



Created TO BE

2024 Bible Study



"For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you,
for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well."

PSALM 139



CREATED TO BE

We are very grateful to the following individuals for their work in writing the
2024 Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp Bible study.

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2024 CREATED TO BE

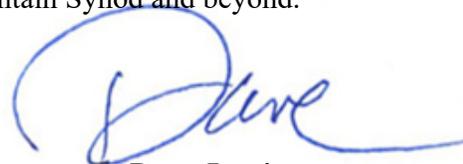
Growing up, I was always the average kid. I did fairly well in school, was a decent athlete, could draw amazing stick people, I liked to sing but was never going to be the solo in a choir, and had a good circle of friends. But I always wondered why God hadn't gifted me with being a superior athlete, an amazing artist, or encircled me with all the cool kids at school. I felt... inferior. It wasn't until I understood that I had been uniquely crafted by God to serve the world in my own special way... that I possessed gifts that others didn't have, and I really had something to offer. I realized I don't ever want any of our campers feeling inferior. Hence this study!

In Psalms 139, we hear of the immense love that God has for each and everyone of us. *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”* We have a God that is crazy in love with us. There is nothing we can do to make God love us any less. But we were not created to just exist in this world. We are created to make the world different. Created to be Christ's love in the world!

1. **CREATED TO BE... LOVED!** God loved us immensely even before we came into being. And that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” It is our prayer that each camper goes home believing that no matter what, no matter what they do and don't do, they are a **beloved child of God**.
2. **CREATED TO BE... FULLY PRESENT!** We live in a world that is always moving and fighting for our attention. However, when we slow down, unplug, and become fully present, we are able to be aware of the needs of those around us and can actually be the presence of God for others.
3. **CREATED TO BE... ME!** The journey of faith is a lifetime of learning, remembering, discovering and being reminded of God's fearfully and wonderfully created 'me.' We'll explore our giftedness and the gift we can be for the world just being our authentic selves.
4. **CREATED TO BE... A DISCIPLE!** A disciple is a learner or a follower, so a disciple of Christ is someone who learns about God and who follows Christ. You can be a disciple being the authentic and unique self that you were created to be. Becoming a disciple doesn't happen overnight. It takes practice.
5. **CREATED TO BE... AN AGENT OF CHANGE!** As disciples, we understand we can be “agents of change” in the world for the good, wherever we find ourselves. And we don't have to do it alone. There is strength in others in our faith community as we go out to serve.

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. It is challenging, but I hope it can move campers, staff, and adult leaders to wake each morning, to think about their day ahead, and fully understand that they are created to be an agent of God's love for the world throughout their day. If this happens, they will transform the lives of others, and be transformed themselves. 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

2024 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY CREATED TO BE

INTRODUCTION TO THE OVERALL THEME

“You can be anything you want to be.” I heard these words throughout my childhood, and I was very blessed to be able to do most of the things I wanted to try. My family did not have a lot of money, so I just did what we could do with the limited resources we had. I had friends that I could ride bikes with; I made the COOLEST hopscotch patterns with which I then dominated my friends with hopping and hopping and picking up the marker, aka rock, while spinning to finish strong; I swam in rivers and lakes lifting my head to make sure a snake and I did not intersect our faces in the water; I made potholders for hot oven pans that I think my mom had 30 years after I made them; I danced to cool 70’s and 80’s music that I think most of you know the words to because your parents taught you well and occasionally we dance to those songs at camp; I painted by numbers making sure that I stayed in EVERY SINGLE LINE; I pitched for a boy’s baseball team for my Lutheran school because they did not have enough girls to play softball; I played my first PONG game on an ancient system called Atari and it was awesome.

Then when I was your age I was told that my dream, my dream “to be anything you want to be” because you were created by God, was to be a pastor? HA! Guess what? That “thing” was not possible because I was a girl. For you see, the Tennessee Lutheran church I grew up in did not allow women to be leaders in the church. This was a big conflict for me because I so wanted to be a pastor of a church. I even did the weirdest thing of practicing every Sunday after church giving holy communion to my stuffed animals, EVERY SUNDAY, with saltines crackers and water. Friends, I thought everyone did this, but guess what? They did not! I was so confused with the “rules” of no women pastors because with all of that practicing, I was ready! I had practiced! The stuffed animals? They thought I was great. And yet, the world said “nope” because of how I was created to be...by God.

“God created and it was good.” We read these words in the beginning of Genesis and friends, the reality is that God never stopped creating. God continues to make us new, continues to make a way, continues to create.

We will spend this week at camp understanding how we are created:

- to be loved.
- to be fully present.
- to be ME!
- to be a disciple.
- to be agents of change.

Friends, in our studies together we will be leaning into God’s amazing word that tells us:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

Psalm 139:13-14

So let’s begin, dear ones. You are created to be an amazing child of God. Set aside the world’s labels and let’s see what you and God are up to in the world. Blessings on your week ahead.

2024 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
CREATED TO BE
DAY 1: Created To Be....LOVED!

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

“For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.”

Psalm 139: 13-14

Last night at worship you heard this summer’s theme in the words from Psalm 139 and I ask you to hear these words again from two additional translations:

From The Passion translation: “You formed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside and my intricate outside, and wove them all together in my mother’s womb. I thank you, God, for making me so mysteriously complex! Everything you do is marvelously breathtaking. It simply amazed me to think about it! How thoroughly you know me, Lord!”

And from The Message translation verses 15 and 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.”

Okay let’s be honest: How many of you just did an eye roll? How many of you just said: Yeah, yeah that’s what everyone has to say at camp. ‘You are a beloved child of God.’

Let’s be real- we all have many different roles: Some of us are siblings, we are cousins, students, neighbors, football players, symphony members, soccer players, choir participants, basketball players, gamers, and for those of us connected to the Lutheran church, we are saints and sinners. As adults we are spouses, parents, we are ministry leaders, we are tax-payers, and sometimes all of those other roles I just named above. But the role of “beloved child of God” without doing anything? I am not so sure.

We might believe that we are the beloved of God consciously, and maybe we hear it all the time. But many of us struggle to truly believe it deeply at a soul level. To live out a place of freedom in that beloved place of God is challenging. Often deep down there’s self-talk we don’t always see driving many of our decisions and emotions; there are voices telling us we’re not enough, we need to be more, do more and be better. Remember how some of us began this new year with resolutions to be more active, to lose weight, to eat better, to be more organized and to really be our best selves? We often think that “only then”after we have it all together and we get our A+s, our 5 gold stars, our medals and trophies, our PRs, will we be worthy of belonging, will we be loved.

Friends, many of us are also carrying words that have been spoken to us deep in our hearts and souls for so long that we almost forget they are there and we do not notice them. For some of us there is a little kid who is in pain from a name calling event or a shaming moment, and that little kid who now may be 15- or 22- or 55-years old wonders if when everything is said and done, he/she/they is that worthless name they have been called many years ago.

I am pretty sure I have shared many times that one of my greatest pains was being told as a 10-year-old girl that I would never be able to be a pastor because, so sad for you, you were born a girl, a dumb girl, a girl who can't possibly lead a church as a pastor. So with my roles as a tomboy, a climber of very tall trees, as a crazed trail biking rider, a pitcher on a boys' baseball team, a lover of watching football, a fixer of cars, and the point guard of my high school basketball team, this "girl obstacle" made no sense to me. And because it came from many people in my church, my church I loved, I did not question this judgment. Gosh, the church is saying this is true, so it must be true and I must only be "a little bit beloved" of God, secondary to boys, because I am a girl.

Friends, we all do this. It might have been said by someone we love or someone we hated. Maybe it wasn't blatantly said but expressed through an unloving action. We might say we are God's beloved, but there's often a deeper, self-rejecting voice. It's this harmful voice we need to bring to the surface, think about, feel fully even as it may be painful, and then ask for God to remind us of who we really are. We can do that through training and replacing that voice with what Dutch priest and professor Henri Nouwen called "the voice of the beloved."

Henri once spoke about how we are not what we do, what we have, or what people say about us. We who follow Jesus are God's beloved daughters and sons. Friends, I decided that I needed to believe this, deep down. I needed to train this into my heart and I wondered what would my life look like if I reminded myself of the following:

I'm not what I do.

I'm not what I have.

I'm not what people say about me.

I am the beloved of God.

It's who I am.

No one can take it from me.

I don't have to worry.

I don't have to hurry.

I can trust my friend Jesus and share his love with the world.

Friends, we must remind ourselves that we are so loved. You do enough. You are enough. God's word reminds us in John 3:1a (New Testament, one of the Gospels) that: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

It is my prayer that your study with your campers, and your study for yourself, will open up this reality for you to live into every day. It is my prayer that each camper goes home believing, or trying really hard to believe, that no matter what, no matter what they do and don't do, they are a **beloved child of God**. May the Holy Spirit guide you and bless you this day.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Read and explore scripture to hear the plethora of ways God loves us and names us as beloved children of God. This is our identity.
- Encourage participation and exploration of God's word and increase the comfort with using Bibles and talking about God's word.
- Practice praying out loud in your small group.
- Explore the negative narratives that all of us carry and that tell us we are not beloved children of God because we are not perfect nor "the best among the rest" and therefore not worthy of God's love. .
- Prepare ourselves to live into God's love, practice God's love and know we can be still and be fully present to the truth of this gift.

Staff Goal: As you explore what narratives your campers may have about themselves, be prepared for tears, anger, and resistance to being beloved children of God. Be mindful of your own negative narratives and how God can support you in knowing that you are a beloved child of God.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Welcome to this day.

God of creation. God who created us. We are made in your image.

Help us remember that you take pleasure in your creation...all of your creation...including me.

Help us to do the things we were made to do; to do the things we love to do, what you have created us to do and to be the people we were created to be, filled with your love.

Introduction to the Day

Welcome to your first full day of camp. Today we will explore that we are created to be Loved. We will learn about the over 100 bible verses that tell us we are beloved children of God. Do not worry: we will not read all of them today. :-) But you may want to have a reminder that God indeed loves you that much.

Why we chose the Passage and Scripture

Psalms 139 reminds us in so many ways how intimate God is with us and how well God knows us. We celebrate the creator and God's handiwork in creating each of us as unique and special beings. We were loved by God even before we came into being, and God has been with us from the very beginning. But God didn't create us to just exist in this world. We were created to share

God's world, created to be our authentic selves, created to live as Christ's disciples and created to be agents of change for good in our world.

"For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well."

Psalm 139: 13-14

Song: "Child of Love" by We The Kingdom

I was walking the wayside, lost on a lonely road
I was chasing the high life, tryna satisfy my soul

All the lies I believed in, left me crying like the rain
Then I saw lightning from Heaven, and I've never been the same

I'm gonna climb a mountain
I'm gonna shout about it
I am a child of love
I found a world of freedom
I found a friend in Jesus
I am a child of love

I've felt the sting of the fire, but I saw You in the flames
Just when I thought it was over, You broke me out of the grave

I'm gonna climb a mountain
I'm gonna shout about it
I am a child of love
I found a world of freedom
I found a friend in Jesus
I am a child of love

Yeah yeah (Yeah), oh (Oh)
I am a child of love
Yeah (Yeah), oh (Oh)
I am a child of love

Nothing can change the way You love me
Nothing can change the way
I belong to You, yes, I do
Nothing can separate
Nothing can change the way You love me
Nothing can change the way
I belong to You, yes, I do
Nothing can separate

I'm gonna climb a mountain

I am a child of love
I found a world of freedom
I am a child of love
I'm gonna climb a mountain
I'm gonna shout about it
I am a child of love
I found a world of freedom
I found a friend in Jesus
I am a child of love

Oh yeah (Yeah), oh (Oh)
I am a child of love
I am a child of love

Questions for Consideration:

- What do you think about when you consider that God knew you before you were born?
- Do you think you have to earn God's love? Why or why not?
- What do you think about God loving you no matter what?
- Where do you see God's love in action?

Closing Prayer: God, I belong to you. You are crazy about me, your beloved child. Thank you for making me fearfully and wonderfully made. Remind me that it is not what I do or what I don't do, but that your love for me is genuine and empowers me to share your love in the world. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Welcome to the first day of your Bible study with your campers. Remember that often, not always, the first Bible study can be awkward. Keep in mind that many of our campers have never been to church. Some of them may have never opened a Bible. Please remember you can give a Bible to a camper who does not have one, and please please write a blessing from you to them in that Bible. Those Bibles are usually kept in Dave's office in Columbine. We are hoping that for those campers, our teaching of "it's okay we all are learning much from the Bible," will prevent embarrassment, remove shame from not knowing something, and encourage them to be curious and discover more in God's word. Good grief, I lead a women's Bible study on Tuesday mornings with women who have been reading the Bible for over 80 years and they STILL learn something new each time we gather.

As you begin your study, think about asking the group, "So we are reading from Psalm 139. Is the book of Psalms in the Old Testament or New Testament?" Also please say: Just a reminder the larger numbers are the chapters in each book and the small numbers are the verses. Assume they do not know. The more we open possibilities for learning, the more engaged the campers are and they will eventually learn where books are with practice.

When we were in the process of writing this Bible Study way back in January, we were initially naming a couple of Bible verses that may be helpful as each writer began. We did Day One last and everyone looked at me and said: "So I guess you can find a few Bible verses about God's

love?” and we all laughed. “Probably” I said, “just a few.” When we sat down to write I, in jest, googled: “Bible verses about being a beloved child of God” and guess what? The first search that came up said: “100 Bible verses about being beloved children of God.” Friends, you can go almost 3 ½ months reading one verse a day before you start repeating God’s words about being beloved children of God. 100 days. This is how much God wants us to know about the love God has for us.

Opening Prayer:

Encourage participation with your campers. Some of them may want to pray if they are comfortable and some may be shy. You may ask if everyone feels comfortable with holding hands and you may lead the prayer OR you may ask each one of campers to say something, even one word, in the form of gratitude or hope. Prayer does not have to be fancy, praying is a privilege and practice makes skill and brings comfort.

Opening Questions or Starting Points:

1. Consider asking your campers to name their highs and lows in the last 24 hours. Often campers do not have lows and that is okay and if homesickness has kicked in, highs may be tough and that is okay too.
2. Explore who has been here multiple times and who is here for the first time. Ask the returning campers for “wisdom” they may have or their favorite thing about camp. For the new campers ask if they have things they are wondering about from the orientation.
3. You may explore the definition of love. Ask them what they are thinking about when they hear the word “love,” even who gets to be loved. When we hear the word “love,” many different things may come to our mind. How we view boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, how we view our parent’s relationships with each other, and how the media portrays love. Review that the main thought that we want to focus on today is that God’s love for us is never ending, ongoing, and everlasting. God’s love is not based on contracts nor is it conditional.

Activity: A Valentine from God (*Each camper will need two cut out pink hearts and something to write with.*) Say: “You have heard that God loves you, and that we are assured of this over 100 times in the Bible. That said, if you were to receive a Valentine from God, what do you think it would say? God’s love is never ending, ongoing, unconditional... so what would God write to YOU in a Valentine?”

Take a moment and, on one of these hearts, write what you think God would say to you.” Give the kids a couple of minutes to write their message of love from God, then ask, “Was this a difficult message to write? Why or why not? In what ways are you lovable? In what ways are you NOT lovable? How do you think God looks at you?” Field the answers. Have them put their hearts in their Bibles. (At the end of the study today, the kids will repeat this process, and will compare the two Valentines from God. More later on that.)

Then, without going into a lot of answers of your own, say, “Well, those are the kind of things we’ll be looking at today in our Bible Study. Let’s begin with a scripture from Psalms.”

Let's Read and Study:

Please turn to Psalm 139 and read verses 13-14:

“For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.”

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

When we are thinking about God making us, it is helpful to remember that it’s not just that God knows everything — *God knows me*. It’s not just that God is everywhere — *God is everywhere with me*. It’s not just that God created everything — *God created me*. Think about God as loving you so much that God wants to be involved in your life, NOT as a divine being who is trying to catch us as doing something wrong to keep some sort of heavenly score card. But God wants to be with us in our lives.

Think about the complexities of babies coming into this world. Every baby is a miracle. The workings of the human body are stunning in their design and execution. We know far more than David (we think the writer of this psalm) ever did about how we are made, and it should make us full of more awe and praise than David ever had. The brain alone contains around 86 billion neurons, 85 billion other cells, and over 100 trillion connections. We are wonderfully made!

Let's turn to 1 John 3:1:

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

When life gets really difficult, it’s easy to believe we are cut off from God’s love. That’s simply not true. This scripture gives us a list of things that would tempt us to think we could be separated from God’s love, and yet, even in the midst of this list, God’s love is stronger. God not only has love for you, God IS love for you — God is love. So many people get Christianity all wrong. They think that you have to live a certain way so that God will love you. That’s not true. In actuality, we live in a certain way precisely because God loves us. When you begin to understand that God loves you because that’s who God is, not because you’ve done anything to deserve it, everything changes. God loves you more than you can imagine.

Now let's read:

John 3:16-17 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”*

What did you hear?
What did you notice?
What do you wonder about?

Have you seen the John 3:16 signs at football games and other public events? Sometimes folks use verse 16 to say that if you do not believe, God does not love you. However, God made you as you are and you were only meant, created, commanded to be who you are — weird and wonderful, imperfect and messy and lovely.

Think about this scripture in the context of this story: A little boy was selling newspapers on the corner, the people were in and out of the cold. The little boy was so cold that he wasn't trying to sell many papers.

He walked up to a policeman and said, "Mister, you wouldn't happen to know where a poor boy could find a warm place to sleep tonight would you? You see, I sleep in a box up around the corner there and down the alley and it's awful cold in there for tonight. Sure would be nice to have a warm place to stay."

The policeman looked down at the little boy and said, "You go down the street to that big white house and you knock on the door. When they come out the door you just say John 3:16, and they will let you in."

So he did. He walked up the steps and knocked on the door, and a lady answered. He looked up and said, "John 3:16." The lady said, "Come on in, Son."

She took him in and she sat him down in a split bottom rocker in front of a great big old fireplace, and she went off. The boy sat there for a while and thought to himself: John 3:16...I don't understand it, but it sure makes a cold boy warm.

Later she came back and asked him "Are you hungry?" He said, "Well, just a little. I haven't eaten in a couple of days, and I guess I could stand a little bit of food." The lady took him in the kitchen and sat him down to a table full of wonderful food. He ate and ate until he couldn't eat any more. Then he thought to himself: John 3:16 ...Boy, I sure don't understand it but it sure makes a hungry boy full.

She took him upstairs to a bathroom to a huge bathtub filled with warm water, and he sat there and soaked for a while. As he soaked, he thought to himself: John 3:16... I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a dirty boy clean. You know, I've not had a bath, a real bath, in my whole life. The only bath I ever had was when I stood in front of that big old fire hydrant as they flushed it out. The lady came in and got him. She took him to a room, tucked him into a big old feather bed, pulled the covers up around his neck, kissed him goodnight and turned out the lights. As he lay in the darkness and looked out the window at the snow coming down on that cold night, he thought to himself: John 3:16 ...I don't understand it but it sure makes a tired boy rested.

The next morning the lady came back up and took him down again to that same big table full of food. After he ate, she took him back to that same big old split bottom rocker in front of the fireplace and picked up a big old Bible.

She sat down in front of him and looked into his young face. “Do you understand John 3:16 ?” she asked gently. He replied, “No, Ma’am, I don’t. The first time I ever heard it was last night when the policeman told me to use it,” She opened the Bible to John 3:16 and began to explain to him about Jesus. Right there, in front of that big old fireplace, he gave his heart and life to Jesus. He sat there and thought: John 3:16 — don’t understand it, but it sure makes a lost boy feel safe.

You know, many of us may not completely understand how crazy God is about us either. And yet it does show us that we have a God that loves us so much, that God was willing to be one of us as Jesus and we saw what that love looked like in a very real, tangible way.

Let’s read: 1 John 4:7-8: *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”*

What did you hear?
What did you notice?
What do you wonder about?

When people think about love, they often start with how to love others. And the Bible does talk a lot about how to love other people. Remember there are over 100 verses. But here in 1 John, God makes it very clear that **love begins with God. God IS love** (1 John 4:8). Imagine the equation: “God = Love.” Even though God is complex and a mystery and so hard to name and define, love is the core of who God is.

Let’s keep going and read: Ephesians 5:1: *“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.”*

What did you hear?
What did you notice?
What do you wonder about?

Since God loves us then we can live in love. The Message translation says it this way and includes verse 2: “Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.” No strings attached. Just love.

Activity: Get supplies of hand mirrors and tissues. Have each camper think about how they would describe themselves while looking in the mirror. Are there names they were called that still sting? Do they see themselves as “less than” because they cannot compete with social media?

We will be seen as imitators of God’s love. It is really helpful to know how we see ourselves and to consider if we carry stories about who we are from our families or from our childhood experiences that may be holding us back to be completely embraced as one of God’s beloved children.

Let's read: 1 John 3:2 *"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."*

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

Did you hear that? WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN. And there is so much we do not know about God's love and yet we know we are God's children. You know you are important to your parents because you are part of their family. You can walk into their home, you can eat their food, you can go with them on vacation because you are their child. All of God's gifts are waiting for us because we are God's children.

1 John 4:16: *"So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."*

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

Living a life that is with God abiding in love gives us hope, gives us a way to be in the world. For you see this love of God overflows, so to speak, from the inside. Again this is God's action. We do not have to pull love out of God, or beg God for love. God's love pours out. For you see agape (unconditional love) does not compete with other loves, it enables them. This love of God is to be shared.

John 13:34-35: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

This is the ultimate command of Jesus. Love should be what distinguishes Christians from others. Love is the center of how Christians are to be in the world. Love, not power, respect or tolerance, and not equality, justice, freedom, enlightenment or submission. And yet many of these other ways of being in the world can come from the foundation of love. This commandment of love for someone can be expressed by giving that person the dignity of choice and support; it can also be expressed by lending a helping hand if they are unable to help themselves.

Matthew 17:5: *"He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'"*

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

In hearing this story, it is helpful to know that when this baptism of Jesus happened, Jesus had not been teaching, healing, challenging, or disrupting. He was beloved simply because he was God's child.

Romans 8:37-39: *“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

You have probably been hurt or betrayed by someone you love at some point in your life. Maybe you have experienced this more than once. Loving and trusting other people is risky. Once one person hurts you, it becomes harder to open up to others.

In contrast, God's love is truly unconditional. God never fails you or betrays you. You do not need to hold back in your relationship with God, because God is totally trustworthy.

These verses remind us that no matter what we face in life, God's love for us is unending and unconditional. God's love is not based on a performance of our “good behavior.” Nor is God's love just some abstract activity. God's love is real. God's love is a gift.

Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber shared that as she attended an AA meeting her fellow pilgrims were talking about their “higher power” and how they name the “god of their understanding” and she wrote: “One of the old guys, a guy who has been sober for like, 45 years, said something so simple and so casual but something that made me shake my head and wonder what it would be like if we all really believed it. As we were all discussing what our ‘higher power’ is like, he said: ‘I don’t know about you, but my God is crazy about me.’ I couldn’t stop thinking about that. For most of my life I’ve heard the saying ‘God loves you.’ But it always feels more like an empty slogan like, don’t worry, be happy, or something. For some to say: Nadia, God loves you, feels almost compulsory. Like God loves me kind of because God has to since I’m one of God’s kids. But to say my God is crazy about me. I don’t know. That’s different.”

Friends, please hear this: GOD IS CRAZY ABOUT YOU. One of the struggles of this truth is that we either compare our lives to others. We think, “I am not like them,” or “I am not as perfect as they are.” And when we talk about the “shadow side” of our lives we can make ourselves to be so much better than someone else. We do not need to do any of these things: We can trust that we are loved by God. God is crazy about us, and we can let go of our fears of worthlessness and live every moment with joy in friendship with Jesus, as one of his disciples, as one of God's beloved. God is crazy about us.

You were only meant, created, commanded to be who you are — weird and wonderful, imperfect and messy and lovely.

Friends, we began this day stating that God has made us, knows every inch of our bodies and is familiar with our thoughts, our concerns, our fears. We are not what we have done or not done. Each day, every day we need to be still, to remind ourselves we are loved, to listen to the truth that we are God's beloved children.

Let's give each camper a handout with the 50 LOVE verses that they can take with them to remember that they are beloved children of God.

Now that you have spent 45 minutes or so talking about God's love, as you hand out the page with 50 love verses on it, ask the kids to use this list as they take their second pink heart to write what they believe a Valentine from God would look like. Have them compare the two messages.

Consider:

- **In what ways are you encouraged or inspired by what is on your Valentine?**
- **What questions does this make you ask?**
- **Can you believe that God—the same one who created the vast universe, the most distant stars and planets, the highest mountains and the deepest oceans, and the smallest cells and teeniest atoms—takes a loving interest in you?**
- **Which verse have you encountered today that brings you the most hope and comfort as you consider God's love?**

At the end of the study, have the kids place the Valentines from God into their Bible, where they will run across it from time to time in the coming years.

Close with prayer. Consider asking one of your campers to pray for the group or consider this one: Good and gracious God, thank you for being crazy about us. Help us to accept how we have been made and know that no matter what you will continue to love us, all of us. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

Greetings friends: What if we asked the campers to distinguish between the world's definition of love and God's definition. I love the Valentine idea...thank you for that and yet I wonder about the love of God that is unconditional, given freely without earning it, and the love that reflects GOD, not me or anything I can do or anyway I try to "earn it."

True love is liberating, not restrictive. We need to remember this does not give us a license to sin, but the freedom to serve God completely, motivated by love, and empowered by the Spirit. God's love motivates God's compassion and mercy (love in action). lovGod's love brings transformation.

We can see that the sort of love predicated of God is not any mere human love, certainly not any sort of narcissistic self-directed love, search for personal fulfillment, or expression of strong personal desires. No, to say God "is love" is to say that God is the most self-sacrificial being in the universe, and as such he was prepared to go to incredible lengths to set humankind right. The writers of the New Testament would clearly have nothing to do with any attempts to define God on the basis of merely human notions of love or, worse still, define love "as our god." For Christians, God is the very definition of self-sacrificial love and what it truly means. We should have long ago stopped trying to define God and the divine character on our very partial understandings of human love and human feelings. If the counselors wanted they can get into the greek understanding of AGAPE love and teach the campers that Greek has 8 words for love with Agape being unconditional love. In case you are wondering as you may, the other 7 are eros, philia, storge, mania, ludus, pragna, and philautia. So fun! In English we have one word of LOVE and we use the same word for loving ice cream and loving God.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

We are aware that our wonderful villages will come up with their own suggestions of a theme of the day and yet, one thought for today could be a Valentines' Day and to focus a lot on God's love. Yes this could be a day of red and pink and Valentines written with "Jesus Loves You," or "God is love". Valentine cookies could be made.

Maybe a dance would be good since it is not a big activity day such as hike day and rafting.

Morning and worship can be filled with many of the verses of how much we are loved and how God empowers us to love others.

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

Father I Adore You #2	Pass It On #4
We are the Family of God #10	I love you x12 #12
More Precious Than Silver #11	Fill My Cup #21
I'll Do My Best #24	They'll Know We Are Christians #29
Your Everlasting Love #42	Jesus, Lover of My Soul #59
Reckless Love #82	

Short video of girl affirming herself in the mirror (youtube)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9OOXCu5XMg>

Drawing hearts on each others hands

- Verbal affirmation comes from the person drawing

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

See if you can get a copy of or get the scripts of:

God's Great Love for You by Rick Warren and Chris Saunders (illustrator).

Nothing: Nothing Can Separate You from God's Love. by Natalee Creech, Joseph Cowman (illustrator)

Going to each member and saying: You are a beloved child of God and rotating to the next person. You may also place a sign of the cross on their forehead.

As "loving others" may feel abstract ask the littles to think about how to do these things:

- Think of a small act of kindness you can do for someone who is struggling.
 - Stop by to just be with them and listen.
 - Bring them something special, like coffee or flowers.
 - Drop off dinner or have it delivered.

- If they have kids, offer to watch them for a couple hours.
- Sign up to volunteer at your church or a local organization focused on helping people in need.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

This same activity will look different for the older group.

Going to each member and saying: You are a beloved child of God and rotating to the next person. You may also place a sign of the cross on their forehead.

- Think of a small act of kindness you can do for someone who is struggling.
 - Stop by to just be with them and listen.
 - Bring them something special, like coffee or flowers.
 - Drop off dinner or have it delivered.
 - If they have kids, offer to watch them for a couple hours.
 - Sign up to volunteer at your church or a local organization focused on helping people in need.

This activity may be best for a village's evening All Camp Activity.

Supplies: Clothespins in four colors (about 50 of each color)

Clothespins with a heart on them – one for each student

Game: Love Tag

Divide the group into four different teams and assign a color to each team, which matches the colors of the clothespins.

Give each team their 50 clothespins and explain that when you say ‘Go,’ they will try to put their clothespins on members from the other teams.

They cannot put the clothespins in people’s hair, face or ‘bathing suit’ areas.

They can also take off the clothespins they are tagged with and try to put them on other people.

One twist is that at the end of the game, if you have your color of clothespin tagged on you, it is minus 20 points.

Say ‘go’ and let the game begin.

Give the teams 5-10 minutes to tag and then call ‘time.’

Have teams total up how many of each color they were tagged with, but each clothespin of their own color is minus 20 points.

Have fun tallying up the numbers and give the teams a point for each clothespin they put on another team.

Then subtract 20 points for each clothespin a team has of their own color.

Lesson:

If there was one word that I could write to describe how you think other people see you, what would it be?

Grab a few clothespins and write down these words.

Maybe you would write 'smart' or 'athletic' or maybe you can help fill-in some words for me (pause to see if anyone will be brave to give some examples, if not, maybe add some words that would be said if they were to share out loud: funny, loner, popular, nerd)

And what would be the words that you would write for yourself if you were truly honest?

Beautiful.

Ugly.

Shy.

Lonely.

You fill in the blank....

What if I were to write this word: Loved. (Write "LOVED" on a clothespin)

Would you say that word 'fits' you?

Because if there is one word that I could choose for each of you, it would be this word: Loved.

What does it look like to truly love and be loved?

This sounds like a simple question that should have a very simple answer, but think about the crazy ways that we look for love. Think about how God is CRAZY about us.

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Psalm 139:13-14

Reflection: Thank you, dear parents and grandparents, for allowing us to accompany your camper in this week of growth, faith development, and learning to accept the love of God that we do not have to earn and that we get to share with others in the world. During this week your camper will learn about being a beloved child of God, about learning how to be fully present (yup that will mean without their electronics. :-)), what it means to be "me" just as we are, how to become a disciple, what that means, and how to be an agent of change for good in the world.

So today we begin with being a beloved child of God which allows us to step into the other things that we are created to be.

Activity: Do you have a time during the day when you tell your child or grandchild that you love them? Were you told “I love you” as a child? Do you find it challenging or very comfortable? What do you think of the statement: I don’t have to tell them, they just know I love them?

You can begin a family conversation about love by doing the “would you rather game?”: And find out their preferences. Think about questions like: Would you rather eat breakfast or dinner for every meal? Would you rather dance in front of 1000 people or sing in front of 1000 people? Would you rather be able to fly like a bird or swim like a fish? Would you rather be a superhero with a cool costume or a wizard with a magic wand? Would you rather have a robot servant or a magical genie? Please encourage them to choose one, you choose, and in the midst you learn about each other. Then move to “love” questions about activities, foods, vacations you took and learn even more.

As I invited our families last year: I ask you to think about the Maya Angelou quote: “I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Dear parents and grandparents, showing God’s love will remind your camper that they are indeed beloved children of God.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for loving us. Thank you for the love we share in our family. Help us to choose love and make decisions from a place of love each and every day. In Jesus’ name, AMEN.

K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION

- Do you believe God loves you no matter what?
- Where have you seen God’s love at work during camp on a very real day like the story of the home insecure little boy and John 3:16 lived out?
- Have you given a visible, tangible sign of God’s love toward a staff person such as filling their “affie bag”? Have you started or even finished your end-of-summer Kristkind gift for your KK?
- Have you called home to talk about how God loves all of us with your family or really good friends?
- What do you need to say to yourself each day to be mindful of God’s love?

2024 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
CREATED TO BE
DAY 2: Created To Be....FULLY PRESENT!

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Yesterday in Bible study, we learned that God is crazy about us - just the way we are! You are not what you do; you are not what you have; you are not what people say about you. You are a beloved child of God. That's who you are! No one can take it from you; you do not have to worry; you do not have to hurry; you can trust your friend, Jesus, and you can share his love in the world!

Today is hike day at Rainbow Trail and the campers will be out exploring the beauty of this mountain. As they hike (and hopefully as they go down the mountain at the end of the week), there will be a growing awareness of how our minds work, and how we can tame some of the chatter (aka monkey mind) in the world by using meditation techniques. While being grounded and fully present in our bodies, we can also practice Creation Care for the whole planet, beginning here at camp and hopefully into our own parts of the world.

We will begin this study reading together and studying the story of the prophet Elijah from the Old Testament. Elijah (whose name means My God is YAHWEH [YAHWEH is that most sacred name for God which means "I AM." It was the name that God gave to Moses at the burning bush]) was, according to the Books of Kings in the Hebrew Bible, a prophet and a miracle worker who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Ahab (9th century BC).

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah defended the worship of the Hebrew God over that of the Canaanite deity Baal. God also performed many miracles through Elijah, including resurrection, bringing fire down from the sky, and entering heaven alive "by fire." He is also portrayed as leading a school of prophets known as "the sons of the prophets." Following his assumption, Elisha, his disciple and most devoted assistant, took over his role as leader of this school. The Book of Malachi prophesies Elijah's return "before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD," making him a harbinger of the Messiah and of the eschaton in various faiths that revere the Hebrew Bible. (This is a very brief synopsis of Elijah's life taken from Wikipedia.)

Our story from I Kings 19: 11-13 comes after Elijah has defeated all of the prophets of Baal. Queen Jezebel threatens Elijah and he gets scared and runs to the mountains. Here, in his fear and panic, God meets him. It wasn't in the big sounds that happened (the wind, the earthquake, the fire), but in the silence that God was able to speak to him.

What does it mean to be still and know God? How does this look for each camper here this week?

As we explore Elijah's story, the hope is that the stillness of the campsite, the trust that these campers are gaining in you, their counselor, and the meditation practices we will try on, will help each of us to experience God's voice coming into our own lives, perhaps for the first time. It is frightening to think of being "unplugged" in our day for many of us. Yet here, today, that is what we are asking. Unplug. FOMO is a real thing, I understand! Trust me, as an old lady pastor who has had many rotations around our planet, you aren't missing out on much. And you

can always catch up! Who knows? You may even gain a deeper sense of God's love for you as you unplug today and see how in nature's grand scheme you are...created to be...fully present!

From Psalm 46:10 we hear the Psalmist inviting us to "be still" and know that God is God. Even Jesus from Mark 1:35 takes time away to be still, to pray, and to listen to God!

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

Today, we will look at ways we can become more fully present and aware of God's loving presence in our lives, especially in our bodies and minds. The story of Elijah's encounter with God on the mountain will be the foundation of this Bible study. Psalm 46:10 adds an extra punch to this story, calling us to figure out what it means to "be still" for each of us.

- Examine the story of Elijah to explore how God talked to this prophet.
- To introduce and practice four basic meditation techniques: 5 finger breathing, sitting, walking, and lying down.
- Understand what it means to be fully present and fully aware of the needs of those around us.
- To talk about Creation Care and how we can each play our part.

Goal: To have an action plan for Creation Care and to have practiced at least 3 of the meditation techniques listed in today's lesson.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Welcome to this day.

God of creation. God who created us. We are made in your image.

Help us remember that you take pleasure in your creation...all of your creation...including me.

Help us to do the things we were made to do; to do the things we love to do, what you have created us to do and to be the people we were created to be, filled with your love.

Introduction to the Day

Be still and know I am God! Psalm 46:10. We live in such a crazy-busy world that it is often hard for God to get through to us! Between our electronic devices, television, and all of our elective activities, outside of school, we seldom can find the time to just quiet ourselves and "be."

Today is hike day. You will be out in creation. Take a look around you as you hike today. Examine the beautiful sky (even if it's raining), take a close look at the mountains, the water, and be amazed by the way your feet are planted on the ground and able to move your whole body on the trail. If you think of it, say a quick prayer of thanks to God. Remember that you are grounded in God's grace, and loved by God who is crazy about you. What a way to start the day, created to be fully present!

Why we Chose the Passage and Scripture

Be still, and know that I am God! **Psalm 46:10.**

¹¹ [God] said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. **1 Kings 19:11-13a**

Song: What A Wonderful World by Louis Armstrong

I see trees of green
Red roses too
I see them bloom
For me and you
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue
And clouds of white
The bright blessed day
The dark sacred night
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow
So pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces
Of people going by
I see friends shaking hands
Saying, "How do you do?"
They're really saying
I love you

I hear babies cry
I watch them grow
They'll learn much more
Than I'll ever know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world

Yes, I think to myself
What a wonderful world
Ooh, yes

Questions for Consideration:

- When I am hiking today, what will I look for to remind me that I am part of God's creation?
- Do I think that God still talks to people today like God talked to Elijah? If so, how?
- How can I try to be more present to God and to others today?
- What does it mean for me to be still?

Closing Prayer

God of Creation, be with us today as we hike on this mountain. Protect us and open our eyes in a new way to see the beauty all around us. Ground our feet as we hike. Open us to accept the stillness you bring our way even as we seek to understand more about you. In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Scriptural Basis

¹¹ [God] said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

1 Kings 19:11-13.

Be still, and know that I am God! Psalm 46:10.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he [Jesus] got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. Mark 1:35

Bible Study Background and Information

Today is hike day. I invite you to be fully aware as you hike - what do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What have you come to understand by being more aware of Creation today (this includes both Nature and the campers, and yourself)!

I am asking you as staff to put your phones away for the day. Memories and experiences don't have to have a photo to make them real!

In today's study, we will take a look at ways to become more fully present and aware of God's loving presence in our daily lives. I hope you can accomplish this by looking at the story of Elijah and how it was not in all the "noise" of that mountain top moment (wind, earthquake, and fire), but in the sound of sheer silence, that God was able to talk with Elijah.

How do we talk with God in our "noisy" world today? How can we unplug and become attuned to God's voice in our own lives? We humans suffer so much from "Monkey Mind!" More than before, we jump from idea to idea, thought to thought, feeling to feeling enhanced by social

media and all of the electronic devices at hand, and add to that the frenetic pace of our culture today. This only enhances this “Monkey Mind” phenomena!

There are many ways to block out the noise, and we will explore just a few methods anchored in meditation to become more grounded in the love of God, and to grasp (perhaps in a new way) God’s crazy love for us and for this planet. This will hopefully open the door of curiosity and wonder that can (hopefully) be taken down the mountain and implanted into our daily busy lives.

We will explore some simple practices of meditation. You will teach deep breathing using the 5-finger method (explained later), which is a technique that can be readily utilized by anyone, anytime and anywhere. You will also learn and teach and (maybe even practice on your own or in a group) sitting meditation, walking meditation, and lying down meditation. It is my prayer that by using these methods throughout the week, you will be ever more deeply grounded in God’s love.

God loves this planet! In this study we will talk about ways to strive to be better stewards of the earth, practicing Creation Care here at RTLC. Campers can creatively think of ways that even the youngest among us can care for the earth.

Unplugging from social media can be another way to find a moment or two to “be still, and know that I am God.” To fight the FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and FOLO (Fear of Losing Out) craziness that is rampant in our culture, using this week away from camper’s phones and other electronic devices as a means for becoming plugged into the beauty and the opportunities that camp offers. I also pray that this disengagement will allow campers some breathing space, moving space, and growing space away from internet influencers. And, this is why I’m asking you to unplug for just 24 hours.

Bible Study Background

I have always loved the story of Elijah! His story begins in the Bible in 1 Kings 17. The country of Israel was a complete mess at that time! Elijah had left this country and was living in the wilderness where God fed him with water from the river and food brought to him by ravens! When the river dried up, God told Elijah to go to Zarephath where a widow would provide food and shelter for him. He found this widow and he asked her to prepare some food for him. She told him that she was collecting a few sticks to cook the last of her flour and oil, so she and her son could eat and then die. Elijah assured her that if she fed him, for as long as the drought lasted, their food supply would not diminish. Trusting Elijah, she did this and it happened just as Elijah said.

Sometime later, the widow’s son died and she blamed Elijah. Elijah understood this woman’s grief, and in a prayer-filled miracle, Elijah was able to revive her son. Once again, this widow was assured that Elijah was indeed, a man of God!

But, this is not all! Elijah confronted King Ahab and Queen Jezebel about being the cause of the problems for the people of Israel. He challenges them to a demonstration of the power of the gods! On the appointed day, the Baal priests begin the sacrificial event by praying that Baal will send fire to consume their sacrifice. Hours pass, and Elijah taunts them, as they dance and pray and cut themselves...but no fire.

Elijah then boldly drenches his sacrifice with gallons and gallons of water. And with one simple prayer, God sends down fire that completely engulfed the sacrifice, and all of the stones, and all of the water! Thinking this would solve Israel's "which god to believe" problem, Elijah was pleased. However, Jezebel was NOT pleased and she threatened his life. Frightened by this threat, Elijah fled to the mountains. The text for this Bible study comes from this time when God and Elijah meet on the mountain. We hear from our text how God and Elijah had a relationship that was honest, even if it was hard.

Elijah soon after this event took on a disciple named Elisha. Elijah passed on his title to Elisha...in a particularly dramatic way! It is written that Elijah was swept up into heaven by a chariot of fire pulled by fiery horses. (2 Kings 2:12)

Elijah is one of the two people from the Old Testament who never died. The other? Moses! And, who visited Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? Moses and Elijah! Go figure!

Elijah is considered the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He did many powerful things, and he also had times of doubt and struggle proving that he truly was just a man, a man who was fully present to God and grounded in God's love.

Grounding Techniques Background

There are four easy to teach methods of doing meditation. I strongly suggest that you learn all four and use them this week! They can all be taught today, but not all of them in this Bible study time; your Bible study space may not be conducive to the walking meditation technique, and you may need to find another space to teach this method. I strongly suggest that the lying down technique be used at bedtime.

Please remind campers that this is a practice. No one does this perfectly the first time, or even the 101st time. Monkey Mind is always with us. Monkey Mind is the way our mind jumps from one subject to another, one thought, idea, feeling, image, etc. to another in rapid succession. It's like watching spider monkeys jump from limb to limb at the zoo or in the wild. This is normal to our human condition! What meditation strives to do is to give some space (and a safe environment to practice) as to what the mind can experience when it pauses to rest!

Here is how I got involved with meditation. One of my seminary professors worked as the ELCA's liaison to the Buddhist community in the US. He spent several months at a Buddhist Monastery in California and came home with these techniques that he wished to share with anyone who was interested. I was curious about meditation so I went to our old chapel each Saturday morning from 8:30am -11am for most of the weeks he offered this opportunity. We also learned walking meditation at this time. I had to learn lying meditation at another venue. As I practiced, I found myself calmer, kinder, and more able to take in stride whatever the day brought my way only after a few weeks of sitting! Then, one day, I found that tears were rolling down my cheeks for no apparent reason. Healing. Deep healing had happened. What a gift!

Each time I have the privilege of giving this gift away, I thank God for Dr. Donald Luck and his willingness to instruct a group of seminary students on what he learned at the Buddhist monastery in California.

5-finger breathing technique for calming the mind

- No talking!

- Use the dominant pointer-finger to trace the non-dominant fingers starting at the thumb.
- On the upward movements, breathe in,
- On the downward movements, breathe out.
- At the end of the pinkie, place hands in the lap and wait for all to finish.
- Take one final in and out breath together.

Sitting meditation

· There is this thing called “Monkey Mind” where it is very difficult to keep your thoughts from going all over the place. When you find yourself thinking, gently move your thoughts back to your breath. The more you practice this, the easier it becomes. However, it will almost always happen – even with the most practiced meditator. So, be aware of Monkey Mind as we begin to practice sitting meditation.

· Sit up straight. The easiest way to know you are sitting up straight is to:

1) roll your shoulders forward 2) make your shoulders try to touch your ears 3) roll your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch 4) drop your shoulders

· Keep your head parallel to the ground/floor, keep your eyes open but drop your gaze to the ground.

· Place your hands in your lap. You may place your hands gently on your stomach to ensure that you are belly-breathing and not chest breathing.

· Inhale. Count to three.

· Exhale. Count to three.

· Repeat.

· Try to stay focused on your breathing.

· If you have to adjust your stance, scratch an itch or a tickle, please do so in very slow motion, so you don’t distract your neighbor in their practice.

· Inhale/exhale for ten complete breathing cycles.

· Check in with the campers:

- How did it go?
- What did you learn about your breathing?
- How was your Monkey Mind training?
- Were you able to hold your posture?

- Would you like to try this again?

Walking meditation

- There is this thing called “Monkey Mind” where it is very difficult to keep your thoughts from going all over the place. When you find yourself thinking, gently move your thoughts back to your breath. The more you practice this, the easier it becomes. However, it will almost always happen – even with the most practiced meditator. So, again, be aware of Monkey Mind as we practice walking meditation.
- Stand up straight. The easiest way to know you are standing up straight is to:
 - 1) roll your shoulders forward
 - 2) make your shoulders try to touch your ears
 - 3) roll your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch
 - 4) drop your shoulders
- If you are comfortable, tuck your tailbone by tightening your lower abdomen while lifting your ribcage.
- Stand in a circle. Reach out your arm and grasp the shoulder of the person in front of you.
- Take 1 step out.
- Keeping your head parallel to the floor, drop your gaze to the ground/floor in front of you.
- As you breathe in, take ½ a shoe-length step. Hold your pose for the count of 3.
- As you exhale, bring your feet together. Hold your pose for a count of three.
- Repeat the last two points for 10 steps.
- Check in with the campers:
 - How did it go?
 - What did you learn about your breathing?
 - How was your Monkey Mind training?
 - Were you able to hold your posture?
 - Would you like to try this again?

Lying Meditation

- There is this thing called “Monkey Mind” where it is very difficult to keep your thoughts from going all over the place. When you find yourself thinking, gently move your thoughts back to your breath. The more you practice this, the easier it becomes. However, it will almost

always happen – even with the most practiced meditator. So, again, be aware of Monkey Mind as we practice lying meditation.

- Lay down on your bunk, face up.
- Place your pillow under your head.
- Lift your knees so your low back is on the bunk mattress and your feet are hip distance apart.
- Let your knees fall into each other.
- Place your hands on your stomach.
- Breathe in. Hold for a count of three.
- Breathe out. Hold for a count of three.
- Repeat for 10 complete cycles.
- Check in with the campers:
 - How did it go?
 - What did you learn about your breathing?
 - How was your Monkey Mind training?
 - Were you able to hold your posture?
 - Would you like to try this again?

Bible Study Itself

As the campers settle into the spot for the study, ask them to put their stuff down and do the 5-finger breathing technique.

- No talking!
- Use the dominant pointer-finger to trace the non-dominant fingers starting at the thumb.
- On the upward movements, breathe in,
- On the downward movements, breathe out.
- At the end of the pinkie, place hands in the lap and wait for all to finish.
- Take one final in and out breath together.

Pray – either a prayer of your own, or this one:

God, thank you for loving us in your crazy-love way! Be with us as we study Elijah's story together today. Help us to be open to learning about how to be more grounded in our bodies and in your amazing creation. Amen

Open the Bible to **1 Kings 19:7-13a** (or see below)

¹¹ [God] said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

1. What happened in this part of Elijah's story?
2. Do you know the whole story of Elijah? (Here's a BRIEF synopsis)
 - a. He was a prophet. (a prophet is a person who conveys messages from God to humans)
 - b. He challenged the prophets of Baal, a foreign god and won!
 - c. The queen didn't like the fact that Elijah and Elijah's God (and our God) won, so she threatened his life.
 - d. He ran away and was totally scared. God took care of him and then?
 - e. God and Elijah had a face-to-face encounter.
3. How do you think Elijah felt with all of those events?
4. How would you feel meeting God on the mountain like that?
5. Do people still meet God today?
 - a. If so, how?
 - b. If not, why not?

Remember that all answers are valid! There are no right or wrong answers, especially with the feeling questions!

"Be still, and know that I am God!" *Psalm 46:10*

1. Let's say this verse together three times: first time in a medium voice, second time in a whisper, and the third time in a voice of your choice!
2. What do you think the psalmist means by this verse?
3. What does "be still" mean for you?
4. How can this verse apply to your life?

5. Underline this verse in your Bible.

Being Fully Present allows us to be Fully Aware

Today was hike day. We invited you to be fully aware as you hike at morning watch. How did trying to practice awareness go for you? What did you see that invited you to be aware of God's presence with you? What did you hear that brought a sense of God being with you? What do you smell that reminded you of God's presence in every moment of your hike?

In being fully present on the hike:

- What did see other people do for others? Did anyone help someone, carry their pack, help them over a tough spot? Did anyone do anything for you?
- Were you aware of someone around you that needed help? Who and how did you help?
- What did you notice about yourself on the hike?
- What did you notice about the creation around you? Was there anything specific that you saw today for the first time?

Grounding activities

We have so many distractions in our world that call for our attention: cell phones, messaging on so many platforms, screens of all sizes and how do we put those down to hear that sheer silence?

In today's study, we want to look at ways to become more fully present and aware of God's loving presence in our daily lives. I hope you see this by looking at the story of Elijah and how it was not in all the "noise" of that mountain top moment (wind, earthquake, and fire), but in the sound of sheer silence, that God was able to talk with Elijah.

Consider having your group walk the labyrinth that we have on site. This would need to be outside of your Bible study time but can be a gret centring activity for your campers.

What will your action plan be when you go down the mountain?

Where can you think about finding "sheer silence" during your day at home?

Can you ask your family if there can be moments just to breathe before meals, before bed, before going to school?

God wants us to care for this planet because God, who is crazy about you, wants you to have a place to live that is safe, free from pollution, and beautiful. As we look around us this afternoon, and as you think about the hiking adventure you were on this morning, how can we take care of our planet? (Accept all answers)

How can we start here at Rainbow Trail? (Accept all answers)

What will our action plan be for the rest of the week? (Come up with a group action plan).

Write the action plan down and have all campers sign it. Remind them of this plan during the week.

Meditation

Practice one or two of the meditation practices listed above. Again, it is my suggestion that you ALL do the sitting meditation practices. IF your Bible study spot has space, then you can also practice the walking meditation should you have time. You could move into more open space for walking meditation, but be aware of some campers being very self-conscious since meditation should be somewhere private. Trust your judgment here.

I would save the lying down meditation for the last thing you do with your campers tonight, and maybe practice this meditation each night for the rest of the week.

Closing

Finish with the 5-finger breathing technique.

Pray – either a prayer of your own, or this one:

God of love, as we wrap up this day's Bible study, thank you for the beauty that is all around us, and especially the beauty that we saw today on our hikes. Help us to care for creation. Remind us that our Monkey Minds need some taming so we, too, can hear your voice over all the noise. In our stillness, remind us that you are crazy about us!

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

- * The grounding idea of an all-camp clean up, or maybe a discussion of things that their school/church/scout troop does to help with Creation Care could be interesting.
- * How can you make a difference in your part of the world by practicing Creation Care?
- * How does being grounded in God's love and grace play out where you live at your school, in your neighborhood? Talk about what you've seen or participated in and the impact it has made.

Questions that stimulate discussion

1. What did you learn about Elijah that you didn't know before?
2. Why do you think God wanted to talk with Elijah?
3. Have you ever practiced meditation before today? If so, where?
4. How do you think you might use some of these meditation techniques at home?

Related stories

When Jesus was in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry, he was there for 40 days. Who did he talk to? Can you imagine doing this?

Supporting games

Role-play ideas: should provide a decent outline for how you could see the study flow.

1. Read the Bible story of Elijah
 - a. Talk about Elijah's life in your own words
 - b. Where was God in this story?
 - c. Do people still hear God today?

2. Read the Bible passage of Psalm 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God!”
 - a. Have the kids say this verse together three times, each time in different voices.
 - b. How does this verse apply to your life today?
 - c. Underline the verse in your Bible.
 - d. See how still you can be as you pray.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Created to be...Fully Present.

Activities: hiking is a big part of this day. The meditation techniques are a part of this Bible study and I hope and pray they may become part of the campers and staffs' lives.

- Sit in a circle, tie string bracelets and pass the string
 - Campers have a take home item, and assign a meaning to the string.
- Texture rubs
 - With paper and crayon/graphite, create rubs of different parts of nature.
- “I can’t imagine life without”
 - Mental activity/prompt to ask campers what they value, can work as an icebreaker at the start of Bible study.
- 5 Senses
 - I hear, see, smell, touch, feel (probably not taste)
- Find the right voice
 - Blindfold one person, have someone try to call them to where they’re standing while everyone else distracts them

- Morning and evening worship ideas:

- Doing the 5 finger breathing exercise as part of worship.

- All camp evening activities:

- An all camp clean up, trail fixing activity, or tree planting
- Nature scavenger hunt
 - Find the coolest stick/rock/leaf and have campers talk about their item show and tell style

- Any types of meals used to emphasize the theme:

- It would be a total pain to do this, but what if the campers were only allowed one part of a meal at a time?
 - This could take forever, but mindfully eating first the vegetables, then the protein, then the carbohydrates, could help campers appreciate the beauty/complexity of every meal.

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

Songs

Just Be #51

Breathe #68

Little Room #65

Additional Scriptures

Mark 1:8-18 ⁸ I have baptized you with* water; but he will baptize you with* the Holy Spirit.⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved;* with you I am well pleased.’¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.¹³ He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. How do you suppose Jesus lived in the wilderness all those days by himself?

Mark 1:35: In the morning, while it was still very dark, he [Jesus] got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

* Additional resources

Be Still (A Sit for a Bit Book) by Kathryn O’Brien

Breath: A New Science for a Lost Art by James Nestor

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

Honestly, I don’t think this study is difficult to adjust “down” for juniors. The meditation techniques are simple enough for everyone and the story of Elijah is filled with all kinds of thrilling adventures that lead to this moment of stillness. The book “Be Still” is a take on the Psalm for this morning and it may be a great way to end the day!

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

In the cacophony of our world, this study for Sr. Highs, can stand as is. The study of Elijah can be a way for Sr. High campers to think about the gods they and their friends may put up in place of God and to ask how the noise of our culture prevents us from making (and finding) the time we may need to disconnect from our devices and to (re)connect with God. They all understand the noise of our culture and the crazy connectedness of their devices. To give these campers permission to disconnect from social media and to connect with nature and with God is awesome!

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:11-13, Psalm 46:10

Reflection: Today is hike day. The theme for this day is Created to Be...Fully Present. The campers will be on the trails this morning after breakfast. They are encouraged to be more aware of their surroundings as they hike. Things like the feel of their shoes on the ground, the

sights, the smells, the sounds that they experience can become a part of the hike they are on. Because we live in such a “plugged in” world today, this day invites the campers to engage in Creation. When they come to Bible study time this evening, the campers will be introduced to meditation techniques, and the concept of “Monkey Mind” (ask your camper(s) about this concept). This is the understanding that we all jump from thoughts, to feelings, to ideas, to what’s next...just like spider monkeys jump from limb to limb both at the zoo and in the wild. The first meditation technique is a 5-finger deep breathing technique (see below for your family activity for the explanation), plus a sitting meditation, and possibly a walking meditation. Tonight, in their cabins as they go to sleep, lying meditation may be introduced. These simple techniques are ways to be fully present in our daily lives. Also, we will briefly touch on Creation Care as a way to be fully present on our beautiful planet.

Activity: Five Finger Meditation can be practiced by anyone. I invite you to try this simple technique for being fully present today!

- No talking!
- Use the dominant pointer-finger to trace the non-dominant fingers starting at the thumb.
- On the upward movements, breathe in,
- On the downward movements, breathe out.
- At the end of the pinkie, place hands in the lap and wait for all to finish.
- Take one final in and out breath together.

Prayer: Creator God, thank you for Rainbow Trail and our child(ren)’s week of camp. Remind us that we are created to be fully present in your beautiful creation. Bless our family and this special time with you. Amen

K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION

- Barrel of Monkeys - each staff member may choose a monkey for their “mascot” for the summer for this day’s Bible study.
- One week, have the staff sit for meditation...really sit...for 15 - 20 minutes.
- Banana treat of some kind.
- One week, have the staff practice walking meditation for 15-20 minutes.
- Monkey stickers. (I will supply)
- One week, have the staff practice lying meditation for 15-20 minutes.
- Repeat the different meditation methods for the weeks later in the summer

2024 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
CREATED TO BE
DAY 3: Created To Be....ME!

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

“I praise you, [O God] for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

Psalm 139: 14

Beloved of God, we anchor our week with this good news of God from our guiding Bible theme verse this year! This is how I start each academic year at Cross of Hope Preschool as well - with the good news that God made you, and God loves you. Just the way you are!

No argument. No Negotiation. No Conditions. Just gospel!

Say it with me now: ***I’m created to be me!***

It’s the good news of God that we can all say together because it’s true for each of us. God created you to be you – no one else – you!

And this is what can make this day challenging.

We live in a world where there are entire industries and influencers whose job is to tell, or convince, you the ‘me’ you are.

The truth is, *you’re the only you there is!* No one else is exactly like you. You are unique, gifted, and worthy (we’ve already begun exploring this truth!). Today we’ll explore how to live from the authentic ‘me’ God fearfully and wonderfully created, and distinguish between the genuine and the junk. This way both can build or reinforce a firm foundation in God and either begin or continue to discover how that foundation shapes your life in the world.

What does it mean to be your authentic self?

What does it mean to be the ‘me’ God created you to be?

These questions are at the heart of the day today and will also go with us as we think beyond one Bible study, one week, and one summer. Because not only are your campers only beginning to be able to articulate ‘me,’ your ‘me’ is being shaped and formed by your experience as a young adult. The reality is that ‘me’ changes over a lifetime, and is influenced by people, experiences (like camp!), choices, and changes.

The role of faith is to hold you secure in your belovedness - the truth of worthiness that is the good news of God for you - as you discover who you are, as you continue to notice and recalibrate on the journey to remain true to the ‘me’ God created and how that makes a difference in the world!

To name both (1) the good news that God fearfully and wonderfully created you, and (2) that there is no cookie-cutter ‘me,’ frees us to acknowledge that none of us are perfect. We won’t

always get it right, and heck there are (and still will be) days when we don't even know who 'me' is.

The journey of faith is a lifetime of learning, remembering, discovering and being reminded of God's fearfully and wonderfully created 'me.'

The gift of faith is that we don't need to do all of this on our own. Since the good news for each of us is the same - that God fearfully and wonderfully created you - we can encourage one another in living into your unique 'me,' and remind one another of this inherent goodness.

Who has helped you be your 'me' – who helps you to remain true to who you are?

So here's the deal, we're not going to tell our campers who they are - only they can do that. We're not going to tell them who they 'need to become' - they get enough of that from social media and maybe others in their lives.

Today we're going to celebrate and explore that through all of the learning and growing into your beautiful self God knows, loves and is crazy about me... no wait, you.... ugh, you know what I mean 😊

Say it with me: **God knows, loves, and is crazy about me!**

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- That each person hears the good news that, in God, *you are created to be 'me!'*
- That each person hears the reality that who you are changes over a lifetime.
- That each person understands that the only one who can tell you who they are is them.
- That each person understands the positive impact and importance of encouraging one another to be who they are.
- To consider the importance of sharing your unique self with others to carry God's love to the world.
- The goal today is to hold the safe space for the campers to really consider the 'me' God has carefully and wonderfully created.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Welcome to this day.

God of creation. God who created us. We are made in your image.

Help us remember that you take pleasure in your creation...all of your creation...including me.

Help us to do the things we were made to do; to do the things we love to do, what you have created us to do and to be the people we were created to be, filled with your love.

Introduction to the Day

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun. Good morning, unique child of God! Welcome to this new day! Today you hear how in God, you are Created To Be

ME! That's right you! Just as you are today. *You're* the only *you* there is! No one else is exactly like you and that is awesome! You are unique, gifted, and worthy and I'm glad you're hearing this, friend. Be encouraged to be still and know that God is God and you can count on this good news as you reflect, share and wonder about 'me' today.

Why we chose the Passage and Scripture

God has created all there is for a unique purpose, to be exactly who they are and to share that openly and boldly with the world! As we spend a lifetime learning, growing and changing, we remain grounded in the love and grace of God that is our shared beginning with all creation.

*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!*

Psalm 139:13-14, The Message

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
Oh, I believe
What You say of me
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
When I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours
And I believe
Oh, I believe
What You say of me
Oh, I believe
Taking all I have, and now I'm laying it at Your feet
You have every failure, God, You have every victory

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing

You say I am strong when I think I am weak
You say I am held when I am falling short
When I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours
And I believe
Oh, I believe
What You say of me
I believe
Oh, I believe
Yes, I believe
What You say of me
I believe

Questions for Consideration

- As I take a deep breath, what feelings do I notice in this moment?
- What is something that you would confidently say you love?
- How does it feel to hear your name as the answer to the last question?
- What is something new that you've learned about yourself this week that you want to remember?
- What is something new that you'll try today?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, Creator of all, you do nothing by accident and you call everything you have created 'good.' I thank you that I am a unique part of your loving creation. Help me believe and know this truth today and see others through your loving eyes. AMEN.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Psalms 139:1-14

- 1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
- 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You discern my thoughts from far away.
- 3 You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, You know it completely.
- 5 You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay Your hand upon me.

- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
- 7 Where can I go from Your spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
- 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
10 even there Your hand shall lead me,
and Your right hand shall hold me fast.
11 If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night’,
12 even the darkness is not dark to You;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to You.
13 ***For it was You who formed my inward parts;
You knit me together in my mother’s womb.***
14 ***I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are Your works;
that I know very well.***

The Message: Psalms 139: 13-14

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!

Philippians 4: 10-13

10 I rejoice[g] in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it.[h] 11 Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. 12 I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. 13 ***I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me!***

1 Corinthians 12: 4-27

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the

body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Actual Study Possible Outline

Space considerations

It may be a good idea today to select a spot with some privacy and minimal distractions to allow for both focus and reflection, as well as vulnerability and sharing. A space conducive to writing will also be important for today.

Material considerations

This Is Me/ICNU worksheet, writing implements, wide rubber bands/bracelets to write on, mirror

Gathering

Begin by briefly reviewing Monday - Created to be Loved:

Writer's key takeaway - You are loved! God is crazy about you! You are worthy!

Your key takeaway

and Tuesday - Created to be Fully Present:

Writer's key takeaway - When we are fully present, we can be fully aware of the needs of those around us

Your key takeaway

Introduce today's theme with these or your own words:

*Today we're going to build on these first two days as we explore the theme Created To Be ME! Say it with me now: **I'm created to be me!***

Offer a **repeating** prayer with these or similar words (/ - indicates pause for repeat):

Creating God,/ you have created me unique,/ gifted,/ and worthy./ Thank you for this truth./ Help me believe and celebrate,/ discover and explore,/ this good news today./ In Jesus' name. Amen./

*A repeating prayer here offers the benefit of each camper (and counselor, adult, etc) to hear this good news 'for me' while also hearing the voices of others for whom this is also good news.

This is Me activity

On the **THIS IS Me** worksheet (see appendix), have the campers spend 5 minutes thinking about and jotting down, either in art or prose, unique things about themselves that make them 'me' today.

Questions to help them in their work:

- What are things you enjoy doing?
- What is important to you?
- What is a 'hidden talent' you have?
- What is something you are excited to learn more about?
- _____
- _____

When ready, have everyone who is comfortable (be encouraging!) share one or two things from their paper.

After a time of sharing, flip the paper over and write their name at the top.

Now, invite everyone to pass their paper to the right or left and explain that we're going to write an affirmation - something 'I See In You' that is part of the person's unique 'me.'

Once the rotation is complete, give everyone a few minutes to process what they've received from others.

*Tell the campers to please hold on to their papers for Friday's study!

WORD

Invite campers into a comfortable and focused posture to hear Psalm 139: 1-14 (you can omit v7-9 for time and clarity if desired). You or another leader read.

Prime the pump with brief discussion after first reading (from the Spark Bible p. 675):

Know it! How much does God know about you?

Think About It! When was the first time God knew you?

Try it! Write verse 14 on a wide rubber band and put it around your wrist. Wear it for a whole day.

Invite campers to look back at their This Is Me side, or to close their eyes as you read Psalm 139: 13-14 first from the New Revised Standard Version:

- 13 *For it was You [O God] who formed my inward parts;
You knit me together in my mother's womb.*
- 14 *I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are Your works;
that I know very well.*

Then from The Message translation:

*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!*

Possible questions for reflection together:

- What words or phrases did you notice/caught your attention?
- How does it make you feel to hear that God created you with great care?
- How does it make you feel to hear that God calls you wonderful?
- Have you ever before considered yourself a unique and marvelous act of God's creation?
 - If yes, how has that shaped your understanding of who you are?
 - if no (or even yes), what are some barriers to thinking about that?

*If it hasn't occurred already, this is where the conversation may turn (intentionally or unintentionally) toward those pressures and stresses in life that can counter the freedom to live as your authentic 'me.'

Some may include:

- Pressures from influencers on social media,
- Expectations of parents or others in their lives ('you're a Berndt, and Berndt's don't cry!' or 'you're good at soccer so of course that's what you should focus on!' etc.)
- The cultural expectations (marketed or otherwise) of what you're supposed to look like, act like, or be interested in.

*Our role here is not to diminish or discount this reality. On the contrary, by appropriately acknowledging the human inclination to doubt ourselves and our worthiness of the love and acceptance of God and others when we let ourselves be the authentic 'me,' we disarm some of the fear that comes with offering our authentic 'me' to the world. By offering your authentic 'me' (again appropriately!) to the campers, it allows them to see the resilience built by faith - the learning and growing into the person God created you to be through trying new things. Both succeeding at something only to give it up to pursue something new you are interested in, and failing at something only to realize it wasn't as bad as you feared, are ways in which we discover and live into who we are.

Whether or not you've had a long, deep conversation with this hard work, it's time to ask these questions and take the space to think about them:

What does it mean to be your authentic self?

What are some things that help us know who we are?

What are some things that make it hard to know who we are?

What does it mean to be the 'me' God created you to be?

The Lutheran Study Bible asks it this way: *We are not mere accidents of nature, but loving creations of the Creator. What difference does this make for you? (p.1000)*

Explore these questions honestly (see introduction).

Puzzle Activity

We are all a part of the Body of Christ, and each of us brings to the Body unique gifts. Using paper puzzle pieces provided, give each of the individuals in the Bible Study a piece of the puzzle, instructing them to take a moment to think about what they have to offer the world... specifically ways they can serve God using their gifts and talents.

Get the kids to dig a little deeper than they may have done in the past when assessing their own gifts. For example, point out that many have mathematical gifts, organizational gifts, gifts of communication, gifts of listening to others, gifts of service, gifts of kindness, gifts of working with children, gifts of seeing the needs of others... in addition to music, athletics, leadership and some of the more frequently named gifts. Then, once they have landed on a way they can serve God as a part of the Body of Christ, have them write about it or draw an example on their puzzle piece.

When all are finished, put the puzzle together, making the point that all pieces are necessary, and all pieces work together to form the entire picture. Each piece has a unique shape and design, and although some pieces may be similar, no two pieces are exactly alike. And as members of the Body of Christ, each of us has a unique and essential part to play.

IMPORTANT: When passing out puzzle pieces, you will note that one side of the puzzle piece has lines where the puzzle has been drawn, while the other side is clean. Be sure that all participants use the **SAME SIDE** of the pieces or they will not fit together.

Created to be Me with you!

Share this good news with your campers: *You are created unique and you are not alone!*

Invite a camper to read 1 Corinthians 12: 4-27 (see above for text)

Questions for discussion and reflection:

- What is something someone else is good at that you are not good at?
 - Why is it easy/hard to be thankful for that?
- What would life be like if we are all the same?
- How do our different gifts/abilities/talents lift up one another, how does it build up the body of Christ?

SENDING

Review the theme of today: Created To Be ME! Unique and important to the body of Christ - the community living in and out of God's love in the world. Be excited for tomorrow where we'll explore this way of life more!

Depending on the time remaining, sing a song, play a game, or pray out and head to the next part of your day.

Close your study with prayer.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

Synergy - as a group consider the work it takes to be confident in your identity in God and the freedom that comes with that confidence (or clarity). Then discuss how this confidence/clarity allows someone to move throughout life in a way that they're not living different (or compartmentalized) lives.

No Cookie Cutter nor Storm Trooper - choose the image that works for you (or both!) and explore honestly how no two children of God are the same and why that is actually a good thing! It means we can be honest with ourselves and others that not one of us is perfect. We won't always get it right, and yes, there are, and still will be days when we don't even know who 'me' is. BUT GOD DOES AND THAT'S WHAT MATTERS!

Mentors - Who has helped you be your 'me' – who helps you to remain true to who you are?

Practice telling your story and receiving another's - If the group is really gelled and trusts one another, have them find a partner and tell one another who they are. You'll practice reflecting on the 'me' God has created and receiving this story from another person without question or judgment *because it is their story!*

Movies (most art) can help to explore a salient point.

Barbie (2023) - In the blockbuster hit from last summer, the climatic scene between Barbie and Ken has to do with the realization that what the foundational truth is that you are created to be you! Consider the scene where Ken is distraught in full on existential crisis not knowing who he is apart from Barbie (may be fun to have kids act out quickly!):

Barbie: Ken, you need to figure out who you are without me.

Ken: Why?

Barbie: You're not your girlfriend, you're not your house, you're not your mink.

Ken: Beach?

Barbie: Nope, you're not even beach. Maybe all the things you thought made you, you aren't... really... you. *beat (pause)* Maybe it's Barbie *and* it's Ken (emphasis on each as separate)

Ken: *(slowly realizing)* Ken... is... me?

Barbie: Yes!

Ken: *(fully realized)* Ken is me!

Barbie: *(introspectively to herself)*: and I'm Barbie.

Ken: Ken is me!

Again, it's only an illustration of the challenge of both knowing and being confident in (or confidently sharing) yourself.

The truth of today is that God has created you to be you - as only you can - even when you don't know fully who that is!

Luther's Small Catechism - the Apostle's Creed (primary statement of faith of the Lutheran Church) The First Article: On Creation

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

In Martin Luther's explanation of What is this? or What does this mean? He offers: "I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties.

In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property - along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true."

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Perfect day for a camp dance or other activities that allow space for campers to be themselves perhaps in a new and different way.

A personal blessing might be included during worship where you remind one another of your uniqueness yet common connection in Christ. Words like name *God created you and God loves you* along with an action or making the sign of the cross on their forehead.

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

Be Bold #40

Borning Cry #34

Every Move I Make #72

Fruits of the Spirit #71

Isaiah 43 #43

More Precious Than Silver #11

You are the Light of the World #52

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

Read the Max Lucado classic, You Are Special. Note how Punchinello learned how Eli created them to be 'me'. This revelation led Punchinello to believe in themselves and that it doesn't matter what others think. The connection to our campers is to realize they are loved and worthy because their maker/creator loves them as much as he loves everything God creates. This frees you to be silly, wonderful, amazing you!

After reading Psalm 139 - simply go around to each camper, look into their eyes and, using their name, tell them the truth that God created them and God loves you.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGH

Explore the concept of 'Filters' on pictures and social media.

- How are they fun? *add humor, help express yourself, etc.*
- How are they unhealthy? *used as a mask, unrealistic expectations, etc.*
- Why might it be important to see yourself without filters too?
- If God's filter is unconditional love, what would it look like to put on that filter to see yourself? to see others?

Small Mirror reflection

Get out the mirrors again and invite each camper to take a long look at themselves and invite them first to describe who/what they see.

Take a long look at yourself. In the mirror. No really. Just take a look. What do you see? Can you realize how God delights in you? Can you see what God sees? Can you look at yourself with these eyes of love?

Now have them repeat after you: **God knows, loves, and is crazy about me!**

Have everyone write this on an index card or small piece of paper to keep with them to practice seeing themselves with God's lens (different from a filter - a lens helps you see clearly!).

Reinforced that God has created them, loves them and is excited to flow through them as they offer themselves in love to the world!

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Psalm 139: 13-14

Reflection: Today we are exploring the good news that in God, you are created to be 'me!' The truth that in the eyes of God you are unique, gifted, and worthy. There is no one else exactly like you and yet you are created to share your beautiful self with the world. This is our starting point as loving creations of God as we learn, grow and change through a lifetime of sharing the journey of life and faith. When you think about your own life, how are you the same as when you were younger? How are you different?

Activity: Make a meal together. Even if you have young kids who can not cut with a sharp knife, find something they are able to do to contribute. The goal is to create and accomplish something *together* using and honoring the unique gifts of each individual 'me' together in joyful community.

Prayer: Holy God, Creator of all, you do nothing by accident and you call everything you've created 'good'. I thank you that I am a unique part of your loving creation. Help me believe and know this truth today and see others through your loving eyes. Amen.

K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION

- What is something new you discovered about yourself this week?
- What challenged your remembering that you are created to be ‘me’ this week?
- What is something that you are considering trying/changing/emphasizing in your life this week?
- Who is someone I look up to (and could talk to) about what it means to be ‘me’ when I need to? (try to think of someone new each week as you build a network of trusted people in your life. Some you may not even know well yet but are open and interested in connecting with.
- How is God gifting you to encourage others this week?

2024 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
CREATED TO BE
DAY 4: Created To Be....A DISCIPLE!

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

When I was a kid, I loved to play baseball. I'm sure part of it was because my two older brothers played baseball and I wanted to be just like them. I started playing when I was little and loved it! When my son Lucas was born, I wanted him to play baseball as well. He is a natural and took to parts of the game at a very young age. Rockies' games were always a blast as he would pay attention like no other two year old. After Lucas learned how to walk, he quickly moved to running. When he would fall, he would lay there and we would look at him and call him safe or out. He would then jump up and start running again. It got to the point where we had to tell his daycare providers to do the same. Lucas loved baseball. We would play baseball in our backyard where he would hit off a tee and just run the bases. We would work on throwing and catching. It wasn't a fight to get him to play or practice, it was fun.

When Lucas turned three, we looked to sign him up to play t-ball. All of the leagues around us started at the age of four, but when I found out someone from our church was going to coach his son's team, I asked him, "Hey, if I sign up to be an assistant coach, can my three year old play?" He said, "Of course! Since he actually wants to play, he probably won't be one of the kids digging for dinosaurs in the field."

That spring I helped coach a t-ball team of 4-5 year olds and my 3 year old son. We taught the kids all about baseball, the positions, the bases, throwing techniques and hitting techniques. Every practice focused around learning how to play baseball and making sure the kids were having fun!

Here's the thing though, even though we taught the kids everything about baseball, mostly the basics, they still didn't have it down. There were a number of kids who would get up to bat in a game, hit the ball... and run straight to third base. Even though we taught the kids to stay in their position and get the ball if it came to them or in their area, they would still run after the ball on the other side of the field. It takes more than teaching to know something, it takes practice. You don't learn how to throw and catch a baseball by hearing how to do it or watching someone else do it, it takes practice. You don't learn how to hit the ball by hearing how to do it or by watching someone, you have to practice swinging a bat and working on your hand and eye coordination to hit the ball. It takes practice. Even the major league baseball players practice.

We are created to be a disciple, but it still takes practice.

Today, we discover what it means to be a disciple and to live as a disciple. God created us to be a disciple. The great thing about being a disciple is we don't have to change who we are; actually God wants us to be who God created us to be: me. God loves you for exactly who God created you to be. Isn't that awesome!?!

In fact, Jesus chose his twelve disciples for who they were: not for their talent or a strong ability (many were fisherman and one was a tax collector), not for their faith (which for many of them, their faith faltered), and not for their leadership ability (which wasn't any better than anyone

else's). Jesus' disciples were not the religious elite or God freaks (they couldn't be Jesus freaks yet), they were real people, working real jobs. They were chosen because of their willingness to follow Jesus and to learn from him. After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to spread the good news of Jesus across the nations.

So what does it take to be a disciple and follow Jesus? A willing heart. A disciple is a learner or a follower, so a disciple of Christ is someone who learns about God and who follows Christ. When we do this we are drawn into a relationship with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We engage in this relationship with God and learn about God by spending time with God by reading the Bible, praying, spending time with God in the places you experience God, like taking a walk to experience creation and all God has made and by being still to allow God to speak to us. We can experience God in creation, here at RTL, at church, in others, in serving and we can experience God at home. When we immerse ourselves into a community of faith, we grow together with other disciples to encourage one another, support one another and learn from one another. All we have to do is show up and be fully present.

John 8:31-32 says, "Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'"

What is that word? It is the word of God, the words of Jesus, the Bible. It is these words that reveal to us the truth, which is what makes us free. Free to be "me," free to be who God created you to be, free to be a disciple who doesn't care what other people think because you are being you, not what others want you to be or who they tell you to be. The tough thing about being free and living this way, as a disciple, is that others may reject you or your lifestyle. They may criticize you as being holier than thou or as a Jesus freak. The thing is, it isn't about you, it is about them and their judgments. You are just being you, and who God created you to be.

Being a disciple doesn't mean you are always teaching and preaching Jesus to others, it means you are learning about God and following Jesus' teachings of love, grace and compassion. If you were to describe what it looked like to be a disciple, how would you describe it? What does a disciple look like? Is it about their looks or their words and actions? But really, what does the life of a disciple look like?

I think the first thing is to have a foundation of faith. A foundation of faith can be different from one person to another. For one person their foundation of faith can come from their knowledge of God, for another it can be trusting in God's love, for another it can be the way they live, for another it can be their belief in God or Jesus, for another it can be their baptism.

From this foundation, we continue to learn about God and practice our faith. We live as a disciple. We go to church, read the Bible, attend Sunday school, youth group or a Bible study to learn about God. We are then sent out to "Go in peace. Serve the Lord." We serve the Lord by loving others, caring for others, serving others, etc. How do we do this throughout our life and at camp? Today is rafting day for many of the kids. How do we or can we love, help, encourage, support and walk with others on this day?

Some days we may be better disciples than other days. Some days we may mess up, sin or fail. Other days we may be a great disciple and an example to others. The great thing is that through God's love and grace, we start every day fresh as a brand new day.

Martin Luther writes in the Small Catechism about the significance of baptism saying, “It signifies that the old person in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily sorrow for sin and through repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Every day, we wake up new and have a fresh start as a disciple, as a loved child of God. Therefore, living as a disciple takes practice and it is a way of life. This life looks different for all of us because we are all different, we are all unique and still we are all loved and created equally by God who created us to be who God created us to be. This is God’s crazy and amazing love for us. It is wonderful to know that God loves us for who we are and that God works in and through each and every one of us because we all have varying gifts given to us from the Spirit. Because of this, we all are able to be agents for change, which we will learn about tomorrow.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- To explore what it means to be a disciple: a learner and follower. Being in relationship with God and spending time with God; especially in the word is part of being a disciple.
- To understand that being a disciple takes a willing heart and practice.
- For the campers to understand that they are created to be a disciple as they are. For God uses them with the gifts and abilities they already possess and God will empower them with gifts from the Holy Spirit.
- Discovering ways the campers can be a disciple and practice living as a disciple.

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Welcome to this day.

God of creation. God who created us. We are made in your image.

Help us remember that you take pleasure in your creation...all of your creation...including me.

Help us to do the things we were made to do; to do the things we love to do, what you have created us to do and to be the people we were created to be, filled with your love.

Introduction to the day

Today, we discover what it means to be a disciple and to live as a disciple. God created us to be a disciple, to learn from God and to follow Jesus. The great thing about being a disciple is we don’t have to change who we are; actually God wants us to be who God created us to be: me. God loves you for exactly who God created you to be. Isn’t that awesome!?!

Why we chose the Passage and Scripture

Being a disciple is not about checking off the box of being a Christian, it is a way of life.

Disciples are people who are learners and followers. We can always learn something new about God and from God, which is why it is important to continue in God’s word. God’s word is the truth and it makes us free as we follow God and live out our faith each and every day as disciples and people of God.

“Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 8:31-32

Song: “Nobody” by Casting Crowns

Why You ever chose me
Has always been a mystery
All my life I've been told I belong
At the end of the line

With all the other not-rites
With all the never-get-it-rights
But it turns out they're the ones You were looking for
All this time

'Cause I'm just a nobody
Trying to tell everybody
All about Somebody
Who saved my soul
Ever since You rescued me
You gave my heart a song to sing

I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus
I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus

Moses had stage fright
When David brought a rock to a sword fight
You picked twelve outsiders nobody would have chosen
And You changed the world
Well the moral of the story is
Everybody's got a purpose
So when I hear that devil start talking to me saying
"Who do you think you are?"
I say

I'm just a nobody
Trying to tell everybody
All about Somebody
Who saved my soul
Ever since You rescued me
You gave my heart a song to sing

I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus
I'm living for the world to see

Nobody but Jesus

So let me go down, down, down in history
As another blood-bought faithful member of a family
And if they all forget my name, well that's fine with me
I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus

So let me go down, down, down in history (Goin' down in history)
As another blood-bought faithful member of a family
(That's all I ever wanna be)
And if they all forget my name, well that's fine with me
I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus

'Cause I'm just a nobody
Trying to tell everybody
All about Somebody
Who saved my soul
(Gonna save, gonna save my soul)
Ever since You rescued me
You gave my heart a song to sing
(You gave me a song to sing)

I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus
(Nobody but You, Lord)
I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus
I'm living for the world to see
Nobody but Jesus

Questions for Consideration

- When you think about a disciple, what comes to mind?
- Do you think you have to be any different to be a disciple or can you be yourself?
- What are the ways you learn about God?
- Where have you learned about God? Who has taught you about God?
- What does it mean to follow God? How do you follow God in your life now?

Closing Prayer

Loving God, thank you for this new day. Thank you for creating me for who I am. Help me, Lord, to be who you created me to be. Throughout this day, help me to live as a disciple, continuing to learn about you, follow you and serve you by loving, caring and helping others. AMEN.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Materials Needed for this study

- Blindfolds
- Clues for a scavenger hunt

Bible Study Outline

- Introduction and prayer
- Jesus' disciples: who were they
 - Activity: Trust walk
- What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus
 - Activity: Scavenger Hunt
- Learning about God
 - Reflection activity
- Living as a disciple
 - Reflection activity
- Wrap-up and closing prayer

Created to be! What have you learned the past three days? We have been created to be what? (loved, fully present and me). Today we will build upon these past three days as we learn how we have also been created to be **a disciple**. We will talk about what it means to be a disciple, how it takes practice and how it is a way of life, not just something we do. We will look at being a disciple as a way of life that touches our heart rather than it being something we just think about.

Our theme verse for today is John 8:31-32, "Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

A disciple is a learner and a follower. The first disciples were those who literally followed Jesus and learned from him. As Jesus taught them they witnessed how he could heal, cast out demons, make people think, and raise people from the dead.

Ask a question that relates to when they first became a disciple (a learner or follower):

When did you first go to church?

Where did you first hear about Jesus?

Have you been baptized? If so, when were you baptized? (you don't have to be baptized to be a disciple)

PRAY: Let us pray. Thank you God for creating each and every one of us for who we are. As we learn about being a disciple, help us to learn about you and how we can make discipleship a way of life. Be with us now as we open your word and hear your voice. In Jesus name, amen.

Ask the campers, Who do you think Jesus chose to be his disciples? (field answers)

- Do you think Jesus chose people who were really religious?
- Do you think Jesus chose Jews who knew the Torah, the prophets or the Psalms (our Old Testament Bible)?
- Do you think Jesus chose regular people like you and me?

Tell the campers:

Jesus didn't choose his friends to be his disciples, he didn't choose really religious people, he chose ordinary people! Some of the disciples were fishermen, one was a tax collector and we don't even know what the others did.

Background information: We do not know much about Jesus' life between his birth and the start of his ministry. His father, Joseph, was a carpenter, so we consider Jesus to be a carpenter because it was traditional for the children to learn the father's trade and work with him. The gospels quickly move to John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus by preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People would come confessing their sins and were baptized with water. Jesus then comes to be baptized by John in the Jordan river. The Holy Spirit comes down on Jesus and drives him out into the wilderness for forty days where he is tempted by Satan. It is then, when Jesus leaves the wilderness, that he begins his ministry by calling disciples.

READ: Mark 1:16-20 (Mark is a gospel and the first book of the New Testament)

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Ask the campers: What did you notice about this passage?

- The first four disciples Jesus called were fishermen. They were two sets of brothers. James and John were fishing with their father. Jesus just made a statement, “Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.” It was short and the response was quick, they dropped their nets and followed him. With James and John, it says they left their nets. They didn't clean up, just left and followed Jesus.

ACTIVITY: TRUST WALK

- Have the campers get in pairs.
- Designate one camper as the leader and one as the follower.
- Have the leader only use their voice to lead the other camper through an obstacle course or from point A to point B.
- Have the campers switch roles
- Take it a step further and have the follower blindfolded while the leader guides them through the obstacle course or from point A to point B. For junior campers, consider having the follower put their hands on the leader's shoulders and lead them through the obstacle course.
- If the Trust Walk is going well, take it another step further. This time pick one or two pairs to do it at a time. Once again, have the follower blindfolded, but this time, as the leader instructs them to go through the obstacle course or from point A to point B, have the other people shouting out wrong instructions. Be sure, as the counselor, that the follower does not get hurt. They do not have to complete the activity, they will get the point quickly.

REFLECT

How did it feel to be the follower? Was it easy to follow the leader's voice and instructions? Was it easy or hard to trust them when you were blindfolded? Was it hard to hear the leader's

voice when there were other voices competing? How was it to be the leader? Did you feel as if the follower wasn't listening to you or obeying your instructions? How did it feel to compete against the other voices?

FOLLOWING JESUS

God created us to be disciples who learn from God and follow Jesus. What does it mean to follow Jesus? What did it mean for the disciples to follow Jesus? Do you know what it means to follow Jesus today? What does it look like to follow Jesus in our world today, in 2024? What happens when we don't follow Jesus? What might life look like if we don't follow Jesus? How would your life be different?

Do you have things in your life or in this world that compete with what God is telling you, teaching you or calling you to do? Do you think it is hard to follow Jesus at times?

The disciples did not always do a good job of following Jesus. As we talked about earlier, the disciples were ordinary people. They were religious, but they did not work in the temple and weren't religious leaders. They were people like you and me. This means that they too struggled in their faith, questioned many things and didn't always understand.

For instance, Peter believes Jesus is the Messiah, but doesn't understand that he must die. He just doesn't get it.

Read: Mark 8:27-33

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

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

(To take it a step further for Sr. High, continue reading to verse 38 and see the **IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS** section for additional study material)

The disciples didn't have it all together, they too struggled with following Jesus and understanding everything he taught them. These are the times we can ask questions or ask for help. This is the importance of community and being part of a community of faith because we have a place where we can ask these questions to people who may understand and who we know love us and care for us.

It is important to know that Jesus chose ordinary people and people who struggled to follow and understand Jesus because we can relate. We don't always have it together, there are many things we do not understand and we may not know where God is leading us or where we are supposed to go or who we are supposed to be. There are times when the voices of our world, of influencers, of friends or even family are louder than God's voice.

What makes it even harder is that we don't literally hear God's voice; instead, God calls us in other ways. God calls us through the Word of God. Do you remember what the Word is? Where can we find this Word today? The Bible, right? Where do you hear the Word of God or where do you encounter this Word? Reading the Bible is one way, but there are many other ways to hear and encounter the Word: church, worship, Sunday school, youth group, Bible studies, when we serve, when we care for others, when we lend a helping hand...

ACTIVITY: Scavenger Hunt

Tell the campers you are going to go on a scavenger hunt and they need to find the treasure.

(Either have something you have placed for them to find (like a hat or water bottle) or pick something for them to find. Then write out instructions for them to follow to find it. This will take some prep work, but once you have done it once, you can use it for several weeks. For the sake of explanation, I will use a water bottle placed at the base of the great I AM with our Bible study spot as the Secret Spot. Tell the campers this is a game and the item was specifically placed somewhere, so it may be somewhere we have not been today or this week. You can make the instructions as detailed or hard as you think your group can handle).

Tell the campers to "Go! Go find my water bottle." Wait, camp is massive, you could search for hours or even days before finding my water bottle. Do you think it would be helpful to have instructions? Hand them a sheet of paper with instructions:

- You can see the location of the water bottle at this place that makes the sound for our meals. Look around, there are many things that are alive, but the water bottle cannot be found there. The water bottle can be found at the base of how God identifies God's self to Moses at the burning bush.
- Or, walk towards the gaga pit. Turn right and take 100 paces down the road. Turn left and take 50 paces. Turn left and you should be facing something that once used to be alive. There you will find the water bottle.
- Or, (place new clues throughout camp) Clue #1: You are in search of a water bottle? Follow these series of clues which will lead you to your treasure. Your next clue can be found along one of the sides of this hexagon game. Clue #2: You are getting closer to your treasure! Your next clue can be found near this thing that makes the sound for meals. Clue #3: Your treasure can be found at the base of this thing, which is the way God identifies God's self to Moses at the burning bush.

REFLECT:

Was it easier to find the water bottle with instructions or without instructions?

What instructions or clues do we have to learn about God? The Bible! The Bible is the Word of God. It is what teaches us about God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Bible can be a guide for our life and can act as instructions for us as disciples. It is where we learn about God's desire for us to love, care for others, serve and how to live. God speaks to us through this Living Word (Hebrews 4:12, Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.).

LEARNING ABOUT GOD

As a disciple, we come to God through the Word, which inspires us and guides our life. This Word builds on our foundation of faith as we grow closer to God and into a deeper relationship with God.

This is what transforms our lives. This is what makes being a disciple something we think about to be a way of life. The Word is not just something we read or something we hear, it touches our lives and it touches our hearts. We are drawn to it because of God's crazy love for us.

Let's look at what Jesus has to say about the importance of coming to God.

READ: John 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

Jesus tells us that he is the bread of life. When we come to Jesus, we will never be spiritually hungry or thirsty and will never be driven away. God desires for us to come to God and be in relationship with God, which is part of being a disciple.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Learning from God is such an important part of discipleship. What are the ways we learn from God? How do you learn about God? Where have you learned about God? Who has taught you about God?

- Parents, grandparents, friends, the church, RTLC, books, songs, creation...
- Who do you follow? Facebook uses the term friends and Instagram uses the term followers and following. Who is a good influence on your life? Who may be a bad influence for you?

When we come to God and learn from God, Jesus is our example for he came to reveal God to us and to show us the way: the way to the Father and the way of life. Jesus is our model of discipleship.

There are so many things that distract us from God in our life that having this foundation of faith as a disciple helps us when those distractions hit us or we are told by the world to focus on what the world sees as important rather than what God wants us to do or who God wants us to be.

The disciples struggled with this, they wanted to be the best and they tried to turn discipleship into a competition about who was the greatest. Hear this story:

READ: Mark 9:33-37

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one

another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

The disciples were so caught up in themselves that they are missing out on the point of Jesus' work and ministry. They are missing the message. It's not about who is the greatest, but it is about who God makes us. It is about how great God is because of God's love and grace for us, not about how great we are. We are great because of God. In God, we are forgiven and redeemed. It is not what we have done, it is all about what God has done.

LIVING AS A DISCIPLE

The disciples have done great things and they have missed the mark in other things. We can certainly relate! We see and hear that being a disciple takes PRACTICE! We aren't going to always get it right. God loves us regardless and when it comes down to it, Jesus looks beyond our failures and calls us beloved.

SHARE A STORY ABOUT HAVING TO PRACTICE: What have you had to practice at to become good at? What did that practice look like? How long did it take to get to where you are now? It probably didn't happen overnight did it? It takes practice, well so does being a disciple.

After the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the disciples (now called apostles) were filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to go out and proclaim the gospel. They have been following and learning from Jesus for the past three years and now are able to put what they have learned and practiced into action.

READ: Acts 2:22-24, 37-42

"You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

How inspiring! The disciples who learned from Jesus and followed him were then filled with God's Spirit and empowered to proclaim Jesus as the crucified and risen savior. As a result, they then created new disciples who learned from them and began to follow Jesus themselves.

God has created you to be a disciple! God desires you to follow Jesus and learn about God from God and from others.

As a disciple, you are then able to go out and make more disciples by teaching them and guiding them to the Word of God. You are able to go out into the world to love and serve the Lord. You are able to be an agent of change, which we will learn about tomorrow.

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray. Awesome God, you have created us to be who we are and you have made us disciples. Thank you for your amazing, crazy and generous love for us. Help me to see me for who I am and love the person you have created me to be. Help me to learn more about you and to follow you each and every day. Amen.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

- The Life Application Study Bible describes the disciples in this way, “Jesus’ faithful disciples were ordinary men who became extraordinary because of Jesus Christ. Despite their confusion and lack of understanding during his lifetime, they became powerful witnesses to his resurrection. Their lives were transformed by God’s power. The story of Jesus’ disciples does not end with the Gospels. It continues in the book of Acts and many of the letters.”
 - Ask the campers, do you think God can make this kind of transformation in your life? You may be experiencing the confusion and lack of understanding that Jesus’ disciples were experiencing and that is okay! God doesn’t expect you to have your faith all figured out. You have the foundation of faith, which you are growing on and deepening. Part of being a disciple is exploring this, learning, following and practicing. This is what God desires, not that you have it all figured out and understand it all.
- The Conversion and Ministry of Saul/Paul
 - If you want to take a different route or focus on one specific person as a disciple, you could focus on Saul/Paul. Many of us know Paul and his many letters. Paul originally was Saul, he was a religious person, a pharisee, who persecuted people who believed in Jesus as the Son of God or believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, becoming their savior. On his way to Damascus, God spoke to Saul and Saul ended up converting to believe in Jesus. He became a believer, a disciple, a learner, a follower and a teacher as his name was changed to Paul and he converted many and made many more disciples. Read Acts 9:1-6, 17-21.
- The work of Jesus’ disciples
 - Jesus’ disciples didn’t just learn from Jesus and follow him. Jesus also sent them out to teach, preach and heal. You could focus on the work of the disciples as you talk about what God calls us as disciples to do.
- Jesus tells the disciples to go and make disciples - Matthew 28:16-20
- Jesus sends the disciples out, giving them authority to drive out demons and to heal - Matthew 10:1-15
- Jesus sends out the disciples two by two to preach, cast out demons and heal - Mark 6:6b-13

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- Telephone - Use actions instead of a phrase, show how it can be hard or confusing to follow directions.
- Follow the leader as you travel throughout camp - think how ducklings follow the mother duck.

- All camp scavenger hunt where each group/cabin have to find certain items around camp with clues provided.

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

- Seek Ye First #3
- Here I Am Lord #23
- They'll Know We Are Christians #29
- Create In Me A Clean Heart #38
- Light The Fire#49
- Step By Step #53
- Here I am to Worship #79
- Just a Closer Walk With Thee #93
- My Lighthouse #97

A song not in the songbook: Thy Word

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

When I feel afraid,
And think I've lost my way.
Still, You're there right beside me.
Nothing will I fear
As long as You are near;
Please be near me to the end.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

I will not forget
Your love for me and yet,
My heart forever is wandering.
Jesus by my guide,
And hold me to Your side,
And I will love you to the end.

Nothing will I fear
As long as You are near;
Please be near me to the end.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.

And a light unto my path.
You're the light unto my path.
Straight ahead.

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

- Focus on the idea of what it means to be a disciple and how disciples learn about God through the Word of God and following Jesus.
- Talk about the characteristics of Jesus and what they can do to be like Jesus.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

Continue reading in Mark 8, add verses 34-38

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Did you know there are costs to discipleship? There are so many benefits to being a learner and follower of Jesus, but when we live out our faith and live as disciples of Christ in the world, there are costs to being a disciple. We live in a world where there is an expectation that you follow culture, have the newest and coolest things, live a certain way and speak a certain way. Being a disciple is living differently and sometimes counter cultural.

Have there been times in your life when you have found it hard to be a disciple or follow Christ? Have you been pressured into doing something that you weren't sure about or knew wasn't right or what God would want you to do? There are so many temptations in our world and just like the disciples, we don't always understand or know what is right or wrong.

The great thing about being a disciple is God loves us no matter what and God forgives us when we do make a mistake or do something wrong. God is a forgiving God, so don't be afraid to come to God in prayer asking God to forgive you or asking God for wisdom or guidance.

Many of Jesus' disciples did suffer and were persecuted, but here these words from Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:6-12

For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle

and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him.

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: John 8:31-32

Reflection: Today, we discover how God has created us to be a disciple. We explore what it means to be a disciple and to live as a disciple, which really means how we live out our faith. As a disciple, we learn from God and we follow Jesus. The great thing about being a disciple is we don't have to change who we are; actually God wants us to be who God created us to be: me (remember this from yesterday?).

The amazing thing about sending your child(ren) to camp is that they are building upon their foundation of faith. They are growing deeper roots and growing into beautiful children of God. As your child(ren) come back from camp, they will be filled with the spirit. As parents, we encourage you to think about ways you can continue to nurture the faith of your child(ren) throughout the year. We can always learn something new about God and from God, which is why it is important to continue in God's word. God's word is the truth and it makes us free as we follow God and live out our faith each and every day as disciples and people of God.

Activity: Take a couple of minutes to reflect on your faith. Who helped you to form your faith? Was there someone who took you or invited you to church? How do you live out your faith? These questions can be hard for some people and may not be something you talk about as a family, but it is so important to think about, talk about and share with your child(ren).

Prayer: Loving God, you sent Jesus to show us the way and teach us about you. Help us to learn from you and your word as we follow you and serve you. Bless us as we help our child(ren) grow in their faith and relationship with you. Thank you for your love and presence in our life, always. Amen.

K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION

- How were you a disciple this week?
- What did you learn about God this past week? Was there anything you struggled with or didn't understand?
- When did you follow God or God's call for you?
- Where did you encounter God this past week?
- How did you love, serve or care for others this past week?

2024 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY
CREATED TO BE
DAY 5: Created To Be....AN AGENT OF CHANGE!

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

I will never forget my first day at a new school, in a new state and city, in the middle of January. My family had just moved from small town Ohio, to HUGE city Oklahoma City. My new middle school was bigger than our old middle school and high school put together! I was nervous. I had been the new kid in the middle of the school year before, but not while in middle school. I was scared. I felt like we had moved to a different country. It was all so different. And I showed up that first day in an outfit that would have totally been “cool” in the school I just came from...but not so much in the school I found myself. I can still feel the pit in my stomach when my home room teacher made me stand up to introduce myself and I realized no one was dressed the way I was. It still catches in my throat yet today.

I spent the rest of my middle school, high school, college and many years beyond trying desperately to “fit in” and always feeling like I never quite made it. I always “knew” that someday, someone would figure out who the real me was and would kick me out. This went on long into my years of youth ministry and even to the beginning of being a pastor. I was always afraid someone would figure me out and go – heck no! She can’t really think she can be a pastor?!?!

It wasn’t until a really good therapist, who challenged me, worked with me, never gave up on me – made me work hard and worked hard alongside me and still does – that I was able to see the paths that led me to where I was. And how to refashion my way of thinking about myself and my place in this world.

Why tell you this story?

Because I believe, looking back, even though I did some great things for Jesus, I couldn’t fully embrace myself or the life Jesus calls me to until I learned to love myself and realize wherever I am Jesus wants me, and wants me to be an agent for change for him. It might not be the exact spot I thought I would be in...but wherever I am – I can share Jesus’ love! I was created to be me. A person who loves to laugh and have a good time, who takes walking with Jesus very seriously, but myself not so much. I am a person who knows what it means to be the “new kid” and have to form friendships again and again and again. I am the daughter, sister, aunt, great aunt who is a confidant for many of my nieces and nephews as well as other family members. I am a pastor who believes fully in the priesthood of all believers and constantly finds ways to place ministry in the hands of those who are as talented or even more so than me in as many areas and ways as I can. Even some that others think are “only for pastors”! I am...an empower-er of others. I am a coach and mentor. I am a friend. I am a leader. And I am an agent of change with Jesus’ love in hand, for myself and in the world I live in.

All this week we have been looking at who each of us is – a loved one, worthy of love as we are; a person called to be really present in the world and in the lives of others, paying attention to the world around us. We have looked at how to be our own unique selves – whatever that is - and a disciple/Jesus-follower now in present times. Today we are going to bring it all home – literally – as we get ready to go down the mountain.

This day is always bittersweet – it’s been a great week in so many ways, and yet, we have to say goodbye. We all know this place called RTALC is amazing and special and it’s hard to believe that something as good as this can also happen down the mountain. But RTALC is actually a training ground for how to live the other 51 weeks of the year. And so, today we focus on what it means to be agents of change in our own lives and in the world outside of RTALC.

Because do not doubt – God longs to use you and your campers to make a different world. In fact, God is planning on it!

So, in Acts 1 we will look at the story of a bunch of guys who didn’t feel ready, didn’t trust in their own abilities, were scared at the thought that Jesus might leave them...so scared when they did see him leave, ascending into the sky, they just stood there looking at the sky. Yet – these are the same people Jesus has just looked at and said – You will be my witnesses – in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth! Just like that day so long ago, Jesus is looking at us and saying – you will be my witnesses.

But how? It seems so daunting. Here at RTALC, a community where the very air you breathe is the love of Jesus...it might seem a whole lot easier. But we don’t stay here. Just like Jesus didn’t stay with his disciples. But just because we can’t stay here – doesn't mean life with Jesus ends – it just becomes different. And we have a role to play in it! So today, we’ll not only look at the call Jesus gives us all, but some of the ways Jesus sets us up to succeed. We’ll look at the truth that Jesus is with us always – no matter what (Matthew 28:20) and the model he sets us for us – we don’t have to go it alone (Luke 9:1-6). As well as the truth that the world will know Jesus followers by our love. (John 13:34-35)

Think about it! If we choose to believe the truths we’ve learned this week, embrace the true reality that God is for us, with us and created us to be who we are...and we find folks to go with us – we can change the world around us! Be brave! Be bold! You can start today and what can you do? That’s what we’ll discover today as we look at what it means to be agents of change. If God can use a misfit kid, an adult who’s convinced she doesn’t belong, a pastor that questions everything about what it means to walk with Jesus today...God can use you!

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY

- Campers will come to understand God longs to use them to be “agents of change” for the good wherever they find themselves.
- Campers will discover actual ways they can be agents of change in their world...they don’t have to wait until “someday”.
- Campers will see that they aren’t meant to live for Jesus all by themselves. They will discover the places they have others who will walk with them – what does it mean to have 1 or 2 to walk with or a whole faith community?!

STAFF: Today, make sure your campers feel empowered to take “camp” down the mountain and they have a plan for doing so!

C. MORNING WATCH

Common Welcome

Welcome to this day.

God of creation. God who created us. We are made in your image.

Help us remember that you take pleasure in your creation...all of your creation...including me.

Help us to do the things we were made to do; to do the things we love to do, what you have created us to do and to be the people we were created to be, filled with your love.

Introduction to the day

Today friends, we are going to look at the truth that Jesus wants us to help share his love with the world. How can we do that now? What happens when we fail? (and at times we will) Will we give up? Or will we find others who can walk with us? What exciting things lay ahead as we become agents of God's love in the world? Today we just may find out!

Why we chose the Passage and Scripture

Today is all about what happens when we leave camp. No one wants to go home, but we all have to eventually! While we love camp, camp is a place we get to practice living as Jesus would have us live. But there is life down the mountain and Jesus calls us into it. Today's text tells us where Jesus wants us to go and to remember that he is always with us - at camp and at home!

*“So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him,
“Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”*

Jesus replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching and they could no longer see him.

As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? “

Acts 1:6-11a New Living Translation

Song

Build Your Kingdom Here, by Rend Collective

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbdJXKqVgtg&ab_channel=RendCollective

Come, set Your rule and reign
In our hearts again
Increase in us we pray
Unveil why we're made

Come, set our hearts ablaze with hope
Like wildfire in our very souls
Holy Spirit come invade us now
We are Your church
We need Your power in us

We seek Your kingdom first
We hunger and we thirst
Refuse to waste our lives
For You're our joy and prize
To see the captive hearts released
The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace
We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause

We are Your church
We pray: revive this earth

Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray

Unleash Your kingdoms power
Reaching the near and far
No force of Hell can stop
Your beauty changing hearts
You made us for much more than this
Awake the kingdom seed in us
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ

We are Your church
We are the hope on earth

Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray

Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear

Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray

Questions for Consideration

- What keeps you from being the person you are at camp, at home?
- Can you believe that God has plans for you to reach people with God's love - even today?
- What makes you say what you do?
- Who are people in your life who can walk with you in your faith journey at home? Think church people, friends, other adults...write their names down here!

Closing prayer

Dear Jesus - I know you love me, but I sometimes have a hard time believing that. I also know you want me to share your love in the world around me. But I also struggle with knowing how to do this. Open my eyes and heart today to hear and see ways I can be an agent of change with your love, in the world! Give me strength and excitement for the journey! AMEN.

D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Consider this your public service announcement 🙏

It's a reality with almost everyone I meet who has been to Rainbow Trail. They LOVE coming here! If this is your first time here - you are in for an amazing summer! If you are returning - you are in for an amazing summer! But I also hear a lot of something to this effect: "Once I leave the mountain, it's just not the same. People aren't the same. My old life is still the same as before. That makes it really hard to live for Jesus.... so I quit trying." And there is truth here - "real life" isn't like camp life - not everyone in the world is going to love you like Jesus loves. Your life down the mountain...the people there haven't had the same experiences that you had/will have this summer. BUT...It's not all bad - it's just different.

And this is the piece we must all remember!

RTLTC is not designed to be a place people come and stay forever. Its very purpose is to train, support, grow, empower us to live lives of following Jesus - no matter where we find ourselves.

It's kind of like this:

Your car was designed for a specific purpose...to get you from place to place. It actually does a really good job of this! But...you also have to stop at times to either fill up your gas tank or charge your battery. Your car will not go forever on one charge, or one tank. And as nice as some gas stations/charging stations are, the point is not to stay there indefinitely. You get a boost - gas/electricity - and then you keep going.

The same is true for camp. It is not meant to be a place we come and just stay at forever. We come, get re-energized, get a spiritual boost and then...we keep going. Those who believe camp is the only place they can follow Jesus and is the only real community are sorely mistaken.

Camp is a jump start to our engines each year. Camp is a recalculating of our path. Camp is meant to train, equip, bless AND SEND us.

Why is this so important to talk about? Because it is our role as faith leaders in the lives of campers to help them see, know and live into this truth. It does not lessen camp any, to remind campers that what we do here is all about how we live “there,” wherever it may be. We have to believe this - or our campers never will!

And I bring it up here - because today it is easy to focus on the stuff in the Bible study that feels all good and warm. That celebrates who we are at camp. It is also easy to kind of “slide through” Friday’s Bible study...to let other things become more important. Please don’t do this! *One of the most important things we can do is equip our campers to go down the mountain!!*

That is what this day is all about!!

Texts for today:

Acts 1:6-11a New Living Translation

*“So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him,
“Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”*

Jesus replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching and they could no longer see him.

As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? “

I love this text! Here we have the disciples - who have hung out with Jesus for 3 years. They have seen him healing, raising the dead, getting snippy with the church people, feeding thousands, walking on water! Not to mention, they have listened to him for all those years - teaching, preaching, having conversation after conversation after conversation. The Messiah has not come to free the Jews from Roman rule! The coming of the Messiah ushers in a new age - one where we aren’t concerned about who’s in power but rather we’re to be concerned with who needs to be loved.

Even after 3 years of almost constantly being in Jesus’ presence...the disciples still don’t get it! They’re talking with Jesus and they ask what seems like a dumb question: Now Jesus? Are you gonna ride triumphantly into Jerusalem and overthrow those pesky Romans...now? And I’m pretty sure Jesus rolled his eyes here! Scripture doesn’t tell us that little detail - but how could he not? Three years he’d been telling them the Messiah was different...not what they thought, and they still didn’t get it!

Why not? Perhaps because they wanted freedom from the Romans SO bad, they couldn’t really imagine a “different” Messiah. Perhaps, they were so scared at the thought of Jesus leaving,

they were grasping at anything to keep him here. We don't really know...what we do know is they didn't want Jesus to leave.

Ever have that kind of experience? Maybe it's been with a teacher or professor you really liked and didn't want their class to end. Maybe it's been a relationship with a beloved grandparent/friend that ended in their death. Maybe it was/is camp and you don't want it to end! We've all been in places, with people, where we don't want what is happening to end. Same with the disciples.

But Jesus had to go. He was never meant to stay on earth forever. His was a limited engagement. And he left his mission - spread God's love - to the disciples and ultimately to us. Why are you standing there looking up in the sky?

Why are you standing there crying at the end of camp?

Why are you not seeking, searching, finding, being the love of Jesus in the world?

Why? Because we, like the disciples, are afraid.

When we find a place, a person, where we feel comfortable and loved - we want to stay. But Jesus tells us - that's not your story. Your story is filled with come, gather, love, be loved...and go. Go out into the world.

And lest they, the disciples, or we miss what it is we're supposed to be doing, here's one of my favorite verses in scripture: Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Wow! That's a life purpose! And we sabotage this purpose in a couple of key ways:

- 1) First we forget to pay attention to the power the Spirit gives us - power to reach certain people, in certain places or circumstances. Power that compels our hearts. Not everyone is compelled the same. Just like there are no cookie cutter people there is also no cookie cutter look to everyone's mission of sharing Jesus' love. Pay attention to the places the Spirit makes your heart break or beat faster. Share God's love there!
- 2) We self sabotage - we let that monkey brain of ours get in the way. We let the self-depreciating loops run amok and then decide we're not good enough, talented enough, enough period...and God could never really use...me. REMEMBER: this week is all about embracing who you are created to be and trusting that God loves you and wants to use your gifts in the kingdom. And don't roll your eyes - yes you have gifts! And yes God gave them to you. And yes - you can use them for the love of God's sake! 😊

So let go of the sabotage and lean into the truth that we gather SO THAT we can go! Go where though? Great question! Here we go...straight out of the text!

- Jerusalem = this was HOME base - what's your home base? That's where you start.
- Judea = AREA - this is where we spend our time - college campus and dorms, school, work, church, hanging with other Jesus followers, Starbucks, the library, sports teams. The next area includes those places where we spend our time.
- Samaria = the place no one wants to go. The Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. This hatred built over hundreds of years (If you want to know more of the story go here: <https://bible.org/illustration/hatred-between-jews-and-samaritans>. But no self-respecting

Jew would go into Samaria. They would literally add days of travel to a trip just so they could go around Samaria.

But lest we think “Samaria” is some small village in Africa or on an island in the Bering strait, remember this: Samaritans and Jews come from the same ancestors. So the “place or people we don’t want to go to” could easily be the neighbor with a different skin color, the young person struggling with gender identity, the student that is always made fun of, the family member we’re in a fight with, etc. Our Samaria’s aren’t that far away at times!

- Ends of the earth - OK - this is like saying - and every place else I didn’t already cover! The ends of the earth - until all people know the love of Jesus for them - our work is not done. Ever,

*Rainbow Trail exists to create holy spaces that embody God’s radical grace to **affirm**, **empower**, and **transform** all people to be Christ’s light in the world.*

If you haven’t already encountered RTALC’s mission statement here it is. At the very core of who we are - we are empower-ers that equip and send campers back into the world to share the light of Christ. That is why this whole amazing place exists! So today especially, we will do just that!

Here are a couple more texts we will use today - a promise and a challenge to go with the call.

Matthew 28:20 New Living Translation

“And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Jesus says this to his followers just as he is leaving. In the book of Matthew the very last thing Jesus says is: GO! and make disciples! Go! And Jesus knowing how scared the disciples were to carry this whole thing on without Jesus present with them..gives them this reminder:

Remember I am going with you! There is no place you can go, no place too dark, deep, ugly, unfriendly you can go that I am not there with you. There is no place happy, ecstatic, joy-filled, promising you can go that I am not there with you. Jesus is with us always! Whether it feels like it or not in a particular moment - it is truth.

We need to embrace this truth. Our campers need to know this truth. Jesus is with them - always and forever, no matter what! Right? Right!

John 13:34-35 New Revised Standard Edition Revised

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Here, Jesus is sitting at the table of the Last Supper with the disciples. He has already washed their feet, setting a pretty darn good example of what it means to serve others. Judas has already left to betray Jesus, and Jesus turns and looks at the gathered group and tells them he is going away and they cannot go where he is going. But he’s giving them this new command - love one another. Boom! Not a whole list of dos and don’ts...but a simple command - love each other.

Our world does not do this very well AT ALL! Love is so often conditional. What is marketed as love is a cheap imitation. The “love” we see on social media is often so filtered, nothing like it really exists. “I love you” has become a catch phrase you’re supposed to say to someone you like or want something out of. But that love can be broken in a moment’s notice... Or on a Tik Tok video or Instagram post. This, my friends, is not love. I don’t care how many influencers, movies, snapchats, Tik Toks, Instagram posts say that it is... it is not.

When Jesus looks at his disciples and says love how I have loved you...that’s the standard. How did Jesus love? He included those on the outside (Samaritan woman at the well, those with leprosy, Gentiles, etc.) Those technically on the inside but who lived in fear or as “less than” (woman caught in adultery, woman who bled for years, Bartemaeus who had been born blind, etc). Jesus loved in ways that truly believed in others...trusted others...grew others. Love for Jesus isn’t just a word to toss around - it is a verb to be lived.

We often think that kind of love has to be spectacular and truly outstanding. But what about the wedding feast where Jesus made the equivalent of 960 bottles of really good wine so the homeowner wouldn’t be embarrassed? OK - that could be seen as amazing to us - but the people in the story never knew it was Jesus. Or when Jesus pulls a little child into the midst of a bunch of adults to make his point this one here - is important.

Jesus always had an eye out to find ways to include, welcome and love. And so then should we.

This is what it means to love like Jesus loves us. This is why we come to RTLK to experience even a smidgen of that love for ourselves SO THAT we can go out and share his love with others.

It’s not complicated but it’s also not easy. This is why we spend time today helping campers discover who in their lives might walk with them. For we are all braver if even one person is with us, right? Let’s spend this day continuing to fill the campers with purpose. A purpose of love.

I have a book in my office entitled “Do Hard Things” (find it here: <https://amzn.to/48tmpwS>) This book challenges the idea that teens simply want no responsibility and really don’t care for anyone beyond themselves. Written by a pair of brothers, teens themselves at the time they wrote it, this book’s premise is that most youth actually want to do hard things. They want to be challenged. They want to rise to the occasion. Today it’s our job to plant in them the vision for what it can look like to do hard things - good things - to share Jesus’ love with others. Just imagine...the seeds we plant today might change the way the world functions some day! It is a high and holy calling - one we are all a part of! Let’s do this!

ACTUAL STUDY:

It’s Friday! Can you believe it? It is wild how fast the week can go at camp! But this last day is just as important as the first! Here is where we get to commission and send our campers into the world as Agents of Change! This isn’t something to be afraid of...it is our purpose in life - to love as Jesus loves. Let’s set these young ones free to help create a new world around them - at home, where they spend their time, where they don’t want to go and to the ends of the earth!

Just Getting Started -Secret Messages

Items needed: secret message sheets and writing utensils

Give each camper a secret message page (see addendums 1(elem) 2(middle school) 3(highschool))

Tell them their job is to figure out the secret message. Hand out the appropriate secret message sheet and go over the instructions on the sheet:

Each letter in the phrase has been replaced with a random letter or number. Try to decode the message.

Give campers a few minutes to try and figure out the message on their own. If they are struggling, let it become a group effort. If they are really struggling, feel free to occasionally give them a letter! If they manage to get the message done pretty quick, there is a second message for each day (addendums 4, 5, 6)

Once the message(s) has been decoded - ask the group what they think this means. There is no one "right" answer...so let them express themselves.

The answers to the decoded messages are:

Elementary: I want to change the world AND I want to love like Jesus loves me

Middle School: The world needs me to be myself AND I want to love those around me like Jesus loves me *(on this 2nd message the coding has been done as an Atbash Cipher. An Atbash cipher is replacing letters in English with other letters. The letters got reversed, so that the first letter becomes the last letter(a=z), the second letter becomes the second to last letter(b=y), and so on.)*

High School: There is no one like me. I have a unique place in this world. AND Jesus wants me to help change the world around me for the better *(on the 1st message the coding has been done as an Atbash Cipher. An Atbash cipher is replacing letters in English with other letters. The letters got reversed, so that the first letter becomes the last letter(a=z), the second letter becomes the second to last letter(b=y), and so on.)*

(The 2nd message is a Caesar cipher - where like the Atbash cipher one replaces English letters with other letters. In a Caesar cipher the letters are shifted a certain number - for example if the letters are shifted 3...A=C. In this cipher the letters have shifted 5 to the right).

Ask your campers things like:

- What do you think of the messages? Do you believe them to be true?
- What if loving others like Jesus is like a secret message. What would that look like?
- Have you ever wanted to be a secret agent? What do you think they do?

Going Deeper**Items needed: THIS IS ME worksheet (from Wednesday's study)**

Have your campers take out their **THIS IS ME worksheet**

Go around and as campers are willing - have them say: My name is _____ and I...

then read out loud the things they wrote about themselves and that were written about them. After each person has had a chance to read their sheet - give them snaps!

Another Idea

- Eye tag
 - Look down, then look up, if you make eye contact describe the gifts you see in the person you're looking at

Then say something like this:

You are a pretty amazing group of people! AS well as amazing individuals! Look at all the ways God has gifted you! And you know what? God gave you those gifts/talents/abilities - partly to help you be you, but also partly to help take his love into the world.

Tomorrow we go home. How is everyone feeling about that? (leave time for answers)
Yeah, I'm kind of sad too or yeah I'm so excited you're going home too! 😊

What has you feeling the way you are? What are you going to miss? What are you looking forward to? (leave time for answers)

So all week we have been looking at who we are and whose we are. We have been practicing grounding ourselves and choosing to believe God has plans for our lives...including following God. And we also know going down the mountain is hard. BUT...being here at camp is really a *training ground for how God wants us to live in the world*. I know... "home" isn't like camp. But that doesn't mean we can't be "like camp" at home. What do I mean?

Let's read a story about the guys who were closest to Jesus. See what they felt and what Jesus told them when he had to leave. Turn to Acts chapter 1. Acts is in the New Testament, the fifth book - after Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
(Once everyone is there...) let's look at verses 6-11a - that means just the first part of verse 11. We'll stop with "why are you standing looking up into heaven?".

Would someone like to read? Or you can go around having a different person reading each sentence;

Acts 1:6-11a

Ask things like:

- What did the disciples want Jesus to do? (save them from the Romans)
- What did the men in white ask? (why are you staring at the sky?)
- What did Jesus tell them? (it's not their business to know the date and time and you will be my witnesses)
- Do you ever feel like the disciples? Unsure what to do? Or even how to follow Jesus?

Today we're gonna explore some answers to these questions!

Mimic

Have everyone put down anything in their hands (have them mark Acts 1 as you'll come back to it) and make a circle - spread it out a bit. Have one person walk a little ways off with their back to the group. Once they are gone, choose the person to be the leader. The leader's job is to start doing a motion of some sort that everyone in the circle follows. Every so often the leader changes the motion and everyone follows. The trick is that everyone looks straight ahead - not necessarily at the leader - so they change motions when they see the person across from them change. Once the group is going, bring the person outside the group into the middle. Their job is to figure out who the leader is in 3 guesses or less. If they guess right they are able to trade

out with the person who is the leader and the “leader” is now the person outside the group. A variation of this is that you simply let each camper have a turn at being the chooser!

Change Agents for Jesus

Items needed: Concentric circles sheet, something to write with

Have everyone settle back in and say something like this:

So Jesus wants us to mimic him...by sharing his love in the world. But that’s not always easy. People are mean. We have unreal expectations of ourselves. Parents don’t always understand and on and on. But being a secret or change agent for God is a beautiful thing. It’s like we’re looking for times and ways to share Jesus’ love even when people don’t know that’s what’s happening.

Imagine seeing someone who’s having a really bad day - how could you be a change agent of God’s love?

Imagine you run into someone you don’t like and knock what’s in their hands to the floor. What could you do that would change the situation for good?

Think of the different places you spend your time...

Go back to Acts 1 again really quick. Look at the verses - where does Jesus tell his disciples they are gonna go be his witnesses? (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth)

So to help us see how we can be change agents for Jesus in the world - we’re going to think about these areas in our own lives. Pass out the Concentric circles sheets. (addendum 7).

Ask campers what the circles are labeled. (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth). Now have them put an equals sign after each label and add the following titles: (talk about the titles as they add them)

Jerusalem = home

Judea = where I spend a lot of my time (school, sports, clubs, groups, dance, etc.)

Samaria = the people I don’t want to be kind to

Ends of the earth = everywhere else

Now have them put at least one name of a person in each of those circles - or for instance the last one - maybe it’s a people group - i.e. the homeless, the hungry, etc.

Looking at their **THIS IS ME worksheet** again - ask them - using the things you’re good at - how might you be an agent of change for the good in the people’s lives you wrote down? Write in the circle what you could do.

When everyone has had a chance to finish - say something like:

- Often we think it’s too hard to follow Jesus and shine his love into the world because we think it always has to be something grand or amazing. But the little things add up. If you’re always fighting with your mom and you put her down - what might happen if you went home and told her you were going to work hard at trying to understand her viewpoint as well. Or even better - just start doing nice things for your mom - pick up your room. Put your dirty laundry where it belongs. Help clean up the table without being told to do so. If you’re an artist - make her something. If you’re a musician write her a song... or practice without being asked to!

- You don't have to change the whole world in order to be a change agent in the world. This is one of the greatest things Jesus calls us to do! Listen... Read John 13:34-35
- The world will know we love Jesus by our love of others. Jesus is pretty clear with that!
- So let's be people who are agents of change using love as the way we do it.
- Then ask - what might get in the way of us being change agents at home? (Let campers list whatever they find challenging at home... or the self-talk they do to convince themselves they can't really make a difference.)
- Say something like: It can be hard. And we can count ourselves out - or we let others cancel us out. But Jesus says - nope. You're mine and I want you. I want you for you and I want you to share my love. And when it gets hard remember this: (this is what Jesus told his disciples before he left them) Matthew 28:20: I am with you always - to the very ends of the earth.
- This means Jesus is ALWAYS with us no matter what. And when we feel weak he can be our strength. When we are afraid, Jesus can be our courage. When we mess up - Jesus is our forgiveness and the one who picks us back up.
- AND... Jesus puts others in our lives to walk with us. ASK: How many of you feel braver if even one person is with you? Yeah most of us do, right? So think about those at home... who could be there for you? To walk with you? (Have them think about pastors, youth directors, adults they know, family members - aunts, uncles, cousins, best friends, people at church, etc.) When everyone has a list then go on.

Closing:

Items needed: little vial of oil (can be olive oil and doesn't have to be much) and your RTLC Key Chains

Created To Be Key Chains: Be sure that you picked up your Created To Be Key Chains at the office before your Bible study. Give one to each camper (and one for yourself). Say, "this key chain is to be a daily reminder to you that you are Created to Be an agent of change in our world! To be one who reflects God's love to all who you meet. Attach this to your school pack, to your own key chain, or anything that is with you everyday so you see it and remember your calling to be a follower of Jesus!

Tell your campers you are going to close today by commissioning each of them to be change agents for Jesus. How we're going to do that:

We're gonna stand in a circle and we're going to commission each other. So the first person (say their name) is going to turn to the 2nd person and say these words (feed the sentences to your campers a bit at a time):

NAME, you are God's own child - deeply loved just as you are. I am sending you from camp out into the world - not knowing where you go, but knowing Jesus goes with you. Be strong and courageous. For Jesus is with you always and forever no matter what. I send you now in the name of the Creator, the Savior and the Spirit Amen.

Then have that camper make the sign of the cross on their person's forehead with the oil and give them their keychain.

When that person is ready they turn to the next person and do for that person what was done for them,

Closing Prayer

After everyone has been commissioned (including you) - pray something like this:

Jesus, we thank you that you love us and want to use us as change agents in the world where we find ourselves. Give us courage and strength...know we never go alone, but that you are always with us, before us and behind us. Give us joy in being agents of change with your love. And all God's children say... AMEN.

E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

If things aren't going well - if you have a really active group - movement is always good. So if you can't talk about taking the love of Jesus into the world - do it! Have your group brainstorm some ways they could be agents of God's love at camp right now/today. Make a plan and go do it! Could include things like:

- Find any of the full time staff and run up to them - thanking them for all the hard work they do!
- Go to the door of the kitchen and get Chris to come to the door while your group sings a song for her.
- Make cards for support staff - recognizing the less than desirable things they "get" to do - and thanking them for being willing to do these things!
- Find a cabin and go in when no one is there to leave notes of encouragement like: God is crazy about you! God made you unique! etc on each pillow.

More advanced:

- talk about what it means to "change the world" or be agents of change. Have the group make up specific definitions for both. Then have them look at how they might be catalysts in their worlds starting with Jesus' love.
- Have campers speak about the very real barriers they face at home - when trying to take camp down the mountain. Don't try to fix everything... but acknowledge their struggle is real. Then help them identify some people at home that could support them - when everyone has at least one name - pray over those names for them to have willing hearts in order to be able to walk with these individuals.

F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Secret Agent Day or Mission Impossible/Possible day

- Things are done in code all day long with each cabin/village getting a decoder or having to find a decoder to figure out what the messages are.
- Morning worship could be about "Your mission if you choose to accept it...." - where the whole camp is challenged to acts of random kindness all day - but you can't get caught doing them!
- All camp could be about having to do stuff in secret - without getting caught - capture the flag maybe, or random things to do but they can't get caught or they have to start all over.

- Evening worship could be a recap of some of the things people did all day - sharing stories of kindness.

Men in Black Day

- Could use a lot of the same things as Secret Agent Day.
- Focus all camp around saving the world from aliens - again Capture the Flag could work into this story line as well.
- Could use the decoders they've been using all day for all camp - each group has to figure out some clues of what they're supposed to do and then they have to go do them. Each task has someone that has to sign off on its completion - they sign the "name" in code and part of what each team has to figure out is their code name!

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

Songs:

- They'll Know We are Christians by Our Love #29
- Isaiah 43 #43
- Here I Am Lord #23
- Be Bold #40
- Light the Fire #49
- History Maker #67
- Set a Fire #95

Additional Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-3

*But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

Isaiah 6:6-8

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph^[b] touched my mouth with it and said, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Other songs:

- If You Say Go: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jG-OOjJiRYo&ab_channel=WorshipLyrics
If You say "go" we will go

If You say "wait" we will wait
If You say "step out on the water"
And they say it can't be done
We'll fix our eyes on You and we will come

If You say "go" we will go
If You say "wait" we will wait
If You say "step out on the water"
And they say it can't be done
We'll fix our eyes on You and we will come

Your ways are higher than our ways
And the plans that You have laid
Are good and true
If You call us to the fire
You will not withdraw Your hand
We'll gaze into the flames and look for You

Oh, If You say "go" we will go
If You say "wait" we will wait
If You say "step out on the water"
And they say it can't be done
We'll fix our eyes on You and we will come

We Could Change the World:

- <https://genius.com/Matt-redman-we-could-change-the-world-lyrics>

Books that might help:

- Do Hard Things by Alex Harris and Bret Harris
- https://www.amazon.com/s?k=do+Hard+things&crd=240XDYNC44DYD&spre fix=do+hard+thing%2Caps%2C259&ref=nb_sb_noss_2

Stories about kids Changing the World:

- <https://www.rd.com/list/kids-who-changed-the-world-in-the-last-decade/>
- *Important to remind our campers that they don't have to do something huge in order to change the world!*
- **Jahkil Jackson** - After distributing food to the homeless with his aunt, young Jahkil Jackson from the South Side of Chicago established [Project I Am](#) to give out “Blessing Bags,” which contain essentials like soap, toothbrushes, and socks, to the homeless—all at the tender age of 8 years old. Now 12, Jackson’s group has helped over 35,000 people in need around the world. Also a motivational speaker and youth ambassador for several other organizations, Jackson strives to get young people involved in their communities on a local and global level.
- **Ryan Hickman** - When he was just 3 years old, Ryan Hickman was inspired to collect recycling in his neighborhood after visiting a recycling plant in California. With the help of his parents, he founded [Ryan’s Recycling Company](#)

in 2012 to help his efforts to keep plastic out of the ocean. According to his company's website, the now 10-year-old has recycled 809,000 cans and bottles and has donated over \$10,000 to the Pacific Marine Mammal Center. He's also saving the proceeds from his efforts to pay for college. Hickman recently visited Washington to promote a **standardized labeling system** to help eliminate recycling contamination in trash bins.

- **Marley Dias** - For many people of color, particularly girls, it's frustrating not to see themselves represented in the books they read. That's exactly how 11-year-old Marley Dias felt about the books she was assigned in school. But she didn't just want to find black female protagonists for her own reading—she wanted all black girls to have access to those stories as well. So in November 2015, she launched the campaign [#1000BlackGirlBooks](#) to collect and donate 1,000 books featuring black girls—and so far, she's collected over 13,000 books. In 2018 at age 13, Dias published her own inspirational children's book, *Marley Dias Gets It Done—And So Can You*.
- **Melati and Isabel Wijsen** - These Indonesian sisters are on a mission to stop plastic bags from ending up in the ocean off their island of Bali. Indonesia is one of the world's biggest polluters of marine plastic, so in 2013, the then 10 and 12-year-olds decided to do something about it after being inspired by a lesson in school on influential leaders like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi. They started a petition to get the government to take action on the plastic issue, organized beach cleanups— and even decided to go on a hunger strike as Gandhi did. That last action, publicized on social media, scored them a meeting with the governor. After years of working with local and international leaders, including speaking at the United Nations, the sisters made major progress when the Balinese government announced a **law banning** single-use plastic in 2019. The Wijsen sisters' organization, [Bye Bye Plastic Bags](#), also helps kids around the world start anti-plastic initiatives in their own communities.
- **Jaylen Arnold** - With Tourette's syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Asperger's syndrome, Jaylen Arnold always knew he was different. But when he was bullied at school for it, the then 8-year-old decided to take action on behalf of other bullied kids. He started a website for his classmates with the message, "Bullying No Way," and the project immediately grew in leaps and bounds. The [Jaylens Challenge Foundation](#) now runs programs that teach kids how to recognize bullying and how to appreciate kids who are different. Arnold's foundation is internationally recognized—he even was presented with The Diana Award for philanthropy by Princes William and Harry, the only American to have received the honor, in 2017 at the age of 16.
- **Amariyanna "Mari" Copeny**- After a change in the water supply of Flint, Michigan, led to residents becoming sick and dying, something had to be done. Amazingly, then 8-year-old Mari Copeny drew the federal government's attention to the water crisis with a letter to President Obama in 2016. When the president visited Flint after reading her letter, the spunky kid donned her beauty pageant sash for the meeting, earning her the nickname "Little Miss Flint." The visit resulted in federal aid to help the crisis—but **Copeny's advocacy** didn't end there. She went on to fundraise over \$500,000 for Flint and helped her

community first by handing out bottled water and then more environmentally-friendly water filters. She's also become involved with aiding underserved children and organizing community events. Her next goal? To run for president herself.

- **Amika George** - When U.K. teen Amika George read an article from the BBC about "period poverty," which occurs when girls have to miss school because they can't afford sanitary products, she decided to take action. George started the petition [FreePeriods.org](https://www.freeperiods.org/) in 2017, which gained thousands of signatures in a short amount of time. Two years later, the British government announced that starting January 20, 2020, children and young women would be able to access free sanitary products in schools and colleges in England. But George hasn't stopped campaigning to normalize periods and keep girls in school with accessible sanitary products: Now 19, she's tackling period poverty globally as well.

H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

Early juniors might have a harder time "seeing gifts in others" but they know what they like about others. So you could use that language when talking about their gifts and talents.

Changing the world can be an awfully big concern for a junior so use more language around how they can change the world at home or school. Be a little more contained in the places they can change.

It is hard for youngsters to sit still for a long time - so don't be afraid to move your Bible study around. Pick and choose the quieter activities and make sure you do plenty of moving!

This age loves the idea of being secret agents and breaking codes - so use that to your advantage! You can create some of your own codes to help them grab hold of the Bible concepts.

I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

Back to the idea that most teens love to be challenged to do things that make a difference. So challenge them!

- Have them be very specific about how to make changes in their world after camp.
- Have them identify 1-2 specific people at home that they would be willing to work on being an agent of change for good in those folks' lives. Help them come up with a plan.
- Talk to them more about finding a faith community at home - not just being someone who maybe shows up, but someone who helps drive what the youth group does and how it functions!

J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL

Scripture: Acts 1:8

Reflection: Camp at RTLTC is awesome! And many of you already know your camper(s) love going. The hard part is coming home to a world that has not changed even if they have. Same friends, same struggles, same situations they found themselves in before. It can become very easy for your camper to believe what happens at camp can ONLY happen at camp. And that also turns into the person they are at camp they can only be when they're at camp. This week we have fed into them how amazing they are - created to be themselves! And God's love for them is always and forever - no matter what! We have ended the week with the challenge for campers to truly take camp down the mountain and be agents of change in their worlds. This can be exciting and fun! By looking at Acts 1 they have learned that Jesus calls us all to be witnesses of God's love in Jerusalem - our homes, Judea - the places we spend a lot of time - think school, dance, sports teams, etc. Samaria - the place or people we don't want to be nice to. And the ends of the earth - pretty much covers everything else!

Activity: We've talked about specific ways your camper can live this out - they have a plan. But they need your help and support. Help them find relationships that will encourage them - a faith family that will walk with them and maybe... even let them teach you the challenge - and you do it too! Letting them know how you are doing - because well, we ALL are called to be witnesses of God's love - change agents in our world!

Prayer: Gracious God, I give you thanks for how you created my child(ren). They are unique and loveable each in their own way. Help me celebrate who they are and walk with them in this journey of faith. Help me let them challenge me to grow in my own faith as well! Amen!

K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION

This day's part of the study is all about being intentional agents of change in the world around us. Each week - pick 1-2 campers and 1 staff member to intentionally love in ways that are important to them. Or even try being a "secret agent" and intentionally love them without them knowing! See what happens!