or the times you've misbehaved?
- Imagine God only seeing good in you. How different would that feel than thinking God is seeing your naughtiness?
If that's how God sees you, how do you think you should look at others?
- Think about some people that have hurt you. Take a minute to write down their names and then next to their name, write something about them that you see in them that is good.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for this beautiful day even though I am really tired. And thank you for the gift of being at camp. Most importantly, thank you for seeing the good in me and my heart. Use this day to teach me the importance of seeing the good in those in my life that are not easy to love. I pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

* While Jonah's time in the "great fish" may be the most famous part of the book of Jonah, there's a lot more we can learn from this prophet. We can learn from his attitude and actions in response to God's call for him to go to Nineveh. We can learn of God's mercy and how God looked upon the people of Nineveh when they repented. We can learn of God's disappointment in Jonah when he chides God for being merciful and seeing through the Ninevite's sin.

The book of Jonah can be divided down the middle to show two short episodes: God's compassion to Jonah and God's compassion to *the Ninevites*. And when you look at these two episodes side-by-side, you'll see some rather obvious similarities:

JONAH CHAPTERS 1-2

God's compassion to Jonah

1. God sends Jonah to Nineveh
2. Jonah disobeys
3. God's judgment comes after Jonah in a storm,
4. The sailors pray to him, do not let us perish.
5. The storm subsides and the crew is spared.
6. Jonah prays to God when he is in trouble (in fish)
7. Jonah is answered. Fish spits him out on dry land

JONAH CHAPTERS 3-4

God's compassion on the people of Nineveh

1. God sends Jonah to Nineveh
2. Jonah obeys
3. Jonah warns that God's judgment is coming to Nineveh and Jonah tells his shipmates that the storm is from Yahweh, the Hebrew God.
4. Nineveh repents and calls on God so that they will not perish.
5. God relents, and Nineveh is spared.
6. Jonah prays to God when he is in trouble (in scorching heat.)
7. Jonah is answered. God chides him for not having compassion on the people of Nineveh.

Nineveh was a major city in Assyria. Jonah prophesied in the mid-700s BC, a time when Assyria was not as powerful as they had been in recent years. Israel on the other hand, was in a "silver age." Under King Jeroboam II, the nation expanded its borders and enjoyed an age of splendor that hadn't been seen since the days of King Solomon.

Jeroboam II however, was a wicked king. It was God's mercy that allowed Israel to prosper, not the behavior or devotion of His people. Jeroboam II led the people of Israel to

commit idolatry, just as all the kings before him had, and all the kings after him would continue to do. While Judah had a handful of godly kings, Israel had one terrible king after another.

Assyria was a wicked nation that committed terrible atrocities against the people it defeated and/or controlled. Captives were led into exile with fish-hooks through their jaws. City leaders were impaled alive on poles, and some were beheaded. There are records of the Assyrians keeping track of how many they had killed by counting the heads of those they beheaded. Believing that “gods” of the cities they attacked lived in unborn children, the Assyrians would rip open pregnant women and kill their babies. This historical background really helps us to understand why Jonah was so reluctant to go to Nineveh!

Put yourself in Jonah’s shoes. Your nation has finally begun to prosper; evil Assyria seems to be experiencing a period of weakness. Surely, they are getting their punishment, and God is blessing Israel! But...God has told you to go to Nineveh – to one of the most important cities in Assyria – and to warn them of God’s coming wrath against them.

It’s definitely possible that Jonah didn’t want to go to Nineveh because he was afraid – afraid of what the Ninevites would do to him. Who could blame him for that? But Jonah 4 reveals the primary reason Jonah doesn’t want to go to Nineveh. After the Ninevites repented and God was merciful towards them, Jonah tells God, “I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster” (Jonah 4:2). Jonah then asks God to take his life from him, saying “it is better for me to die than to live” (4:3). In other words, if God is going to forgive wicked Nineveh, Jonah would rather be dead. He sees his hatred for the Assyrians as superior to God’s love for them. He sees a nation that deserves judgement, whereas God sees a people who are in spiritual darkness, and who desperately need Him. God knows that the people of Nineveh are wicked, but God chooses to see the possibility of good in them instead.

The book of Jonah communicates two beautiful aspects of God’s character: God’s mercy and God’s 20/20 vision. The fact that God would forgive the Ninevites of all the atrocities they had committed, tells us that God is willing to forgive us of every sin in our life. Jonah had a problem with this because the recipients of God’s mercy were the people his nation hated. Jonah had no desire to see the good in the Ninevites. He only focused on their wickedness. But God is a God of love and mercy. God prefers to focus on who we can become. And because God sees the good in “them,” we are called, maybe even expected to see the good in those we deem difficult to love.

* **THE BIBLE STUDY:** To get the full effect of the story of Jonah and the Ninevites, you need to read as much of the book that I’ve included. The entire book is only 4 chapters long. It’s a great story of cowardice, expectation, redemption, release and God seeing good in people that may have deserved God’s punishment. After each section of scripture, I’ll give you questions for discussion.

JONAH, CHAPTER 1. *The LORD gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: ² “Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.” ³ But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish.*

⁴ But the LORD hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. ⁵ Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their

gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. ⁶ So the captain went down after him. "How can you sleep at a time like this?" he shouted. "Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives." ⁷ Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm. When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit. ⁸ "Why has this awful storm come down on us?" they demanded. "Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?" ⁹ Jonah answered, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land." ¹⁰ The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the LORD. "Oh, why did you do it?" they groaned. ¹¹ And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, "What should we do to you to stop this storm?" ¹² "Throw me into the sea," Jonah said, "and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault." ¹³ Instead, the sailors rowed even harder to get the ship to the land. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn't make it. ¹⁴ Then they cried out to the LORD, Jonah's God. "O LORD," they pleaded, "don't make us die for this man's sin. And don't hold us responsible for his death. O LORD, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons."

¹⁵ Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! ¹⁶ The sailors were awestruck by the LORD's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him. ¹⁷ Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

- 1. What job did God give Jonah?**
- 2. What did Jonah do instead of fulfilling God's wishes?**
- 3. Why did he run?**
- 4. When Jonah was tossed overboard and the storm settled, what did the sailors vow to do?**
- 5. Where did Jonah hang out for three days and three nights?**

JONAH, CHAPTER 2 is basically when Jonah was captive in the belly of the fish. The entire chapter is a lament. He thinks he may die. When God was satisfied that Jonah groveled enough, he had the fish spit Jonah up onto the beach. Jonah's life is spared.

JONAH, CHAPTER 3. Then the LORD spoke to Jonah a second time: ² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh and deliver the message I have given you. ³ This time Jonah obeyed the LORD's command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all. ⁴ On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!" ⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow.

⁶ When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in burlap and sat on a heap of ashes. ⁷ Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: "No one, not even the animals from your herds and flocks, may eat or drink anything at all. ⁸ People and animals alike must wear garments of mourning, and everyone must pray earnestly to God. They must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence. ⁹ Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will change his mind and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us." ¹⁰ When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

1. **Why do you think Jonah went to Nineveh this time? What was different between Jonah and God?**
2. **How did the people respond to Jonah's message that in 40 days God was going to destroy the city?**
3. **Even the king of Nineveh got in on the action. What did the king do in response to Jonah's announcement?**
4. **What was the king hoping God would do?**
5. **How did God respond to Nineveh's behavior?**
6. **What do you suppose God saw in the Ninevites?**

JONAH, CHAPTER 4. *This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. ² So he complained to the LORD about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. ³ Just kill me now, LORD! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen."*

⁴ The LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?" ⁵ Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as he waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ And the LORD God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

⁷ But God also arranged for a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant so that it withered away. ⁸ And as the sun grew hot, God arranged for a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. "Death is certainly better than living like this!" he exclaimed. ⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?" "Yes," Jonah retorted, "even angry enough to die!"

¹⁰ Then the LORD said, "You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. ¹¹ But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?"

1. **What did Jonah accuse God of?**
2. **Does God have a right to change God's mind...and see good in people rather than their naughtiness?**
3. **How do you feel about Jonah confronting God?**
4. **Jonah pouted! How did God shake Jonah up a bit?**
5. **What disturbed God about Jonah's concern for the silly plant that died because of the worm?**
6. **How did God look at/see the people of Nineveh after they were sorry for their poor behavior?**
7. **According to the theme for the day, what did God wish Jonah was able to do that God did?**

A POWERFUL STORY ABOUT PETER'S TRANCE & NEW STANCE ON ASSOCIATING WITH GENTILES

In chapter 10 of the book of Acts we encounter Peter and Captain Cornelius. Their meeting was a bit awkward. It isn't because Peter is reluctant to engage in a relationship with a Gentile or Roman. Peter's come a long way in a short time. Instead, the awkward encounter is because of how Cornelius greets Peter. In a rather enthusiastic manner, Cornelius falls at Peter's feet. He is paying him homage. What Cornelius is actually feeling is immense joy. He senses that he is in the presence of the one whose message will bring salvation. Peter, however, reminds Cornelius that he is only a human being. After his vision and the voice of the Spirit, the playing field is leveled and he now approaches Cornelius as though they stand on the same plane...they stand on the same footing.

In verses following the ones we will study today, Peter says that *it is against our law* to associate or visit with a Gentile (literally, "a person of another race"). Despite this deep-seated taboo, Peter announces he has learned a powerful lesson through his heavenly vision. The vision advantageously converged with the arrival of Gentile messengers and the Spirit's instruction "Go with them, not making any distinctions." Peter's honesty makes the interpretation of the vision and the instructions he received from a quiet voice quite clear: "*God has shown me that I should not call any man impure [common] or unclean.*"

In other words, we should never look upon another human being as less than us. We must work hard to see others, the "them" in our lives, as God sees them. All people carry worth in God's eyes. All people should carry worth in our eyes, too. No human being is to be treated as profane, somehow beyond the reach of a God's saving, sacred and sanctifying work. No human being is to be viewed as unclean. All are to be seen through the cross of Christ and by God's 20/20 vision of love and pure goodness.

ACTS, CHAPTER 10:9-36 (The Message) ⁹⁻¹³ *The next day as the three travelers were approaching the town, Peter went out on the balcony to pray. It was about noon. Peter got hungry and started thinking about lunch. While lunch was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the skies open up. Something that looked like a huge blanket lowered by ropes at its four corners settled on the ground. Every kind of animal and reptile and bird you could think of was on it. Then a voice came: "Go to it, Peter—kill and eat."* ¹⁴ *Peter said, "Oh, no, Lord. I've never so much as tasted food that was not kosher."* ¹⁵ *The voice came a second time: "If God says it's okay, it's okay."* ¹⁶ *This happened three times, and then the blanket was pulled back up into the skies.*

¹⁷⁻²⁰ *As Peter, puzzled, sat there trying to figure out what it all meant, the men sent by Cornelius showed up at Simon's front door. They called in, asking if there was a Simon, also called Peter, staying there. Peter, lost in thought, didn't hear them, so the Spirit whispered to him, "Three men are knocking at the door looking for you. Get down there and go with them. Don't ask any questions. I sent them to get you."*

²¹ *Peter went down and said to the men, "I think I'm the man you're looking for. What's up?"* ²²⁻²³ *They said, "Captain Cornelius, a God-fearing man well-known for his fair play—ask any Jew in this part of the country—was commanded by a holy angel to get you and bring you to his house so he could hear what you had to say."* *Peter invited them in and made them feel at home.*

²³⁻²⁶ *The next morning he got up and went with them. Some of his friends from Joppa went along. A day later they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had his relatives and close friends waiting with him. The minute Peter came through the door, Cornelius was up*

on his feet greeting him—and then down on his face worshiping him! Peter pulled him up and said, “None of that—I’m a man and only a man, no different from you.”

27-29 Talking things over, they went on into the house, where Cornelius introduced Peter to everyone who had come. Peter addressed them, “You know, I’m sure that this is highly irregular. Jews just don’t do this—visit and relax with people of another race.

- 1. Up to this point in time, how did Jews and Gentiles treat each other? What was the extent of their engagement with each other?**
- 2. Why do you suppose the dream about the sheet happened three times? What was Peter’s response?**
- 3. Who was in charge of Peter’s afternoon and what did they ask Peter to do?**
- 4. Captain Cornelius...was he a Jew or a Gentile?**
- 5. What was the point of the animals, reptiles and birds coming down from heaven on a sheet?**
- 6. Was it about food or was it deeper than that?**
- 7. What do you think God was telling Peter about how he was to “see” people of different races?**
- 8. How does this story fit with today’s theme? Jews and Gentiles were not exactly best buds! But God was removing the barrier between nations. God wanted Peter to see Gentiles and others as God sees them.
Both Jews and Gentiles had gifts, goodness and love in their hearts and souls.**
- 9. How do you think Peter felt about this new scenario...being able to associate with people of different races?**
- 10. Does God see skin color or sexuality?**

Journaling for today:

For journaling today, use the Meditation and Journaling Guide in Appendix B. Following the meditation, have your campers list in their journal five (5) things they saw as good in the person that they find difficult to love.

Close your study with prayer.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

- * “No one is born hating another person, because of the color of his skin or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” Nelson Mandela

- 1. What stirs you about Nelson Mandela’s quote?**
- 2. In what ways is he spot on and are there other ways he is not?**
- 3. How about you...were you taught to see the good in others regardless of the color of their sin, their background or religion?**

- * What do you know about Martin Luther King, Jr. other than there is a Monday holiday named after him?

Here is probably one of his most famous quotes that should stir us to see us to see each other as equals and see the goodness in each other even if we are dramatically different from each other. Martin Luther King had a different dream. He dreamed that the content of one's character mattered more than the color of one's skin. He was concerned that one day we would see each other as God sees us. "I have a dream," MLK said, "that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

He dreamed that eventually there would be one America. An America where there was no black community nor white community, but only the American community. "We have fought hard and long for integration, as I believe we should have, and I know that we will win."

- 1. How far have we come in learning to see the goodness in each other?**
- 2. What has changed since MLK made these profound statements?**
- 3. And you...how able are you to see others as God sees them?**

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- * Theme for the day ideas (not just theme, but how to carry the theme through entire day)
 - International dinner on the mall
 - worships that include music and liturgies from other countries
 - conversations before bed at night that focus on how we might see the good in others even if they are dramatically different from us
 - star gazing emphasizing the universality of the sky (we see what they see)
 - covenant with each other to look for the good in others, in "them"
 - write in your "See Good" journals

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

* From RTALC song book: Big House, We Lift Up, More Precious Than Silver but change the words to "Friend, you are, more precious than silver." I'll Do My Best and again, change the words to "Love, I'll love, I'll love you Friend forever..." Dance With Me, You Are the Light of the World, Open the Eyes of My Heart, Hello Hello

* From Worship and Praise song book: Beauty For Brokenness, Bind Us Together, Change My Heart, O God, Good Soil, One Bread, One Body, We Are Called

* More Scripture: More than once in the Old Testament the prophets remind God's people of their purpose. Their lives are always about reaching out... As God tells Abram, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:3. As Moses encourages the Israelites to emulate their God, who "defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt." – Deuteronomy 10:18-19 And as God says through Isaiah, "my justice will become a light to the nations." – Isaiah 51:4

* From Awesomestories.com + Mother Theresa once said: “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”

The streets of Calcutta were dangerous, dirty, and crowded. People were infected with cholera and leprosy, dysentery and other diseases that were fatal in most cases. Mother Teresa and her group of helpers went among them every day with courage and conviction to do what they could to ease their pain.

One day, Mother Teresa came across a young woman in the gutter of the street, directly in front of one of the Calcutta hospitals. The woman was so ill that she did not notice or care that the rats and cockroaches were eating her feet. Mother picked up the woman and carried her into the hospital. She told the nurse inside:

This woman is dying. She needs help.

But the nurse replied:

Sorry, no room for her here. She is poor and can't pay and we can't save her anyway, so we can't waste a bed on her. Now please move along.

Mother Teresa's heart broke as she carried the woman back to the street, and there she stayed with the woman for hours until she died. Mother Teresa was angry, and she felt like no one should have to die alone, forgotten and in despair in the dirty street.

Mother Teresa found an old abandoned hotel just behind a Hindu Temple and started bringing in the people the hospital refused to admit. They were so sick that she knew there was no hope of survival for them, but she felt compelled to make a place they could come to die. It was a horrible undertaking as the people who filled the rooms had open wounds covered with maggots or had parts of their bodies missing due to disease. The Hindus from the Temple did not want these people close to them and threw garbage and rocks at Mother Teresa.

One day, Mother Teresa saw a man lying on the steps of the Hindu Temple -- very sick. She learned he was one of the Hindu priests and no one at the temple would touch him for fear of getting his disease. So, they put him on the steps to die. Mother Teresa picked him up and took him to the old hotel where she cared for him until he died a peaceful death. The Hindus at the temple saw what she had done and never gave her any trouble again.

- 1. In what ways did Mother Theresa see others as God sees them?**
- 2. What connection did she have to those who were dying and in need of a peaceful place to complete their journeys?**
- 3. What characteristics did Mother Theresa have that enabled her to care so deeply for those in need?**

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

* Ideas to try with Junior Age (4-6 grade)

Tell the story of the Good Samaritan. Make sure children know that this is a story about one person, a foreigner seeing another person as worthy of love; seeing the person as God

sees them and offering them help and acceptance. It's how we are called to live together with each other and with the "thems" of our lives.

The Good Samaritan

One day a lawyer came to Jesus and asked what he needed to do to live forever or, "to get into heaven" or "to become enlightened." Jesus asked him what the law of the Ten Commandments said. The lawyer answered, "You shall love God with all your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself." "Right!" said Jesus. Then the lawyer asked, "But, Teacher, who is my neighbor?" In other words, "who do I have to treat lovingly?" This is the story that Jesus told to the man:

Once, a man was walking on a lonely stretch of road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Suddenly a gang of thieves jumped out from the side of the road and surrounded him. "Give us your money," they demanded. "I need my money" he cried. "I have to buy food with this money, for myself and my whole family."

One of the thieves picked up a rock from the side of the road and hit the man in the head. He fell to the ground with a groan, bleeding. Seeing no one around the thieves jumped on the man and took everything he had, including his money, and his clothing. One of the thieves picked up a stick and hit the man hard several times before leaving him on the side of the road half dead.

After a time, a priest came walking down the road. He saw the man lying on the side of the road and crossed over to the other side as he hurried by. Soon another man, a Levite appeared. He too, saw the wounded man lying in the hot sun, naked and bleeding and he scurried on by.

A long time passed. Flies buzzed around the man who was dying from his injuries. Luckily someone else was coming down the road. He was a Samaritan riding on his donkey. Now the people of Samaria were not friendly with the people of this man's country. They were sworn enemies of each other.

But the Samaritan man did not hesitate when he saw the man lying by the side of the road. He didn't stop to think about whether he should help him because of where he was from, or what group the man belonged to. He saw that this man needed help and he felt compassion.

The Samaritan took healing oil and wine from his bag and cleaned the man's wounds and bound them up with bandages made from the cloth of his own shirt. He covered him with a robe. He gave the man a drink of water and helped the man onto his donkey. Slowly, for the man was in great pain and the road was long, they walked to the next town. There the Samaritan found an inn and asked the innkeeper to give him what was necessary to make the man comfortable. The next day, the Samaritan gave money to the innkeeper to pay for the wounded man to stay at the inn until he got better. The Samaritan promised to come back in a few days and pay whatever else was needed to bring the man back to health.

When Jesus finished telling this story, he asked the lawyer, "Which one of these three men acted like a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves?" The lawyer said, "The one who showed kindness." "Yes," said Jesus, "go and do the same."

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

The world is becoming increasingly more negative and contemptuous. From Washington, D.C., to governments on the state and local level, to the church, to our homes and friendships,

suspicion and judgment abound. There is no better time than today to make a decision for good to overcome evil and goodness to be the focus of your everyday.

I think it's especially hard in High School to see "them" as God sees "them." There is so much divisiveness and competition to be better than, dress better than, look better than, etc., that it is particularly important to work at and choose to see the good in all things. But how High School's function makes this difficult. James Sweet has written an insightful description of the nature of High School Hierarchy. This might be a good topic of conversation in your cabins or villages.

The Nature of the High School Hierarchy By James Sweet III

Hierarchies are naturally occurring, but the values that determine an individual's placement in that hierarchy varies. The most peculiar of social structures is the one formed by the youth, whose brain is still developing. In high schools, students are often associated with groups, and those groups are placed above another group. These social structures vary according to location, like most social structures. Unlike other social hierarchies, this one is not reliant on wealth, race, or gender. Rather, the high school social hierarchy focuses on the acceptance of others.

The Structure

PBS compiled and analyzed research to determine what a high school social hierarchy typically looks like. The following is what they believe the average high school social structure turns out to be:

- The "Very Popular Kids": The athletic "alpha males" and the "queen bees". They often have social skills and looks that make others more attracted to them. They are usually physically stronger than other students of their respective gender and may be more aggressive.
- The "Accepted Kids": The majority of high school students fall into this group. They are considered well known or popular and are smart and outgoing.
- The "Average or Ambiguous Kids": While not popular, they are also not unpopular. They are very common in friend groups.
- The "Neglected Kids": These students are often well-behaved students and achieve good or average grades, causing teachers to not give them special or extra attention. However, it does take them much longer to make friends, and they often do require or wish for some kind of attention from parents and teachers.
- The "Controversial Kids": They often have a mixed, mostly negative, reputation to their name. They may be nice with some weird habits or be bullies to kids while making others laugh with their sense of humor.
- The "Rejected Kids": These students are at the highest social risk. "Rejected Kids" are either submissive, meaning they withdraw themselves from social activities so as to not receive any attention, or aggressive, meaning they purposely act up or emotionally blow up if they are teased too much.

The Line of Acceptance

A student that belongs in any of the first three groups finds themselves above the "line of acceptance". They are mostly accepted by their peers or are at least not considered unaccepted.

Any students who land in one of the last three groups are below the line. They are mostly not accepted by the majority of their peers.

The line is drawn between the “Average Kids” and the “Neglected Kids”. If you are on that line, you are, theoretically, perfectly balanced between acceptance and its opposite. The line is the halfway point towards total acceptance and domination of your school as well as complete isolation and “undesirable” status. One question arises from this: What causes one to rise or fall in this social structure?

The Aggressive Social Climb

As previously stated, the students at the top of the high school social hierarchy are likely to be more aggressive than their counterparts. In fact, a student is more likely to be aggressive if they land above the line of acceptance and they are submissive if they are below the line of acceptance.

While you can have bullies that are beneath the line of acceptance, they are often found above the line. Some students below the line of acceptance undeniably are victims of bullying by either students in their same social status or by those above them. Those at the top of the social structure, however, face bullying and/or aggressive actions more commonly than one typically thinks.

In schools, students are taught that bullies are insecure or are mimicking their home life. This isn't entirely true for all bullies. It may apply for the kids that are in the “Controversial” social status, but it likely isn't the case for bullies that are on the top. Researchers from the University of California at Davis and Pennsylvania State sought to uncover the motives of bullying and found a possible answer.

Students at the top of the social hierarchy are aggressive and competing to become the king or queen of the school. In a conflict that occurs over the social climb, neither student is willing to back down. Students at the top of the social structure have more to lose than the average student. After all, a group of friends may revolve around one person, and they are very likely to defend that status as the center of their group, meaning that conflicts are usually started by those in the center and that the friends in the circle back up their “leader”.

Assuming you fit the social norms, the risk of victimization increases with your social status. Being at the top makes you a target. If you're taken down or outdone and do nothing about it, that's a guarantee that you are going to lose social status and your rival will gain your former place. If you continue to fall down the social ladder, there is less of a reason for those wishing to climb up to bully you.

Once a student is threatened, they are likely to undergo radical personal changes, either to prepare for the fall to the bottom or to prepare their retaliation. This conflict at the top does spill out to the social groups below them. If an aggressive alpha male drastically drops in social status, they may take their anger out on some submissive, lower status student who wishes no harm. There is little to gain from this, but it serves as an emotional vent for the fallen.

The Lesson

High school has a very tense environment. Students compete for grades and social status. So how does one ensure that they are not trampled during the stampede for the top? One thing should be clear: do not change who you are as a person. You are a unique individual and trying to conform yourself to the masses is a way to erode your identity.

It comes down to being able and willing to fight back. Do not initiate conflict, but do not avoid it if it comes your way. If you are willing to defend your own status, not only are you ensuring that you will stay at your current place in the hierarchy, you are also making it possible to shut an aggressive bully down and climb the ladder yourself. As Dr. Jordan B. Peterson said: “Stand up straight with your shoulders back.”

1. **What can you relate to in this article?**
2. **Which category do you fall into and why?**
3. **Have you experienced a “fall from glory?”**
4. **How do you suppose God sees those categories and the people who land within them?**
5. **Speak to the difficulty or challenge of seeing “them” (those in another hierarchical category) as God sees them? Will you give it a try?**
6. **What would keep you from being able to do this? Or, what risks are there if you choose to see the “thems” at your school through God’s 20/20 vision of love and goodness?**

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48

Reflection: Our country has become increasingly more negative, contemptuous, unkind, divided and judgmental. Every day we are bombarded with news stories that stir our sensibilities and pull us into a negative spiral. At camp this week we have chosen to focus on the good in each other, ourselves and the world God made.

God sees good! Plain and simple! And God’s 20/20 vision of the world and of us is elucidated through the cross of Jesus Christ. God sees good in all things and people because of the sacrifice Jesus made for all. In other words, God wears cross shaped glasses thru which God sees good. Those glasses should be part of our attire as well. When we make a commitment to see the good in others, especially our enemies, our hearts soften, and our lives are blessed.

On this day your child/youth will be challenged to see good in people that aren’t necessarily in their circle of friends; in people that may not be easy to love and befriend. They will come to understand that everyone is a person of worth even though we don’t always see people that way. We all make judgments about individuals that are within our circle of friends but more likely, we judge harshly the “thems” in our lives.

Activity: An Activity to help you see the good that God sees in *them*: Take a moment to think about people in your life that might fall into the category of “them or those people.” These are people you normally do not associate with or maybe never give a second thought to. They are people who might be difficult for you to love. They are people that could be on the opposite side of the fence from you politically, socially, racially, and in terms of their sexual orientation.

Write each individual’s name on a piece of paper. Then, on the flip side of the paper, write at least two good things if not more about that person. See them as we know without a doubt, God sees them. Now, put those papers in a place where you will see them regularly. And each time you see them, offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the goodness in that person. Ask God to bless

them and ask God to open “the eyes of your heart” that you might grow more loving and kind to the “thems” in your life.

Prayer: Gracious, loving and “good-seeing” God, thank you for the gift of Rainbow Trail and my child’s/youth’s experience there. Thank you for counselors and congregational leaders who have touched my child’s/youth’s life with your grace and love. Thank you for your 20/20 vision that sees clearly the good in all things and all people. Train my eyes and heart to do the same. Increase my awareness of the good in people who are not like me; whom I struggle to love. May I choose to see them and love them as you do. This I pray in Jesus name and through His powerful cross. Amen.

2020 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
20/20 VISION: SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS AS GOD DOES
DAY 5 “I Choose to see Good”

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

1 Peter 4:8-10

“Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

I have been accused of being an eternal optimist and many times a “goodie two shoes.” 😊 “Too perky” is actually the description I hear most often. Yup mornings are my favorite time of day! I will admit that I do try to put the best light on everything and yet choosing to see the good in people sometimes is hard. Choosing to see the good in people may be seen as simply looking for all that is sweetness and light. Choosing to see the good may be seen as simply being too optimistic. Choosing to see good may be named as not wanting to face “hard reality” as we understand it or trying to run from that which is ugly. And yet... we learned on Monday that **all** God created **was good**. **All that God created was good**. We learned that God sees potential in everything God has created. So maybe, just maybe, seeing good in others can help bridge our differences. Perhaps seeing good in others gives us a sense of common humanity—and may even decrease our bias toward those in outgroups, toward the “thems” of our world.

As people who live in the United States, we all seem very divided these days. Open any social media article and you can see signs of hatred and conflict between groups—and many of our politicians seem to have an intention on making it worse. The name calling of others and setting people in certain unhelpful groups fuels distrust and divisiveness. We are also familiar with the horrors that many humans have been involved in, be they genocide, war, murder, child abuse, financial manipulation or other activities that are not life giving. Plus, we’ve all been wronged numerous times. It’s hard to choose to see the good in someone when they just lied to you or cheated on you. It is hard to see the good in someone when they gossip about you and do not put the best construction on your actions. To complicate things our own brains can conspire against us in the need to look for good! We have an intrinsic “negativity bias”, or tendency to focus on and give more weight to negative experiences or information instead of positive ones.

A common example of the negativity bias would be our relationship with dogs. Many folks have had positive experiences with dogs throughout their lives. Dogs are loyal and they give what we define as unconditional love. But if you were bitten or attacked by a dog, you are likely to be scared of them for the rest of your life because you focus on the **one** negative experience instead of the many more pleasant ones that were good and life giving. It turns out that the negativity bias is so ingrained in our psychology that it has already developed and become measurable by time you turn seven months old! Clearly, seeing the positive attributes in others is an uphill battle. **And yet God created good.**

Choosing to see the good in others can actually encourage more compassion and generosity. In other words, it breaks down the barriers between people—something that we all need in our

lives. Naming our gifts, naming the gifts in others, seeing good as God sees good has the capacity to transform us all, filling us with hope for humanity and the sense we can do better. We are better in God's framework. The biblical foundation in 1 Peter 4:8-10 that we have lived in during this week gives us direction for seeing this good of God and putting into practice:

"Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

Take note that I said we have lived "seeing the good" during our week and we have the invitation to put "seeing good" into practice. "Practice makes perfect" is what we know for being good musicians, good athletes, good students. To see the good God sees, we must also practice seeing good in order to accept God's goodness in the world, which brings hope. To see the good in others is love. To love is a gift of God and it changes me and it changes our world.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- We will review how we have seen the good in others and the good in ourselves.
- We will consider the labels we put on others that we consider to be the final word on who folks are and challenge those labels.
- We will explore the invitation we have in 1 Peter 4:8-10 to go out into the world to maintain constant love for one another, to be hospitable without complaining, and to share the good that God sees in the world.
- We will explore how others have seen things differently and how their intentions have changed the world. We will increase our ability to find the positive intention behind the actions of others.
- We will explore how we can choose to see the good in others and therefore love them in the process.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLCC and a new day of your life. May you see as God sees. May you see the good in God's creation, the good in others, and the good in yourself. "Here on the pulse of this new day, may you have the grace to look up and out and into your sister's eyes, into your brother's face, your country and say simply, very simply, with hope,
Good Morning."

~Maya Angelou

Introduction

Today we will begin to choose to see the good in all things as we prepare to head down the mountain. Today we will affirm that it is often a challenge for us to see the good in the

world, the good in others, and the good in ourselves and yet this is the practice we are invited into.

Why we Chose the Passage and the Scripture

We are called many times in the New Testament to see the good in others, to love with humility and gentleness, knowing that God shows no partiality. We are not simply given a suggestion to how to choose to see the good, we are given clear directives from 1 Peter 4:8-10:

“Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

Song: “Live Like You're Loved” by Hawk Nelson

You're not the only one who feels like this
Feeling like you lose more than you win
Like life is just an endless hill you climb
You try and try, but never arrive
I'm telling you something
This racing, this running
Oh, you're working way too hard (you're working way too hard)
And this perfection you're chasing
Is just energy wasted
Cause he loves you like you are

So go ahead and live like you're loved
It's okay to act like you've been set free
His love has made you more than enough
So go ahead and be who he made you to be

And live like you're loved
Live like you're loved
Live like you're loved
Live like you're loved

And live like you're know you're valuable
Like you know the one that holds your soul
Cause mercy has called you by your name
Don't be afraid to live in that grace

I'm telling you something
This God we believe in
Yeah, he changed everything
No more guilt! No more shame

He took all that away
Gave us a reason to sing
So go ahead and live like you're loved
It's okay to act like you've been set free
His love has made you more than enough
So go ahead and be who he made you to be

And live like you're loved
Live like you're loved
Live like you're loved
Live like you're loved

Live like you're loved, walk like you're free
Stand like you know, who he made you to be
Live like you're loved, like you believe
His love is all, that you'll ever need

So go ahead and live like you're loved
His love has made you more than enough
So go ahead and live like you're loved
It's okay to act like you've been set free
His love has made you more than enough
So go ahead and be who he made you to be

And live like you're loved
Live like you're loved
Live like you're loved
Live like you're loved

Live like you're loved, walk like you're free
Stand like you know, who he made you to be
Live like you're loved, like you believe
His love is all, that you'll ever need
Live like you're loved

Songwriters: Ben Glover, David Garcia, Jonathan Allan Steingard
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Questions for Consideration

- Do you fully realize that you are loved? Do you see God's love in your life?
- When do you think it is most difficult to see the good in the world?
- Have you found yourself thinking that God did not create good in ALL things?
- What is one thing you can do to practice seeing good in all things?

Closing Prayer

Good and Gracious God, help us to see the good under a leaf, in a snowflake, in a blade of grass, in a raindrop – in all parts of nature. Remind me of the good of your love in my parents’ loving embrace, in the phone call from grandparents or friends, in all relationships. Open my eyes to good in working and sharing with others, in helping the unfortunate, in volunteering for jobs. Knowing I am loved, help me to find your good in all ways and walks of life. Amen.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Welcome to our last day of Bible study! How is it possible that it is already Friday? We leave tomorrow! Did it not just feel like we got here on Sunday afternoon? Yet today we begin our packing to leave and begin the hike down the mountain. **Or** have you found this to be a longer week than you thought and perhaps you have a little feeling of relief that today is here? All feelings are okay. The week has taught us different things. You are not a bad counselor if part of you is ready for the week to be complete. Regardless of your feelings: Today is **THAT DAY** where we prepare our campers with practical ways to take home the things they have learned this week. Take time in the beginning and the end of this study to name this completion of this time together and how we can begin to choose to see the good in the world, in our family and friends, in ourselves, and in those we find hard to love. Review the conversations you had had in your study and affirm the good you see in the campers.

Opening Prayer:

In your last time of prayer together, at least for this group, in this time, in this place, ask for full participation. If you have not been holding hands in a circle as you pray, try it on this last day. Consider having a circle prayer while they hold hands and ask **EACH CAMPER** to say something good from the week. Strongly invite them to speak out loud to practice in their lives. Praying is a privilege and praying out loud in front of others is a practice that creates skill and comfort.

Opening Questions or Starting Points:

- (1) Considering asking your campers to name their highs and lows in the last 24 hours or something for which they have been grateful since arriving on Sunday. If they have lows help them to see possible good even in the lows.
- (2) Ask how the campers are feeling about leaving tomorrow. Keep in mind that some of our campers do not return to loving, “ideal” family situations or school environments. Some may want to stay here all summer!
- (3) Ask them to think about seeing good in their lives. Have them look at their journals and perhaps ask them if this week has taught them a new way of looking at things, at God, at others or even how they may see themselves differently with good.

We want to prepare our campers to “see” the good in the world, in others and in ourselves. Having the campers lead each other while blindfolded could also be an example of God’s love leading us into seeing good.

Try **Blind Trust Walk** with your campers. The details and materials list are in Appendix A.

Let's Read and Study:

Ask them to open their Bibles to 1 Peter 4:7-11:

(Keep urging the OT or NT location question and please teach that the large number is the chapter and the smaller number the verse. I know you may be rolling your eyes, but many of our campers do not know this. 😊)

"Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!"

from The Message

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

Did you notice that these verses are not a simple suggestion of how we are to be together as the body of Christ? Did you notice that we are to serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received? Notice it did not say if you received a gift, but each has received a gift. We have practiced naming our gifts and now we get to use them. Cue happy dance music and let's get to work!

If we look at this contextually, we can consider that for the second time in this letter (the first being 1 Peter 1:22), Peter commands Christians (workers of The Way) to work hard at loving each other. The Greek word translated as "deeply," "earnestly," or "fervently" is *ektenē*, and it is used to describe the muscles of an athlete straining to win a race. Peter writes that Christians should do this "above all." A follower of Christ must make demonstrating the love of Jesus to others as a first priority. This is always a requirement, but especially crucial during seasons of suffering. Remember we said this is a spiritual practice. It will take time. It will take practice *especially when things are tough*. Remember no one runs under a 4 hour marathon or is received into the NFL without practice, practice, and practice. Also, no one becomes first chair without hours and hours of finding that right note. We are seeking our best selves that God invites us into.

This text also asks us to consider hospitality. Love will show itself in hospitality. We have the opportunity to open our homes to others and doing it all without grumbling. It means we can share our lunches, share our snacks and our money. **And** sometimes this means we may feel put

out, inconvenienced, that the hospitality is costly, burdensome, and irritating. We can check our hearts in the process of showing hospitality to make sure we hold a cheerful spirit as we give. We can create sacred, holy space that is a “get to thing,” making a difference for others.

Finally, we who have received a gift can (who now know our gifts from our week at camp) minister to one another. Love will show itself as we give to those in our worlds what God has given us as gifts. As we do so, we are good stewards of the many-faceted (manifold) grace of God given to us.

In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul makes it clear that he was what he was only by God’s grace. And at the same time, “His grace toward me was not in vain” because Paul put his own God-inspired efforts to work with God’s grace. Please do not hear this as a “have to do” thing but a “get to do” thing from God’s grace. We have an opportunity to choose to see good and give good, and therefore, our gifts are not given in vain.

Okay let’s read again.

Let’s practice seeing the good when we do not agree:

Romans 14:1

“Welcome those who are weak in faith (or conviction), but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.”

Ephesians 4:1-3

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

We as the body of Christ can reflect this unity. We can seek good in our gathering. We can work hard at being in relationship instead of always needing to be right. We can see in the text that it is clear that the perfection of our gathering is a process and not a completed event. Friends, we always have to work at this! Christ has equipped the church and each of us with gifts (Peter 4:7, 11), so that the church as Christ's body may reach maturity. We can reach that place that is life giving. This is a process. We cannot simply say one day: Oh! I will be unified with all people. In our brokenness we will have time of disunity and we can be aware of our quarreling and our lack of patience. And yet God created good and we can choose to look for that good in all.

Dear Counselors and Bible Study leaders: Take a moment to stop and think about how hard this is to do in your life. Think about asking the campers about how hard it is to hold their tongue when in a quarrel or disagreement or honestly when someone just gets on their nerves. This may have even happened this week! 😊 You will hit a wall at some point in the summer when even those you love working with may find a less than pleasant spot in your thinking and

relational way of being with one another. When this happens know that you are not a bad person, nor are they. Being in relationship is an ongoing event.

Let's read:

Romans 2:11

For God shows no partiality.

Philippians 2:3-4

“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.”

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

“You are her favorite!” Has anyone heard this statement either about what a parent or about a teacher thinks in comparison between two people? Have we thought about what this really means? Does the favorite get more or is better than others? Or with the Philippians text do we try to be humble with others instead of making ourselves more important?

God loves us all. God sees good in us all. God loves us all.

Let's Read

Romans 15:1-7

“We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

1 Peter 3:8-9

“Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.”

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

Have you ever been labeled by others? What feelings come up when you think about that? Even if the labels are positive, how does that make you feel? Do we find ourselves being imprisoned or diminished by labels?

Have you taken the time to think about if there really are “good” people and “bad” people? Can some people be “cruel”? Is anyone really “empathetic” or “fun” or “funny”? These words are all labels. They take a complex array of behaviors, character traits, and attitudes, and simplify them down to a single word or phrase. While labels are very helpful for communicating, their simplicity changes the meaning of a person’s behaviors. You might think of a thief as a “bad” person. I would tend to agree.

But what if that thief is a Robin Hood type character who steals from the rich and gives to the poor? Or what if the thief is himself poor and steals just enough to feed his starving family? We should not argue here that those are morally acceptable reasons for stealing. My point is that calling them a “bad” person is a bit premature. It’s just not that simple. Remember, these labels are not intrinsic features of a person; they are merely creations of the mind to help describe them. Some folks have “labels” that were given to them in Kindergarten. Do we really believe that people never change?

Instead of considering your labels of others as the final word on the matter, or another’s label of you as a constricting box, let’s challenge those labels. After labeling someone, ask yourself: “Were they like this yesterday?” If not, then why would they be like that tomorrow? If yes, then ask yourself: “Am I taking a one-sided view of this person? Are there other people out there who might look at them differently?” Before you can consciously look for the good in others, you must understand the subjectivity of labels. As you practice challenging these labels, it becomes easier to see people however you want to see them (and we hope this is more positively naming the good God has placed in them).

Bryant McGill, from Voice of Reason, notes that “Every journey begins with the first step of articulating the intention, and then becoming the intention.” Do we say most people, on any given day, are doing the best they can and are seeking good outcomes? Do we have the intention of seeing good? Do we work hard at “putting the best construction on our neighbor’s actions” as Martin Luther invites us to in the explanation of the 8th commandment? Actually, here is what we are invited into:

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

What is this? or 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 their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and **interpret everything they do in the best possible light.**

So what does lens of seeing good this mean in the world? Let’s think about Action ideas:

Hear these stories of others who are choosing to look for the good in possibility and doing good for others:

In May 2018 in Paris, France there was video footage that was striking: In a matter of seconds, a young man scales four stories of a Paris apartment building to rescue a child dangling from an outside balcony.

The rescuer's name is Mamoudou Gassama, **an undocumented immigrant** from Mali, and the 22-year-old was feted as a national hero despite having been in France for less than six months. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo announced that the city would support his effort to stay in France, and President Emmanuel Macron welcomed him to the Élysée Palace on Monday. Mamoudou explained to President Macron that he arrived from Mali several months ago, dreaming of building his life in Paris. The president told him that his heroic gesture is an example for all citizens." Mamoudou reported that around 8 p.m., he was with his girlfriend in Paris's 18th arrondissement, or district. As he was walking down Marx-Dormoy street, he saw a crowd gathered below a building, with people screaming and pointing up. Then he saw the boy, who authorities later said was 4 years old. "I climbed up to save him, voilà," Gassama said. "I did it because it was a kid. I love children very much." "I didn't think about the floors," he said, referring to the building he scaled. "I didn't think about the risk."

The physical risk was great. The immigration risk was great. He saw the good to act on behalf of others.

Many of you have heard of Malala Yousafzai. Malala is the youngest individual ever to receive the Nobel Prize and was born in Pakistan. She lived in a small town ruled by the Taliban, which banned girls from receiving any education or attending school. At the age of 11, she was writing a blog for a local BBC station, voicing her desire for girls to continue studying. When she turned 15, Malala was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman while she was riding a bus to school. She survived the attack and was sent to a hospital in Birmingham, UK, where she now lives and runs a number of education projects.

Her speaking out was a great risk. Her life endangered as she saw the good in education for all. She has changed so much for young girls and they are seen as good.

Boyan Slat, a 16-year-old teenager from the Netherlands, was shocked to find lots of plastic while diving in Greece. He chose to explore ocean pollution as his high school science project. At the age of 18, he presented a system that uses ocean currents to make plastic concentrate itself, reducing the process of cleaning the ocean from millennia to years. A number of organizations and companies praised his invention. Boyan is the youngest person ever to receive the UN's highest environmental award.

His work allowed companies to see the good of reducing the time to clean our earth. Boyan sees the good in God's creation.

Let's step into our campers understanding that choosing to look at the world, our friends, our family, and even those that challenge us as good is a gift. And as Oprah Winfrey notes: "It doesn't matter what the thing (gift, good seeing) is; what matters is how much of yourself goes

into the giving, so that when the gift is gone, the spirit of you lingers.” Are we aware of how much of God’s love lingers when we seek the good?

Please consider reminding your campers to continue the journey of writing those good things they see in others, themselves, and in the world. This spiritual practice can be a great gift in empowering them to see the good.

Finally, my dear bible study leaders, our dear counselors of Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp, I offer you this blessing either for you as you travel on this camino (this way or path) to help the campers to choose to see the good as God sees the good.

You may say to your Bible Study group or yourselves:

Receive this blessing for the end of this study as we prepare to go down the mountain, back to our homes, our family and our friends:

***For Those Who Have Far to Travel
A Blessing for Epiphany***

If you could see the journey whole, you might never undertake it, might never dare the first step that propels you from the place you have known toward the place you know not.

Call it one of the mercies of the road: that we see it only by stages as it opens before us, as it comes into our keeping, step by single step. There is nothing for it but to go, and by our going take the vows the pilgrim takes: to be faithful to the next step; to rely on more than the map; to heed the signposts of intuition and dream; to follow the star that only you will recognize; to keep an open eye for the wonders that attend the path; to press on beyond distractions, beyond fatigue, beyond what would tempt you from the way.

There are vows that only you will know: the secret promises for your particular path and the new ones you will need to make when the road is revealed by turns you could not have foreseen. Keep them, break them, make them again; each promise becomes part of the path, each choice creates the road that will take you to the place where at last you will kneel to offer the gift most needed—the gift that only you can give— before turning to go home by another way.

~Jan Richardson

Journaling for today:

For journaling today, use the Meditation and Journaling Guide in Appendix B. There is no meditation today. Have your campers list in their journal five (5) ways they saw good in the world today. This will be the prompt they take with them for the next 61 days as well.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

We are in a time of looking back at Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood and all the things he taught us with many of those things just passing us by until now. I am not sure if many of our campers

have seen Mr. Rogers' as a show or if they have seen the movie but if you can show a clip of him or if we have a movie night, his messages for the world empowers us up to see the good in others. I am unclear if the campers even know his background. So here you go:

Fred Rogers was the much-loved host of the public television show "*Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*", which ran on PBS from 1968 to 2001. Fred Rogers was a puppeteer and ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church when he became the host of the TV program *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. With a degree in music composition, he wrote 200 songs for the show, including the theme, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" He was honored with numerous awards and accolades for his dedication to children via television.

Here are things we can take away from his ministry as we choose to find the good in others and in the world:

- (1) Love your neighbor as yourself (Sounds a lot like Jesus)
- (2) Build people up
- (3) Be a helper
- (4) Expect and accept mistakes
- (5) It's our responsibility to care for the most vulnerable
- (6) We can work to make a difference right where we are (you do not have to be famous to see the good in the world or to move for good)
- (7) We are all neighbors. This does not mean that we have the same zip code! 😊 It means we are all beloved children of God.
- (8) We respond best when there's an attempt to understand (Jesus met people where they were and Jesus listened to their stories)
- (9) Expect and accept mistakes (That is what forgiveness is all about and remember God loves us anyway)
- (10) Conflict is natural
- (11) It's okay to feel whatever it is that we feel
- (12) **And** our feelings are not an excuse for bad behavior
- (13) Other people are different from us and just as complex as we are
- (14) Yes, people with different beliefs can co-exist. ***We are not in a competition.*** (My words and emphasis added.)
- (15) Remind friends of their authentic value
- (16) Be a good listener

Bible Study companions, Fred Rogers has many more and if our campers take even a couple of these home, the world would be a different place. 😊

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- What if there would be a "Looking for Good" Scavenger Hunt? Friends I have no idea what could look like but it could be fun.
- What about a meal of extra good food? What if we teach about farm to table practices or how our food gets to our tables?
- What if the activities for the nightly gathering had "glasses" 3-D, partial glasses, magic mirror, etc.
- What about a *Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* Movie Night for older kids?

- What about watching *2 Popes* for older campers or for the staff? SUPER good movie and I have a Lenten guide to go with it! 😊

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

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| #11 More Precious Than Silver | #28 Walkin' In the Light |
| #19 Rainbow Trail Theme Song | #40 Be Bold |
| #52 You are the Light of the World | #69 Open the Eyes of My Heart |
| #72 Every Move I Make | #90 Lord Listen to Your Children Praying |

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

- Many of our juniors may be in a place of right or wrong, good or bad, so let's teach them to find the good. Maybe the group can do a "would you rather" event with choosing sides and talking about why they choose what they chose. Helping them see the world of grey instead of black and white can open so many possibilities.
- Think about making lists of the good things our campers see through the week.
- See if we can find situation cards and have the juniors "see good" in each card. These cards can be pictorial or a spoken situation. Yes you can google "situation cards"!

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

Have them play the game Autobiography - For groups that need to be more closely knit and to really see the good in each one, like a sports team or a drama cast or a camp Bible Study 😊, have each person sum up their life in one sentence. It's difficult — but they'll learn a lot about their friends! Hopefully, they will be able to include the good they see in themselves.

"Who is this in the mirror?" may be a question, with mirrors of course, to see the good in me and how I see the good in others. You will have to see where we have mirrors on campus. BTW just watching how senior high students can look at themselves or not look at themselves will tell you a lot.

Consider engaging them in conversations about who is good in their schools? What do they think about popularity, cliques, or differences in social economic status groups? How are labels a part of this?

Think about encouraging the senior high students to keep a log, sheet, or banner of the good they see on campus this week.

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:7-11

Reflection: Thank you, dear parents, for allowing us to accompany your camper(s) in this week of growth, faith development and learning to see the good in the world as God does. This week we have looked at the good that God made in the world, the good we see in ourselves and the good we see in others, those we love and those that are hard to love. Today we will be talking

with them about how to bring this “choosing to look for the good” in the world, in others, and in themselves down the mountain into their worlds.

We shared with your children that this scripture is not just a little suggestion. This Bible text is a directive to how we will be with others. We hope to empower them with different ways to see the good in the world.

Activity: Do you have a time in your family routine, breakfast gathering or dinner at the end of the day, when you can ask them where they saw the good in the day? Do you have a time when you can ask them what good can come from something that seems not so good? Do you have a jar or a box to name good things throughout the week, write them on a piece of paper and read them on Saturday nights or Sundays?

Model for your campers good listening. In this very busy noisy world, very screen-filled world, having a space to have a voice and to be heard and seen is critical. Remind members to not interrupt one another. Remind everyone to listen well...not just preparing for the next statement you want to say. Think about reflecting on what you think you heard and wait for affirmation or clarification from your camper. Use a statement such as: “So what I am hearing you say is...” See if they can reflect what they hear from you. Consider looking in the faces of your campers, nod your head, and give empathy that is appropriate. Remember that our adult brains move at a much faster rate, and are so much more complicated than our developing those frontal cortex children. Asking more questions to make sure we are on the same page is a beautiful thing..

Prayer: Good and Gracious God, we thank you for this day. We thank you for making us good. Help us to see the good in your creation, the good in our family, the good in those we love and even the good in those we find hard to love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

APPENDIX A

Kirberg Games

These icebreakers are great games that can be done multiple times. They are especially effective at camp where your members will be spending a lot of time together and allow campers to learn more about each other.

All My Neighbors

Setup

No special materials are required to play this game, making it convenient and free to play.

How to play

1. Have everyone in a big circle. Everyone take off one shoe to mark a spot. One person in the middle has only one shoe but theirs is off to the side and not used in the game. Like Musical Chairs, the goal of the person in the middle is to get to an empty shoe.
2. The person in the middle then says in a loud voice so all can hear, "All my neighbors who... (insert something true about themselves here – for example... WEARS GLASSES).
3. At that point anyone who wears glasses (or whatever the mentioned THING is) has to get up immediately and move to a different spot. The person in the middle then has to scurry to a vacated shoe.
4. Of course, as in Musical Chairs, someone is going to be left without a shoe. It's now that person's turn in the middle to repeat the process... "All my neighbors who... (must insert something different here – for example... Are Green Bay Packers fans)," have to move shoes.

The objective is that your members get to learn about each other (who has pets, likes to go fishing, are biology majors, is the oldest child in the family, likes Justin Bieber, has eleven toes, plays sports, had traveled overseas, the possibilities are endless!) in a fun and competitive way.

Two rules are: you can't use the same thing twice and you can't move to the spot next to you on either side. Be creative and have fun with it.

Rock, Paper, Scissors Royale

Setup

No special materials are required to play this game, making it convenient and free to play.

How to play

1. Have everyone find someone they didn't come to camp with, introduce themselves, and then practice playing the game of rock, paper, scissors. Make sure to clarify if you're playing "rock, paper, scissors" or "rock, paper, scissors, shoot." After there is a winner, have them find someone else, introduce themselves, and play again. Do this about four times.
2. Now, have each member of the group pair up for the first round of rock, paper, scissors. If there is an odd number, add the odd person out to another pair and have them do a quick

knock-out match to form a pair. Alternatively, you can ask for a volunteer to participate as a referee with you.

3. Everyone should be in pairs. Ask them to play 1 game, and determine the winner. You should act as a referee during this time in case there are any disputes or confusions.
4. Instruct the losers of the first match to start cheering the name of the person who beat them and following that person around to their next game.
5. Have all the winners pair up again and face off against each other while the ones they beat are cheering for them. When one winner beats the other, all the people behind the losing player should start cheering for the winning player.
6. Repeat this process in elimination, tournament style, until there are only two players left. Each should have a large group of people cheering them on from their previous wins. Let them play the final match. The game is over after one player wins the final match.
7. (Optional): If you have an odd number of people and you want to reset the game and play again, have the winner of the last game stand aside as a referee with you to give another player the chance to win instead.

Winning the game:

The last person standing in this tournament is the winner. They must not lose against any player from the beginning to the end of the game. At the end, the winning player should have all the other players cheering for them. You can reset the game and play again.

Name and Action

Setup

There are two variations of this game to choose from. Neither require any specific materials, making them convenient and easy to play.

How to Play

Variation A

1. Have all players stand in a circle, preferably not next to someone they know.
2. One player begins the activity by introducing themselves with their first name and one of their favorite activities. Then act out an aspect of that activity (i.e. “Megan” mimicking kicking a soccer ball). Everyone in the circle repeats the name and the action.
3. The next player repeats the process, stating their name and favorite activity with an action (i.e. “Joel” mimicking reading). All players repeat the second player’s name and action, followed by repeating the first player’s name and action.
4. Repeat until the entire circle has introduced themselves, repeating all previous names after each new addition.

Variation B

1. Have all players stand in a circle, preferably not next to someone they know.
2. One player begins the activity by introducing themselves, stating an action that begins with the same letter as their first name and their name and performing that action (i.e.

“Dancing Dave”). Everyone in the circle repeats the action—both verbally and physically—and the name.

3. The next player repeats the process, stating an action and their name (i.e. “Spinning Suzie”). All players repeat the second player’s name and action, followed by repeating the first player’s name and action.
4. Repeat until the entire circle has introduced themselves, repeating all previous names after each new addition.

Both of these variations are great for early in the week to make sure everyone knows names and something about their village mates.

Blind Trust Walk

Setup

You will need 1 blindfold for every 2 people in your group. Blindfolds are available in the resource box for today’s study in Columbine.

How to Play

1. Have group members partner up to walk to the Bible study site. Announce that one partner will wear a blindfold, and will be led safely by the other person for 3-4 minutes.
2. Instruct the leader to quietly lead their partner on the safest path to your destination.
3. Announce “switch” halfway to the Bible study site and have the partners reverse roles for another 3-4 minutes. If walking to the Bible study site doesn’t work well, this can be done in and around the Bible study area, both inside and outside.

This activity is best when the campers talk as little as possible so they can focus on the experience of leading or being led. If there is an odd number of campers, put three together and give each person a 2-3 minute window to lead the other two. The counselor needs to monitor the time and direction if this is done as a walk to Bible study.

APPENDIX B

Meditation and Journaling Guide

Each day we will close our studies in a time of loving-kindness meditation and journaling. Below is both the script for our mediation (it will change slightly each day) and the prompt for your time in your journals. You'll find some things to consider and pointers for leading these mediations.

Loving kindness is without any desire to possess another. It is not a sentimental feeling of goodwill, not an obligation, but comes from a selfless place. It does not depend on relationships, on how the other person feels about us. The process is first one of softening, breaking down barriers that we feel inwardly toward ourselves, and then those that we feel toward others. This is a practice of asking God to help us share in the love that God has for all of what's around us.

Things To Consider:

- Ask yourself or your campers: When's the last time you were completely still for more than a minute?
- We are bombarded by noise all around us and we don't pay attention to our bodies
- Meditation is NOT about focus, it's about noticing and returning; **lightbulb**
- You MUST emphasize that this is a judgment free zone
- Curiosity is key!
- Be the Zootopia sloth!
- Do NOT "check off" meditation for the day.
- Contemplative Prayer is for community
- It's all about returning
- Falling asleep is not the worst thing to happen in the world.

Setting up your Campers for Success:

- Body Position: Spine straight, eyes closed or downcast, feet on floor if in chair, or legs crossed hands relaxed, sleep is okay but not goal
- Calm, slow, quiet
- Long pauses, slow cadence
- Inflection on actions words if you want them to do something.
- Have several reminders to come bring back attention

MEDITATION:

Say: Close your eyes and bring a gentle awareness to your body and your breath. Begin by asking God to be present in this moment with you and to allow the Spirit to work in your heart and words. Take a moment to picture (blank 1). Keep this picture in your mind and hold it with a sense of loving-kindness in your hands.

Say this to them:

May _____ be free from inner and outer harm and danger. May _____ be safe and protected.

May _____ be free of mental suffering or distress.

May _____ be happy.

May _____ be free of physical pain and suffering.

May _____ be healthy and strong.

May _____ be able to live in this world happily, peacefully, joyfully, with ease.

(allow for silence here)

Say: When you're ready, take slowly open your eyes and come back to our community.

Daily phrases to fill in the blank 1:

- Day 1: "all of creation"
- Day 2: "a friend, loved one, or mentor"
- Day 3: "yourself"
- Day 4: "somebody that you find difficult to love"

Daily phrases to fill in the other blanks:

- Day 1: "all of creation"
- Day 2: "they"
- Day 3: "I"
- Day 4: "they"

JOURNAL PROMPTS:

Day 1: List 5 things you saw as good in God's creation today.

Day 2: List 5 things you see as good in your friend, loved one, or mentor.

Day 3: List 5 things you believe that God sees as great about you.

Day 4: List 5 things you see as good in the person that you find difficult to love.

Day 5 and the next 61 days: List 5 ways you saw good in the world today.

APPENDIX C



My full name is:
I was bone on:
I was born in:
My family consists of:
I have:

I really don't like to:
I'm good at:
I'm not so good at:
My least favorite thing to do is:
My favorite thing to do is:

I am proud of:
I am happiest when:
I feel really sad when:
I laugh when:
I get angry when:

I am:
I love:
I love to:
I see:
I long to:

I might:
I want to:
I think:
I hope for:

The one person who can always make me smile is:
The best hugs:
Person or people who believe in me are:
My biggest fear is:
My greatest joy is: