



## WHAT IS CHURCH GROUP GATHERING?

There's a lot that goes on at camp every day. A LOT. A lot of logistics, a lot of frustration, a lot of fun, a lot of spiritual formation, a lot silly, a lot serious. Camp is a lot of things. But Student Life Kids Camp has built in one critical part of the day every day so that all of the "A LOT's" of camp don't get swallowed up by a busy day and a late bedtime. And that critical part of the day is what we call Church Group time. Church Group time is the chance for you to put on your shepherd's hat and care in particular ways for your particular kids. It's a time to debrief the day, to recap what was learned, to assess what God might be doing in the hearts of certain kids, or even to reiterate some behavioral expectations where necessary.

And Church Group time happens at the end of the day (literally) because at the end of the day/week (metaphorically), your church is the only piece of camp that will continue on with these kids. Spirit sticks, squad wars, the camp staff, the on stage drama, even the style of worship and preaching don't travel back home in your church van with your kids. But you do. And your other adult leaders do. And Student Life truly believes that this is the best thing possible. A few days at camp is great. But the other 51 weeks of the year in your kids ministry within your local church is so much more important. We hope that what we do here this week is just a launching point into deeper discipleship with the kids in your church. All that to say, we hope that you will place the value on your Church Group time that Student Life places on it.

Now, not all Church Group time works the same. Some nights will feel like a major breakthrough. Some nights will feel like a race to Lights Out. There might be a night that you have a great spiritual thing planned, but Johnny accidentally (or purposefully) derails the whole thing by loudly passing gas during a prayer time. It happens. Because they are kids. So the aim of this guide is to give you some plans—some adaptable plans—so that you can do your best to harness some precious time at the end of the day and utilize it to reinforce critical spiritual truths for your kids.

The ideas below are pick-and-choose, or mix-and-match. Take whatever seems like it is going to fit most for that particular evening. Take into consideration the sermon that you just heard (either from the evening or morning) and the Bible study that happened earlier in the day. But more than anything, take care to use this time to shepherd a bunch of (possibly tired) kids through how to process all that has happened to them and in them today.

## CHURCH GROUP GATHERING IDEAS

### RESPOND TO THE SERMON

Sometimes the best way to respond to the A LOT that has happened in a day is to respond to the most recent thing that just happened. Take time to revisit what the kids just participated in. Ask about the songs, the drama, and especially the sermon. In terms of responding to the sermon, there are a couple of different approaches you can take:

**Individual Approach:** If the camp pastor shared the gospel and invited kids to respond to the gospel message by putting their faith in Jesus, it might be that the best use of church group time would be to assign an adult to talk to that kid about what is going on in his/her heart. Select an adult who is closest to that kid or that kid's parents and have them talk through the gospel and what it means to trust in Jesus. (Side note: With the way the daily themes build upon one another, it is most likely that if there is a sermon that invites kids to respond to the gospel, chances are it happens on Night 2 of camp. Of course, the pastor can share the gospel in every sermon at camp, but it is likely that this plan of action would be most useful on the second night.)

**Whole Group Approach:** If the pastor had one clear sermon point, or a number of points that he asked kids to write down, spend time talking about those points. Ask questions to help kids get those ideas deeper into their hearts.



### Questions to Ask

- What was one point from the sermon that you remember?
- What does that point teach us about God?
- What does that point teach us about ourselves?
- How did that Bible passage show us our need for Jesus?
- How are we supposed to live in light of what we heard?
- What is one thing we should change in our lives based on what we heard?

### SILLY/SERIOUS/SHOUTOUT SHARE TIME

Another great way to recap the day is simply by having the group share some things that happened throughout the day. This can be a mixture of silly and serious. And it can also be a time of great encouragement from kid to kid. But more than anything, it may be really enlightening for you, that you would be able to see more of what is going on in your kids' hearts and minds after a full day. As close as you are paying attention to everyone and everything at camp, there's a really good chance that you aren't seeing and perceiving everything. This option is designed to help you perceive more of what is happening under the surface of your group.

Here's a simple way to structure that time. Tell kids that we are going to do share time in 3 phases. You are going to ask if anyone has: **1) Something Silly to Share**, **2) Something Serious to Share**, and **3) Someone Who Deserves a Shoutout**. We'll take them all in turn.

#### Something Silly to Share.

This is to break the ice. Silly things happen at camp. That doesn't mean your kids are being unspiritual. They're just being people. So lean into the silly at times. And even feel free to lead the way in sharing something silly to start. (\*\*As always, the silly should not be inappropriate, bathroom related, or making fun of anyone in the group.\*\*) Ask a few questions like:

Was there anything that happened today that can make our whole group laugh a little (but never laughing at someone in particular)?

Was there anything that happened today that would make for great camp news at Start Up tomorrow?

#### Something Serious to Share.

This is the transition point to get to something of substance. Hopefully, the silly helped break the ice and got the kids talking. But now, we want to try to look under the hood of these kids' hearts to see what God has been up to. Ask a few prompting questions like:

What did you learn about God today?

Was there anything you heard from God's Word that you don't think you had ever heard before?

Did you hear anything that you think could change your life forever?

Do you feel like after today that God is calling you to change something, really big in your life?

#### Someone Who Deserves a Shout Out.

This is really important. Like we said earlier, the only thing about camp that is going back home with you is your church. And God has called our churches all to be places where we encourage one another. What if your kids started that practice right now? What if they learned more about how to be the church to one another while away at camp? See if you can make real encouragement a major part of this week of camp, and then a major part of your kids ministry, and a major part of the life of your church. Tell the kids that we want to take time to give a shout out to others in the group for any number of important actions or behaviors. Lead the way in offering encouragement yourself, but also, ask some prompting questions:

Did anyone in our group do something today that made them look like Jesus in any way that we can highlight and encourage them?

Did someone go out of their way to perform an act of service? Or generosity? Or kindness?

### RECAP THE DAY'S CONTENT.

It may be that the best way to use your time is simply to repeat many of the key truths already discussed throughout the day.



- Repeat the day's theme word
- Repeat the big idea and the main point from the Bible study
- See if anyone has memorized the day's memory verse

Repetition makes impressions. So don't be afraid to repeat the day's material. Say the material in your own words. Get kids to say it in their own words.

Below are the main ideas, passages, teaching points, and memory verses from each day of Bible study, placed here for you in easily accessible form.

## Day 1 – LOST

**Bible Study Passage:** Jonah 1

**Main Idea:** When we run from God, we make a shipwreck of our lives.

**Memory Verse:** But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:8 (CSV)

## Day 2 – FOUND

**Bible Study Passage:** Jonah 1:17-2:10 & Matthew 12:40 & the Romans Road (3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9)

**Main Idea:** When we turn to Christ as our Savior, we are rescued from death and given new life.

**Memory Verse:** He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. 14 In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. - Colossians 1:13-14 (CSB)

## Day 3 – HOMEWARD

**Bible Study Passage:** Jonah 3-4)

**Main Idea:** When we know Jesus as our Savior, we join in his mission to the world on our journey homeward.

**Memory Verse:** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." -2 Corinthians 5:20 (CSB)

## PRACTICAL TIPS

### SNACKS ARE A GOOD IDEA

The key to a kid's heart (and to getting them to kind of close their mouths for a few minutes) is through snacks. Plan ahead for this!

### DON'T FEEL THE NEED TO MEET FOR A CRAZY LONG TIME

You know your group. You know how many of them just slept through the sermon. Feel out their needs, and don't force anything.

### BE PREPARED TO ADAPT YOUR BEST LAID PLANS

Like we said earlier, the wrong gas-inducing item on the dinner menu could derail what you had thought would be a good plan. Be prepared to roll with it.

### BUT WHATEVER YOU DO, JUST DON'T SKIP CHURCH GROUP TIME

It is so valuable! We truly believe it!

## PRAYER

Finally, **DON'T FORGET TO PRAY.** Be sure to incorporate prayer into your church group time. Do what you can to encourage kids to pray. Model for them what simple, brief, specific prayers look like. And encourage them to do it. Then, once they do it, be sure to thank them for leading the group in prayer. If you are looking for a simple way to guide a prayer time, consider something like this.

Ask a couple of kids to **praise** God for **something specific** about who He is.

Ask a couple of kids to **thank** God for **something specific** that He Has done.

Ask a couple of kids to **ask** God for help concerning **something specific** regarding that day or the next.