

FOUR WAYS A WEEK AT CAMP
CAN TRANSFORM YOUR YOUTH GROUP



It's a weeknight in August—time for your weekly youth group meeting. As you walk into the room of students you sense the buzz of energy. It's that end-of-summer rush of adrenaline that builds just before the start of school. The students are laughing, talking about the crazy stuff they did that summer.

You hear one student say, “And I brought my friend, Jack, to camp. It was epic. He accepted Christ and I think he may even want to come to church with me this fall!” Right then and there your heart soars and you know it's going to be an exciting year of youth ministry.

Later, as you drop into bed, it occurs to you: *“We need to plan a camp-type experience for our own youth group. We need to pull these kids away from their everyday world of school and screens and give them room to breathe.*

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They need wide open space in nature to unplug, recharge and to experience God in fresh, new ways.

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I wonder what camp would do for the faith of our kids?”

Now you are on to something! Here are four reasons you should consider scheduling a week at camp for your youth group this summer.

1. CAMP PROVIDES A UNIQUE TIME TO MENTOR YOUR STUDENTS

In youth ministry, time can often work against you. You spend hours juggling appointments, looking at your schedule trying to figure out how to squeeze in school meetings, making a Starbucks run or getting to games in order to connect with your students. Just imagine having a solid week, 24-7 with your students in a peaceful, natural setting completely unplugged from technology. Now we're talkin'.

When it comes to unpressured time to mentor students everyone wins. You benefit, the students benefit and their parents benefit as well. There is nothing more significant than having a youth group leader or a youth pastor speak truth into the life of a young person. A mentor's words are often the advice a child or teenager hangs onto for years to come. A fresh voice that is outside of the "parental soapbox" can be life-changing. Uninterrupted time for you to mentor students in a camp setting can build students up so that they are better equipped to handle the pressures they often face back at home or school.

CAMP CREATES A FOUNDATION FOR LIFELONG FAITH

According to The National Study of Youth & Religion,

“ youth who attend a faith-based summer camp are three times more likely to be continuing in their faith five years later than those who do not. ”

Dr. Christian Smith, principal investigator of the study and Stuart Chapin Distinguished Professor and associate chair of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, notes: "Going to religious summer camps appears to be one of a broader set of intentional practices that parents can pursue to help build up the religious faith of their teens."

2. CAMP GIVES STUDENTS A UNIQUE WAY TO SHARE THEIR FAITH

It is so much easier for students to invite friends (who may not yet know the Lord) to camp than it is to invite them to church. Inviting a friend who is not quite ready for “formal church” can be intimidating. (It’s Intimidating for anyone, really!) Church pews, dress-up clothes, and a sanctuary filled with adults holding Bibles can be overwhelming for any first-timer. Inviting them to an action-packed and inspiring week at a Christian camp? Now that’s a win-win!

Think about your own journey. There is nothing more energizing to your faith than being used by the Lord to invest in a student and see them profess faith in Christ! It is no different for your youth group members. There is no better way to strengthen their young faith than giving them opportunities to share their faith with unchurched friends. As you teach kids to integrate evangelism into their lives when they are young, it often becomes a lifelong pattern. Sowing seeds of faith becomes part of their DNA.

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” - Matthew 28:19-20

3. CAMP BRINGS FUN TO FAITH

We don't have to tell you that not all students are overjoyed when parents usher them into a traditional church service. Young children and teens all mature at different times and some students need a little more time before they truly benefit from the Sunday morning sermon.

“ A week away at camp helps kids understand that faith can be fun—and it should be crazy fun! ”

When students tackle activities that are not part of everyday life, they learn surprising new lessons. Throwing hatchets, scaling climbing walls, navigating ropes courses, playing a high-stakes game of paintball, and just conquering obstacles together—these are ways new friendships form and kids learn to appreciate each other's differences.

A WORD FROM A FELLOW YOUTH LEADER

“I could always count on camp to break down walls with the students. I felt like our small group grew so much closer together during that time as we not only experienced fun recreation on another level but dove deep into scripture that was taught clearly and accurately. The students trusted each other more and therefore became more vulnerable with each other.”

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When kids feel heard and supported, they can experience God in ways they never expected.

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When it comes time for group worship and Bible teaching, they have already built connections with each other. With the music pumping, singing worship songs becomes a shared spiritual experience. Guest speakers connect them to spiritual truths that become part of the chatter as they hang out together. During small group times, you find that students feel safe to share their questions and struggles. Barriers come down and students seek you out for one-on-one discussions. Camp provides the time and space for the Holy Spirit to move in ways that don't easily happen when day-to-day life can crowd out God's voice.

4. CAMP HELPS STUDENTS ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

School can be a very lonely place. At camp, groups of students can come together and see one another in a different light. Negative peer pressure fades, cliques vanish, and all of a sudden a child may think, “Hey, that kid is kinda cool. He’s not as lame as I thought.” Both small group time and unstructured time at camp provides the opportunity for a new kind of connection: kids begin to appreciate each other. After all, they conquered the ropes course together or had each other’s back in paintball. Spiritual encouragement can come naturally as students spend their days helping each other tackle new challenges.

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.” - Proverbs 27:17

And the best part of this type of encouragement? Positive peer pressure begins to develop and they can see their friends in a new light. These new bonds carry over to your youth group in the fall. Group dynamics are critical when it comes to the spiritual development of teenagers, and time away at camp can bolster and infuse small groups with an energy that is hard to find anywhere else.

When the fall rolls around you are ready. Your students are well-connected, they know that time with their youth group will be a total blast, and they are pumped for a new year with their friends.

LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT CAMP TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

We believe Hume Lake Christian Camps is an amazing place for your youth group. A week at any of our locations centers around a creative theme, establishing a practical link between the not-to-be-missed activities and a clear presentation of the gospel. Hume staff seeks to support your program and give you the time and space to help you do your job even better. The staff follows your lead when it comes to curriculum planning and teaching. Or, if you prefer, Hume Lake programming staff can take the lead while you focus solely on relationship-building. They position the teaching of biblical truths in an environment of crazy fun and worship that is uplifting and Spirit-filled. Hume staff nurtures spiritual growth from sunrise to sunset!

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LEARN MORE?**



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