

EQUIPPING

for intergenerational ministry

Supporting camping - Parents



Camping, traditionally seen in the LCA through Christian Life Weeks (CLW) and weekend camps aimed at school-aged students, provides a unique experience that can have a lasting impact on the formation of faith.

We often refer to camping as a peak experience. These camps provide a journey, often through a specific topic such as identity. They offer an opportunity for young people to 'go deeper' than they can at a once a week youth event.

Faith is deepened through the mixture of meeting new Christian people, hanging out with leaders who have a passion for service and living in community. It is a place where the presence of God can be felt in a real and tangible way through others. Young people often report a camping experience as a turning point for them in the formation of their faith.

Why is camping so important in the faith formation process?

- Camps create mountain-top experiences. A mountain-top experience is "a temporary, uncommon encounter with God that is meant to give us a fresh awareness of His reality and nearness."
- Camps create memories.
- Camps create shared experiences.
- Camps allow time away from the pressure of day-to-day life to focus on God. They are often away from the ordinary and can

sometimes help young people listen to God more clearly.

- Camps provide opportunities to have times of quiet reflection.
- Camps provide a safe place to try new things.
- Camps encourage young people to see God in the everyday experiences.
- Camps provide exposure to nature, where God is revealed in a significant way.
- Camps provide valuable opportunities for young adults to be involved in leadership, according to their gifts.

Research shows that parents continue to be the single greatest influence on their children's faith.

It is important you take an active part in the faith formation of your child. Give them an opportunity to experience all that camp has to offer and share in the journey by talking to them about the experience before and after camp.

BEFORE CAMP

Discuss with your child their expectations of camp. What might they do, see and hear? Talk about who else is going. Show that you are interested in them and excited about what camp might mean for them and their relationship with Jesus. Ensure they have all that they need to be 'successful'. Go through the camp list with them, especially if they are younger. Pray for them in the lead-up to camp, pray for them in the car on the way there.



AFTER CAMP

The after camp experience can be a bewildering time for young people. They are coming down from a high, often very quickly as they are tired and excited all at the same time. They've had an awesome time, appreciated sharing stories, intense bible studies/sessions, and enjoyed small group time with new friends. They have valued being part of a community where they have found acceptance.

COMING HOME CAN BE DIFFICULT

Here are some more ideas to help with the after camp experience:

1. Prepare to be an 'outsider' to their experience

You weren't part of the experience, trying to play catch-up on the way to lunch straight after picking them up from camp might be a bit too much to expect.

2. Tell them you missed them

Let them know you are glad to see them! Let the first words they hear when they return be words of love. "It's so good to see you. I missed you. I'm glad you're back."

3. Let them have 'space'

Allow them some transition time. They will be very aware of all of the responsibilities such as homework etc. that await them. Avoid talking about school obligations immediately upon their return. Let them enjoy the moment.



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4. Pray for them

Pray for them while they are away. Pray that they will experience God's love in a significant and perhaps new way. When they return, tell them that you prayed and share the specific things that you prayed about.

5. Create space

Young people can be hesitant to divulge too much information. It's important to remember to give them some space initially, especially if they're tired, but you might like to say something like this when your young person arrives home, "It sounds like you had a really great time. Whenever you're ready to talk, I'd love to hear about it."

Allow them to find the time and place to talk about their experience.

When they are ready, here are some things that might help the conversation:

- What new things did you discover about God and your faith? Was anything on camp confusing?
- What commitments did you make on camp, to yourself or to God, and can I help?

Your child may have a desire to pray, read the Bible or support their friends.

Perhaps your child wants you to help them get a new devotional or Bible, take them to a youth group or help them catch up with friends from camp.

6. Follow up

Parents can help by planning follow-up events after the peak experience of camping.

Organise events where your child can reconnect with their new friends.

See the Grow Ministries equipping sheet – 'Supporting camping - congregations' for ways you can encourage your congregation to support your child and their friends.