



# GET CROSS FIT

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." **Matthew 16:24**

## 2025 Bible Study





# **CROSS+FIT**

We are very grateful to the following individuals for their work in writing the  
2025 Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp Bible study.

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# 2025 CROSS+FIT

In my younger days, I was a marathon runner. I know you look at this body and wonder how that was even possible. But several of my summer staff got me running during the summer of 2000, and by the end of the summer, we were signed up to run the Chicago marathon in October. I was 43 years old, and was not really built to be a runner. But I followed a rigorous 16 week training program and what seemed impossible soon became very doable. I finished that marathon crossing the finish line, arms raised with four of my summer staff and it inspired me to run six more marathons as well as over a dozen half marathons over the next ten years. The trick was **all** in the **training**. It was intentional. It was work. Similarly, in strengthening our faith for the long run, we also need to be deliberate and intentional as we seek to follow God's will for our lives.

We wanted to create a Bible study that was less cerebral and more hands-on, and easy for campers to implement into their everyday life. So we chose Cross+Fit. The CrossFit world has four key elements: discipline, community, overcoming plateaus, and transformation. These four elements parallel closely to our spiritual journey as well. The tools we will gain and the understanding of what we have to offer will allow us to "take up our cross and follow him."

1. **CROSS+FIT: TRANSFORMATION** Through the power of Jesus Christ, we are invited to change how we interact with people and the world around us, and when we do, then we will be transformed.
2. **CROSS+FIT: PRACTICE, PRACTICE!** Much like His disciples, Jesus calls us to live our faith, and one of those ways to actually practice our faith. We can be transformed by finding ways to grow in our faith practices by trying new things and strengthening our faith journey.
3. **CROSS+FIT: HITTING PLATEAUS** Even in our spiritual journeys, we hit plateaus where we don't feel like we are progressing or growing. What can we do to move forward? Who are the people who help us move off the mark and start growing in our faith again?
4. **CROSS+FIT: COMMUNITY** A faith community is a critical part of the faith journey. This is not just a group of friends but rather a group of people in which we actively participate that will encourage, support and even challenge us to continue to grow in faith.
5. **CROSS+FIT: EQUIPPED!!** As we have been transformed this week, we identify the tools we are equipped to take down the mountain to serve Christ in the world. What are the communities that we can connect with so we are supported and held accountable as we practice our faith, overcome plateaus, and live transformed to change the world.

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

I am very excited about this study. It is a very hands-on study, and 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 can be transformed to Christ's love and presence in the world throughout their day. If this happens, they will transform the lives of others, and change our world. 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**



**2025 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY**  
**CROSS+FIT**  
**DAY 1: CROSS+FIT: TRANSFORMATION**

**A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME**

I have long struggled with body image. When I look back on pictures from high school and college when I thought I was “fat” and see what my body really looked like – I wonder now – how could I have ever thought I was fat?!? As I grew older, I took on a defensive stance around my body – people should love me for who I am, not what I look like! Which I still believe to be true, but I also understand I used/use this as a protection for myself against fear and failure. See, what complicates this more for me, is that I have an “all or nothing” mindset deeply embedded in me. If I can’t do it all right – then I don’t want to do it. Or if I can’t be assured of an outcome – like weight loss – then I won’t do anything. Do you see the catch 22 I put myself in? Because I can’t do it all, I don’t do it at all – which keeps me in this forever loop of being stuck where I am.

The same was true for my faith for many years. I grew up in a home where I was blessed with parents who love Jesus and made sure I knew Jesus loves me from the beginning. We went to church, we had family devotions before bed, we served as a family...the core of my life is firmly standing on Jesus’ love for me. But as I grew older, I also picked up some other messages. There were “right and wrong” ways to follow Jesus. And the right way included having a quiet time every morning where I read the Bible and journaled about what I read. The right way included memorizing scripture to bury God’s Word in my heart. (BTW, I suck at memorization!) The right way included praying a certain amount of time each day – and making sure to pray specifically for others. My faith became a task list I had to check off. And I began feeling like I was failing at this following Jesus thing. I had thoughts that I can’t do this – why in the world would I think I could be a pastor?!?! I’m not faithful enough, I’m not good enough, I don’t sound theologically deep enough...and on and on. A loop that kept playing over and over – a forever loop of being stuck where I was. Until...

One day, not that long ago, while I was wrestling with all this, I remembered a moment in time years before, when sitting in an empty church after Good Friday services, I heard an audible voice say to me: “It all means nothing if I don’t have your heart”. After looking around and realizing there was absolutely no one with me – I understood the voice to be the voice of Jesus. And in that moment, years later, I finally began to understand what my faith journey could be. I asked myself...what connects my heart to the heart of God? That was easy – music, first and foremost. Then working with people of all ages helping them have a real faith that stands the tests of real life. Spending time with scripture – not to have to memorize, but to let it dwell in my soul. These things bring me life and connect me to the heart of God. Why then, I asked myself, do I not spend more time doing those things?

I immediately gave up trying to do quiet time in the mornings (I am NOT a morning person!) and changed my whole perspective around how to do my faith journey “right”. Now instead of fighting to feel like I’m “succeeding,” I rest in the arms of my God, and I enjoy my time in God's presence, if I strive at anything, I strive to understand Jesus’ love for me and desire to use me where I am, how I am. I surround myself with people who will challenge me and support

me. These people, “my people” love me, will pick me up when I need it and encourage me when I find myself wandering or stuck. In the process, my heart has been transformed – and in that transformation, my life is transformed. I follow Jesus into the world not because I have to, but because I get to. I long to align my heart with Jesus’ and see the world and the people in it the way he does. This changes me – again and again. This transforms me. Not all at once and not without setbacks, stumblings, and mistakes. But my life still continues to transform.

This then, is the invitation for this week. To invite ourselves and campers into believing we can, in and through the power of Jesus’ love, change how we interact with the world around us and when we do, with Jesus as our guide, the rock-solid ground we stand on, then we can be transformed.

*And in this, know that transformation TAKES TIME, and we need resources or tools to help us. Every single one of us needs help and encouragement along this lifelong journey!*

CrossFit has had an explosive impact on many people around the world, wanting to be more fit and healthy and it has transformed the way many think about life and body transformation. Its basic pillars of commitment, community, overcoming plateaus and reward (transformation) set it up to be a place and method of huge life impact. One CrossFit coach says it this way: CrossFit is the tool I use to help my community to be healthier. It’s not just about the fitness, it’s about everything that influences a person – the way we talk with each other, the way we keep working hard through a long effort, and the way we miss people that have not come to the gym for a while. CrossFit is so much more than just a method of training. We have saved lives and built lifetime bonds.” Sergio Landim, Vila CrossFit Head Coach for 5 years.

This summer we are going to take the model of CrossFit for the body and utilize it to help us understand what Cross+Fit for the soul or spiritual transformation can be like and how we each get to choose to participate in our own transformation process.

Each day we will look at one of the pillars of transformation and how those pillars’ tools can help us as individuals. Campers (and yes, you staff as well) will be able to craft plans for how to not just consume camp culture while here, but actually let camp change them/you and the ways we think...and then empower us all with a plan as we all eventually go down the mountain. This week’s Bible study will gift ourselves and our campers with some of the very necessary tools and mindsets that can help each of us put ourselves in places and spaces where God can transform our lives. This is not a study that just talks about things – but one which will equip us all to take “camp down the mountain” and live lives of transforming love and purpose.

“Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

<sup>34</sup>For who can know the Lord’s thoughts?  
Who knows enough to give him advice?

<sup>35</sup>And who has given him so much  
that he needs to pay it back?

<sup>36</sup>For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory.  
All glory to him forever! Amen.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This

is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

*Romans 11:33-12:2*

## **B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY**

- Campers will come to understand what life transformation actually means and what it takes
- Campers will discover how to open themselves up to the possibility of their own transformation
- Campers will begin to see their faith journey as something they choose, not consume

## **C. MORNING WATCH**

### **Common Welcome**

Good morning! Welcome to a brand-new day at camp, where we gather as a community in Christ to grow, learn, and be transformed by God's love. Today, we invite you to see how God is working in your life and in the world around you. Together, we'll explore what it means to live boldly in faith, share the good news of Jesus, and care for creation and one another as God calls us. Let's start this day with joy, curiosity, and a spirit ready for transformation.

### **Introduction to the Day**

Welcome to Rainbow Trail! Today we get started by considering the idea that God wants to transform our lives from what they are into something better! Jesus longs for us to become more and more like him. Is this possible? Would you allow it this week? Take a risk and see! But be careful – God might just go to work in you and with you!

### **Why we chose the Passage and Scripture**

Today's scripture is a call to each of us to remember that God is amazing and can do amazing things – in us! There is a call to not conform to the world, but look to Jesus for who and how to be. If we do – it can literally change our lives!

*Romans 12:1-2: And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

### **Song: "Made For More" by Josh Baldwin**

I know who I am 'cause I know who You are  
The cross of salvation was only the start  
Now I am chosen, free and forgiven  
I have a future and it's worth the living

'Cause I wasn't made to be tending a grave  
I was called by name  
Born and raised back to life again  
I was made for more  
So why would I make a bed in my shame  
When a fountain of grace is running my way  
I know I am Yours  
And I was made for more

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Oh hallelujah  
You called out my name  
So I'll sing out Your praise  
Hallelujah  
You buried my past  
And I'm not going back

'Cause I wasn't made to be tending a grave  
I was called by name  
Born and raised back to life again  
I was made for more  
So why would I make a bed in my shame  
When a fountain of grace is running my way  
I know I am Yours  
And I was made for more

### **Questions for Consideration**

- What are some things about you, you wish were different?
- What are some things about you that you like?
- Have you ever thought about Jesus changing your life? Helping you become more like him? Take a few moments to think about that. How does that make you feel? What do you think?
- If Jesus could help change anything in you or about you – what would you have him change?

## **Closing Prayer**

Hi Jesus – I don't know if you really can change me, but I want to believe you can. Help me this week to be open to you moving in my life, teaching me, showing me, challenging me to be willing to change for your sake and for mine. I'm going to choose to trust you today and trust what I learn and hear and experience is true. Help me, Jesus. Amen.

## **D. SCRIPTURE STUDY**

The book of Romans is a powerful collection of the Apostle Paul's theological understandings and his calling on Jesus followers to actually live out their faith. His words, his wisdom and his call are still very appropriate for us today. The section of Romans we are focused on today is a "bridge" section – connecting Paul's reflections on God's mystery and power with the call to live out the Gospel.

Romans 11:33-36

*Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!*

<sup>34</sup> *For who can know the Lord's thoughts?*

*Who knows enough to give him advice?*

<sup>35</sup> *And who has given him so much*

*that he needs to pay it back?*

<sup>36</sup> *For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.*

This is a moment of awe and worship. Paul is overwhelmed by the mysteries and wisdom of God and God's ways which are beyond our comprehension. It is an acknowledgement that with God there are things we will not understand, ways we can't figure out. And that's the reality of God – a beautiful and powerful mystery to which we belong and for whose glory we exist. Paul's use of this imagery, these truths, sets us up to remember that the way we live out our lives and faith are never for our own personal gain, but always about honoring and reflecting God's greatness.

I encourage you to sit with these verses a bit. Let them be a doxology – a song or expression of praise to God. Sit in the mystery that is God. Let God's power and majesty fill your heart. Don't worry about understanding it all, or being able to explain it all. Sometimes, the best "answer" we have is that God is not fully understandable. That God is more – more than we can explain, more than we can understand, just...more!

Once you have done that – then realize these verses are important to set the context for the next verses. Romans 12:1 starts out: "And so" or "Therefore" (depending on your translation) – which is a clue to us that the verses to come are connected to the verses behind. Paul is setting out for us this amazing God we have and all that is ours in God, and then comes our response.

Romans 12: 1-2

*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God*

*transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

And so...

Paul now connects the reflection on God's wisdom, mercy and power, the mysteries of God with how we then respond with our lives. In light of God's mercy, there is a response called from us. Not as a way of earning this mercy or power of God's, but in response to it in our lives.

Give your bodies to God...let them be a living sacrifice

The concept of living sacrifice is deeply significant here. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were always killed. But Paul is calling followers of Jesus to present ourselves to God not as dead sacrifices but as living ones. Our lives are to be an ongoing act of worship to God – helping us understand worship is so much more than simply attending church on Sunday. Worship is actually the surrender of one's life to God.

To help you and campers understand this idea of “Living sacrifice” and one that is “acceptable” we'll look at a couple of Old Testament texts that talk about this very thing:

*Micah 6:6-8*

*What can we bring to the Lord?*

*Should we bring him burnt offerings?*

*Should we bow before God Most High  
with offerings of yearling calves?*

*<sup>7</sup>Should we offer him thousands of rams  
and ten thousand rivers of olive oil?*

*Should we sacrifice our firstborn children  
to pay for our sins?*

*<sup>8</sup>No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,  
and this is what he requires of you:*

*to do what is right, to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with your God.*

The prophet Micah is trying to help the people of his day understand that it's not the act of giving burnt offerings, or rivers of oil or even the ridiculous notion of sacrificing their children (*which was done often in Micah's time – child sacrifices were common among the followers of Molech/Molek. Idols of the god were giant metal statues of a man with a bull's head. Each idol had a hole in the abdomen and possibly outstretched forearms that made a kind of ramp to the hole. A fire was lit in and/or around the statue. Babies were placed in the statue's arms or in the hole. First borns were often sacrificed to ensure financial prosperity for the family and future children*). But in fact what God wants most is our heart – which leads us in love to do, as Micah laid it out: do what is right, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

Isaiah 58(1-5) 6-11 (12-14)

*“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned;  
lighten the burden of those who work for you.*

*Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.*

*<sup>7</sup>Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless.*

*Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*

*<sup>8</sup>“Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal.*

*Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind.*

<sup>9</sup> *Then when you call, the Lord will answer.*

*'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply.*

*"Remove the heavy yoke of oppression.*

*Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!*

<sup>10</sup> *Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble.*

*Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.*

<sup>11</sup> *The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength.*

*You will be like a well-watered garden,*

*like an ever-flowing spring.*

This entire chapter is all about people doing things to please themselves, and then the prophet calling the people out and laying out the kind of sacrifice/fasting the Lord really wants – and what the Lord wants is our lives to be reflections of his mercy and grace. Lives that make a real difference in the world – feed the hungry, remove chains that bind people, give shelter to the homeless, help those in trouble. This is what living sacrifices look like. This is what God wants us to be like and how God longs for us to live. This is worship that brings God's love to life.

And then you can hear the question being asked and answered: how do we do this? The answer: *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.*

A life of worship to Jesus, the life of a living sacrifice is a counter-cultural life. If all we want to do is "fit in" then following Jesus is going to be a struggle. Jesus followers don't look like today's world. For Jesus followers:

- Faith is not a weapon to tear down others
- Faith is not created by governments nor defined by them
- Faith is not used for personal gain – ever
- The call to love is the greatest command we are given – even loving those who are different or whom we disagree with
- The call to serve others is core to our lives
- The call to be kind, trustworthy, compassionate, generous – this is what defines our lives

There's more – but you get the idea. If we want our lives to transform, to become more and more like Jesus, we have to live differently. And take the risk of "sticking out" for the sake of good and right and kind. And that will only happen when we allow Jesus to change us from the inside out.

Our minds control all we say and do – if our lives are to be transformed – it starts with how we think, feel, react, act. This is not about superficial change, but an inner reorienting that aligns one's thinking with God's truth and love. When our minds are renewed and transformed our lives will follow.

### **Things to remember about campers and Bible study:**

\* Today is your first day of Bible study – your campers are still getting to know each other and still figuring out what and who is "safe". You can **help create a safe space** by setting/creating a group covenant around how your crew will treat one another. Suggestions of good practices are things like:

- We will listen to each other so that when we are talking others will listen to us
- We will hold each other's stories within our group...meaning we will not share someone else's story outside our cabin/Bible study group.
- We consider everyone to be equal and so will treat each other as we would like to be treated

With younger groups it can be as easy as:

- we won't talk when someone else is talking
- we will treat each other with kindness
- we will not talk about another person in our group or share what they shared with anyone else

\* Sometimes campers have a **hard time paying attention or need "distractions"** while they engage...here are some ideas that could help:

- have a talking stone – when you hold the rock that's your time to talk
- have everyone turn to a partner and share their answer with their partner...then have the partner's share each other's answers with the group or simply have each person share what they shared with their partner
- have everyone stand up and once they have spoken have them sit down (or vice versa) while you're walking to your bible study spot, walk for a short way then stop and ask a question. After everyone has answered, walk a short way further, stop ask another question. Keep this going till you get to your bible study spot.
- A lot of campers won't have much experience with Bible study or the experience they've had has been Sunday School lessons or VBS. We don't want to teach them that Bible study is boring. **Bible study is so much more than just reading scripture!** If we relegate Bible study to just looking at words on a page – we don't let the text live in our campers' lives. Campers, especially the younger ones, like to move and be active. The activities are just as important as the reading of text!

\***The enthusiasm of the group will never rise above the enthusiasm of the leadership!!**

Which means if you aren't engaged, if you are bored with what you are doing – you can guarantee your campers are the same...or less. You have to bring extra energy to this time, so your campers will want to engage!!

### **ACTUAL POSSIBLE STUDY**

Today we start off taking a bit of time to get to know each other. As the first day of Bible Study, it is key to set the stage for the week. This group has to be a safe space to share and open up. It's hard to do that when we don't know each other. These activities don't take a lot of time – but they progress -from sharing simple non-threatening things to taking the risk to share a little more about ourselves. This will help build the safe space.

**Pass the Ball (what you need: an inanimate object like a ball/rock/pen/etc, music on your phone)**

- **How it works:** Campers stand in a circle and pass a ball/rock/pen (any inanimate object can work) around as the music plays. When you stop the music (or a designated signal occurs), the camper holding the "ball" must answer a question, such as "What's your favorite animal?" or "What's the best vacation you've ever been on?"
- **Why it's great:** This game is active so it keeps campers engaged.
- **Possible questions to ask:**

- o How many siblings do you have and where are you in the line-up?
- o Do you have any pets? What are their names?
- o What do you like to do after school?
- o If you could have one super power what would you want?
- o What subject in school do you like the most? The least?
- o What's your favorite thing to do on a snowy or rainy day?
- o What are three of your favorite foods?
- o Where's one place you'd love to go?
- o If you could invite anyone to have lunch with you at school – who would you invite?
- o Favorite song? Book? Movie?
- o What job might you like to try when you're an adult?

**Guess Who? (what you need: slips of paper 1 per camper, writing utensils)**

- **How it works:** Each camper writes one fun fact about themselves on a piece of paper. You gather the pieces of paper up and shuffle them. Then the facts are read aloud, and the group tries to guess who the fact belongs to.
- **Why it's great:** This game is perfect for revealing unexpected facts about campers!

**Transformation – what is it?**

Ask your group:

Can you think of anything that changes from one thing into another?

Some ideas: caterpillars to butterflies, transformers from cars to giant machine people, tadpole into a frog, seed into a plant, seasons – fall to winter, winter to spring, etc, egg to chick, trees into paper, normal humans into super people like Clark Kent into Superman)

After campers have had a chance to answer, say to/ask them:

We call that process by which one thing changes into another a “transformation” and it’s usually a big deal. For instance, when a caterpillar spins a cocoon, in the process of becoming a butterfly, the caterpillar actually dissolves into a kind of goo and then over time begins to reform as a butterfly!

But butterflies and plants, or out of this world machines aren’t the only things that can be transformed. We can be too! Does anyone have any ideas how we might change from one thing to another? (Give campers a chance to think and then respond – don’t be afraid of some silence!)

Some possible answers might be: from a baby to an adult, from a couch potato into an athlete, from a struggling student to a straight A student, from a hockey player into an ice dancer, etc.

Those are all great ideas!

**For a little lightness:**

**Superhero Powers (what you need: nothing)**

- **How it works:** Each camper thinks of a superhero power they would love to have (e.g., super speed, the ability to fly). Afterward, they share their superhero power with the group and explain why they would want that power.

- **Why it's great:** It lets campers think about what they value or admire in others while sparking creative and imaginative thinking.

**Scripture Texts:**

**Say to your group:** Did you know the Bible talks about transformation? It does! Let's turn to Romans chapter 11. (*Campers, especially younger ones will need help finding Romans – it's in the NT, back further in the Bible, etc. Make sure everyone has found Romans 11 before you go any further*)

**Would someone like to read Chapter 11 verses 33-36 for us** (*if no one volunteers today, be ready to read it yourself, campers might not be comfortable enough to read in front of others yet*)

After those verses have been read – ask:

- Does anyone understand what these verses are about? (be ready for no answers – this is a hard one especially for youngsters to comprehend)

After giving anyone a chance to answer and reaffirming any answers given...say something like:

This is like a song to God – praising God for how great God is, how wise and amazing God is. It's like the writer was saying I PRAISE YOU GOD BECAUSE YOU ARE AMAZING!!!

Now, let's turn to chapter 12 and read vs 1-2 – these verses are connected to what we just read!

Look at the first word in chapter 12 – what is it? (Therefore, And so, etc)

Explain that these words connect the ideas we just read with what we are going to read now.

It's like God is so amazing and because God is amazing...then...and let's read!

**Would someone like to read verses 1 and 2 for us?** (Don't make anyone – if no one volunteers, be ready to read yourself today)

**After reading the text ask your campers:**

- What has God done for you? (home, family, created me with talents, passions, loves me, cares about me, etc)
- What does it mean to be a sacrifice? (given up for a greater good, or perceived greater good)
  - Take a moment and share about sacrifices in the Bible times
  - They would kill goats, cows, sheep and burn their bodies as sacrifices to God
  - Or other gods – sometimes they would do human sacrifices – not cool right!?
- So do you think God really wants us to sacrifice each other like that? NO
- What is this talking about then?
  - writer is saying God has done great things and is amazing AND SO in response to what God has done – this is what we are called to do...offer our lives
  - To worship God, say thanks to God by how we live

Verse 2:

What do you think it means to “conform to the patterns of this world?” Think about that as we do this next activity!

### **Play some Simon Says (what needed: nothing)**

- Choose someone to be “Simon”. Simon will give commands to the other campers such as “hop on one foot”, “sit down”, “touch your nose”, or “stand on only one leg”.
- Players must follow only the commands that are preceded by the words: “Simon says” For example if Simon says, “Simon says touch your nose: everyone should touch their nose. However, if Simon simply says “touch your nose” players should not follow the command.
- If a player follows a command not preceded by “Simon says” they are eliminated from that round of the game. The last player remaining wins and becomes the next Simon.

After playing a few rounds, have everyone sit down and ask:

- In this game was it to your benefit to conform to Simon’s rules or not?
- How is playing this game like life?
- Where in your life does the world try to push you into a certain mold or shape to fit in? What are some examples? (social media, peer pressure, etc)

So the Bible verse we read before says we shouldn’t conform to the world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind or by changing the way you think.

- How could changing the way we think help us make decisions that honor God?
- Can you think of an example in your life where a shift in your thinking led to a better decision?
- What are some areas in your life right now, where, if you changed your thinking about yourself or something or someone, it could have some positive results – or you hope it would have positive results?

### **Transforming Butterflies (What you need: butterfly cutout for each camper, writing utensils)**

Give each person a butterfly. Have them put their name on their butterfly – SMALL in a corner of a wing or along the body. Then as they hold their butterflies, have them think about one thing in themselves that could use some transforming for good – and that they might be willing to work on this week. Maybe it’s an attitude they have about something or someone, maybe it’s the way they act around certain people, maybe it’s that they want to be kinder or more patient. Perhaps they are critical of others or they gossip or put people down in order to feel better about themselves. Maybe they wish they were better at praying or speaking up. Whatever it is – have them write down ONE thing. Then hand their butterfly to you.

Once the whole group is done explain: I’m going to hold onto these butterflies for you this week. Only you know what you put down here. At the end of the week – I’ll give them back to you and we’ll see if God was able to do any transforming in you this week. And don’t worry! God might work on something different than what you put here and that’s OK. This just gives us a possibility – and this is what this week is about: embracing the possibility that God just might be about transforming each of us!

Then...holding all the butterflies in your hands in such a way that no one can see what is written on them...have everyone gather round you and place their hands one on top of the other and say and pray something like this:

Remember: transformation doesn't happen overnight. It's a process and it takes time, effort, prayer, support and the power of the Holy Spirit (or God) working in us.

### **Closing Prayer**

*Dear Jesus, we know you long to transform our hearts and lives so that we are more and more like you. Some of us here believe that's possible this week, others of us think this is all just craziness. But that's OK because we know you hold us and you are at work in us this week. Bless our week at camp and transform our lives. Amen.*

**Put the butterflies somewhere safe** and then either as part of devo time Friday night or Bible study time on Friday – pass the butterflies back out and have your campers look at (and talk about it if they're willing) how God might have been working on what they wrote down this week.

### **E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

If the study isn't going well especially as this is the first day two things could be really helpful:

- **Movement** – movement is always good. Go back to one of the activities/games and play again. Or suddenly without saying why – get up and simply tell them the next part of Bible study is happening somewhere else and follow me. Take them to a new spot and restart where you left off.
- **Go to more 'getting to know you' activities.** Easy things to do could be:
  - a **Rock/Paper/Scissors contest**. Everyone gets a partner. They play a round of RPS with their partner. Once done, switch partners with someone else. Once a player has lost 2 complete rounds they are out until another round starts. Last person in wins!
  - Do some **Would You Rather**: Have the whole group get up and stand in the middle of your area. Tell them you are going to give them two options as an answer to each question of "Would you rather...". They have to pick a side. There's no staying neutral in the middle! 😊 Then go thru some of the following:

Would you rather...

To the right:

Live in a treehouse

Sit on nails

Go to PE

Lose all your teeth

Skip forward in time

Have a dog

Explore space

Never be able to cry

Sell all of your possessions

To the left:

Live in an igloo

Sit on ice

Go to the library

Lose all your hair

Go back in time

Have a cat

Explore the ocean

Or never laugh

Sell 1 of your organs

## **F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

**Butterfly, Tadpoles and/or Eggs day** – becoming more of what God created you to be  
\*Worship could center on changing ideas – texts about changing, songs about changing or where you have to change what you do as you go

\*All Camp could be a huge tag game where people are given a label: tadpole, egg, caterpillar. When they are tagged they “transform” into the thing they would become, ie. tadpole becomes a frog, caterpillar a butterfly, egg a chicken. When they are transformed they have to “run around” as what they are: butterfly, chicken or frog. When tagged again they change back into their original form tadpoles “swim”, caterpillars crawl and eggs sit still.

**Transformers Day** – where what’s on the outside isn’t the whole story

- Food for the day could be things that are transformed (scrambled eggs, tortillas, cookies, etc) or things that are different on the inside than the outside: pigs in a blanket, grilled cheese, etc
- Worship could start really quiet and somber and, in the middle, suddenly transform into loud and raucous. OR could start one place and travel from place to place changing a bit as it goes
- All Camp could be some kind of scavenger hunt where each stop each team has to transform to a different way of traveling – walking, running, carrying half the team, half the team being blind, half the team can’t hear

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

### **Songs from camp:**

- |                      |                        |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| - #9 Wounded Soldier | #23 Here I Am, Lord    | #43 Isaiah 43          |
| - #45 Dance with Me  | #49 Light the Fire     | #67 History Maker      |
| - #76 Lions          | #81 Grace Like Rain    | #93 Just a Closer Walk |
| - #82 Reckless Love  | #94 Great Are you Lord |                        |

### **Other new songs:**

- Made for More by Josh Baldwin

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ov9Ls4npIrc&ab\\_channel=JoshBaldwin](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ov9Ls4npIrc&ab_channel=JoshBaldwin)

Lyrics:

I know who I am ‘cause I know who You are  
The cross of salvation was only the start  
Now I am chosen, free and forgiven  
I have a future and it’s worth the living

‘Cause I wasn’t made to be tending a grave I was called by name  
Born and raised back to life again  
I was made for more  
So why would I make a bed in my shame  
When a fountain of grace is running my way  
I know I am Yours And I was made for more

Hallelujah  
You called out my name So I'll sing out Your praise  
Hallelujah  
You buried my past And I'm not going back

### **Supporting Stories:**

*It is often believed that our lives can't change, we can't do things that are hard and that teens don't want any responsibility. These two brothers proved different and show how using the talents God gave them and a sense of purpose from God they are changing the world around them.*

At age 16 Alex and Brett Harris decided to speak out against the idea that teenagers were irresponsible, lazy and incapable of doing meaningful things. They started a website called The Rebelution.com to challenge and support teens to do “hard things” for God. The website was a huge hit! At 18, the brothers wrote their first book “Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations. The book too became a hit and has been translated into a dozen different languages. At 19, they released their second book “Start Here: Doing Hard Things Right Where You Are”. The young men, now both having graduated from college (the first in their immediate family to do so) and getting married, they continue to host The Rebelution.com as a resource for young people who want to reject apathy, embrace responsibility and do hard things for the glory of God. (info from their website therebelution.com)

### **JK Rowling: From Rock Bottom to Literary Royalty**

The beloved creator of the Harry Potter series, JK Rowling's personal transformation is a narrative of sheer tenacity. Before her rise to literary stardom, Rowling faced rejection from multiple publishers, battled depression, and found herself at the brink of financial ruin. Yet, her resilience and imagination led her to create one of the most beloved and successful literary franchises in history. JK Rowling's story reminds us that sometimes our lowest points can be the launching pads for the greatest chapters of our lives.

*There are tons of stories of life change and transformation because people invited Jesus to be a bigger part of their lives – do some of your own searches and see what inspires you!*

### **Additional Scripture:**

Micah 6:6-8

*What can we bring to the Lord?  
Should we bring him burnt offerings?  
Should we bow before God Most High  
with offerings of yearling calves?  
Should we offer him thousands of rams  
and ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
Should we sacrifice our firstborn children  
to pay for our sins?*

<sup>8</sup> No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,  
and this is what he requires of you:  
to do what is right, to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with your God.

Isaiah 58(1-5) 6-11 (12-14)

*“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned;  
lighten the burden of those who work for you.*

*Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.*

<sup>7</sup> *Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless.*

*Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*

<sup>8</sup> *“Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal.*

*Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind.*

<sup>9</sup> *Then when you call, the Lord will answer.*

*‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply.*

*“Remove the heavy yoke of oppression.*

*Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors!*

<sup>10</sup> *Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble.*

*Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright  
as noon.*

<sup>11</sup> *The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry  
and restoring your strength.*

*You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like an ever-flowing spring.*

## **H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS**

- Transformation is a big concept for juniors, but most kids know about the Transformers and how they change from cars, vehicles and animals into other world machine people. Using the Transformers as a starting place for talking about how Jesus wants to “transform” or change us to be more like him is a great way to help them understand the idea.
- Keep the text study to mostly Romans 12:1-2 and simplify the questions to things like:
- What has God done for you? (home, family, created me with talents, passions, loves me, cares about me, etc)
- What does it mean to make a sacrifice? (give something you want or like up even when you don’t want to) Take a moment and share about sacrifices in the Bible times They would kill goats, cows, sheep and burn their bodies as sacrifices to God Or other gods – sometimes they would do human sacrifices – not cool right?!?
  - So do you think God really wants us to sacrifice each other like that? NO
  - What is this talking about then?

Writer is saying God has done great things and is amazing AND SO in response to what God has done – this is what we are called to do...live our lives like Jesus would like us to even when it’s hard. Examples:

when sibling is being annoying not hitting them

when you want to play with something and someone else has it

when you have to not do what you want because you have to go to a siblings game/match/recital, etc

What other examples can they come up with?

- Before doing Simon Says talk about places and times where they feel they have to be like everyone else. (school, in dance, at home, etc) Is it fun to always be like everyone else? Why or why not?
- When the Bible tells us to not conform to this world it is telling us that if we have to choose between being like Jesus or doing things the way someone else says we should we should always do Jesus' way first.
- Then play Simon Says.
- Talk about what it's like to be told by someone how we can act. What if our friends are being mean to someone – what would be the way Jesus would want us to act? When we act like Jesus wants us to – that's what it means to be transformed – we start thinking what does Jesus want me to be like instead just what do I want.

## **I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS**

With High Schoolers – this is something very familiar to them – the idea of conforming and not conforming. They live this every day. So take the time to introduce them to the additional texts in the text study.

When you get to talking about a life of sacrifice – tell them people throughout time have struggled with this. Even in the Old Testament, thousands of years before Jesus people struggled with not conforming to the world around them and understanding what it meant to sacrifice for God.

Take them to Micah 6:6-8 and Isaiah 58 – talk about what the text says the people were doing for sacrifices and what God really wanted. Ask them how today people do the same things – maybe not sacrificing animals, but using ritual and tradition instead of giving their hearts and lives to God.

Also...don't let them off with easy answers about what needs transforming in their own lives. Invite them to be serious – and to really be open to what God might want to do in them this week. Some might find it hard to believe – but especially when doing the butterflies – help them be honest and real.

Don't be afraid to call their bluffs – or to challenge them to actually ask God to be at work IN them this week. This could be life changing stuff if they take it seriously!

## **J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

**Scripture: Romans 11:33-12:2**

**Reflection:** Welcome to camp! Today your camper is going to discover the truth that Jesus wants to be part of their lives and wants to help transform their lives for the good. Is that really possible? Do we even want that? While many of us talk about changing lives, our own included because of Jesus' love – we often seem to think we can just ask God to change us and poof! It should be done, right? Not really. We will also discover the truth today, that allowing God into our hearts and lives to transform our hearts and minds is a choice we have to make –

sometimes daily, sometimes by the hour or minute. It's a process and it takes time. But once we open ourselves up to the possibility and invitation of transformation – watch out! The Spirit just might go to work!

**Activity:** We often think as adults we don't have to pay as much attention to Jesus changing our lives – but that's not true. Today's text reminds us all that a life of worship, a life that praises God is a life that is not conformed to this world, but lets Jesus constantly grow us and change our thinking. So, dear friends – each person in your family including you Jesus longs to transform. Where or what in your life needs transforming? Is it your relationship with Jesus? It is your understanding of what feeds your soul? Or perhaps is Jesus calling you out into the world to serve the least of these? Have each person in your family pick one area or thing they want to work on allowing Jesus to transform and then have each person make a plan how you each intend to help this transformation along. Share your plans with each other and agree on ways to keep each other accountable! See what happens!

**Prayer:** Lord, we often hear your call to transforming lives and think that sounds great – until you start to mess with our lives. Help us trust you. Help us open our hearts and minds to you and the ways you long to work in us. Help us be open, faithful and willing to invest our time and hearts into this process of transformation with you. In your name Jesus, we pray, Amen.

## **K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION**

Every summer as I talk with staff, especially ones who have been to RTLC before, I often hear the longing for the world to be the same as camp and the disappointment when it is not. I hear the phrase “I can't find anything like camp”. While understandable, there is also something at play here I want to name for you. It's the difference between transforming faith and consumer faith.

While at camp, you are part of a community that is set up with GREAT intentionality in every detail. That is rare and hard to find in the world at large. BUT...you have experienced this place. You have been transformed by this community. And you know how it's done. You know what it takes. Instead of waiting for the world to provide this type of community for you – what if you were a catalyst for creating this type of community where you find yourself? It doesn't have to be a community of 60+ it can start with a community of 3 or 4 or even 2! What are you waiting for?

Consumer faith says I want someone to provide all the experiences for me and I get to just show up and be part – consume the experience. But if we are really going to be Jesus followers in our everyday worlds, it means we are more than consumers. You know what being a part of this community means to you. What if you helped provide this kind of community wherever you find yourself?

It probably won't be exactly the same – no two communities ever are. Even each camp community is a bit different each year. But that doesn't mean you don't try. Part of life transformation is being willing to step up, step out and try – asking Jesus for guidance and strength along the way.

SO.... what in you needs transforming this summer so you might be in a better position to bring life transforming community to your world?

For the first half of the summer – figure out your goals that will help prepare you to go down the mountain – not just consuming faith but with a transformational faith walking with Jesus! The second half of the summer, with your goals now written down – what are the steps you will commit to taking? Once you have some steps – choose to share this with someone so they can help keep you accountable. And then watch God show and go to work in you and through you! Beware! It just might transform your life! 😊

**2025 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY**  
**CROSS+FIT**  
**DAY 2: CROSS+FIT: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE**

**A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME**

Luke 9: 1-6

Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

My wife is a song bird. She sings non-stop, in the house, in the car, in church. It is her calling to make a joyful noise. So... she practices... a lot. Often she is unaware of the impact her practice has on... well me. I may be quietly watching something on television when suddenly she breaks into song. She plays a video at full volume and sings along. Completely blissfully unaware that I am in the same room. I can't hear anything other than her. This is frustrating. But in that moment, at that time, I have a choice to make. I can respond poorly and throw a hissy fit, which is my first inclination. Or I can... pause and practice something for myself. Something I did not intend to practice, but was given the opportunity anyway. In those moments, at that time, I practice patience.

The reason my wife practices singing is two-fold. First, she wants to improve in her own spiritual journey. She wants to sing to the best of her ability. She wants to get better and stronger at singing. She wants to use the gift that God has given her and at the same time, she wants to push herself. Get better. For herself. For God.

The other reason she practices so much is because she wants her gift to have an impact on the people who hear her song. It's also for the sake of the community. She hopes that her song will touch people's hearts and strengthen them in their own faith journeys.

The same thing could be said for my need to practice patience. I believe that God has called me to be generous, loving, and kind in my relationships. Being patient isn't a convenience for the people around me. It is an essential part of what it means for me to follow Christ. I think Jesus wants me to be patient and loving. It's a goal for me. I want to grow in my faith. I want to grow closer to Christ through the practice.

Also, it has an impact on the community around me. If I practice patience during the course of my day, even during times of frustration, then it will have a positive impact on the people around me. I want to change myself so that I can be a stronger person. So that I can better represent the One I have chosen to follow... Jesus.

When Jesus sent out the Twelve, they had been with him for a couple years. They were part of a larger group who had listened to Jesus, learned from him, and watched him do his ministry

work. But the time came for the followers to practice what they had learned, to put their faith into action. So Jesus gave them authority over demons and the ability to cure diseases, and he sent them out. Can you imagine how intimidating that must have been? They had been watching Jesus do all these wonderful things, and then he said... your turn. Go and do the work. Do what you believe. Practice your faith. And they did.

I bet it took a while to learn how to do the things Jesus called them to do. I doubt they did everything right all the time. After all, they were just like us. But they practiced. And the last line of the Bible verse for today says, "They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere."

I know. You're going to say... they were special, they were disciples. Bah. They were just people. And they had to learn how to live out their faith, just like we do. All disciples can grow in their faith, their whole life long.

The funny thing about practicing our faith is that we are never done. As long as we are breathing and moving, we have the opportunity to practice and grow. Because PRACTICE DOES NOT MAKE PERFECT. It is not possible to attain perfection. And anyone who tells you it is possible, is probably trying to sell you something. And if you are telling yourself you need to be perfect, please stop that internal talk. It's hurtful. It's not good for you. You are on this journey just like everyone else. Be nice to yourself. Give yourself the same grace you would extend to other people. Perfection is not the goal.

But practice can make us stronger. And if we believe that we have the Holy Spirit is living within us, then we know that it is possible to change for the good. It is possible for us to become more like Christ in our daily faith journey. It is possible to have a positive Godly impact on the people around us. And that has the power to change the world. One step at a time.

The question now is, "how do we practice?"

Well. We begin. If we want to become better at playing the piano, you can't just hope you will get better. We have to sit down at the piano and try. Trying means learning the notes, pressing the keys, finding a teacher, watching a video.

If we want to become better at a spiritual practice, like prayer for example, we need to begin where we are. Don't pile huge expectations that you will be able to pray like someone who has been praying for 70 years. Begin where you are. Take the first step. Pray your first prayer. And learn as you go. Just try. Trying means speaking the words, talking to God, finding a friend who can help you, watching a video. It's ok to learn. It's ok to grow. It's ok to change.

As a matter of fact, you know that Holy Spirit I mentioned before, it is hard at work in you and me, transforming us, if we are willing. That's all God is asking. That you make yourself available to learn and grow and practice. God will do the rest. Just open yourself to the possibility that with a little practice you can become stronger in your faith journey. You can do it. This is your invitation.

This is your challenge to try.

## **B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY**

- Campers will understand that our faith in Christ takes practice.
- Campers will gain the expectation that they can be transformed through their commitment to practice and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Campers will be able to identify one or more practice(s) they would like to see grow.
- Campers will learn that they do not have to be perfect in their faith journey, but there is a possibility that they can learn and grow, which will help them to become stronger in their faith journey.
- Campers will be challenged to TRY during the hike day and beyond.

## **C. MORNING WATCH**

### **Common Welcome**

Good morning! Welcome to a brand-new day at camp, where we gather as a community in Christ to grow, learn, and be transformed by God's love. Today, we invite you to see how God is working in your life and in the world around you. Together, we'll explore what it means to live boldly in faith, share the good news of Jesus, and care for creation and one another as God calls us. Let's start this day with joy, curiosity, and a spirit ready for transformation.

### **Introduction to the Day**

Practice, practice, practice. Today we are going to talk about what it means to practice our faith. It's kind of like when we practice anything else in our lives, sports, music, drama, or any other activity. When we practice, we commit to the idea that we will TRY to get better at what we are doing. We want to get better. We want to get stronger. And that applies to our faith too. Jesus calls us not to just talk about our faith, but to actually do things in response to God's love for us. Today we will learn how and why we practice.

### **Why we chose the Passage and Scripture**

The Bible verse for today tells the story of the Twelve, the disciples chosen by Jesus to get out into the world to do his work. We need to keep in mind, Jesus didn't choose professional religious people. He didn't choose them because they already had skills or knew what to do. They didn't. They knew how to fish and collect taxes. But they didn't know how to do the work of faith. They were just normal people, like us, living their lives. But Jesus asked them to learn and practice new skills, like casting out demons and healing the sick. They learned. They grew. And soon they were good at the work. They spread the good news of Jesus to anyone who would listen.

Luke 9: 1-6

*“Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against*

*them.' They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.'*

**Song: "Do Something" by Matthew West**

I woke up this morning  
Saw a world full of trouble now, thought  
How'd we ever get so far down, and  
How's it ever gonna turn around  
So I turned my eyes to Heaven  
I thought, "God, why don't You do something?"  
Well, I just couldn't bear the thought of  
People living in poverty  
Children sold into slavery  
The thought disgusted me  
So, I shook my fist at Heaven  
Said, "God, why don't You do something?"  
He said, "I did, yeah, I created you" (now listen)

If not us, then who  
If not me and you  
Right now, it's time for us to do something, yeah  
If not now, then when  
Will we see an end  
To all this pain  
Oh, it's not enough to do nothing  
It's time for us to do something

I'm so tired of talking about  
How we are God's hands and feet  
But it's easier to say than to be  
Live like angels of apathy who tell ourselves  
It's alright, "somebody else will do something"  
Well, I don't know about you  
But I'm sick and tired of life with no desire  
I don't want a flame, I want a fire and  
I wanna be the one who stands up and says  
"I'm gonna do something"

If not us, then who  
If not me and you  
Right now, it's time for us to do something, yes it is, come on  
If not now, then when  
Will we see an end  
To all this pain  
Oh oh, it's not enough to do nothing  
It's time for us to do something

We are the salt of the earth

We are a city on a hill  
We're never gonna change the world  
By standing still  
No, we won't stand still  
No, we won't stand still  
No, we won't stand still  
No

If not us, then who  
If not me and you  
Right now  
It's time for us to do something  
If not now, then when  
Will we see an end  
To all this pain  
It's not enough to do nothing  
It's time for us to do something  
It's time for us to do something  
It's time for us to do something

### **Questions for Consideration**

- Do you believe that you can get better and stronger in your faith?
- Do you WANT to get better and stronger in your faith? Do you want to grow?
- What difference does practice make?
- What would it look like for you to practice your faith?
- Can you name one or two things you could do that would make you feel stronger in your faith? What would you be willing to TRY?

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you are our mentor, coach, and friend. You have taught us what it means to follow you. And it's a lot. It's a lot to understand. It's a lot to do. We want to get stronger in our faith, but we need your help. Thank you that you have given us your Holy Spirit, which is your strength living inside of us. Help us to do one or two things today that will help us to grow closer to you and each other. Help us to practice. Help us to grow. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

### **D. SCRIPTURE STUDY**

*Luke 9: 1-6*

*Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.*

Along the way during his first year of ministry, Jesus picked up all kinds of followers. People would go from town to town with him, hoping to see some miracle or pick up on his teachings. They followed him like lost little puppy dogs. They knew there was something special about him. They wanted to be close to him. At this point in the gospel of Luke, Jesus designates a small group of disciples who will enable him to expand his ministry AND carry on the mission after he was gone. They were with him day in and day out. They were learning and growing. But at this point, he designates and names them the TWELVE. And he sends them out. The period of time of training and observation was done. Now it was time to put their faith into practice. Remember how intimidating this must have been for these people. They were thrown into action. I am confident they did not feel ready. But Jesus gave them what they needed to do the work. Now they just needed to practice to get better and stronger.

*Romans 12: 9-21*

*Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

The reason I chose this verse is to help further explain what we mean when we say "spiritual practices." The Apostle Paul is writing to the church in Rome. Typically when he writes a letter it's because there has been a conflict in the congregation. Paul writes to clarify what it means to be a follower of Christ. He wants to help them understand how to practice their faith. In this passage he lists several practices that are important to how we live out our faith. I'm going to break them down into a list. P.S. This is not a comprehensive list. These are just SOME WAYS we practice our faith. There are many more.

Have genuine love.  
Hate evil.  
Do good.  
Love one another.  
Mutual affection.  
Show honor to others.  
Serve the Lord.  
Be patient in suffering.

Keep praying.  
Contribute to those in need.  
Extend hospitality to strangers.

Live in harmony.  
Don't be haughty.  
Associate with the lowly.

Don't pretend to be smart.  
Don't repay evil with evil.  
Do what is NOBLE.  
Live peaceably.  
Feed your enemies.  
Give them something to drink.  
Be overcome with good.

*1 Timothy 4: 12-16*

*Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. **Put these things into practice**, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

The author of Timothy is teaching this "young" church leader that he needs to put his faith into practice in order to make progress in his church. He was only 30-35 years old and he was in charge. It was his job to keep the church healthy and strong. But there were Elders, people who held office in the church AND were older than him, trying to undermine his calling. At any rate, Paul calls him to put his faith into practice. He needs to do what he is supposed to do. Get to work Timothy! Read the scripture in public. Exhort, which means to correct and guide other people in the church. And teach! Timothy has the gifts given to him by God, he has the Holy Spirit working inside of him, and he has a responsibility. He needs to use his gifts in order to get stronger and better AND to contribute to the well-being of the church.

### **Actual Bible Study**

*Open with a prayer!*

**[BUT if you would, dear counselor, please consider. It would be good for YOU to model some vulnerability toward this opening prayer moment, in reference to faith practice. Maybe YOU could talk about how you didn't always know how to pray or you didn't always feel comfortable praying, but somewhere along the way you decided to practice. And you became better. You became stronger and more confident in your ability to pray. OR maybe you still don't feel confident. That would be worth sharing. That YOU intend to practice this summer. Go YOU!]**

We know that prayer is an important part of our faith life.  
Seems like we are always praying.  
Prayers of the church. The Lord's Prayer. Grace. Bible study prayers.  
We pray because Jesus told us to pray.  
Jesus talked to his Father in Heaven, and he taught us to do the same.

How many in your group feel confident and strong praying?

Can you just stand up in front of this group... and start praying?  
Or is that just a bit scary.

How many would like to get better at praying?  
Why would you want to get better?  
Why would you **NOT** want to get better?

Tonight we are going to talk about what it means to **PRACTICE OUR FAITH.**

Just like we practice basketball by taking millions of shots and running lines...  
So that we can get more accurate in our shots...  
And so through hard work... our body gets faster and stronger.  
We can do the same thing with our faith.  
We can practice. We can get better and stronger.

Just like we can practice the piano or singing...  
And over time the songs sound better...  
And we can play or sing harder and harder songs.

And we have a sense of accomplishment...  
Because we have GROWN.  
We are better and stronger...  
Than when we began.

The same is true with faith.  
If we practice our faith...  
We gain more experience.  
We can become stronger.  
We can get better...  
At following the way of Jesus.

-----  
*Open up your bibles and read Luke 9: 1-6.*

In this story the TWELVE were chosen by Jesus...  
Out of all the people he could have chosen...  
He picked these twelve disciples...  
To do a little bit more.

Jesus gave them the job to go out into the world.  
To do the ministry.  
To do his work.  
To cast out demons.  
To heal the sick.  
To share the good news.

They had been with Jesus for over a year.  
They had been watching him and listening to him.  
In a way... they had been training...

BUT... this was different.  
He told them... it's YOUR turn.  
Get out there... and get to work.

-----  
How do you think they felt going out and doing these things? (**Nervous, scared, not ready**).  
Do you think YOU would have felt confident or afraid?

I don't believe they would have felt ready to do the work.  
Maybe they were excited?  
Maybe they were willing to TRY?  
Maybe. But I bet they were scared.

They had no idea...  
What they were about to do.  
How they were about to change the world.

But Jesus knew...  
And Jesus knew... they needed to start somewhere.  
They needed to begin where they were.  
And if they wanted to get better...  
They needed to **PRACTICE**.

Because the only way they were ever going to grow in their faith...  
The only way they were going to get better at what they could do...  
Was to be willing to practice.

So they did. They went out into the world...  
And they got to work.  
They worked hard.  
Sometimes they did good... and were successful.  
Sometimes it was rough... and they failed.

But the Bible verse says... at the very end...  
They shared the good news about Jesus...  
And they healed the sick EVERYWHERE.

In other words... it worked.  
They practiced.  
They became stronger.  
They made a difference in the world.

-----  
**WE** are the disciples of Jesus today.  
We face the same things those first twelve disciples faced.  
It's a different world, but we have the same challenge from Jesus.

Jesus has asked US to do his work in the world. BUT...  
We don't always feel like we know what to do.  
We don't always feel ready to do the work.

We don't know what to say...  
We don't know what to do...

But listen. We don't have to worry about not knowing what to do.  
Or getting it right every time.  
The disciples didn't.  
We don't have to either.  
Jesus wants us to TRY...  
To live more like him.

---

Jesus isn't thinking that you are going to be PERFECT all the time.  
PERFECTION IS NOT POSSIBLE.  
Have you heard the saying...  
Practice makes perfect.  
It's a lie.

Practice does not make perfect.  
Practice makes us stronger.  
Practice makes us better.

So if we want to follow Jesus... more and more everyday...  
If we want to grow in our faith...  
Then we need to practice... we need to TRY.

---

**[Ask for a volunteer to tell a story of something they had tried in the past... that they didn't think they could do. What happened? Did they get better? Did they fail? What did they learn in the process?]**

We can always TRY...  
But that doesn't mean it's going to be easy.  
The way of Jesus is not easy.  
He asked you to do some really hard things.  
I can prove it to you.

**Let me ask you a few questions:**

How many of you LOVE other people?  
Who do you love? **[Give me some names and relationships].**  
Why do you love those people?

Jesus said... that's great...  
You should love the people who love you.  
But Jesus wants us to do something MORE.

He said... you also need to love your ENEMIES.  
I don't want to.  
They're not nice to me.  
They're not good people.

We have a million reasons...  
Why some people are just bad...  
And not worth loving.

Who do you consider to be your enemies?

Do you love you enemies?  
Are you good at caring for them...  
And praying for them...  
And seeing them as people...  
Who are loved by Jesus?

Why is that hard? How can you change your attitude and approach toward them?

Well... that's fine... BUT...  
Do you want to grow in faith...  
And become better at following Jesus?

Well... he said... loving your enemies is part of following him.

---

He also said... being humble is important.  
We live in a world...  
Where EVERYONE is trying to convince us...  
That they are great and important.  
Better than everyone else.  
**[Gather some examples from Sports, Entertainment, Social Media].**

Seems like everyone wants us to believe...  
That they are smarter... know more... happier...  
Than everyone else.

That's not the way of Jesus.  
It's not a competition.  
We are all in this together.  
He calls us to humble ourselves...  
And SERVE other people.

---

What does it mean to be humble?

Are you a humble person?  
Do you want to be a humble person?  
Do you think it's important to be humble? Why?

And you know what...  
Those are just two examples...  
Of what Jesus has asked us to do.

There are so many things...  
He said... were important to learn and do...

If you want to follow him...

This morning at worship, you were challenged to try two new things in living out your faith and practice them on the hike. Anyone willing to share what they tried, how it went, and how people responded? How did it feel?

What are the things you do for other people because you follow Jesus?

Here are just a few things... Jesus asked us to do...

Like repenting (being sorry for your sin)

Being patient.

Praying.

Being hospitable (welcoming other people into your group)

Forgiving other people.

Feeding the hungry.

Clothing the naked.

Worshipping God.

Donating to those in need.

Working toward unity.

**[Can you think of any more?].**

-----  
What about you?

Is there something that has to do with your faith...

Some activity of your faith...

That you have seen other people do...

That you want to practice.

Maybe it's something you're already good at...

And you just want to get better and stronger.

Is there something you're not good at?

Even a little scared to try...

But you want to try...

But you don't know how to start. What are those things? How can you try for the first time?

Well... let's start here. Tonight.

**SO, EACH OF YOU THINK OF TWO THINGS YOU WOULD LIKE TO PRACTICE.**

**[They can write them down, maybe even in the back of their bibles].**

Pick something you would like to TRY.

Pick something that means something to you.

Pick two TRIES for the rest of this week.

And remember this is camp.

This is a safe place.

This is a great chance to practice something.

This is the most loving community in which to be vulnerable.

And remember that God is with you.  
You have the strength of God living inside of you. The Holy Spirit.  
You just need to TRY... and the Holy Spirit will do the work.  
God will bring your work to completion.  
God will help you... as you TRY.

**[As leader SUPPORT and ENCOURAGE the choices they make.  
Also be ready to be vulnerable yourself.  
What is a practice YOU would like to do better... be stronger.  
Share your two ideas with the group. Maybe even go first.]**

-----  
The reason we call these TRIES... is because you might get better...  
You might not.  
You might fail.  
And that's ok.

The world tells you...  
You should be perfect and never fail.  
Again that's not the truth.  
That's not reality.  
Reality is... you can't get better...  
You can't get stronger...  
If you don't take a chance...  
And TRY.

Perfection is not the goal of practice.  
You are not going to be the G.O.A.T...  
At what you choose to practice.

Practice is about learning.  
You are growing.  
You are getting better.  
You are getting stronger.

So be brave.  
Be willing to grow.  
And keep TRYING.

-----  
Would anyone like to close our time together with prayer?  
Would anyone like to TRY?

**Closing prayer** - this is a great chance to get one of your campers to try and practice praying for the group. Encourage them and celebrate it!

## **E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

What is something you can do that other people can't?  
How did you get good at that thing?

Were you always as good as you are now?  
What did you have to do to get better and stronger?  
How did other people help you as you learned?  
Are you done? Have you learned everything about the thing that you do?

I remember getting frustrated with people who would ask me to help setup their technology. I would go behind the machine and say this is easy. You just plug this in here, change the setting, and reboot. Bada bing bada boom. It's so easy... quit bugging me. Frustrating for me... until one day a friend reminded me that I have been working with technology for a very long time. And it is silly to think they would know how to do what I know how to do. The way I became good and strong in the area of technology is through practice. Years and years of learning how things worked. And I kept trying. And I grew.

Part of practicing our faith is allowing other people the space to practice. And helping them along the way. Teaching and mentoring something you know for the benefit of other people.

### **Another additional Study Idea**

What makes you afraid?

I was thinking about a time when I was a camper. There was a trust activity where we were asked to jump from a stump, reach out with both arms, and catch a horizontal bar. The rest of my group was in front and under the bar with their arms linked to catch me. But I was afraid to jump. I stood on that stump paralyzed by my fear. I was absolutely certain that I was not going to be able to reach the bar and the people would not catch me. Eventually I worked up enough courage to jump. And it wasn't even close. I grabbed the bar with lots of room to spare. And I was amazed. The way I thought about myself changed. I didn't think my arms were that long. I didn't think I was that tall. I didn't think I could trust other people. I was wrong. And it was the fear that stopped me from trying.

What would you do if you weren't afraid?

What would you TRY if you knew that even if you failed... you would be ok?

Would you sing in church?

Would you read a bible lesson out loud in front of people?

Would you visit someone who is sick?

Would you do some random act of kindness in God's name?

What would you TRY if you weren't afraid?

### **Activity - Do As I Say, Not As I Do**

Players form a circle standing 6 feet away from one another.

The leader will select one person to start the game.

The selected player will turn to the person on his or her left and say, "I am doing [insert verb]."

For example, "I am brushing my teeth."

However, the player will act out a different action.

For example, he or she will be waving their hand.

The person on his or her left will then act out the action that was spoken aloud but say a different action. In this example, the player would pretend to brush his or her teeth but say something else, like, "I am sleeping."

Players take turns doing what the person before them says, not what they are doing. They must make it around the circle without making a mistake.

Application of Activity - Jesus has asked us to do many things. When he said take up your cross and follow me, what he meant was take me and what I tell you to lead you as you do the most important things in your life. More important than your own ideas and opinions. He told us what to do. But it definitely takes practice to do what he says.

#### **F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

This would be a great day for the counselors and other staff members to identify what two things they would like to practice. And then, to inquire from random campers what they want to practice. And after the counselors listen, acknowledge, and support the campers in their process, they could share what they themselves are hoping to accomplish. This would help teach the concept that even the wise old counselors and support staff are growing in their faith journey and practicing to become better and stronger.

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

I the Lord of Sea and Sky WOV #752  
Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ WOV #754  
I'll Do My Best RTLC SONGBOOK #12  
Light the Fire RTLC SONGBOOK #49  
Step by Step RTLC SONGBOOK #53

#### **H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS**

I would think that the younger campers don't quite feel the same pull to grow in faith practices as the older campers. My first inclination would be to ask them what Jesus wants us to do. Have them generate a list of practices of the faith that is more in sync with their age. And then ask them to choose one or two that they want to TRY and learn how to do.

I know it's an old book, but I wonder about The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein. The connection being that this tree had a lot to offer in service to the boy. He may not have appreciated all the tree gave, and yet, it was in the nature of the tree to give and serve. The tree practiced the faith values of love, sacrifice, and meaningful service. The boy/man just took and took. He had nothing to offer. Nothing to give. He didn't even try. He did not practice any of the faith elements and did not grow in his own understanding of life and grace. Maybe a hard stretch... but it was in my brain.

And for some strange reason, I am thinking about Despicable Me. And how Gru had no idea of how to be father to the three girls. And it took time and work and practice for him to realize what it meant to love his children. By the end of the movie Gru grew.

Overall for the younger campers, I think I would approach it more like a children's sermon. Jesus had some disciples. His followers. His friends. Jesus sent them out into the world to do his work, but they didn't know how. How do you think they learned what to do? Listened to Jesus. Watch what he did. And then they TRIED. They did the best that they could. Sometimes it turned out really good. Sometimes it was not so good. But by the time Jesus was done here on earth, they were the ones who knew how to live like Jesus. And they are the people who taught us.

How about you? Do you practice? What do you do? What do you practice? Have you gotten better than when you started? How have you changed? Are you bigger, stronger, and faster than you were before? Of course you are. You are growing everyday.

And when you follow Jesus you can grow too. It just takes practice. Just like the disciples. You can practice and get better at saying prayers, reading the Bible, listening to other people, helping other people, and doing God's good things in the world.

## **I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS**

You could begin by talking about WHO they admire and why. What is it about those particular people that makes them interested in their lives and excited about who they are? How do you think they got to where they are in life? What did they do? Sure they worked hard, but did they practice, were they disciplined in their lives? Do you think you could get from here to there? Would you want to?

I think I would challenge the Sr. High campers to think of people they admire IN THE FAITH. Is there anyone at church or here at camp or anywhere in their life that they see as FAITHFULLY doing what Jesus wants them to do? Who are those people? What are their names? What do they do? What do you admire about the practice of their faith?

I'll give you an example. There is a woman at our church whose name is Gwen. She is in her late 80's but is very active. She works hard to make sure that people feel welcomed and loved. When I first came to the church Gwen did not smile. There was a reason. She had worked so hard to hold the church together during a difficult time that everything became work. One of my greatest successes in ministry is when I made Gwen laugh. She has an amazing smile and cackles when she laughs. And even at this age, Gwen grew. She practiced letting go of control, she began to trust other people, and she began to find JOY in our church again. I think having joy is a great gift, not only to her but to the whole community.

## **J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

**Scripture: Luke 9:1-6**

**Reflection:** On Tuesday we talked about how Jesus sends his disciples out into the world to do his work, to be like him, and to change the world. We talked about how at first they were probably unprepared to do that kind of work. They had been fishermen and tax collectors, not preachers or teachers. But after spending time with Jesus, he expected them to go out and continue his work. He expects the same thing of us. We spend time with Jesus. We have faith in him. But he also has asked us to do his work in the world, to love other people, to do acts of service, to preach and teach, to grow in our own faith journey, and more. But these things take practice. The disciples didn't just know how to do things. They had to get out there and learn and grow. So do we. We challenged the campers to name two practices of the faith that they wanted to grow. Maybe they wanted to pray more or better. Maybe they wanted to treat people better. Maybe they wanted to grow in humility. Whatever they chose we asked them to TRY to grow in that practice. That trying was important. If they put in the effort to grow in their faith, the Holy Spirit would do the work inside of them.

**Activity:** This is easy peasy. Ask them how they want to grow in their faith. Ask them to name the two practices they chose at camp. Support them in their choices. Ask them how you can help them to learn and grow through practice. And then, you choose two ways to grow in your faith. Tell them what you want to do. Ask them to help you. Growing in our faith is a lifelong process and you're not done yet! So have fun. And try to get better and stronger in your faith... with your children. And check in with each other and celebrate your progress or encourage them to continue.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you. It is a lifelong process of learning and growing. Help us to care about our faith and our spiritual growth, just as much, if not more than other things in our lives. Help us to practice. Help us to be stronger and better as we follow you and do your will in our world. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

## **K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION**

- Is there something you discovered or something that hit you in a new way when you did this study this week? Did you see anything significant happen to your campers as they studied?
- Have you been working on the two practices YOU chose over the course of these weeks? Are you seeing any progress? Are you having any failures? Are you still TRYING?
- Who is someone who has a faith practice you admire? What do they do that is important to you? What can you do to be more like them? Can you tell them that you admire their faith? Do you think that would give them strength in their journey? **I challenge you to ask them how they learned the practice you admire.** Listen to them. And be willing to grow.
- Do you have any stories about how God has been moving in your life this week?
- Do you have anything you want me to pray for this week? If you do, email me and I will pray for you. [prod.joy@gmail.com](mailto:prod.joy@gmail.com)

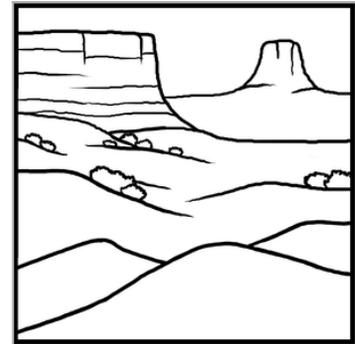


**2025 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY**  
**CROSS+FIT**  
**DAY 3: CROSS+FIT: PLATEAUS**

**A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME**

**We are a CROSS+FITTED people! What happens when we hit a plateau?**

Just what is a plateau? In geography, a plateau is a flat, elevated landform that's higher than the surrounding area and is one of the four major landforms on Earth.



A plateau in personal training is a period of time when you stop seeing progress in your fitness or training goals. It can be frustrating, but it's a normal part of any fitness journey.

A spiritual plateau is a period when someone feels comfortable with their spiritual progress and stops making further progress. While it can feel like going in circles, it can actually be a good place to be on the spiritual journey. Sometimes what you tried, totally blows up and you fail, and maybe we feel like we should just quit, instead of just seeing it as a plateau. Some say that plateaus are meant to help people develop stronger faith and resilience.

Here are some tips for moving past a spiritual plateau:

- **Exercise your faith:** Step outside of your comfort zone and try something new.
- **Determine the root cause:** A lack of motivation? A failure? Locked into a routine that has gone stale?
- **Remember that you aren't the best judge:** Your feelings don't necessarily reflect your true spiritual state. Find some people to help you.
- **Trust that God is at work:** God uses plateaus to help people grow spiritually.
- Some say that there are three major plateaus on the path to spiritual development:
  - **Baptism:** The beginning of the journey
  - **Christian Growth :** The process of learning about God
  - **Spiritual graduate school:** The stage where people learn about the role of mysteries, miracles, and signs in spiritual development

Main Bible text: **Isaiah 40:21-31**

<sup>21</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

<sup>22</sup> It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;

who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to live in;

<sup>23</sup> who brings princes to naught,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

<sup>24</sup> Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,  
 scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,  
 when he blows upon them, and they wither,  
 and the tempest carries them off like stubble.  
<sup>25</sup> To whom then will you compare me,  
 or who is my equal? says the Holy One.  
<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
 Who created these?  
 He who brings out their host and numbers them,  
 calling them all by name;  
 because he is great in strength,  
 mighty in power,  
 not one is missing.  
<sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob,  
 and speak, O Israel,  
 ‘My way is hidden from the Lord,  
 and my right is disregarded by my God’?  
<sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
 The Lord is the everlasting God,  
 the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
 He does not faint or grow weary;  
 his understanding is unsearchable.  
<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the faint,  
 and strengthens the powerless.  
<sup>30</sup> Even youths will faint and be weary,  
 and the young will fall exhausted;  
<sup>31</sup> but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
 they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
 they shall run and not be weary,  
 they shall walk and not faint.

When I was 13 years old, my mother developed bi-polar disorder. Our home life was hectic and erratic. My two sisters and I were scared and we wondered what would happen next as my mom’s disease continued to worsen.

I prayed and prayed and...and my mom just got worse. I begged God to make her better. And, because of the shame associated with mental illness at the time, I disengaged from my friends and family, leaving me feeling alone and isolated and terrified. Why? Someone might find out that my mom was crazy and then think that I was crazy too. I hit a spiritual, mental, emotional plateau.

One Sunday as I sat alone in the back of my church, the back of the bulletin had the words from Isaiah 40:28-3. I read and re-read these verses and they related to me in a way that surprised me and gave me hope and comfort even when my world was falling apart.

This part of Isaiah, (chapters 40-48) offers hope to a nation that has been in exile. The Persian Emperor, Cyrus, had just conquered Babylon where the Israelites were in captivity. These Judeans were in a foreign land, away from their homes and the center of their spiritual life...the temple. They were frightened. They were isolated. They were terrified.

They had totally failed spiritually. Even though their bodies were in the temple for each festival, their hearts were far from God. They went through all the right words and they said all

the right things. They brought their offerings and tithes, but their minds were on other things. Their scholars, after being captured and sent to Babylon, began to slowly understand the nature of this failure. They took the time to write down all of the words that God had said to them through the ages. These writings were eventually compiled into what we know today as the Old Testament.

And yet, and still, God's grace broke into the lives of these exiles who had spiritually failed. Isaiah penned this poem to bring hope to a people who weren't sure they were lovable anymore. Their self-talk was not one of grace and hope. They had hit both a physical and a mental and an emotional plateau. What will they do? To whom will they turn when they had so completely failed as a nation? Can God still love them, even while they are in exile?

Isaiah's writings remind them (and us), that no matter where we are on our life's journey God's grace, hope and love are there for us. We are a transformed people because of our recognition of God in our lives. We are not alone, even when we feel like it!

In CrossFit, there comes a time in your journey that you hit a plateau. Nothing seems to work to help you get to your next goal. In the CrossFit community, that's when you turn to someone to help you out. They give suggestions, encouragement, new practices, and a listening ear as they come alongside you to take you to the next level.

In the Jesus community, we are called to do the same thing. We are a Cross f Fit community, marked by the cross of Jesus and called to be there for each other. So, when you hit those plateaus in your journey, who can you turn to for support, encouragement, and motivation? Before you give the easy answer of "No one," I encourage you to think. Do you have a therapist, a counselor, a pastor, a teacher, a family member, a friend who is willing to walk with you as you go through this plateau?

At 13, this verse Isaiah 40:31 which says: *but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint*, spoke to my soul and helped me to see that God was with me, even in my mom's illness. I cried through that whole church service, and came to understand the words to the song Marsha Stevens-Pino wrote in her song,

#### ***For Those Tears I Died***

You said You'd come and share all my sorrows,  
You said You'd be there for all my tomorrows.  
I came so close to sending You away:  
But just like You promised You came here to stay,  
I just had to pray.

**Chorus:** And Jesus said come to the water, stand by my side;  
I know you are thirsty, you won't be denied.  
I felt every teardrop when in darkness You cried;  
And I strove to remind you, that for those tears I died.

At the next service I attended, I was able to join my youth group as we always sat up front together. I was able to talk to my dad about all that was going on in our family. I reengaged with my personal Bible reading and prayer time with a renewed sense of God's presence in my life. And, to this day, many years later, Isaiah 40:31 remains my favorite Bible verse. It has helped me ever since that Sunday morning in worship!

We are a Cross+Fitted people! No matter how isolated or lonely we feel, we are not ever alone. No matter what plateaus you may be experiencing (in body, mind, or spirit) God is always there with you. And there are people around you who will help you, too!  
As you do this Bible study, I pray that you will be able to determine when the campers (and you) have hit a spiritual plateau. This may take outside help. Please do not be shy about asking for that help!

As campers think about their own lives (and you think about yours), can you list those encouragers who are there for you? Can you list those people for whom you are an encourager?

Life has its times of growth, rest, and stagnation. It's all part of being human. And, you are amazing humans!

On our Christian journey, we are going to experience times when we stop making progress, or we completely fail. This is okay and it's part of the Christian journey! We may need help in getting off the plateau and back into our growth.

## **B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY**

- Define the word plateau and give some examples of plateaus we have experienced, or seen those our family or friends have experienced.
- Read and explore scripture to hear of other communities that have faced plateaus, and how they overcame them
- To name for ourselves those people who are there for us when we hit a plateau in our own life.
- Talk frankly about the self-talk we use when we hit a plateau *i.e.* I'm not good enough, I'm a failure, I'm stupid, etc. and to give ourselves the grace to realize that: I am loved, I am striving to become a better human, I am not perfect and that's okay
- To understand that when we fail, we are not a failure!
- To recognize and celebrate those times when you overcame a plateau

To help the campers know that plateaus will happen in their lives and that there are people around who are available to help them move off the plateau and onto a new path of growth.

## **C. MORNING WATCH**

### **Common Welcome**

Good morning! Welcome to a brand-new day at camp, where we gather as a community in Christ to grow, learn, and be transformed by God's love. Today, we invite you to see how God is working in your life and in the world around you. Together, we'll explore what it means to live boldly in faith, share the good news of Jesus, and care for creation and one another as God calls us. Let's start this day with joy, curiosity, and a spirit ready for transformation.

### **Introduction to the Day**

We are a CROSS+FITTED people! How awesome is that! And, what happens when we hit a plateau in our spiritual life?

### **Why we chose the Passage and Scripture**

Isaiah 40 is the beginning of a poem that doesn't end until the end of this book, 26 chapters later! Chapter 40 is all about God bringing comfort to people who are in exile. They have failed. They are far from home and are strangers in a strange land. They feel afraid and terrified. And, they have hit a plateau in their faith. So, in these words, God reminds them that they are not alone, they have God and God's people to help them!

### **Isaiah 40:21-31**

<sup>21</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

<sup>22</sup> It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;  
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to live in;

<sup>23</sup> who brings princes to naught,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

<sup>24</sup> Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,  
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,  
when he blows upon them, and they wither,  
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

<sup>25</sup> To whom then will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,  
calling them all by name;  
because he is great in strength,  
mighty in power,  
not one is missing.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,

'My way is hidden from the Lord,  
and my right is disregarded by my God?'

<sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.

<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;

<sup>31</sup> but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

**Song: "Faithful God" by I AM THEY**

I am surrounded  
On every side  
Can't see the light of day  
But I am persuaded  
Beyond all hope, You won't let go of me  
I stake my claim on every word You say  
You will not be late

I will sing through fire and thunder  
'Cause You are on my side, I trust You with my life  
I know my story, it isn't over  
Even against all odds  
You are a faithful God  
You're faithful God

The darkest of weather  
Though I can't see, I still believe You're good  
So I'm moving forward  
Through crashin' waves  
I know I'm safe with You  
You hold my life  
You hear my cry  
With every breath inside

I will sing through fire and thunder  
'Cause You are on my side, I trust You with my life  
I know my story, it isn't over  
Even against all odds  
For You are a faithful God  
That's who You are  
You are a faithful God

I am convinced that Your promises will hold together  
And I will dwell in the hope of Your love forever  
I am convinced that Your promises will hold together  
And I will dwell in Your love

And I will sing through fire and thunder  
'Cause You are on my side, I trust You with my life  
I know my story, it isn't over  
Even against all odds  
Oh, You are a faithful God (yeah)  
That's who You are

Oh, You are a faithful God  
Oh, You're faithful God

Songwriters: Matthew Hein / Colby Tyler Wedgeworth / Abbie R Folken  
Faithful God lyrics © Colby Wedgeworth Designee

### Questions to Consider

- Have you ever felt so tired and exhausted that you can't even think?
- What did you do? or What would you do if you ever feel this way?
- Have you ever completely failed at something? What did you do to move forward? or What would you do if you ever fail at something?
- Who are the people you can turn to when you need help moving forward in your life (like a coach, teacher, therapist, pastor, friend, family member)? Write down their names.
- What is your reaction to having God, who created the universe and everything in it, caring about you, today, in this moment, right where you are?

### Closing prayer

Creator God, thank you for creating the universe, and for loving me. Thank you for being there always – when I am growing and when I hit the inevitable plateaus that will come on my journey. Help me to feel your presence today at camp. Amen

## D. SCRIPTURE STUDY

Isaiah 40 begins the last part of this book and it's all a poem! It begins with God offering comfort to people who are in exile. They are on the plateau in Babylon, far from their home.

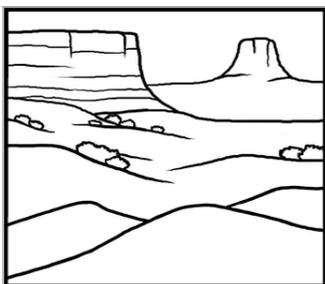
In John 21, Peter, after the resurrection, decided to go back to what he knew (his old plateau), and go fishing. How tempting is it for us in our spiritual life to go back instead of working through our plateaus?

In Psalm 22, the writer is suffering, helpless, exhausted and abandoned by his friends. All he can do is cry out to God. And God is there.

### Actual study section

You may want to start with this prayer, or a prayer of your own or one of the campers: God, help us to be fully present in this study today. Show us if we are on a plateau in our spiritual life. Open us so that we can be honest with ourselves and with our village today. Amen

## PLATEAUS



Just what is a plateau? In geography, a plateau is a flat, elevated landform that's higher than the surrounding area and is one of the four major landforms on Earth.

A personal plateau (either with your physical fitness, or in a sport, or in music, art, or theatre) is a period of time when you stop seeing progress in your goals. It can be frustrating, but it's a normal part of any personal journey.

A spiritual plateau is a period when someone feels comfortable with their spiritual progress and stops making further progress. Sometimes what you tried, totally blows up, and maybe you feel like you should just quit, instead of seeing it as a plateau and an opportunity to learn and go forward. While it can feel like going in circles, a plateau can actually be a good place to be on the spiritual journey. Some say that plateaus are meant to help people develop stronger faith and resilience.

Have you ever been on a plateau, geographically, personally, or spiritually? What did that plateau feel like to you?

Have you ever seen a family member or a friend experience a plateau? Were you able to help them? Why or why not?

If you want to move off of a plateau geographically, you must go down on one side. If you want to move off a plateau in personal growth, you will most likely need some help. You can watch a video, or social media. Or you can ask someone for help: a coach, mentor, teacher, counselor, pastor, friend, or family member who may give you suggestions and be willing to walk with you as you move beyond this plateau.

Take a moment and write down at least three names of people who you can ask for help. Now, take another moment and write down the names of at least two people who can ask you for help.

Have you ever been in a place where you find your mind and heart filled with negative self-talk? (Things like: I am not good enough, I'm a failure, I am stupid, I'm not likable?) How did this negative self-talk make you feel? What did you do to move beyond this time? Did anyone help you?

Have you ever totally bombed, or completely failed at something? Who was there for you? How did they help you?

When we are on a plateau, there are things we can do to move forward. One thing is to give ourselves the grace to realize that we are loved by our eternal God. We can see that we are striving to become a better human.

We can recognize that we are not perfect and we never will be, and that's okay! Here are some other things that can help to get us off of a spiritual plateau, if we find we are on one:

- **Exercise your faith:** Step outside of your comfort zone and try something new.
- **Determine the root cause:** A lack of motivation? A past failure?
- **Remember that you aren't the best judge:** Your feelings don't necessarily reflect your true spiritual state.
- **Trust that God is at work:** God uses plateaus to help people grow spiritually.
- Some say that there are three major plateaus on the path to spiritual development:
- **Baptism:** The beginning of the journey
- **Christian Growth:** The process of learning about God

- **Spiritual graduate school:** The stage where people learn about the role of mysteries, miracles, and signs in spiritual development

When we move forward and overcome that plateau, we can celebrate!

Let's dig into the Bible and find some examples of plateaus and how people overcame them...  
(You may want to read around the group, or you may want one or more people to read this passage.)

Isaiah 40: 21-31

<sup>21</sup> *Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?*

<sup>22</sup> *It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;  
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to live in;*

<sup>23</sup> *who brings princes to naught,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.*

<sup>24</sup> *Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,  
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,  
when he blows upon them, and they wither,  
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.*

<sup>25</sup> *To whom then will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.*

<sup>26</sup> *Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
Who created these?*

*He who brings out their host and numbers them,  
calling them all by name;  
because he is great in strength,  
mighty in power,  
not one is missing.*

<sup>27</sup> *Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,  
'My way is hidden from the Lord,  
and my right is disregarded by my God'?*

<sup>28</sup> *Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.*

<sup>29</sup> *He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.*

<sup>30</sup> *Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;*

<sup>31</sup> *but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.*

If you look at Isaiah 40 in most Bibles, you will see that the lines are indented which lets us know that these words in the original Hebrew were poetry. Our Bible translators let us know this by indenting the lines.

There is a very marked change in the book of Isaiah beginning with chapter 40, from here to end of this book, it's all poetry! And, with this poetry, the words change dramatically. Verse 1 states, *Comfort, O comfort my people says your God.*

What an amazing thing to hear! The nation of Judah had been totally destroyed by Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar II. The temple was destroyed in Jerusalem and the brightest and best humans were taken to Babylon. There they felt abandoned, alone, and afraid. They were sure that their failure as followers of God would keep them out of God's love and grace forever. Not so!

Chapter 40 begins a change for this nation. In history, the following chapters were probably written after Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon. This would eventually bring the Judeans home to Jerusalem where they would rebuild the temple.

Yet here and now in this chapter, this nation of Judah was still in Babylon and still on the plateau of doubt and fear – conquered, scared, and in the worst of times, God speaks to them with words of comfort and hope.

Questions for discussion:

- What does this passage of Scripture tell us about God? (All answers can be affirmed! Looking at this passage, God is eternal. God sees all of our days – the powerful and the lowly. God is with us and gives us strength!)
- What does this passage tell us about ourselves? (Here all kinds of answers can be welcomed.)
- Why do you think that this writer repeats the questions: Have you not known? Have you not heard? (This phrase is a message of comfort to the Israelites who are in exile, encouraging them to trust in God's ability to restore them despite their current situation.)
- Have you ever helped someone off a plateau? How did you feel when that happened, or how do you think you would feel?
- Have you ever totally failed at something? What helped you to move forward? Was your faith a part of this experience? Why or why not?

#### OTHER BIBLE PASSAGES

John 21:1-14.

Read this passage together in the way that is best for your village.

Peter goes back to the plateau he knew best – fishing! So often in our own growth, we do just what Peter did, go back to something familiar.

Why do you think Peter went fishing? (accept all answers – they could be really revealing!) In this story, the disciples didn't have any luck all night long. Then Jesus showed up and everything changed. Why?

What would you have done if you were one of the disciples after the death and resurrection of Jesus? What do we do, as disciples of Jesus?

## **Psalm 22**

Psalm 22 has two main parts: (1) a prayer for help in verses 1-21a; and (2) a song of praise in verses 21b-31.

This Psalm is a very strong link between the Old Testament and the death of Jesus. Many congregations use this Psalm on Good Friday.

Supposedly written by David, he was on a plateau of feeling abandoned by God starting with the very words Jesus quoted on the cross, “My God, my God! Why have you abandoned me?”  
Have you ever felt abandoned?  
What did you do during this time?

This psalm ends with praise. Why do you think the author did this?  
What can you do, who can you turn to, when you feel abandoned?  
What can you do, who can you turn to, when you feel full of thanksgiving?

### **Closing Prayer**

Amazing God, we are so grateful for this time of study and conversation. Be with us for the rest of this day, and with what we’ve learned here about plateaus, help us to recognize them, find the necessary people to help us through them, and even in those plateaus, give you thanks for them!  
In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## **RELATED STORIES OF OVERCOMING PLATEAUS THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL**

### ● **The Marathon Runner:**

A dedicated runner had been hitting a wall at the 20-mile mark in every marathon, unable to break through to a faster pace. After analyzing his training, he discovered he was neglecting proper nutrition during long runs. By incorporating strategic fueling, he managed to conquer the plateau and finish his next race with a personal best time.

### ● **The Musician's Breakthrough:**

A talented guitarist had been stuck playing at the same level for years, feeling uninspired and frustrated. He decided to explore a new genre of music, taking lessons from a different style of player. This exposed him to fresh techniques and perspectives, allowing him to break through the plateau and create more dynamic music.

### ● **The Business Owner's Pivot:**

A small business owner was struggling to increase sales despite consistent marketing efforts. By conducting thorough market research, they realized their product was not aligned with current customer needs. They decided to pivot their product line, introducing new features that resonated more strongly with their target audience, leading to a significant sales boost.

### ● **The Student's Learning Leap:**

A high school student was consistently scoring average grades in math, feeling stuck and unable to progress further. With the help of a tutor who identified learning gaps, they focused on targeted practice and developed new study strategies, enabling them to significantly improve their performance in the subject.

### ● **The Athlete's Mental Resilience:**

A professional tennis player experienced a significant slump in their performance after a major injury. By working with a sports psychologist, they learned to manage their anxiety and regain their mental focus on the court, allowing them to gradually return to their previous level of play.

## **STUDY OUTLINE**

1. Open with prayer
2. Talk about what a plateau is (geographically, personally, spiritually). Depending on the group, this could take just a brief time, and other groups may take longer. Focus your time on the spiritual plateaus.
3. Do Plateau art and/or Thanking God for you activity
4. Have campers find Isaiah 40:21 in their Bibles and read it together in a manner that is appropriate for your village.
5. Read through or talk about the history of this chapter and why it was so important for the Judeans.
6. Answer the questions and accept all answers!
7. Have campers find John 21:1-14 in their Bibles and read it together in a manner that is appropriate for your village.
8. Answer the questions
9. Read some of the stories of overcoming plateaus
10. Do the Spiritual Plateau Busters activity
11. Have campers find Psalm 22 in their Bibles and read it together in a manner that is appropriate for your village.
12. Answer the questions.
13. Close with prayer.

## **E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

### **ROLE PLAY IDEAS**

Spiritual Plateau busters

Have two campers get together to figure out how reading the Bible can break a spiritual plateau.

Have two more campers get together to figure out how prayer can break a spiritual plateau.

Have two more campers get together to figure out how doing acts of service can break a spiritual plateau.

Have two more campers get together to figure out how going to worship can break a spiritual plateau.

Each couplet can act out, draw out, or talk in dialogue about their particular means.

Talk about what you experienced as a group. Can these ideas be added to your tool kit for the week?

### **ACTION IDEAS**

Plateau art

Give each camper a piece of paper and have them draw a plateau and then decorate it with words or pictures that help them to think about their plateau(s), and who will help them get through this time.

Share it with the group!

### **Thanking God for you!**

Make a word art page of all the people you can count on when you hit a plateau. Do this in one color.

Then, add with another color, all of the people who can count on you when they hit a plateau.

Thanking God for you, part 2!

Write a thank you note to the people on your word art page. Mail it or give the note to them when you get home.

If things aren't going well in the study, I would stop and ask the campers if they recognize when they are stuck, like with a math problem, or a reading assignment, and ask what they did to get over it.

What did that feel like? What did it take to unstick you?

Honestly evaluate your spiritual life at this moment. How close do I feel to God? Why is this the case? Do I have a desire to draw closer to God? If so, why, and if not, why not?

Think long and hard and come up with at least five names of people who have helped you in your life's journey. Silently say a prayer of thanks for them.

#### **F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

- activities – have campers “spot check” each other throughout the day for possible plateaus.
- morning worship – call out the names of people who have been an encourager to the camper. Call out one name of a person who they can encourage when they go down the hill, or today in camp
- evening worship ideas – have campers write down at least 1 person who can be an encourager for them and at least 1 person they can encourage on small slips of paper. Toss them into the fire during evening worship.
- all camp evening activities – capture the flag encouraging everyone to participate as they are able.
- any types of meals used to emphasize the theme -

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

Isaiah 43 (#43)

Just a Closer Walk with Thee (#93)

Those Who Wait on the Lord (#101)

Your Everlasting Love (#42)

Other new songs: *Stand in Faith* by Danny Groky on Spotify

Any supporting stories: see above, from Google Generative AI

#### **H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS**

The idea of a plateau may be hard for some Juniors, but the idea of being stuck isn't! Talking about times when the campers were stuck – like with a math problem, or learning to spell certain words, or how to be better at your favorite sport, or in an art medium, or in music practice. How did you get unstuck? Who helped you?

## **I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS**

Senior Highs will be even more familiar with plateaus than Jr. Highs, simply because they have had more experience with them. I think sticking with the Bible study and not focusing so much on the activities would be a good way to go deeper for high schoolers, but please do not neglect the naming of their encouragers in the activities. Helping Senior Highs to create their list of encouragers is essential for when they leave the mountain. Also, helping Senior Highs to realize how they, too, can be an encourager to others is equally essential for when they leave the mountain.

## **J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:21-31

**Reflection:** Today, we are talking about plateaus with your camper(s). There are 3 main definitions of a plateau. One is based in geography (a flat, elevated landform that is higher than the surrounding area and is one of the four major landforms on Earth); one is personal (when you stop seeing progress in your goals be they fitness/athletic, art, or musical); one is spiritual (when we get comfortable with our spiritual progress, start going in circles, or something totally blows up). We are concerned this week about spiritual plateaus. In a CrossFit gym, when someone hits a plateau, someone comes alongside you to help you out. They give suggestions, encouragement, offer new practices and a listening ear as you reach your next personal goal. In the Jesus community we, too, are a Cross † Fit community, marked by the cross of Jesus and called to be there for each other. So, when we hit plateaus in our faith journey, it is important for us to know those people we can reach out to for encouragement, and motivation to reach our next personal goal in faith.

The story from Isaiah 40 tells of people who were in captivity in Babylon and far from home. They were lonely and afraid. This poem reminds them that even though they really messed up, that God who is eternal was always with them, loving them and will empower them until they return home again. This 26 chapter long poem (from chapter 40 to the end of Isaiah), is filled with hope and encouragement and love.

**Activity:** Make a list of at least three people you can go to when you hit a spiritual plateau. Write down at least two people that you can be an encourager to. Then, write (or draw) a note to them and send it off!

**Prayer:** Eternal and loving God, thank you for being with us all the time! When we hit plateaus in our life, remind us that you are always there, and that you have sent us those people who can encourage and accompany us as we work our way through those plateaus. Amen.

## **K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION**

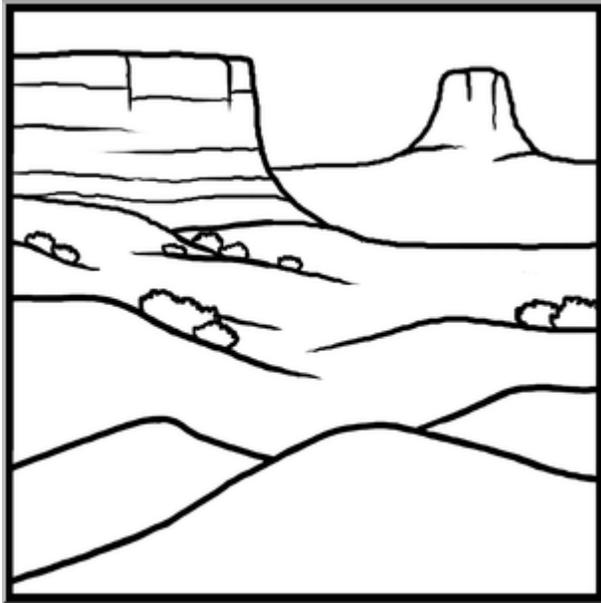
Dear Summer Staff, thank you for your hard work again this week! Your dedication to the campers and camp staffers is awesome! You are invited to ponder these questions:

- Have you hit a plateau this week in your spiritual life?
- Who can you ask to be your encourager? Accompanier?
- Who can you encourage?

- How are you caring for yourself this week?
- How are you caring for yourself this summer?

**What RESOURCES will the summer staff need?** In the resource box...Some pieces of paper for writing down names and some Thank You notes for the kids to write thank you's to their encouragers.

Copies of the mesa drawing below for campers to color and talk about.





**2025 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY**  
**CROSS+FIT**  
**DAY 4: CROSS+FIT: COMMUNITY**

**A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME**

When I went to college, I wanted a fresh start. I wanted to be myself, discover myself and I wanted to do what I wanted to do, not what I had always done. In middle school, I discovered my joy for running. I joined the cross country and track teams and began running. I had to start at the very beginning: learning running technique, how to breath, pacing myself and had to learn the workouts. We did it as a team, so I wasn't alone and I had other people there to help me. After running cross country and long distance track for seven years, I wanted to take a break. I went to college at California Lutheran University (Go Kingsmen and Regals!), but I decided I was not going to run cross country. I needed a break.

God works in mysterious and wonderful ways because after my first semester, I missed it and I wanted to run again. I decided I would run long distance track. I preferred cross country, but this would suffice. I talked to the long distance coach, who was also the cross country coach and he told me to join them for winter workouts in preparation for the track season, so I did. The first practice was a time trial to see where we were at physically and where we stood among the other runners. This helped the coach to determine what workouts each runner needed to get better and who would run together.

I showed up for the first workout and got to meet the other guys running. I had seen them before, but had not met them. They all had run cross country together and were already friends. I wasn't sure how I would fit in, so I just focused on what I knew and that was running. I wasn't there to compete against them, I was there to run and see where I fit in.

As we did the time trial we started at a good casual pace, running as a group, but as we went on and the pace picked up, the group started to spread apart. It got to the point where I was running with one other guy, Chris. I wanted to keep up with him, so I made sure to run his pace and just run together. We were almost to the end and we were hauling (running fast). When we saw the finish line, we both began to sprint and we ended up finishing together at the same time.

I didn't realize how fast we were going and if you had asked me to run that pace, I would have laughed at you. In conversation with Chris afterwards, we blamed each other for pushing each other to go faster saying we were just trying to keep up with the other. It made me realize the power of running with someone and the positive effects we could have on each other. This started a friendship that I couldn't have ever imagined and it built a community of long lasting relationships. I continued to run with the team and became friends with all of the guys, it was such a great community. Reflecting back on it, I realized that this is what I was missing. I had friends in college and I had community, but being on a team with this group of guys was a different kind of community. I couldn't explain it at the time, but it was what I was looking for.

We began to hang out after practices, having dinner together and they even invited me to go to church with them. We went to a local non-denominational church that had a Sunday evening service for college students. It was awesome, there were 500 college students who went to this

service from the surrounding colleges. They had a great band and a good pastor. There was a group of us who went together. We came for the service and we left right after the service. It was great worship.

I had finally found the community I wanted and desired. I was running again, I was going to a church I enjoyed and I had a good group of friends. It wasn't the kind of community I was looking for because I didn't know what that looked like, but I had found it.

All was going great...until, after two months of running, I ended up overworking my knee. It was a sort of PLATEAU, well actually a speed bump or even a wall that I hit. After talking to the trainer, it was decided that I could do the elliptical for the rest of the season to exercise and not put as much pressure on my knee. Well, I was taking English class and literature is not my jam. I needed to spend a lot of time on the class, reading and doing homework, so I decided to just quit track. If I couldn't run, there was no reason to spend my time in the gym without the team. The positive was, I still stayed friends with the team and four of us decided that we were going to room together the next year, our sophomore year.

As freshman year was coming to an end, I wanted to find something to do during the summer. One day on campus, there were a bunch of camps that came to recruit. After conversation, I decided that I wanted to be a camp counselor for the summer and spent the summer at Lutheran Retreats, Camps and Conferences (LRCC) in the outskirts of Los Angeles, CA. There too, I found a great community and I began to understand what is true community, which began to form the things I did.

As I went back to college for my sophomore year, I sought deeper relationships with friends and tried to form a deep community. I moved in early because my roommates were running cross country again, I decided to not run again that year. When I got back to school, we went back to the church we went to freshman year, but it didn't fill me the same way as it did the year before. I got invited to go to the Lutheran student congregation on campus with our campus ministry. It was a much smaller group of people, but what I got was a lot more than worship. It was a group of people who cared about each other, encouraged one another, supported one another and kept each other accountable.

This is when it all started to connect for me. What I was looking for was not just friends and not just a community, but I was looking for a group of friends and a community that would be there for me to help me become a better person, help me to grow in my faith and knowledge of God. They were there encouraging me in the transformation that would take place through my faith and relationship with God. I realized I needed people who would encourage me, support me, keep me accountable and help me reach my goals. I realized that I also need to be that for others because they needed me too. They need me to encourage them, support them, keep them accountable and help them reach their goals. This was true community. This is the kind of community we all need in our lives and this is the kind of community we experience in the church.

The next year, my junior year, my roommates encouraged me and got me to run cross country with them. It was the best experience because of the kind of community we had built. We wanted the best for each other, we encouraged each other and supported each other along the way as the early mornings got tough, as we got tired and as we felt like we couldn't go on.

In the middle of my junior year, my mom got sick and ended up in the hospital. She was diagnosed with cancer and I struggled. I struggled in my faith and questioned why and where is God? How could this happen to her? I had hit a plateau and felt as if I was going backwards. You know what I did? I turned to my community in the church. I got much love and support from my friends, but my church community supported me, loved me and encouraged me where I needed it most. They pushed me to keep going to church, to keep asking questions and reminded me of God's love and the hope we have in God. They walked with me, checked in on me and kept me accountable.

In life, we often feel as if we are competing against each other and we are in competition with others, but that is not community. What worked so well for Chris and I when we ran is that we pushed each other to go faster, to get stronger and be better runners. We didn't compete against each other, but we did it together. We encouraged each other to get better, train harder and get to the next level. Eventually Chris got faster than me and I was so excited for him and continued to encourage and support him.

Community is not just having people in your life or being part of a group or church. What I realized, attending the non-denominational church my freshman year, is that what I needed in a church was not to just show up and attend a service, but I needed a small group or a community within to encourage me in my faith and relationship with God. To push me in my thinking and understanding and to help me when I was down in my faith or doubting God. A community is a group that encourages and motivates us in our practice or training, and supports us when we hit plateaus to get over them and get past them. This is what helps us to reach transformation and be transformed in our lives and in our faith.

As you do Bible study this day you will help the campers understand the difference between a community of people and a community of faith. For we don't just need people or friends in our life, we need people who will encourage us, support us, keep us accountable and help us to reach our goals that lead us to transformation. We need the church and we need the community of the church when it comes to practicing our faith and when we hit the plateaus of our faith. The campers will experience this kind of community here at RTALC and it is then our encouragement to help the campers determine what kind of community they will be able to find and be a part of when they go back home. Maybe they will have to help shape and form this kind of community.

Furthermore, as you work here at camp this summer, you are part of this amazing community. I invite and encourage you to discover who encourages you, supports you and keeps you accountable and who can you encourage, support and keep accountable? If someone else is doing this for you, do it for them, but also find someone else whom you can encourage, support and keep accountable. In doing so, you will form a deep and enriching community.

## **B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY**

- Campers will come to understand the importance of a community who encourages, supports, keeps each other accountable.
- Campers will begin to think about where they can find this kind of community at home.
- Campers will reflect on who can be part of this community for them: who can support them and who they can support.

## **C. MORNING WATCH**

### **Common Welcome**

Good morning! Welcome to a brand-new day at camp, where we gather as a community in Christ to grow, learn, and be transformed by God's love. Today, we invite you to see how God is working in your life and in the world around you. Together, we'll explore what it means to live boldly in faith, share the good news of Jesus, and care for creation and one another as God calls us. Let's start this day with joy, curiosity, and a spirit ready for transformation.

### **Introduction to the Day**

Faith is a personal relationship with God, one that grows and deepens through practice; the practices we learned about on Tuesday. While faith can be done on your own, it is intended to be done in community. Just as one can play an instrument, sing, swim, run or workout on your own, it is much more fun and beneficial to do as part of a community. This kind of community does not just gather, but it encourages each other, supports each other and keeps each other accountable. As a result, we learn, grow, practice and are transformed.

### **Why we chose the Passage and Scripture**

Being part of a Christian community is not just about gathering together and having fun. We need the community to lean on and to push us. As a community we are there for each other. This is exactly what Paul is telling the church at Thessalonica. He is encouraging them as a community of faith to be there for one another, to appreciate each other and their leaders, and encourage those who need their support or are lacking in faith. How special it is when someone reaches out to us in our time of need or when we are stuck in our faith.

*“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

**1 Thessalonians 5:11-18**

### **Song: “Lean on Me” by Danny Gokey & Evan Craft**

If you're tired and hurting  
Weighed down by your burdens  
The future looks uncertain  
I'll always be there for ya

I've learned Love is a verb  
It's never afraid of the hurt  
If you can't shoulder the world  
You can

Lean on me

If you don't feel strong  
Whenever you fall  
I'll be the one to help you up  
When you can't carry on

A tu lado estaré, oh  
Nunca te abandonaré, no  
I'll be there by your side  
So you know you can

Lean on me  
Lean on me

Feels like  
We're all out for número uno  
But Jesus People got different rules, oh  
But we're all for one and one for all, yeah  
Together we rise or together we fall

We know Love is a verb  
We're not afraid of the hurt  
If you can't shoulder the world  
You can

Lean on me  
If you don't feel strong  
Whenever you fall  
I'll be the one to help you up  
When you can't carry on

A tu lado estaré, oh  
Nunca te abandonaré, no  
I'll be there by your side  
So you know you can

Lean on me  
You know you can  
Lean on me  
Lean on me

Call my name  
Lámame  
Cuenta conmigo  
Yo soy tu amigo

Call my name  
Lámame  
I'm there by your side  
Through day and through night

If you don't feel strong  
Whenever you fall  
I'll be the one to help you up  
When you can't carry on  
You can

Lean on me  
If you don't feel strong  
Whenever you fall  
I'll be the one to help you up  
When you can't carry on

A tu lado estaré, oh  
Nunca te abandonaré, no  
I'll be there by your side  
So you know you can

Lean on me  
Call my name  
Llámame  
Lean on me  
Cuenta conmigo  
Yo soy tu amigo

Lean on me  
Call my name  
Llámame  
Lean on me  
I'm there by your side  
Through day and through night  
Lean on me

### **Questions for Consideration**

- Where do you find community? What do you enjoy about the community?
- How does a church community differ from other communities?
- Has there been a time you have leaned on someone for help or support? How did it feel?
- Has there been a time someone has leaned on you for help or support? How did it feel?
- What role does God play in a church community and in the relationships of this kind of community?

### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious and loving God, I give you thanks for the gift of community. As we have formed a community here at Rainbow Trail, I pray that you will bless me with a community like this at home; one full of love, encouragement, support and accountability, always centered in You. In Jesus name I pray, amen.

## **D. SCRIPTURE STUDY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Cross+Fit! What have you learned over the last three days? You have been invited to take part in a transformation. This transformation will lead you to a deeper understanding of God and a deeper relationship with God. You have learned about specific practices you can do that will guide you towards this transformation. You have learned that you will likely hit plateaus along the way and the importance of keeping your eye on the goal and having people help you get over it. Today, we will be looking at the importance of having a specific kind of community to accompany us, walk with us along the way, along this journey of transformation.

**PRAY:** Let's start with a word of prayer. Thank you God for bringing us all together here at Rainbow Trail. We are grateful for this time to be able to come together as a group to learn about you, grow in our faith and encourage and support one another. We have formed community and ask that you bless this time we have together as we study Your Word and learn about community. Amen.

**CONVERSATION:** What is community? Where do you find community at home? (School, sports, neighbor friends, church...) Why do we need community? What would life be like if you lived alone or didn't have others in your life? Do you have a faith community that you are part of? Do you have a group of people you hang out with at church, in Sunday school or confirmation?

We all need community, community is important. We need people and social interaction. In our lives today, community is everywhere, but is not the same kind of community. We can also have a false sense of community with social media. We have interaction on social media, but it is not a true community (more on social media community in the I. Ideas to Adjust up for Senior Highs).

Within our example of CrossFit, one of the reasons people do CrossFit is because of the community. You make friends, encourage one another and push each other. You are willing to keep going, do the extra reps and take that next step because of the community. You have people who are there cheering you on, telling you you can do it and to not give up. With these voices in our ears, we do it, we keep going and push ourselves further than we would have if we were on our own.

Imagine going to the gym on your own, shooting hoops by yourself, practicing your instrument without ever playing with someone else, or running a race without other competitors or people cheering you on. Whatever you do, it isn't much fun to never have anyone do it with you. Even in the sports or arts we are practicing on our own, we are usually preparing for a competition, recital or show and we have a goal in mind. We are working towards that goal. In faith, that goal is transformation of ourselves, our faith, our relationship with God.

When it comes to faith, we also need community. If we try to do and have faith on our own, it just isn't the same, it is so much better to do in community. The faith community is one who will encourage you, support you, keep you accountable and help you reach your goals that lead you to transformation. We need the church and we need the church community when it comes to practicing our faith. When we attend Bible studies, Sunday school, confirmation or youth group we learn with and from other people. They ask questions that will help us to understand or will

push us deeper into the topic or text. We are also able to ask questions and learn from those who have already learned and studied the Bible. They then are able to support and encourage you in your study and life of faith.

They then are able to help and support you when you hit the plateaus of your faith. They are able to encourage you, challenge you and push you to keep going in your faith. There are times when you may struggle in your faith, doubt in God, ask why or have a hard time understanding. When this happens, you are able to lean on someone in your church community. They will be able to talk it out with you, pray with you, give their perspective, answer some of your questions and possibly help you to understand.

We should never be afraid to ask questions, wonder or suggest an idea because those are the things that help us to grow and understand, even if we are wrong. It is okay to be wrong because then we see what the truth is and come to a deeper understanding of God and grow closer to God.

This is exactly what we are doing right now in Bible study! Encourage the campers to ask questions and wonder during this time. So, let's get to it and enter into God's word and allow God to open the scriptures to us.

## **BACKGROUND TO HEBREWS**

In the letter to the Hebrews, the author (the author is not officially known, but often attributed to Paul) is writing to the Hebrew Christians (three for the Hebrew hot children!) who have been considering returning to Judaism. This could be because of their lack of understanding or willingness to take the time to study and learn. Hebrews was written to teach them about Jesus and help them to understand who Jesus was and who he came to be. The book ends with explaining Christian fellowship with action.

Let's read and see how Hebrews explains what Christian community should look like for the Hebrews.

**READ:** Hebrews 10:23-25

*"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

What are the Hebrews being encouraged to do?

- To keep their faith in Jesus.
- To encourage one another to love and good deeds. What does this mean? To love and serve others.
- To not neglect to meet together. To be part of the community and be an active part of it
- To keep each other accountable, if they don't show up, follow up with them.

What do you see as the purpose of community? What makes a community, a community? What makes a community of faith?

## ACTIVITY:

Brainstorm together, the things that make a true community of faith. You can ask, what are the things that make up a faith community? What things are required to be in community? What are you looking for when you want to be part of a community? What things help you to become part of a community and what things lead to a dysfunctional community?

Now, we are talking about a community of faith. You can also talk about the difference between a school community, a team community, etc. to a community of faith to understand how a community of faith differs from other kinds of community. Some of the ideas shared may be true for some people and not true for others. Talk through those things and why it is important for one person and not another. Here are some ideas:

- **People** - What kind of people? People of faith? Do they have to have a certain level of faith? The great thing about a faith community is that it is full of people on all levels of faith; including those who may lack faith or in doubt. This is when the people with more faith are able to support, care, encourage and challenge.
- **Gather Together** - In order to be a community you have to gather together regularly, which forms relationships.
- **God** - Matthew 18:20 tells us, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." We need the presence of God who pours out His love and grace upon us.
- **Care** - I believe to be a community, you have to care for one another; otherwise, the community will fall apart or people won't attend. When we care for one another we encourage each other, support each other, keep each other accountable and challenge each other.

How do we make community happen? Is there a faith community you are already part of? Is there a faith community you are part of, but the community piece is not there? Do you need to help form it?

What do we need to do to be part of the community?

- Show up! In order to be part of the community, you have to show up and show up regularly.
- Care for each other by encouraging each other, supporting each other, keeping each other accountable and challenging each other.
- Follow up when someone isn't at church, confirmation, Sunday school, practice or even school, you can call them, text them, snap chat them and say, hey we missed you today, you okay? This shows that you care for them. By doing this, you are being a good friend.
- When someone is not being a good friend, you can keep them accountable and encourage them by saying, hey that's not cool. I hope you wouldn't do that to me. Or how would you feel if I did that to you?
- When someone is in need, you can say hey, want to volunteer with me or I am going to go help out, you want to do it with me?

When we are in community and have formed relationships/friendships with people, it may seem weird, but encouraging them, supporting them, keeping them accountable and helping them be their best self leads to a deeper relationship and stronger community.

## **BACKGROUND TO 1 THESSALONIANS**

Let's hear how Paul encourages the church at Thessalonica to be a community of faith. There are two letters that Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica called Thessalonians. They are titled 1st Thessalonians and 2nd Thessalonians. 1st Thessalonians was written to strengthen the Thessalonian Christians in their faith and give them the assurance of Christ's return. The Apostle Paul is the author of Thessalonians, writing in approximately 51 AD. It is considered to be one of the earliest letters, which Paul writes from Corinth.

Let's read what Paul has to tell the Thessalonians about community:

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 5:11-18

*“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

**Ask the campers:**

- What did you hear in this passage?
  - Encourage one another and build up each other.
  - Respect those who are working on their faith among you.
- What does it mean to “admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them?”
  - We should help, encourage, support and lift up those who are struggling in their faith, relationship with God or in their practices.
- When you are in class, are there kids who struggle, don't get what is being taught or are getting behind? If you know the material, could you help them? Help them to understand or explain it the way you understand it so that they may get it?

**Hear the passage again from Eugene Peterson's The Message:**

*So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it.*

**12-13** *And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love!*

**13-15** *Get along among yourselves, each of you doing your part. Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs. And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out.*

**16-18** *Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live.*

**Ask the campers:** What did you hear this time? Anything different?

Are these things Paul recommends things you can practice as well?

What would your community look like if these things happened? Would you have the courage to encourage those who are lagging behind in their faith or knowledge of God? Could you encourage them in their praying or helping others by serving? Don't tell them they are lazy, lagging behind, don't know enough about God.

How would you respond if someone encouraged you in your faith or encouraged you to pray to God on your own or to read the Bible? What if they said they'd do it with you?

**ACTIVITY:** Practice encouragement, support and accountability.

What are some ways you can encourage someone who did not show up to youth group/church one night?

- "I missed you tonight" or "I wished you were at youth group/church tonight."
- "I'm glad you are my friend."
- "Hey (friend), how's it going? What were you up to tonight?"
- What is something you can ask someone about their faith journey?
- "What do you hope to get out of church?"
- "Have you ever thought about reading the Bible or praying at home?"
- "What are ways you practice your faith?"
- What is something you can say to someone who is struggling with their faith, with one of their goals or experiencing a plateau?
- You can share a Bible verse with them: A verse on hope, trust, strength, love...
- You can pray for them and let them know you are praying for them or ask them how you can pray for them.
- You can talk to them and listen to what they are going through.

How does this differ from other communities you are part of? Is this a kind of community you would want to be part of? What would it take to be part of this kind of community. This is what a faith community should look like. If your faith community doesn't look like this, you can talk to your pastor or youth director and see how you can help to create this culture in your community.

Remember, when we keep others accountable or challenge others in their faith or actions, we have to do it with love and out of love. The way we say things matters and it can be the difference between someone seeing it and responding to it in love to responding in sadness, anger and defensiveness. However, it is an important piece to being a community of faith. This is what makes a faith community so amazing and what keeps people coming to church. We all need this kind of community in our life!

### **CLOSING:**

The greatest thing about being part of this kind of community is that you do not have to change who you are to be part of this community. Everyone is different and everyone is at a different level of faith. Everyone needs someone to lift them up and encourage them and we need to be that for others as well.

A community that encourages, supports, and holds each other accountable is one of the greatest gifts you can have on your faith journey. It's a place where people walk alongside one another through life's ups and downs. Life is so busy and there are so many things we don't think we have time to go to church, but that is exactly why we need to go to church. So do not neglect finding a community and regularly attending!

## **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Let us pray. Thank you God for the gift of community. As Jesus called his disciples to follow him, he created community and after the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles created a community of believers. Help us to see the importance of a faith community and be part of one to learn, encourage, support and keep each other accountable. May we find this kind of community for the sake of our transformation in faith. Lead and guide these campers, Lord, to this place when they go home. May it be a blessing to them, their life and their faith. Amen.

## **E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

### **Calling and Life of the Disciples**

You may want to develop the idea of community more and what Christian community looks like. You can begin with how Jesus created community by calling his disciples and how they were in community together.

Read Matthew 4:18-22

*“As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.”*

The disciples then spent every day together as they followed Jesus. They ate together, traveled together and witnessed the ministry, teachings, healings and miracles of Jesus.

### **Disciples Go from Students to Teachers**

The community of the disciples is also a great example of the progression of faith and support of the community. When Jesus called the disciples they were students, learning from Jesus. Jesus taught them, challenged them and showed them how to live as a follower of Jesus. After Jesus’ resurrection, God sent them the Holy Spirit and sent them out into the world to be the teachers and spread the good news of Jesus Christ. As a result, they formed community and they became the leaders who taught the people and led by example, showing them how to live as a follower of Jesus.

This first community formed as a result of the disciples teaching, immediately after they received the Holy Spirit, on what we know as the Day of Pentecost.

Read Acts 2:42-47

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”*

What an impact these disciples, now apostles, made! They were now doing the work of God as they were now the ones being sent out to proclaim the good news of Jesus. Their teachings were impactful and caused the people to believe, be baptized and even to live together in community.

Have you ever gone from being a student to a teacher? Maybe you were asked to help someone in your class to show them how to do something and therefore, teach them. When you become knowledgeable in a subject or topic, you are then able to help those who do not know or understand. If so, how did it make you feel? Did you also understand the topic even more because you were teaching it?

### **Another Great Example of Living as a Christian and in Community**

As Paul travels around the North Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea spreading the good news of Jesus, the people who have come to believe in him are also forming faith communities and spreading the good news of Jesus. This is the case for the faith community in Colossae. Unfortunately they are struggling with errors of the church with “being infiltrated by religious relativism, with some believers attempting to combine elements of paganism and secular philosophy with Christian doctrine” (Life Application Bible).

Paul writes the letter of Colossians to the church at Colossae (a city in Asia Minor) to correct them of the errors and to show them they have everything they need in Christ. He helps them to understand that Jesus came for all people and encouraged them to live in the way of Jesus, following Jesus’ ways.

Read Colossians 3:11-17

*“In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

How does this differ from the other ways Paul has taught the community of faith to live?

- Paul speaks more of Christian virtues.
- Paul is giving more of an introduction to Christian living and being a follower of Christ since he has not taught them before.

This is a great explanation of how to live a life of faith and in community with others; founded in love, forgiveness and gratitude.

## **F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

- Community TV Series where a lawyer, Jeff, has his degree revoked and he is forced to go back to school. He goes to Greendale Community College. He invents a study group to get a girl to join, but ends up creating community.

- Community building activities - your group may not need this on this day, but could be a good time filler.
- Comparison of a community that does not get along and a community that cares, supports, encourages and challenges each other in love.

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

Songs:

- They'll Know We Are Christians #29
- Lean on Me #63
- My Lighthouse #97
- Go Where I send Thee #17
- Sanctuary # 37

## **H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS**

- For juniors, you may want to begin with helping them understand the meaning of community. You can talk about friend groups they have and where they have made friends. Maybe they have separate friend groups: school friends, church friends, friends from a team or group they are part of. Help them to understand the communities they are part of, not just the community they live in.
- Talk about how Jesus formed community with the disciples. Jesus began by calling his disciples to follow him, which created community. As Jesus called more people and more people became his disciples and followed him, the community grew.

## **I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS**

- We all need community. We need a place to belong, where people love us and accept us for who we are. Be careful to not make this Bible study solely about how we have been hurt by community, but it is important to talk about the fact that a community of people can hurt us or cast us out. The thing about a community is that it is made up of people: people who are not perfect, people who sin and people who hurt others with their words and actions. Sometimes it's intentional and other times it's unintentional, but it still hurts.
- You do not have to dwell on how a community has hurt them because you want to get to the importance of community and what a good and healthy community looks like. So if you do get into this conversation about how a community has hurt them then talk about what they did about it. Did they leave the community? If so, where did they find another community. If they were hurt by the actions of members of the community, were they able to address it and was there forgiveness. Take a moment to talk about forgiveness and the importance of forgiveness: accepting that a wrong has been done by the person who has hurt another person and being able to forgive that person.
- Where do you find community? Can community be created virtually? How have the sr. high youth experienced a false sense of community with social media? What is the

difference between a virtual community and community where people meet face to face and you can have more candid conversations?

- Have you ever had someone ask you where you were when you missed a gathering or event? How did that make you feel? Was it nice to know that someone noticed you weren't there or that they missed you being there? When we or someone else is not there at an event or gathering, it changes the dynamic of the community. A community is truly whole with everyone present, so it is good and important to encourage people to come and join.
- Prayer partner or accountability partner: Talk to the sr. high youth about what it means to have a prayer partner or accountability partner. These are powerful and meaningful relationships. When you meet you can ask each other, how can I pray for you this week and then follow up with them when you see each other again to ask how things went or are going, for the thing you prayed for over them the last week. An accountability partner can encourage you and follow up with you when they were expecting you and you weren't able to go or when they didn't make it to an event. You can just let them know you missed them and check in on them.

## **J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:23-25, *“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

**Reflection:** On day 4, we talk about community and the importance of community in our lives and in our faith. When we are part of a community, we build relationships and have people who are able to care for us, support us throughout our lives, encourage us in our life, work and faith, and to keep us accountable when we are not showing up, making decisions that are not the best for us, someone else or the community. This is the kind of community Paul is talking about in his letter to the Hebrews.

**Activity:** Brainstorm together, the things that make a true community of faith. You can ask, what are the things that make up a faith community? What things are required to be community? What are you looking for when you want to be part of a community? What things help you to become part of a community and what things lead to a dysfunctional community?

**Prayer:** Let us pray. Thank you God for the gift of community. As Jesus called his disciples to follow him, he created a community and after the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles created a community of believers. Help us to see the importance of a faith community and be part of one to learn, encourage, support and keep each other accountable. May we find this kind of community for the sake of our transformation in faith. May our community be a blessing to us as a family. Amen.

## **K. SUMMER STAFF SECTION**

- What does your community look like this week?
- Who, in your community, have you not connected with lately? Is there someone who seems left out or on the outskirts of the community? What can you do to help pull them back into the community?
- Has someone in your community hurt you? What did you do? Letting them know that what they did or said hurt you can be powerful to reach understanding and forgiveness. This is how relationships can be restored.
- Have you found an accountability partner or prayer partner? Have you prayed for them this week or asked them how you can pray for them this next week? Would it help to have two people, one who can keep you accountable and one you can keep accountable?
- What do you need to do to be more part of the community or what can you do to strengthen the relationships of the people in your community?
- What ways are you able to continue to be community when the summer is over and you all leave this amazing place? Can you continue to be accountability partners or prayer partners?

**2025 RAINBOW TRAIL BIBLE STUDY**  
**CROSS+FIT**  
**DAY 5: CROSS+FIT: EQUIPPED!!!**

**A. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME**

**Matthew 7:24-27**

*“Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” NRSVUE*

Alright! Alright! Alright! Are we ready??? Runners take your mark. Runners...on your mark, get set, GO!!!! I have heard these words followed often by the sound of a pace gun multiple times in my hopes of running a particular race. I would love to tell you that most of those beginnings had this euphoria of “YES!”, “It is finally time!” I think that I have trained so hard, I have run ALL of my training schedules, I have broken in my expensive running or trail shoes, I had the best community to train with, and that coach from our last clinic was awesome! And yet, more often than not, I have the thought when that starting pistol scares me to move is: “What was I thinking of signing up for this race?” “Do I have what it takes?” “Did I run enough?” Then with a deep breath I take that first step and say: God’s got this. I then leaned into each of the races I completed: races where I was transformed, where I was reminded that practice was key, that I could move beyond the plateaus, and that community made me better.

Welcome dear ones to our last full day of camp. If you are like me, you may be asking “how did it go so fast?” “Why did the week seem so long and yet is over so quickly?” You may even be thinking “what was I thinking to come here?” You may be wondering “What is tomorrow going to be like?” We have been blessed with a full week of camp as we explored what it means to be transformed in a life of faith in Jesus Christ. You have shown up here at Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp and you have discovered some of the tools you can use in your own journey of becoming Cross+Fit for Jesus.

Friends, this week you learned from Pastor Jane that transformation may be intimidating with or without an all or nothing mindset. If we think we cannot do it all we will just not do it. Or we make it a simple task list. We learned that God wants our heart, not a list of tasks to be done. We learned we can rest in God’s love for each one of us. Transformation is ongoing. Transformation takes time.

You learned from Pastor Rod that we have the opportunity to practice many things that will guide us deeper into our faith with power from God. We can be patient in our faith journey. Our practice will impact our community. It will take a while, we are never done. Practice does not make perfect. Practice makes us more like Christ. We must try. It is okay when we fail. Just practice. Just try.

You learned from Pastor Pam that there will be plateaus in our faith journey. We may feel that our world is falling apart. We however have a promise: We will be given power and be renewed. We will run and not be weary. God's grace, hope, and love are always with us. We can encourage each other. God comes to stay.

And you learned from Pastor Brad that God works in mysterious ways in our lives. When we do not expect it, we may develop an amazing community. This community can push us. This community can encourage us. In an authentic community we look for accountability to help us meet our goals and we help others reach their goals. There is no competition. We walk alongside one another. What community will we look for?

Now it is time for us to intentionally gather our tools, pack our bags and head back home. Head down the mountain transformed in ways that may excite or even confuse folks in your lives. And dear ones you may be transformed in ways you never imagined. You may even not believe you are transformed. But as you go down the mountain, you are being sent with tools that can help you engage in your faith journey perhaps in ways you never have before. You have been introduced to some of the vitally important parts of training in your faith journey.

To help us gather and prepare to go, our text for this day is from the gospel of Matthew. Jesus is telling a parable about two builders, one who builds his house on a rock and another who builds on sand, showing us the importance of placing our faith, our lives on a solid foundation. We have learned this week that actively following Jesus' teachings and putting them into practice can be transformative. **But we have to engage.** For you see if we simply hear the words without acting on them, we too can crumble when faced with life's challenges, life's plateaus. If we have learned about our Cross+Fit tools but leave them behind here at camp, we will just fade away like the sand.

Let's hear today's scripture reading again from Matthew chapter 7 this time through the words of Eugene Peterson's translation that is called The Message:

"These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

"But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards."

Dear ones, you have been transformed this week and now what? What do we do with this understanding, this lived experience and how can we imagine what transformation means or will look like once we go down the mountain, once we return home?

Today as we begin to name our foundation of Jesus, we will hear who we are for others in our community, and as we concretely name the tools we have -- we name our transformation. Then we will gather our tools into one place, we will make sure we have specific steps we can take home to continue to use our tools and we will take time to see the gifts God has given to each of

us and name those for each other. Then we will bless our transformation, ask for God’s strength to go with us and bless each other on our way.

## **B. OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DAY OF THE STUDY**

- We will review what we learned about being transformed and what our foundation is as we read in Matthew 7:24-27.
- We will explore WHERE are you going to build when you leave this mountain?
- We will read about being equipped with the tools we have named this week and are putting in our equipment bag to take with us including the gifts named in Colossians 3:12: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
- We will hear how others see our tools, our gifts, and how we can use those at home.

## **C. MORNING WATCH**

### **Common Welcome**

Good morning! Welcome to a brand-new day at camp, where we gather as a community in Christ to grow, learn, and be transformed by God’s love. Today, we invite you to see how God is working in your life and in the world around you. Together, we’ll explore what it means to live boldly in faith, share the good news of Jesus, and care for creation and one another as God calls us. Let’s start this day with joy, curiosity, and a spirit ready for transformation.

### **Introduction to the day**

Today, on this last full day of camp, we will begin to explore WHERE we can build our lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ. We will hold that we have been transformed, that we have tools to take with us, and that we have a community to encourage and support us and that we are empowered by God’s spirit to be Cross+Fit.

### **Why we chose the Passage and Scripture**

It is important for us to name what our foundation is and what happens if we choose our foundation poorly. The foundation determines the ability for our structures to withstand the elements, the times when rain, floods and wind come into our lives threatening all we know. Jesus was a carpenter. He could speak as an architect, as an expert. He knows a strong foundation is critical.

### **Matthew 7:24-27**

*“Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” NRSVUE*

**Song: "My Feet Are on the Rock" by I AM THEY**

I can see the clouds roll in  
And I can feel the wind as they try to shake me  
I will not be moved  
My feet are on the Rock

I can feel the waters rise  
And I can hear the howling lies that haunt me  
Fear won't hold me now  
My feet are on the Rock

*Chorus*

When I feel my hope about to break  
I will cling to Your unchanging grace  
Let the waters come and the earth give way  
I'll be dancing in the rain!  
My feet are on the Rock

I can see the morning light  
I can feel the joy on the horizon  
Here my faith is found  
I stand in solid ground!

*Chorus*

When I feel my hope about to break  
I will cling to Your unchanging grace  
Let the waters come and the earth give way  
I'll be dancing in the rain!  
My feet are on the Rock

*Bridge*

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
So stomp your feet and clap your hands  
Our feet are on the Rock  
On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
So stomp your feet and clap your hands  
Our feet are on the Rock  
On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
So stomp your feet and clap your hands  
Our feet are on the Rock!

*Chorus*

When I feel my hope about to break  
I will cling to Your unchanging grace

Let the waters come and the earth give way  
I'll be dancing in the rain!  
When I feel my hope about to break  
I will cling to Your unchanging grace  
Let the waters come and the earth give way  
I'll be dancing in the rain!  
My feet are on the Rock  
My feet are on the Rock  
My feet are on the Rock!

### **Questions for consideration**

- What happens if we do not build a house on solid rock?
- What has been “solid” for you this week in your village, in your bible studies, with certain staff members?
- Where will you look into your family, your friends, your school to build places of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience?
- What is one thing you can do to practice living your faith in a strong way? What about praying for others, reading your Bible, meeting new friends at school, picking up trash, etc. And friends, please do not forget the power of a smile! Mother Teresa invited us to “Let us always meet each other with a smile for the smile is the beginning of love.”

### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God you are our foundation. When the storms come you give us what we need to remain standing in your love. Open us to transformation. Remind us to use the tools we have, to practice the things we have learned, and to count on our community to encourage and support us as we strengthen and deepen our faith. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## **D. SCRIPTURE STUDY**

Welcome to our last day of Bible study! I know I have already asked the question: How is it possible that it is already Friday? How can the week be so long and filled with so much and yet go by so fast? We leave tomorrow! Did it not just feel like we got here on Sunday afternoon and yet today we begin our packing to leave and begin the drive down the mountain. And I have often offered that this week may have also been a longer week than you thought and perhaps you have a little feeling of relief that today is here? Regardless of your feelings: Today is THAT DAY where we prepare our campers with practical ways to take home the things they have learned about living a Cross+Fit life this week. Take time in the beginning and the end of this study to name the completion of this time together and how we can begin to choose to use our tools, can practice what we learned, lean into our community and use a strong foundation to build a life of Cross+Fit in Christ.

### **Opening Prayer:**

In your last time of prayer together, at least for this group, in this time, ask for full participation. If you have not been holding hands in a circle as you pray, try it on this last day, if your group feels comfortable. Please remember that some campers are not comfortable with touch. Ask

EACH CAMPER to say something good from the week. Strongly invite them to speak out loud to practice prayer in their lives. Praying is a privilege, and practice gives skill and comfort.

### Opening Questions or Starting Points:

- (1) Consider asking your campers to name their highs and lows in the last 24 hours or name how they may have been transformed on the rafting trip or in the activities for all camp. If they have lows, help them to see that transformation can come even while having a low.
- (2) Ask how the campers are feeling about leaving tomorrow. Keep in mind that some of our campers do not return to loving, “ideal” family situations or school environments. Some may want to stay here all summer! 😊
- (3) Ask them to think about what tools they have gained this week in preparation for your activity in the bible study.

Is there a game your Bible study liked playing this week? Maybe do that again. Or you can use the small group “human knot” game to **transform** a mess of hands and arms into a lovely circle? 😊 To play the Human Knot game, have participants stand in a circle, each person holding hands with two others across the circle, and then try to untangle themselves without letting go of anyone's hands.

### Let's Read and Study:

Ask them to open their Bibles to Matthew 7:24-27.

Please keep urging the OT or NT location question and please teach that the large number is the chapter and the smaller number the verse. You may be rolling your eyes, but many of our campers do not know this. 😊 Seriously sometimes we have children who have not been to church and this space and this study is a great way for them to experience God's word with no judgement or embarrassment that they do not know things that others do.

May I have a volunteer to read this scripture?

Matthew 7:24-27

*“Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”*

Ask the campers:

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

You may read it a second time as well.

It may be that many of you are thinking, well of course you need to build on a strong foundation. Duh! How do we make sure? In ancient Palestine, seventy percent of the annual rainfall would fall during a four-month period from November through February. It would cascade down the mountain side and fill the wadis (the gullies) and wash away anything not securely grounded. What if you did not know this and you moved into Palestine between March and October? 😊

If you have heard folks talk about buying a house, they often will name the color of the paint, the square footage, the number of bedrooms, how the kitchen is designed and right now “smart homes” are big. Everything is digital. Everything connected to our phones. As someone who just bought a house less than a year ago, friends, I did not ask about the foundation. I made assumptions and the builder promised my husband and me that it was “rock solid.”

Good houses need a strong foundation. Good houses need to withstand life’s storms.

What is the foundation we can take with us down the mountain to determine WHERE we are going to build? Our strong foundations are Jesus words’ in the scriptures, the preaching and teaching we learn in church or in bible studies, in our baptisms and receiving Jesus’ body and blood during holy communion. We can also listen to Christian music as we did at camp and we can take all of the tools you have named of being transformed, of practicing things of your faith, knowing you will get through times of plateaus and you will be taking this wonderful community with you -- at the very least in Spirit -- as you head home.

How do we choose our foundation? Our secular culture tells us that the best foundations are a good education, tons and tons of money, being the MVP in any team you are on, the latest diet, being the best at all you do, and having the highest number of tick tock followers. Although none of these are bad in and of themselves, (well maybe the TikTok thing gets fuzzy... 😊) we can ask: will these things stand when life gets hard? Please also note friends, our scripture did not tell us there would be “**no storms.**” It says that “**when the storms came**”, the house stood.

**For you see, being a Christian does not keep us from storms.** We need to know what our foundation is.

Joni Eareckson Tada is a Christian author and disability advocate and speaker. Joni broke her neck in a diving accident at the age of 17 and doctors told her she could expect to live 10 years with her type of spinal cord injury. Now having inspired millions with her life story of perseverance and faith and having surpassed life expectancy estimates for a spinal cord injury patient by decades, Joni celebrated her 75th birthday in October 2024 with deep gratitude for her unexpected longevity. Having lived in her wheelchair for almost six decades, Joni is one of the longest living quadriplegics to date.

Joni, who is well known for her ability to paint with a brush in her mouth, has lived with quadriplegia for 57 years. This past year also marked the 45th anniversary since she started her namesake ministry, Joni and Friends, bringing hands-on help and Gospel hope to people living with disability around the globe. 2024 also commemorated the 30th year of Wheels for the World, the ministry’s flagship outreach that collects used wheelchairs, restores them in prison work programs, and distributes them to low-resource countries worldwide. Since its founding, Joni and Friends has helped 14 million people all over the world. Joni continues to serve as CEO.

Joni has been transformed. Even as the storms came, she had a foundation. “I know why God has me living – it’s all for the advancement of his Gospel,” Joni said. “There have been seasons I’ve thought I might be close to the end of my days here on earth, but each time God has brought me back from the edge with a renewed sense of purpose to tell more people about Jesus. Especially families struggling with disability.”

Joni continues to make a difference in the world through her transformation as she believes that “As a quadriplegic, I do not take the years for granted; I realize each one is a Spirit-sent gift,” Joni said.

### **Let’s read about other transformations from scripture:**

Luke 22:54-62 and Acts 2:14-42

The transformation of Peter:

Peter, one of Jesus’ closest disciples, denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed, but Peter repented and was forgiven. Learning to repent helps to transform the sin within us to be more obedient to God’s ways. Peter was transformed and he was one of the most influential apostles. He transformed from this self-motivated, impulsive, inconsistent follower of Jesus to one of the most faithful and charismatic leaders of the church.

Exodus 2:11-15

The transformation of Moses:

Moses was a murderer and fugitive. Clearly a man on the run. He transformed into one of the most influential leaders in history. His story demonstrates that no matter how far we’ve fallen, it’s never too late to turn our lives around and follow God.

Luke 19:1-10

The transformation of Zacchaeus:

Zacchaeus was a tax collector people hated. Tax collectors in his day were called “publicans” and were known for their corruption by charging people more than required by law and keeping the extra money for themselves. Zacchaeus met Jesus and repented of that sin. He gave back in multitudes to those he cheated.

Ask your campers: In each of these stories:

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

Each one of these children of God were transformed and the Bible has many stories just like theirs.

Let’s read one more scripture:

Will someone please read Colossians 3:12-15?

*Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

What did you hear

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

Remind the campers, dear ones, that even if we go into the world and share one of the following: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, our world will be transformed. These are the things we can build in our worlds.

Remind our campers that the strong foundation we have is Jesus. Once we have that foundation we can ask God WHERE we can build with the tools we have been given, with the practices we have learned and strengthened by the community we have or the community we WILL BUILD.

Dear Counselors and Bible Study leaders: Take a moment to stop and think about WHERE you want to build after you leave camp and then think about how to invite your campers into this curiosity.

It is my prayer that all of our campers, and all of us who leave Rainbow Trail remember that we have been transformed. Everyone in scriptures who followed Jesus was transformed and they are equipped to show up and make a difference in someone's life. It matters tremendously to God for even one life that is transformed.

**Action time:**

Finally, my dear Bible study leaders, our dear counselors of Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp, I offer you this activity to empower each of your campers to see the gifts God has given them that really are tools for their faith journey. We want others to name what they have seen from them in their Bible study this week. This activity has the potential to be life-changing for each camper. It works best for groups that know each other reasonably well and you will create a space where your campers will be able to share.

Sit in a circle and give everyone their butterfly with their name on it from the Monday study and pen or markers. We are going to tape those butterflies on our backs. It is very similar to just passing around the paper but it gives a little more mystery as the writing happens without you seeing who wrote your tool/gift, and the skills others see in you that you brought to the group. Imagine someone writing "you are great at listening to others" or "you were so kind to Brad when he was upset this week." Our campers (and many of us) think this is no big deal, and yet it is transformational.

The "writing on backs of others", continues until everyone has written on everyone else's butterfly. Say that this is a concrete list that they take with them. Please consider having them read what is written about them to the group. Saying things out loud somehow makes these gifts even more real.

**The take-away gift:** Each camper, staff, and adult leader should receive an RTLC dog tag to wear around their neck. In the CrossFit world, dog tags are awarded as a symbol of achievement, particularly for completing challenging events or reaching specific fitness milestones. The RTLC dog tags represent our transformation as children of God. May this gift remind our campers of the truth of their transformation, of practicing what they have been working on, knowing they will hit plateaus and can overcome them, and that community is part of all of these tools they are blessed to have.

**Final blessing for our week:**

You may place your hand on the head or the shoulder of your camper, ask others to join you if the camper feels comfortable and say:

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

(Name of camper) you have been transformed! With each step in your life at home, you will practice compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. You will keep trying. You will keep showing up. You are not alone. Amen.

**E. ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

**Additional scripture:**

*“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit. I will put within you and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 36:26*

*“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”  
2 Corinthians 3:18*

*“I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1: 6*

*“We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” Ephesians 4: 14-16*

The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32.

The story of Daniel moving from captive person to visionary leader in the book of Daniel.

Bible Study leaders, as the campers leave Rainbow Trail with their piece of paper, their “butterfly”, with the list of their “tools”, their positive things, “gifts” their Bible study camper friends see in them, they can use those “gifts” to respond and show God’s transformation in the

world. They can look at the dog tags and remember they are transformed, they can practice, they will hit plateaus, and they have community.

## **F. IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

You may use the image of coal and diamonds that show the power of transformation. You can also use the image of oyster and pearl as well.

Consider having a transformation of a meal. It is our cookout day so what if we transform breakfast – or lunch?

Since we have a talent show in the evening, consider an all-camp activity earlier in the day and incorporate Cross+Fit activities. Bring humor to activities like The Clean and Jerk with balloons seeing who can be the most dramatic pretending to be lifting heavy weights, Box Jumps, group push ups with faces going into jello or whipped cream, three legged races up to the great I AM, squats with a friend –like “party-pooing” on hike day, Kettle Swings made with milk gallons filled with water, or other creative modifications. Let’s get fit! 😊

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

Rainbow Trail Song Book

Seek Ye First #3

The Rock #7

I’ll Do My Best #24

Be Bold #40

Step By Step #53

Did You Feel The Mountains Tremble #78

GO! #5

Here I Am, Lord #23

Create In Me A Clean Heart #38

Isaiah 43 #43

He’s My Rock, My Sword, My Shield #62

Thy Word #99

**Firm Foundation** (He won’t) by Cody Carens

*Chorus*

Christ is my firm foundation

The Rock on which I stand

When everything around me is shaking

I've never been more glad

That I put my faith in Jesus

'Cause He's never let me down

He's faithful through generations

So why would He fail now?

He won't

He won't

I've still got joy in chaos

I've got peace that makes no sense

So I won't be going under

I'm not held by my own strength

'Cause I build my life on Jesus  
He's never let me down  
He's faithful in every season  
So why would He fail now?

*Refrain*

He won't  
He won't  
He won't fail  
He won't fail  
He won't  
No, no, no, no  
He won't  
He won't fail  
He won't fail

*Chorus*

Christ is my firm foundation  
The Rock on which I stand  
When everything around me is shaking  
I've never been more glad  
That I put my faith in Jesus  
'Cause He's never let me down  
He's faithful through generations  
So why would He fail now?  
He won't (Ayy)  
He won't  
He won't fail  
He won't fail, no, no

*Bridge*

Ooh, ooh-ooh, ooh-ooh  
Rain came and wind blew  
But my house was built on You  
I'm safe with You  
I'm gonna make it through  
Rain came and wind blew  
But my house was built on You  
I'm safe with You  
I'm gonna make it through  
Oh, rain came and wind blew  
But my house was built on You  
And I'm safe with You  
I'm gonna make it through  
Yeah, I'm gonna make it through  
'Cause I'm standing strong on You  
Yeah, I'm gonna make it through  
'Cause my house is built on You

### *Chorus*

Christ is my firm foundation  
The Rock on which I stand  
When everything around me is shaking  
I've never been more glad  
That I put my faith in Jesus  
'Cause He's never let me down  
He's faithful through generations  
So why would He fail now?  
He won't (Hey)  
He won't  
He won't fail  
He won't fail

### *Outro*

He won't  
He won't  
He won't fail  
He won't fail  
No, He won't

## **H. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS**

Many of our juniors may be completely confused about what transformation means. Perhaps there are some films such as The Transformers or the Avengers that show the power of what you can do when you are using the gifts of your transformation.

Have them play this game:

Have plastic spoons (or get metal ones from the kitchen and we will run them through Hobbie 😊) and have peanut M&Ms.

Split your Bible study or your villages into two teams and have each team stand in a line. Each person should have a spoon. They must put the tip of the spoon in their mouths (so that the actual spoon portion is out) and their hands are behind their backs.

The first person in each line will start with a peanut M&M on their spoon. Once you tell them to go, they must, without using their hands or anything else (we will have those campers who will test the rules) pass the M&M to the person behind them. If the M&M falls, you must start all over again. The first team to get the peanut (or two or three) to the end of the line into the bowl wins!

Process with them the stress of this game. Starting over came after a mistake and it is often part of life. Starting over comes with the many changes in life that come our way. Bumps, turns, slips, and bad passes can be frustrating. How do we stay grounded? How do we see transformation happening even when we need to start over again and again? There are so many unknowns.

And yet we have a foundation. Jesus is always present. Jesus is strong and we can keep trying. We can keep showing up. We can keep practicing. We also have a community that will encourage us when we need to start over again and again.

## **I. IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS**

### **Practice drills:**

Cross+Fit requires practice, practice, practice to gain strength, stamina and endurance. Invite your senior high campers to try these practices in attention to the other ones you all have named this week: I know you all have tools now so I will try to incorporate them. 😊

- (1) Regular Prayer: Dedicate time daily to talk to God, express gratitude, seek guidance, and build a personal relationship through prayer. Pick the best time for you: mornings before you forget, with meals knowing we all have to eat, or at bedtime just before those eyes close.
- (2) Bible Study: Read and study the Bible regularly to understand God's teachings, gain wisdom, and deepen your knowledge of the Christian faith. Does everyone know you can carry the ENTIRE bible on your phone?
- (3) Attend Church Services: Participate in your local church community, attend worship services, and engage in fellowship with other believers to strengthen your spiritual connection. If you do not have a church, ask your friends (yes, be brave) or tell mom and dad you would like to try a church.
- (4) Join a Small Group: Being part of a small group allows for more intimate discussions, mutual support, and shared spiritual growth with fellow Christians. It reminds you that you are not alone.
- (5) Serve Others: Actively engage in acts of kindness and service to others. This reflects Christian values and helps you grow by emulating the teachings of Jesus. We are all transformed when we contribute to others.
- (6) Practice Forgiveness: Cultivate a spirit of forgiveness, both toward yourself and others. Letting go of resentment and embracing forgiveness is a key aspect of Christian growth. Bitterness can keep us on those plateaus with no movement toward our best selves.
- (7) Read Christian Literature: Explore books written by Christian authors that offer insights into theology, spirituality, and practical Christian living. Yes there are some good ones out there. 😊
- (8) Meditation and Reflection: Take time for quiet reflection and meditation on Scripture. Allow these moments to deepen your understanding and connection with God. Pastor Pam reminds us of having space to breathe, especially during times of a plateau.
- (9) Fasting and Self-Denial: Periods of fasting or self-denial can help you focus on spiritual matters, develop self-discipline, and draw closer to God. It also reminds you of the gifts we are given.

- (10) **Seek Spiritual Mentoring:** Find a spiritual mentor or seek guidance from someone more experienced in their Christian journey. Their insights and support can be invaluable as you grow in your faith. These folks are your coaches, they are your trainers, they will accompany you in your Cross+Fit journey.
- (11) **Praise and Worship:** Incorporate regular sessions of praise and worship into your routine, whether through music, singing, or personal expressions of gratitude. This helps foster a deeper connection with God. Friends we sang at a minimum of 5 times a day for worship, at meal times, and when your counselor played an amazing song for you.
- (12) **Prayer Journaling:** Keep a journal to document your prayers, thoughts, and reflections. Journaling can provide a tangible record of your spiritual journey and help you see patterns of growth and areas for improvement. These pages remind you of how far, how much stronger, you are.

## **J. PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

**Scripture:** Matthew 7: 23-27

**Reflection:** Thank you, dear parents, for allowing us to accompany your camper in this Cross+Fit week of transformation. We have learned that we all can be transformed, that it is so good to practice so many activities of our faith, that we will have plateaus in our lives, and that community is a great gift to us on our faith journey.

We do understand that it is a logical thing to know that the foundation we build on must be strong. But think about it: Was the foundation of your home the very first thing you considered? Did you start with square footage, the number of bedrooms, and how much you liked the kitchen? When did you ask about the strength of the foundation of your home?

We spent this day naming in our faith journey, Jesus is our foundation. We named that our campers have been transformed...in some way. They may not see it. They may not recognize it but they have and we invited you into seeing how they have been transformed. Now how do they go down the mountain and “build” in their worlds?

**Activity:** Do you have a time in your family routine, breakfast gathering or dinner at the end of the day, when you can ask them what they would like to practice in being like Jesus? Do you tell them how you try to show up, try to practice the things Jesus tells us to do? Do you help them remember who their “people are?” You know -- those people who encourage them, support them, remind them about the gifts they have outside of your family? The healthiest children have communities that are beyond the nuclear family that help them be their best selves. Who are those coaches, mentors, teachers, pastors, and leaders in their lives?

**Prayer:** Transforming God, we are building on your solid foundation of love. Teach us to practice compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience in our family and with everyone we meet. Remind us that when things are challenging we are not alone and that you are with us and we can encourage each other. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## **K. FOR SUMMER STAFF**

- Hello Staff: How are you transformed? Do you have a journal? What can you write each week to keep record of how you have been transformed by the Cross+Fit power of Jesus.
- Have you helped other staff to name the ways they have tools and are being transformed?
- Have you filled an affie bag this week for someone who has plateaued? How is your final gift for your KK going?
- Are there any people or any places of this ministry where you feel called to encourage, support, and walk alongside to help them reach a new level they never imagined?
- Have you begun your list of WHERE you will build, with the tools given, when you head down the mountain? Do you believe you have been transformed? How will you practice the things you have learned? What will you do when you hit a plateau and who will be your mentors, coaches, helpers, spiritual leaders and encouragers? Use the staff passports provided to log the answers to these questions all summer.