

THE GOSPEL AT SUMMER CAMP TIP SHEET

5-7 Age Group:

Interactive Lessons - Short, practical lessons - 10-15 min max of lesson time. Acting out the Bible story, having small parts that campers can play, repeating certain words within the lesson to keep them engaged, “clap” when you hear this Bible character's name, etc.

Bible Memorization - Add in hand motions with the scripture; Simple hand motions help to work both sides of the brain and are an excellent retention tool. Explore different ways to encourage scripture memorization, but keep in mind that not all in this group will be confident readers yet. Help them plant scripture in their heart for the Lord to bring back to mind when they leave camp.

Music - There are so many songs for younger campers to enjoy. Keep them moving! Add in a song with simple motions that they can learn throughout the week. Not all songs will be appreciated by older campers, but the littles will thrive with music!

8-9 Age Group:

Interactive Lessons - Short, practical lessons - 10-15 min max of lesson time - Acting out the Bible story, having small parts that campers can play, repeating certain words within the lesson to keep them engaged, “clap” when you hear this Bible character's name, etc. Think of creative ways to include them in your lessons.

Bible Memorization - Add in hand motions with the scripture, simple hand motions help to work both sides of the brain, and are an excellent retention tool. Explore different ways to encourage scripture memorization, but keep in mind that not all in this group will be confident readers yet. Help them plant scripture in their heart for the Lord to bring back to mind when they leave camp.

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Music - There are so many songs for younger campers to enjoy. Keep them moving! Add in a song with simple motions that they can learn throughout the week. Not all songs will be appreciated by older campers, but younger age groups will thrive with fun songs for their age group!

10-12 Age Group:

Short, practical lessons - 15-20 min max of lesson time, video based lessons are also an option as long as they are age appropriate. For this age group, air on the side of a lesson geared more for teenagers, rather than something made for younger age groups, see *Maturity Level* for more on this.

Personal Testimonies - A great suggestion for this age group is having people on your team share their personal Jesus stories. This needs to be tailored to this age group in what is appropriate to share, but testimonies connect our campers to your leaders. It helps them to see that others may have struggles in the similar ways they might.

Make sure this is a JESUS story though. *Don't let the struggle be the headline of what you share.* Where did you see Jesus work in the struggle? When did you trust in Jesus? How is your life different now? Connect it to scripture. What is your favorite verse?

Small Group Time - For middle schoolers, breaking them into smaller groups will make them feel more comfortable in asking questions and communicating their thoughts. This can be a time of asking questions like what stood out to them about that person's testimony or the lesson that was taught? Where did they see God move? What can they relate to? What did the verse mean to them? How can they apply what they learned to their life? ***Do NOT "require" input from every camper, doing so could cause the individual and sometimes even the whole group to shut down.***

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Maturity Level - Yes, these are middle schoolers, however, unfortunately, they have had a lot of life experience and are more mature when it comes to struggles, as well as overcoming. Many may be experiencing heavy, or even traumatic situations at this very moment. If you have specific questions on what should be shared, please ask our staff. If you don't share personal testimony, we ask that you not do the same lessons or videos for this age group as you would do with the younger groups. Honoring this will help prevent disengagement as well as foster retention.

Staff Follow Up - Always offer time for campers to speak to our staff or Summer Disciples personally. As you have read in the importance of relationships, they may feel more comfortable with people they are more familiar with. This is not a personal issue with volunteers but reflects how the steady presence of someone they know helps to create FELT SAFETY even in conversations. Allow and encourage them the opportunity to do this outside of your team or other campers as needed.

13-17 Age Group:

Short, practical lessons - 15-20 min max of lesson time at the Pavilion

Personal Testimonies - A great suggestion for this age group is having people on your team share their personal Jesus stories. This needs to be tailored to this age group in what is appropriate to share, but testimonies connect our campers to your leaders. It helps them to see that others may have struggles in similar ways that they might.

Make sure this is a JESUS story though. *Don't let the struggle be the headline of what you share.* Where did you see Jesus work in the struggle? When did you trust in Jesus? How is your life different now? Connect it to scripture. What is your favorite verse?

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Small Group Time - Breaking them into smaller groups will make them feel more comfortable in asking questions and communicating their thoughts. This can be a time of asking questions like what stood out to them about that person's testimony or the lesson that was taught? Where did they see God move? What can they relate to? What did the verse shared mean to them? How can they apply what they learned to their life? Always add practical application. How can this apply to their lives now? *Also, please don't "require" input from every camper, doing so could cause the individual and sometimes even the whole group to shut down.*

Maturity Level - Yes, these are highschoolers, however, unfortunately they have had a lot of life experience and are more mature when it comes to struggles, and overcoming. Many are in traumatic situations at this very moment. If you have specific questions on what should be shared, please ask our staff. They will likely not be shocked or surprised by what you have walked through but we also don't want to trigger responses if too much is shared. If you don't share personal testimony, we ask that you not do the same lessons or videos for this age group as you would do with the younger groups. Honoring this will help prevent them from disengaging.

Staff Follow Up - Always offer time for campers to speak to our staff or Summer Disciples personally. As you have read above in the importance of relationships, they may feel more comfortable with our staff. This is not a personal issue with volunteers but reflects how the steady presence of someone they know helps to create felt safety even in conversations. Please allow them the opportunity to do this outside of your team or other campers if needed.



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A FEW SPECIFICS FOR EACH AGE GROUP

- The Bible Time slot is 30 minutes for every age group, but the recommended teaching time for each is much shorter than that. Think of quality over quantity, campers will engage and retain much more if it is given in smaller chunks. This also allows a moment for each group to settle in from their last activity, provide time after your lesson for a related game, song, or other fun activity you may have, as well as space for breakout groups for the older ages.
- Sometimes misbehavior can be a result of a traumatic experience. The trauma response can inhibit kids' ability to regulate their emotions, behavior, and attention. This can show up as withdrawal, aggression, or disruptiveness. If you have a child who's acting out, don't assume they're doing it intentionally. Show grace - your compassion and kindness can make a big difference. Be sure not to "call out" campers in the middle of your lesson for misbehavior; this often has the opposite effect you are desiring. Allow Summer Disciples and group leaders to help with disciplinary actions so you can focus on the teaching time.
- If possible, incorporate creative ways for verse memorization, most campers enjoy a good challenge! Also be sure to ask if they have any verses memorized from the weeks prior to yours - then listen and be amazed! This is a great way to help them solidify the truths they are learning and plant God's Word deep in their hearts for when they'll need it most.
- If a camper approaches you or someone on your team about making a decision for Christ or to ask for a Bible, ***it is imperative that you connect with a full time staff member or Summer Disciple to continue the conversation.*** While our community is very aware we are a Christian ministry, we still strive to approach these situations with the utmost respect for the families who trust us with their children. Some campers may not be allowed to have a Bible at home, or their families may not support a decision for Christ even though they come to camp. Our staff needs to have full knowledge of these interactions with campers so that we are able to communicate clearly with their families. Also, our hope is not just that campers would make a decision *for Christ*, but they would ultimately be disciples *of Christ*. To do that well, we need to be involved from the start so that we are able to continue walking with them once your team has returned home.

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Acceptable

- Share the gospel!
- Offer time for further conversations with staff members to continue discipleship, connect with a family if a decision is made, and inform parents or guardians that a conversation was had with a staff member if they have any further questions.
- Give them solid information. A healthy balance of honoring their knowledge since most will have a foundation of Bible stories and always be sure to include practical life application.
- Celebrate their culture and be willing to learn from campers. They are made in the image of God and should be celebrated for the culture God placed them in.
- Encourage students to participate in reading aloud or reading scripture.

Unacceptable

- Share in aggressive or condescending ways.
- Ask campers to raise their hands if they want to be saved or have an altar call - this pressures them to respond. We are not a numbers-driven ministry. Our hope is for them to genuinely desire Jesus and have a heart for true repentance.
- Fill every moment of Bible time with lots of information - this makes it difficult for campers to absorb even simple biblical principles. See *Trauma and the Gospel* for more information.
- Put down their culture or beliefs, but instead, **speak MUCH of Jesus**. The Holy Spirit will work in the rest of this in His timing alone.
- Pressure campers to read aloud. Some kids may not have the skills yet or desire to read, even older campers. Let them decide to participate, but never force.