



# I AM, WE ARE.



“ **I AM**  
THE RESURRECTION  
AND THE LIFE.  
**THOSE WHO  
BELIEVE IN ME,  
EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE,  
WILL LIVE.** ”  
JOHN 11:25

**2019 BIBLE STUDY**



## **2019 BIBLE STUDY – *I AM, WE Are!***

**We are very grateful to the following individuals for their work in writing the  
2019 Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp Bible study.**

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# *I AM, WE Are!*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Back in 2005, our summer Bible study centered on the Great I AM. The folks at Memorial Day built a huge I AM at the top of the mall in the center of camp. The original intent was that this structure would stand for the summer and then we would take it down. Fourteen years later, the I AM has become an iconic symbol of Rainbow Trail and a constant reminder of Jesus' presence at camp and in our lives. Jesus' I AM statements are bold and life-giving. They also present a challenge to us.

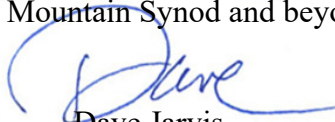
We have taken a different approach to the study this time around. We do, indeed, look at and study several of Jesus' I AM statements. But this study also digs into who WE ARE because of each particular relationship we have with Jesus to the I AM statements.

The first four days of this study focus on those actual I AM with the last day sending us out to be life in the world:

1. **I AM LIFE - I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE:** We are called to experience life as an invitation to be resurrected, here and now, into the presence and promise of the God whom we know in Christ. We are encouraged to place our ultimate trust not in the stuff of life, but in God, and in God's good will for our lives.
2. **LIFE THAT FEEDS: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE:** Contrary to what many Christian people think, eternal life is not life that begins after we die. It is unquenchable, indestructible life from God that fills us already now. With the bread that is Jesus, we are thrust into a wilderness of freedom and a pathway that is love, which is a much, much harder way to live.
3. **LIFE THAT SHINES – I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD:** Jesus declares he is the Light of the world. He promises to shine in the darkness of our lives and show us the way. And Jesus does this, not because he must, but out of great love for us. Jesus is Life and Light. We are Children of Light and we become light for the world, our friends, and. our families.
4. **LIFE THAT LEADS - I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD:** Jesus is the Good Shepherd. We need the guidance of a great God who loves us, who became one of us, and whose voice we can trust. Allowing Jesus to be our Shepherd can empower us to enrich the lives of others.
5. **WE ARE LIFE FOR THE WORLD:** We are children of God, beloved, sent by the God who gives us life, feeds us, leads us, shines in us and promises to be with us always. Because of who we are, we are called out into the world with Jesus to bring life and love to others. It is out of our willingness to take risks that we will experience the new life that Jesus wants us to know—an abundant life full of love and grace in Him!

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. This is going to be a challenging study. I hope this study can move campers, staff, and adult leaders to wake each morning, to think about their day ahead, and live a life that impacts others in the name of Christ throughout their day. If this happens, they will transform the lives of others, and in doing so, they will be transformed as well. 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



## 2019 BIBLE STUDY – I AM, WE Are!

### DAY 1 - “I AM LIFE - I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE”

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE WEEK

The theme for this week’s study is “I AM, We Are.” We begin by reflecting on who Jesus claims to be; how he understands himself and his ministry. In St. John’s Gospel, even more so than the others, Jesus seems to have a very clear sense of who he is and where he is going. St. Mark may have Jesus saying, just before he is betrayed and arrested, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” (14:36) St. John, on the other hand, has Jesus speaking in bolder, more certain terms: “I am the resurrection and the life, Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live...” (11:25) “I am the bread of life that comes down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever...” (6:51) “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” (6:51) “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” (10:14) “I am the true vine... Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.” (15:1a, 4) “I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.” (14:6) In St. John’s Gospel, Jesus is clear about who he is, and bold in asserting what his ministry is all about.

And so as our study continues, we will explore what life is like when lived in relationship with him. Jesus is more than a good teacher, a healer of bodies or a comforter of sorrows. He also comes to raise us to a new and different life; a new and different way of being. He welcomes us into a deeper experience of living, a deeper relationship with others, a deeper understanding of ourselves. During this week we will reflect on what it means to live a life that feeds us; a life that illumines our way; a life that leads us; a life that connects us with God, with one another, and with the world in which we live. And we will consider how this life is not an end to itself, but a way in which God prepares us to give of ourselves to the world that surrounds us.

As we come to see who Jesus is, we come to experience the life he wants us to know, and are equipped to become a source of life for those around us.

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY

On this first day of the week we will focus on Jesus’ declaration that “I am the resurrection and the life.” This statement is set within the relationships between Jesus and his good friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and takes place during a conversation Jesus has with Martha, shortly after the death of Lazarus, her brother and one of Jesus’ dearest friends.

Seemingly unaware that Lazarus has died, Jesus travels with his disciples to Bethany to visit the three of them. Martha meets him at the edge of town, and greets him with what appears to be an admonishing complaint, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (11:21) Jesus assures Martha that death will not have the final say for her brother, and Martha again responds, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” (11:24) Martha may wish that Jesus had shown up four days earlier and prevented her brother’s death, and she may take some comfort that the day will come when Lazarus is resting in heaven with God, but Jesus wants more for her. “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who

lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (11:25–26) Jesus invites Martha to a new and different life; a life in the here-and-now; a life lived in him; a life where death is swallowed up by resurrection; a life where our experience with Jesus transforms what it means for us to live, and to die.

We live in a society that treats life as a commodity, and encourages us to seek the best possible product. We want to be healthy and well until the day we take our last breath. We want to be surrounded by people who love and admire us. We want all of our relationships to be rich and meaningful and comforting. We want to enjoy success after success. We want our work to be well compensated and meaningful. We want to live in comfort – perhaps even luxury. We want to have influence on the world in which we live. We might even lift these desires to God in prayer: Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died; Lord, I know that he will be well in the next life.

Jesus knows that this is not what makes life what God intends it to be. In St. Matthew's Gospel Jesus quotes Moses, declaring that "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (4:4) What does it mean to know Jesus as resurrection and life? It means to be fed by his presence. It means to be enlightened by his brightness. It means to be led by his word. It means to experience life as an invitation to be resurrected, here and now, into the presence and promise of the God whom we know in Christ.

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

- Help campers see the strong sense of purpose and meaning that Jesus displays in his life and ministry.
- Look honestly and critically at what our culture thinks of as a good life, and the way it consistently fails to deliver what it promises.
- Contrast current cultural values around life with Jesus' notion that the faithful life is swallowed up by resurrection.
- Clarify that faith in Christ does not cause us to avoid the disappointment, discomfort and disillusion of this life, nor does it ask us to ignore current difficulties and place our hope in a life to come.
- Develop an understanding of, and a desire to know, a life that is resurrected – raised up – by Jesus' invitation to a deeper experience of living, a deeper relationship with others, and a deeper understanding of ourselves.
- Prepare campers to reflect on what it means that Jesus feeds us, enlightens us, leads us, and connects us in ways that make our lives a much richer and more faithful experience.
- Staff members may want to adopt this as a goal: By the end of the day, help each camper to articulate how the presence of God in their life makes a unique, tangible positive difference for them – in a way that is distinct from anything this world promises.

### **MORNING WATCH**

#### **Common Welcome**

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLK and a new day of life. May you find peace and quiet this early morning and may this day bring you closer to your cabin mates and the many other people you will encounter along the way today. More than anything, may you feel God's love and grace as you study, play, laugh and maybe even cry. Enjoy each moment; enjoy your Life in Jesus in this special place.

## Introduction to the day

Jesus knows that our society's notions about what makes for a "good life" are not what God intends life to be for us. Today we remember that Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." What does it mean to know Jesus as resurrection and life? It means to be fed by his presence. It means to be enlightened by his brightness. It means to be led by his word. It means to experience life as an invitation to be lifted up, here and now, by the presence and promise of the God whom we know in Christ.

## Why we chose the passage and the scripture

11:17-27 – Martha goes out to meet Jesus, and the following conversation ensues:

<sup>11:17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." [St. John 11:17-27]

This Bible passage (St. John 11:17-27) is both the theme verse for this day, and a reflection of where we will go throughout this week. In all that we do, and in all that we are, Jesus wants to lift us up, and help us to experience life as God wants it to be.

## Song: "I am the Resurrection" by Undercover (album: "God Rules")

*I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me will never die,  
I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me will live a new life.  
I have come to bring you truth, I have come to bring you life.*

*If you believe then you shall live.*

*People walked after living in a bed, Jesus raised the people from the dead,*

*Hey, if you believe then you shall live.*

*Jesus said he was the only way, and he stands here, calling you today, and if you believe then you shall live.*

## Questions for consideration:

- What values, experiences, possessions and relationships are most important to me in my life?
- What is one of the best moments I have ever experienced?
- When have I been aware of the presence of Jesus in my life?
- What do I believe God wants for me in life?



## Closing Prayer

*Gracious God, your son Jesus declared that he is the resurrection and the life. Grant us your grace that we might open our hearts to him, that he might lift us up, and that you might help us to experience the life you so want for us. Bless this day, and bless each of us, that we might be drawn into your light and your life. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE STUDY

At the heart of today's theme is a conversation Jesus has with Martha – a dear friend of his, who lives with her brother (Lazarus) and sister (Mary) in Bethany. To set the scene, we begin in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. John's Gospel.

- 10:22-30 – Jesus attends the festival of Dedication at the temple in Jerusalem. While there, he teaches the people that he will give eternal life to those who believe in him. He concludes his teaching by declaring, “The Father and I are one.” (10:30)
- 10:31-42 – The people and their leaders had previously asked Jesus to declare whether or not he is Messiah, but now are so enraged when he equates himself with God that they pick up stones to hurl them at him. He begins to argue with them, the conflict escalates, and although they try to arrest him he slips out of town and heads across the Jordan River to where John had been baptizing.
- 11:1-16 – While there, Mary and Martha send a message to Jesus, alerting him to the fact that their brother is very ill. Jesus seems to understand the severity of this illness, yet in a surprising move he decides to stay where he is for a few more days. Eventually he announces to his disciples that he is going to go back to Bethany and see Lazarus. The disciples are alarmed, and concerned for Jesus' safety, but encouraged by Thomas they go back to Bethany with Jesus.
- 11:17-27 – Martha goes out to meet Jesus, and the following conversation ensues:  
<sup>11:17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” [St. John 11:17-27]

With this passage, we will explore what Martha wants from Jesus, what Jesus wants for Martha, and how the contrast between these two sets of wants is similar to the contrast between what our culture commends to us and what God wants for us.

**During the exodus, Moses reminded the people of Israel that when they were hungry and vulnerable, God came to their rescue (as was the case time and time again...). By doing so, he challenged Israel to understand how the need to rely on God's word is more important even than their need for food.**

- The people of Israel wandered for some forty years as they made their way from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. This roundabout journey could have been

accomplished in a much smaller amount of time, but God used these years to help Israel learn to depend on God's providence (a lesson they were particularly slow to learn).

- One of the vehicles God used was that of manna – a daily gift of bread (along with quails). Enough was given for each day. Those who gathered enough for the day learned to trust God. Those who gathered more than was needed, attempting to store it up and rely on what they gathered for future security, found it spoiled the next morning.
- At the end of the forty years, before God's people passed through the Jordan River into the Promised Land, Moses addressed them for one last time. (He would not cross the river with them.) He reminded them that their hunger during the journey, and God's grace in providing daily food for them, was intended to teach them how important it is to live by God's word – that depending on God's word makes for a richer life than depending on what we can purchase or accumulate on our own:

<sup>8:1</sup> This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup> Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. [Deuteronomy 8:1-3]

With this passage we explore what it means to place out ultimate trust not in the stuff of life, but in God, and in God's good will for our lives.

**Jesus will echo these words from Moses when he is assailed in the wilderness by the tempter. This story, told by Matthew, Mark and Luke, was clearly an important one for early followers of Jesus, and helps us to see more clearly the life (the faithfulness) Jesus invites us to experience.**

- At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus spends 40 days fasting, and being tempted by Satan. Towards the end of this ordeal, weakened and vulnerable, Satan presents him with a particularly vexing temptation: use your power to feed yourself, so that you might stay strong for what God needs you to do.
- Jesus is featured a number of times in the Gospels as being able to provide food for many, as a sign of who he is. Satan encourages him to do so for himself – a seemingly positive suggestion in a difficult situation.
- Jesus could very well have conjured up a meal for himself, but he knows this is a time of preparation – a time for him to be tested and prepared for his public ministry. So even though the prospect of a meal must have been alluring, he chooses to depend, instead, on the word of God that called him into the wilderness; the word of God he knows will sustain him throughout the course of his earthly life.

<sup>4:1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup> But he answered, "It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” [St. Matthew 4:1-4]

With this passage we explore how a focus on God’s word welcomes Jesus into a rich experience of life and faithfulness. Again, we are encouraged to place our ultimate trust not in the stuff of life, but in God, and in God’s good will for our lives.

## **A PLAN FOR BIBLE STUDY**

Today is the first time our groups will gather for Bible study. What you do today will set the tone for the week. It is important that you help your group understand how these times of study are an integral aspect of a week at camp. Your thoughtful preparation, your attempts to invite them into the conversation, your serious consideration of their questions and suggestions – all of this says, “We’re going to give this time together our very best effort.”

I recommend the following suggestions to you as you prepare to lead this study. However, be sure to tailor them to your own style. Leaders who have a passion for what they are trying to communicate present the most impactful lessons. Campers must perceive that what you are sharing is important to you, before they will consider whether or not it might be important for them too.

### **Set the tone for daily Bible study.**

- Choose your location carefully. Is it far enough separated from the other groups? Are there sufficient spaces for your group members to be comfortably seated? It is as free as possible from outside distractions? Is it close enough to the center of camp, so that you don’t spend an inordinate amount of time walking to it and back again?
- You might begin with a prayer, or a time of silence. You could invite campers to think about what they have experienced so far – what they have enjoyed most and least – when they have felt lifted up or encouraged by someone else.
- Speak to them about the importance of these Bible studies. You might recall a time when an RTALC Bible study was significant for you, or a time when you noticed that a camper was particularly touched by the experience. If this is your first year at Rainbow Trail, you might share with them about a positive experience of Bible study you have had in another setting.

**Take time to do introductions.** Remember that when a group leader shares first, it sets the tone for how others will participate. Whether you use some of the following suggestions, or something else you prefer, offer your response first. Start the conversation by being vulnerable with them. Let them get to know you in a new way. This will help them to take you more seriously, and will often help them to be more responsive to your leadership.

- Given that some of your group members will have known each other for a long time, while others may have just met, first day introductions are important.
- Consider playing a name game. Have a soft ball with you, and invite group members to toss it back and forth with each other. Each person who holds the ball must name the one who threw it to them, and the one to whom they plan to throw it.
- Group members might share their names and some background: Where is their home? With whom do they live? What school do they attend? What do they like best or least about school?

What sports or other activities are important to them? What have they been looking forward to in this week of camp? What have they been dreading?

**Establish your Bible Study Group Covenant for the week.** When the group is responsible to set their own rules, they are far more likely to follow them.

- When a small group context is a safe one, participants are more apt to become involved. What guidelines might help them honor and respect each other? How can we make sure everybody gets a chance to share? What can we do to encourage group members to take each other's contributions seriously?
- How will the group respond if someone is breaking one of these rules?
- Set some expectations about confidentiality – what is shared in the group is not to be shared beyond the group without permission.
- Keep in mind, for yourself, the relationship between maintaining confidentiality and intervening if a group member's wellbeing is threatened. Remember what was discussed at staff training with regards to your role as a Mandatory Reporter.

**Introduce the theme for the week.**

Take a brief moment to remind campers about the theme for the week: "I AM, We Are." Refer to the first section of this Bible study (A.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE WEEK) as you prepare to do this.

- Introduce the theme for the day.  
Follow up by introducing the campers to the theme of the day: "I Am the Resurrection and the Life." Refer to the second section of this Bible study (A.2. INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY) as you prepare to do this.

Before we start talking about today's Bible passage, let's talk a bit about life. I'd like you to think about your life – your whole life. Think about what it is like to be in your family. (*Pause for a moment.*) Think about your activities: sports or music or dance or theater or clubs. (*Pause.*) Think about what it is like to be in your school, your church, your neighborhood. (*Pause.*) Think about the world around you: dangers or opportunities that have caught your attention. (*Pause.*)

- What do you think makes for a good life? What experiences have you had? What relationships have you enjoyed? What places have you visited? What truths have you learned? What beauty have you seen? What joy has touched your heart? (*Give each group member a chance to offer a response or two.*)
- Now let's turn our attention to the other side. What has been less than great for you? What has frustrated you? What has made you feel frightened or sad or lonely? What do you hope never happens again? (*Give each group member a chance to offer a response or two.*)
- Optional: at the bottom of this study is a mock report card that campers can fill out. If you think it would be helpful in promoting the conversation, provide copies for your group members and invite them to fill them out and discuss them.

What we've got here is a description of what the good life is and isn't for a person of your age living in our time. In many ways what we've shared has been shaped by the culture in which we live. Just imagine: if you had this conversation with young people living in a different country, or in a different economic situation, or even in a different time in their lives, you would get some very different answers, wouldn't you?

The hard reality is, although our culture might suggest that to be wealthy or healthy or powerful or popular is what life is all about, many people have found that it really doesn't lead to a sense of peace or joy. Talk for a bit about how some of what culture promises to us is rarely realized.

- When have I tried hard to be part of a popular group, only to end up feeling hurt?
- When have I thought the newest cell phone or music player or items of clothing or vacation or concert tickets were going to make me happy, but they really didn't?
- When have I expected that making a team, or being chosen for a role, or becoming part of a club was going to be amazing, but found it to be somewhat disappointing?

We've talked about life from the perspective of what we've experienced. Let's talk now about the kind of life God wants for us.

- Invite campers to open their Bibles to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. John.
- The story of the conversation between Jesus and Martha stands at the center of what we want to discuss today.
- You will want to set the scene for this conversation. The larger context of this conversation is a section too long to read as a group (St. John 10:22 to 11:27), so you'll need to provide some background.
- Important contextual information to communicate:
  - The danger Jesus faces in Bethany and Jerusalem.
  - The message from Mary and Martha about their brother's illness.
  - Jesus' strange decision to stay where he is (long enough for Lazarus to die).
  - The concern of his disciples for his safety, overturned by his own determination to return to Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem..
- Have the group read the text together. You might invite three campers to be readers, playing the parts of the narrator, Jesus and Martha.
- Ask the group what they noticed in this story. Possible responses might include:
  - A number of people care for Mary and Martha, and walk all the way from Jerusalem to Bethany so they can spend time with them.
  - Martha goes out to meet Jesus, but Mary stays home. Why might that be? (Spoiler alert: Mary, at Martha's request, goes out to meet Jesus in the verses following the text we are studying.)
  - Martha at first seems to accuse Jesus of not showing up in time to help Lazarus. Does she seem mad with him? Or simply attesting to Jesus' power, and the regret that he wasn't there to use it?
  - Jesus promises that Lazarus will rise, and Martha assumes Jesus is talking about heaven.
- Draw their attention to the last verses of the text, where Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life." and Martha responds with, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."
  - Here Jesus seems to re-define resurrection and life. It has less to do with bringing a dead body back to life, and more to do with Jesus himself.
  - What could it mean that he says "I am the resurrection and the life."

- Note: he doesn't say he is the one who raises people, or who gives people life. He says **he is** resurrection and life.
- To have Jesus in your life is to experience resurrection, whether you are living or dying.
- To have Jesus in your life is to experience life, whether you are living or dying.
- Go back to what you shared when we talked about what is good or bad about our lives.
  - Jesus teaches us that what is most important are not the particulars of what we are experiencing; whether our culture evaluates our life as a good one or a bad one. (Remind them of the report cards they filled out, if you chose to do that activity.)
  - What is most important is to experience the good and bad of life, while in a living and growing relationship with God, through Jesus.
  - This influence on our life transforms what we experience, so that everything becomes an opportunity for God to enter in and lift us up.
- In this passage, Jesus describes himself as “the resurrection.”
  - Resurrection doesn't only refer to bringing dead bodies back to life.
  - The word for resurrection in St. John 11:25 (in the Greek New Testament) is ἀνάστασις (*anastasis*). It refers to a process of change from a lower to a higher status.
  - Simeon uses this word when Mary and Joseph bring the infant Jesus into the temple. He prophesies about Jesus: “This child is destined for the falling and the rising (*anastasis*) of many in Israel...” (St. Luke 2:34)
  - Jesus is the one who lifts us up – who through grace welcomes us into the family of faith, restores us when we fall, and inspires and empowers us to lift up those whom we meet from day to day.
- In this passage, Jesus describes himself as “the life.”
  - The Greek word for life is ζωή – (*zoe*). (Does anyone know someone named Zoe? Is she full of life?)
  - ζωή refers to the quality of life; the depth of life; the spiritual significance of life.
  - Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life (*zoe*), and have it abundantly.” (St. John 10:10)
  - Jesus is one who invites us into abundant life; the fullness of life; life lived gratefully and faithfully; the life that God intends us to live; the life we were created to live.
- So what, exactly does it mean that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? That is what we'll be exploring together throughout this entire week:
  - Life in Jesus is life that feeds us.
  - Life in Jesus is life that enlightens us.
  - Life in Jesus is life that leads us.
  - Life in Jesus is life that connects us to God and to one another, for the sake of the world.
- The particulars of life may not change in dramatic ways. We'll still have pains and sorrows, struggles and failures, disappointments and discouragements. But through it all, Jesus lifts us up, strengthens us for a new beginning, and becomes our life.
  - And this is the best life for us.
- As a way to wrap up the study, you might ask each camper to share one thing they heard during the study that they had known before, one thing they learned that was new, and one thing they'd like to learn more about.
- Close with a prayer, that group members might know the presence of Jesus in their lives, and that no matter what life throws at them, that their faith and their relationship with God will be a significant part of who they are and what they experience.

## **ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

- Reflect on St. Mark 8:34-37, and discuss Jesus' notion that the attempt to save life will cause you to lose it, but the willingness to give life will allow you to save it.
- Reflect on St. Matthew 6:25-33, and discuss how being anxious and worried about the particulars of life is a completely different way to live, than to trust that God will provide for us, just as God provides for the grass of the field.
- Reflect on Deuteronomy 8:1-3 and St. Matthew 4:1-4, and talk about how both Moses and Jesus understood that relying on God leads to a much richer and more faithful life than relying on what we can provide or accumulate on our own.

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

\* Theme: The Game of Life – find ways to filter the game throughout the day

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

\* Songs from the camp song sheet

Seek Ye First

Thy Word

Fill My Cup

Psalm 27

Your Everlasting Love

Jesus, Lover of My Soul

You Are My All in All

Grace Like Rain

\* Other new (or old...) songs

“He’s Alive” by Jenny Blacklaw

“I Am the Resurrection and the Life”

“I Am the Bread of Life (and I will raise you up)” by Jaime Thietten

“Alive” by Hillsong Young and Free

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

\* The “Report Card for My Life” could be a good tool for conversation with younger campers.

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

A church in suburban Phoenix was attempting to raise money for the construction of their first church home. The church was located in a new neighborhood where everybody lived in new homes that were valued at well above the average price of a home in that town. The stewardship consultant working with them asked members of the congregation to write on a small piece of paper two numbers. The first number was the total amount of money people in their household made each year. The second number was the average of the total amount of money their neighbors made. The surprising result was that almost everybody thought they were making less than their neighbors. Either this was a church that coincidentally happened to be composed of the lowest paid families in the neighborhood, or those responding to the two questions mistakenly believed that most of their neighbors were earning much more than they were.

- How does it change our experience of life if we worry that others are more fortunate than we are?
- How does it limit our ability to be generous if we think our neighbors, who have more than we have, have an easier time giving since they have more?
- How might our overall experience of life be different if we truly believed that we were fortunate to be as well off as we are, without comparing ourselves to anyone else?
- Often times our thinking is much like Martha's: that resurrection comes after we've died. How is it different to think of Jesus as one who is resurrection, instead of someone who gives resurrection? What might it mean that life with Jesus "lifts us up" in ways that nothing else can? To push this line of thinking even farther: if, for some reason, you became convinced that there is no afterlife, would the difference Jesus makes in our lives today be enough to make you want to share it with others?
- If campers have participated in international mission trips through their home congregations, they may have met people who live in much a more modest setting than what they are used to in their own homes. They may also have noticed that those people sometimes experience a happiness or a contentment that surprised them. Talk about the difference between people in our culture and people in other cultures. Does our culture's focus on prosperity and possessions, and the notion that we don't have quiet enough, cause us to experience a life that is less than what we might experience if we were more focused on faithfulness and gratitude?
- Ask campers if they know of someone who is facing significant difficulties, but who seems extraordinarily peaceful or content. How does faith in Christ, and a willingness to trust in God (instead of ourselves) lead to a richer, more meaningful life?

## **PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

**Scripture:** St. John 11:17-27

**Reflection:** Today, during our first full day at camp, we remembered that Jesus once described himself by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." Life, as we all know, has its highs and lows – its ups and downs. But through it all Jesus accompanies us, showering us with grace and love, celebrating with us during the good times and sorrowing with us during the hard times, picking us up when we fall, and empowering us for new beginnings. Our culture promises that wealth and power and influence bring happiness: a promise that often goes unfulfilled. Jesus promises us that no matter what life sends our way, his presence in our lives is what uplifts us and makes life what God intends it to be. As he feeds us, enlightens us, leads us and connects us, we experience life. His life. True life.

**Activity:** Make a list of what the family appreciates most about life. What have been the best moments we have had as individuals or shared as a family? Which of them are high on our culture's list of what is important in life? Which of them are high on our Lord's list of what is important in life?

**Closing Prayer:** Lord God, we thank you that through your son, we experience your grace and your love. Continue to lift us up, that we might enter into the life you most want us to live. Bless us and encourage us, in good times and bad, so that we might know the comfort and strength that comes only from you. Amen.



# Report Card for My Life

On this Report Card, give each area of your life a grade.  
Has it been an A, B, C, or D?  
Or would you give this area of your life a failing grade?

My Life	Grade
The relationships I have with friends and family.	
The experiences I have had.	
The way I feel about myself.	
The way I feel about the world around me.	
How I have enjoyed my life.	
How I feel about my future.	

## 2019 BIBLE STUDY – I AM, We Are!

### DAY 2 – “LIFE THAT FEEDS: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE”

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

This week, we are exploring who Jesus is and who we are – as individuals and with one another – in him. The thread running through all the studies this week is that Jesus is inexhaustible life and has come to give human beings this life. In the Gospel of John in particular, this life is called “eternal life.” Contrary to what many Christian people think, eternal life is not life that begins after we die. It is unquenchable, indestructible life from God that fills us already now.

As Madeleine L’Engle writes, “Eternity is total is-ness, immediacy, now-ness. Living in eternity is, in fact, the way we are supposed to live all the time, right now, in the immediate moment, not hanging onto the past, not projecting into the future. The past is the rock that is under our feet, that enables us to push off from it and move into the future... We don’t bury ourselves in the past, nor should we worry too much about the future.”

As we will see throughout the week, a number of times in the Gospel of John, Jesus says “I am...” Yesterday, we heard Jesus say, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Today, we hear him say, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Our primary biblical text is John 6:35, 41-44, 48-51. It needs to be read in concert with the story of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt in Exodus, chapter 16. Here is the text in full from John:

<sup>35</sup>*Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

<sup>41</sup>*Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”* <sup>42</sup>*They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”* <sup>43</sup>*Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves.* <sup>44</sup>*No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.*

<sup>48</sup>*I am the bread of life.* <sup>49</sup>*Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* <sup>50</sup>*This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.* <sup>51</sup>*I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*

In this passage, Jesus is conversing with a group of people who complain about his claim to be the bread of life. In response to Jesus, the crowd recalls their foundational story, the story of the Exodus, the freeing of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt, and receiving God’s provision of manna in the wilderness. Earlier, they quote a text: “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”

Immediately Jesus tantalizes them with an offer of bread from heaven that gives life to the world. “Sir,” they plead, “give us this bread always!” *I am the bread of life*, he says. *Whoever comes to me*

*will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.* At this, the people begin to complain.

With this single word “complain,” we hear an echo from that ancient Exodus story. We hear of the impulse in the human heart to complain, even when things are sufficient. Exodus 16 tells it: *The whole congregation of the Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*

This is simply astonishing. This means they prefer slavery to the freedom of God. They prefer full but enslaved bellies to freedom and hunger in the desert. But while astonishing, none of us is a stranger to this.

Freedom means that no clear path lies before us; we have to make the path. Comfort and luxury are not guideposts on the path of freedom. Freedom means we are thrust into a situation for which we don’t feel prepared, in which the old, familiar tools don’t work. Freedom means entering a harsh wilderness. So, often, we yearn to go back, even to things that held us in bondage.

In that ancient desert wilderness, God gave sufficient provision. Quail appeared in the evening, and manna in the morning. They hated it. Moses told them the truth about their complaining. He said, “Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.”

So, back to Jesus and his debaters. They actually are onto what he is saying and they don’t like it one bit. The murmuring begins, softly together at first, then gathering a head of steam. This is Joseph’s son. Mary’s son. He’s one of us. He’s just a human being. The bread of life from heaven, come down from heaven? Sorry, we’re not going there.”

They sort of have a point. It’s hard to see the pathway and freedom of God in an ordinary human being. Our minds and hearts are not wired to see that. We prefer our gods to be larger than life, big and flashy, who come down from the sky and make things easy and clear, just like we want.

But instead, here is one who offers himself as bread for the life of the world. One whose body is subject to the same death and decay as ours. One who, in his very body and way of life, his suffering and serving, his embrace of outcasts and tearing down walls of separation, personifies the grace and truth of God. This is the food that gives never-ending life. If you eat of me, Jesus says, you will never die. This is just too much for people to hear.

Sometimes, we prefer not to see Jesus. We retreat to easy, familiar ways, even the ones that entrap us and others in death. We retreat to rules that draw boundaries between us and others. As soon as things become unfamiliar and confusing in life, as when we encounter people who are different from us, we retreat to ways that enslave us and cut us off from God’s hopes and dreams.

With the bread that is Jesus, we are thrust into a wilderness of freedom and a pathway that is love, which is a much, much harder way to live. In Jesus’ love for others, I cannot retreat behind the walls of my prejudice. In Jesus’ embrace of all, the moment I circle the wagons around me with those who are most like me, I see Jesus standing outside that circle with those who are the least like me.

The first bite of this bread from heaven might not go down as easy as the old food of enslavement. But here’s what we are tasting:

- Forgiving the unforgivable
- Reconciling with my enemy
- Risking a measure of understanding for those who have broken our hearts
- Bearing with the unbearable
- Remaining at table with those with whom we mightily disagree
- Not taking our marbles and going home the moment we hear something we don't like
- Giving up some privilege so that others may have enough and exist in peace
- Not reacting in violence when we fear that we will lose

Often, we afraid to eat the food that is Jesus and go with him on this journey into God's freedom. It's easier to hold a grudge, and condemn my enemies, and walk away from people I disagree with, and hoard what I have out of fear of loss.

But, that's living in chains. Jesus releases us from this bondage and beckons us into his freedom, where God always walks with us and provides sufficient provision. Jesus is God's promise that freedom, as hard a path as it is, is life, eternal life that breaks into our life now. This life sustains us in the wilderness and hunger for God's ways is at the root of this life. And God always fills the hungry with good things.

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

- On this hike day, help the campers be aware of the immense preparation and energy that will go into assuring that they will be well nourished on a day of exertion. Become aware of the importance of food to sustain us.
- What are some other hungers, besides food hunger, that campers are experiencing as they hike? Was someone lonely? Was someone hurt or injured? Did anyone have to return early? Was someone scared? Did someone fill someone else's hunger? Accompany the lonely? Assist the injured? Comfort the anxious?
- Observe and reflect upon the social nature of sharing food. Ask how we are connected in eating.
- Engage campers on how hunger for food connects to deep hungers in human life: belonging, being loved, loving others, creating community, reconciling after a dispute, dissatisfaction with injustice, celebration of goodness.
- Engage campers in the "is-ness" of life with God. Help them explore how they may be holding onto a past that it may be time to let go of, or from which to launch a new beginning. Help them explore how worrying about the future can be a form of enslavement that prevents them from experiencing the fullness God grants now.
- Staff goal: experience and model the real presence of eternal life, the freedom that Jesus offers as real food that satisfies us. Forgive yourself, as God forgives you, of past mistakes. Explore how the past is something from which you can launch yourself, but to which you are not chained. Bring to mind and name the things that worry you about the future and moderate your own anxiety about the future by placing it in God's hands. Breathe in and out, experiencing the sufficient presence of God that is the ground of all life: past, present, and future.
- FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY: The Village of the Day leading worship in the evening should include Communion in the service.
- FOR THE BIBLE STUDY GROUPS: Each group should have a small loaf of bread, enough for each person to share a piece, as part of the closing of the Bible study.

## **MORNING WATCH**

### **Common Welcome**

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLC and a new day of life. May you find peace and quiet this early morning and may this day bring you closer to your cabinmates and the many other people you will encounter along the way today. More than anything, may you feel God's love and grace as you study, play, laugh, and maybe even cry. Enjoy each moment; enjoy your Life in Jesus in this special place.

### **Introduction to the day**

Just as bread from a loaf fills us when we are hungry, Jesus is God's bread that fills us, satisfying our deepest hungers in life. Because he fills us, we can help satisfy the hunger of others.

### **Why we chose the passage and the scripture**

*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." – John 6:35*

When we eat bread, sooner or later we will be hungry again. When we come to Jesus to be fed by his love, when he embraces us with his grace and goodness, we are deeply satisfied. This bread is free, a gift from God that never ends.

### **Song: "I am the Bread of Life" by Steve Angrisano and Tom Booth**

*I am the Bread of Life, I am the hope in night,  
I am the door wide open, I am the shepherd's might,  
I am the truth and light, I am the way and life,  
I Am Who Am and I am for you: come and follow me.*

*I am bread for the world, hope for the hopeless.  
Come to me, and know that I'll always be there  
with my arms open wide.  
I Am Who Am and I am for you: come and follow me.*

*I give my heart to those in sorrow, I come to those who are in need;  
hope for today and for tomorrow, light for all who want to see.*

### **Questions for consideration:**

- If you are hungry right now, how do you feel? Like grumbling? A bit grouchy?
- After a meal, how will you/do you feel?
- As you are hiking, think about this: besides food, what do you hunger for in life?
- How do you feel when you receive these things? Does the feeling last long?
- How might believing in Jesus satisfy the deep hungers of life?

## Closing Prayer

*Jesus, you are bread for the world and hope for the hopeless. Thank you for opening your arms wide to me and everyone else. Hold me, feed me, fill me with all I need. Help me follow you all the days of my life. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE STUDY

In the introduction above, I have presented an interpretation of the text from the Gospel of John. You may wish to read the entirety of John 6 to see the context and flow of the story. The theme of Jesus being the bread of life comes back again and again. The snippet of text above was chosen because it centers the meaning of Jesus as the “bread of life” in comparison to the manna from heaven provided by God to the Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus points out that the people who ate the manna in the wilderness died, and makes the bold claim that if you eat the living bread from heaven (referring to himself), you will not die. And yet, of course, we will also die. And so we are presented with a strange paradox: even though we die, we still live in Jesus.

The Exodus was the liberation of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. This is the foundational salvation experience of Israel: liberation from slavery. The experience of new freedom was difficult for the people, and in chapter 16 of the book of Exodus, we hear of their grumbling.

I suggest above that freedom is the ultimate bread from heaven that Jesus gives us. Just as the ancient people grumbled at their new freedom, the experience of freedom in Jesus can also be difficult, until we experience it. Forgiving people who have hurt us, welcoming strangers, loving our enemy, etc. can initially be distasteful things to consider, but in them we find freedom from the shackles of pain, isolation, our sense of superiority, our propensity to want to kill our enemies (even if with dismissive and cruel words).

I would like campers to engage two main texts: first, John 6:35, 41-44, 48-51; then, Exodus 16:2-15. Here’s an outline that might be helpful. **Key: *Have a small loaf of bread with you for the Bible study time.*** This will be used at the end.

- Open the study by checking in with the campers. Bible study will come after the day’s various hikes. Pay attention to how they are physically feeling. How is the exhaustion of the hike, followed by the refueling of dinner, affecting them in that moment? Maybe invite each camper to share a one-sentence summary of the day hiking.
- Open with a prayer.
- Read (or have the campers share in reading) John 6:35, 41-44, 48-51 (to me, the verses I’ve skipped feel distracting; but, feel free to read 41-51). Ask campers for their impressions. What did they notice? What made them wonder?
- After hearing theirs (or to prompt them), raise your own “noticings” and “wonderings.”
- Introduce the Exodus “manna from heaven” story as the key background to this teaching of Jesus. Share that manna from heaven was “emergency” bread God provided the Israelites when they were hungering in the desert and complaining how much better they had it while they were slaves.
- Read (in the same manner) Exodus 16:2-15.
- Again, ask for impressions. What stuck out for the campers? What did they notice? What bothers them? What would they want to know more about?

- Now, read the John text again (or refer back to it in some way). After hearing the Exodus story, how does knowing the background story affect or change how they hear the John text? What things are similar? What things are different? Do they object to Jesus making this claim? Does the claim challenge them? Comfort them?
- Explore these questions and issues:
  - How is the living bread from heaven, that Jesus claims to be, different from the manna from heaven, which ran out each day?
  - What does Jesus mean when he says he is the bread of life?
  - Why did the people complain about this? What did they find shocking or hard to believe?
  - What do you find shocking or hard to believe?
  - What are some different kinds of hungers?
  - Ask: What do you hunger for? How do you try to satisfy those hungers? What are some of the ways campers have experienced Jesus feeding them?
- Raise what life in Jesus looks like for the campers. In the introduction, I listed some aspects of being free in Jesus that are perhaps very hard. Talk about these things in their lives. Invite sharing of stories:
  - Whom have they needed to forgive? Who has forgiven them? Have they withheld forgiveness or had it withheld from them?
  - Who are their enemies and why? What happened?
  - Whom have they had to be patient with when it would be easier to just complain about them?
  - Have they had disagreements with friends or family that has made them want to walk away from that person?
  - Have they stormed away from a situation when they don't like what they hear?
  - Have they shared their things/food/love/etc. so that others may have more?
- Close the Bible study by sharing a small loaf of bread. Be mindful of the time left. Pass the bread around to the campers and have them tear off a piece, or divide it for them. As they eat the bread, ask them to share:
  - What have they learned about food on this hike day?
  - What have they learned about Jesus as the bread of life?
- Close with prayer.

## Background Material

Here's an interesting article from Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology on bread in the Bible.

(<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/bread-bread-of-presence/>)

### Bread, Bread of Presence

Bread was the essential food of the ancient Israelites. Indeed, the very word "bread" could be used generically for any kind of food. Meat was eaten by peasants only at festival occasions, and other foods supplemented bread. As the mainstay of life, bread came to be a primary metaphor for life and sustenance.

Bread in the Bible functions as a social bond. The giving of bread to another is a major element of hospitality and serves as a sign of respect and concern (Gen 14:18; 18:6; 19:3; Deut 23:4; Ruth 2:14; 1 Sam 25:18; 28:24; 2 Sam 16:1-2). Conversely, to take someone's bread and then turn against that

person is to commit a heinous offense of ingratitude and betrayal, as in the case of Judas Iscariot (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18-30).

The ritual and theological texts of the Bible often refer to bread. It played a role in the consecration of the Aaronic priests (Exod 29:2-3). Bread was also used as part of an offering of thanksgiving to God (Lev 7:12-13). Of particular importance in Israel's worship is unleavened bread. In the first Passover, the eating of unleavened bread typified the haste of Israel's departure from Egypt (Exod 12:8-11), although there are already indications that leaven is associated with the pervasive influence of evil (Exod 12:14-20). So important was this concept that a special festival of unleavened bread was instituted (Lev 23:6).

The association of leaven with evil underlines the fact that bread or leaven can represent temptation, false teaching, or materialism. Human life is not sustained by bread alone (physical provision), but requires the spiritual provision of the Word of God (Deut 8:3; Job 23:12). This concept enabled Jesus to reject the temptations of Satan (Matt 4:3-4; Luke 4:3-4), and also underlies the practice of fasting, that is, refraining from eating bread during periods of intense focus on an encounter with God (Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9; 2 Sam 3:35). In Matthew 16:5-12, leaven represents the doctrine of the Sadducees and Pharisees.

More positively, bread frequently stands for God's provision for his people. The practice of setting the bread of the Presence before God expresses this concept. Every Sabbath the priests put twelve loaves of bread on the table of the bread of the Presence in the temple (Exod 25:23-30; 35:13; 39:36; Lev 24:5-9). In contrast to the religious ideas of the surrounding nations, the Bible does not imply that the bread was meant as food for God (Psalm 50:12-15). Instead, the bread was placed before Yahweh as a token of gratitude for his provision for his people. For Jesus, David's eating of the bread of the Presence suggests that human need can at times overrule ritual prohibition (1 Sam 21:4-6; Mark 2:26).

The manna in the wilderness is the quintessential example of bread as a provision of God. The Israelites were to gather just enough for each day and not hoard, since they needed to learn to depend on God for each day's supply (Exod 16:4-5). Similarly, the Christian prays for "daily" bread (Matt 6:11). Such provision spares one from the dangers of both poverty and wealth (Prov 30:8). Jesus teaches that God feeds his people as a father does his children (Matt 7:9), and dramatically illustrates this truth in the miraculous feeding of the crowds (Matt 14:15-21; 15:32-38). The disciples were thus not to be concerned about where they would obtain bread when they went out to serve God (Luke 9:3; cf. Psalm 37:25). At the same time, the Christian is not to rely on the charity of the church for bread but earn it (2 Th 3:12). The failure of the bread supply is a mark of judgment (Lev 26:26; Lam 1:11; 2:12; 4:4; 5:6; Amos 4:6).

The New Testament uses bread as a rich theological metaphor. As God supplies bread, so he will also supply righteousness to his people (2 Cor 9:10). Above all, Jesus himself is the bread of life; he is the sustenance from God that gives eternal life (John 6:25-59). Christians thus partake of Christ's body in the bread of the Lord's Supper. In this, they remember his sacrificial death and celebrate the eternal life he supplies (Matt 26:26-29). After the resurrection, Jesus' eating of bread with the disciples was a token of his victory over death (Luke 24:30; Luke 24:35; John 21:13), and Christians after that met on the first of the week for the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7).



## ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS

Much of this study is about bread as a metaphor and human hungers beyond food hunger. However, many people go literally hungry each day. Here is a fact sheet from Bread For the World. As they say, “Have Faith. End Hunger.”



GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY RESOURCES

THE ISSUES

## Facts on Hunger and Poverty in the United States

- More than 49 million Americans lived in households that struggled to put food on the table in 2013 (latest figures available).<sup>1</sup>
- More than 45 million Americans live below the poverty line (\$23,624 for a family of four with two children).<sup>2</sup>
- More than 20 percent—1 in 5—children live at risk of hunger.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, more than 1 in 5 children in America are living in poverty.<sup>1</sup>
- Since 2009, wages for the bottom 60 percent of workers have fallen 4 to 6 percent. Families on average are still earning \$4,500 less than before the recession.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2013, 21.5 million low-income children received a free or reduced-price lunch through the National School Lunch Program.<sup>6</sup> About half of those, 11.2 million, received a free or reduced-price breakfast through the School Breakfast Program<sup>7</sup>, and only 2.4 million of those received Summer Food Service Program meals during the summer months.<sup>8</sup>
- More than 3.3 million children receive food at child care centers, day care homes, and at-risk after-school care centers through the federal Child and Adult Care Feeding Program.<sup>9</sup>
- More than 8.6 million low-income women, infants, and children received nutritious food, nutrition education, and health care referrals through the WIC program in 2013.<sup>10</sup>
- 1 in 7 Americans receives benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps).<sup>11</sup> SNAP moved 3.7 million Americans out of poverty in 2013.<sup>12</sup>
- 48.1 percent of SNAP households are employed<sup>13</sup>, and two thirds of recipients are children, elderly, or disabled.<sup>14</sup>
- The earned income tax credit and child tax credit, which encourage and reward work by supplementing earnings, moved 9.4 million people out of poverty in 2013, including 5.0 million children.<sup>15</sup>
- 23.7 percent of Hispanic households and 26.1 percent of African-American households were food-insecure in 2013.<sup>16</sup> Communities of color tend to experience higher levels of poverty and hunger than the general population.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> [www.ers.usda.gov/media/1566115/err179.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1566115/err179.pdf) (Table 1A; page 6; Individuals)

<sup>2</sup> [www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html) (Poverty Thresholds by Size of Family and Number of Children; 2013)

<sup>3</sup> [www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/2012-2012-map-the-meal-gap-exrc-summary.pdf](http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/2012-2012-map-the-meal-gap-exrc-summary.pdf) (Table 00; page 36; Child Food Insecurity Rate, US)

<sup>4</sup> [http://factfinder2.census.gov/facts/tableservices/js7/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_13\\_1YR\\_S1701&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/facts/tableservices/js7/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_1YR_S1701&prodType=table) (Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months: Population for Whom Poverty Status is Determined, Under 18 Years; 2013)

<sup>5</sup> [www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?ci=view&id=4900](http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?ci=view&id=4900) and [www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?ci=view&id=4203](http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?ci=view&id=4203)

<sup>6</sup> [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/summary.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/summary.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/sbsummary.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/sbsummary.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/child-nutrition-programs/summer-food-service-program.aspx](http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/child-nutrition-programs/summer-food-service-program.aspx)

<sup>9</sup> [www.fns.usda.gov/food/child-and-adult-care-food-program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/food/child-and-adult-care-food-program)

<sup>10</sup> [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic)

<sup>11</sup> [http://factfinder2.census.gov/facts/tableservices/js7/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_13\\_1YR\\_S2201&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/facts/tableservices/js7/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_1YR_S2201&prodType=table) (Table S2201: “Households Receiving Food Stamps” divided by “Total”; 2013)

<sup>12</sup> [www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/dema/p60-249.pdf](http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/dema/p60-249.pdf) (page 20)

<sup>13</sup> [http://factfinder2.census.gov/facts/tableservices/js7/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_13\\_1YR\\_S2201&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/facts/tableservices/js7/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_1YR_S2201&prodType=table) (Table S2201: “Households Receiving Food Stamps, 1 worker in the past 12 months; 2013)

<sup>14</sup> [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2012/Characteristics.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2012/Characteristics.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <http://apps.cbpp.org/3-5-1-tax/?state=US>

<sup>16</sup> USDA 20.3 Household Food Security in the United States

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

- The Village of the Day leading worship in the evening should include Communion in the service.
- At bedtime, share some of the information on the *Bread For the World* fact sheet and invite the campers into a quiet moment of silence; conclude with prayers for those who have no food this evening.
- Use one or more of these prayers, or make up your own:

Almighty God, it is difficult to see children suffer, especially from hunger. We ask you to give them daily bread today and end their persistent hunger. Provide the food they need to grow and thrive. Pour out your grace on hungry families, especially parents straining to feed their children despite dwindling resources. Amen.  
—from *World Vision*

God our Father, In the name of him who gave bread to the hungry, we remember all who, through our human ignorance, folly, and sin, are condemned to live in want.

Show us, who have so much, what we can do to help those who have so little; and bless the efforts of those who work to overcome poverty and hunger, that sufficient food may be found for all; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. —from the *Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland*

### **A Prayer for the Hungry**

*O God, we pray now for the hungry— not the spiritually hungry  
not the emotionally hungry  
not the psychologically hungry  
(though they surely need our prayers)—  
we pray now simply for the hungry hungry.*

*We know in the realm that Jesus showed us no one goes hungry,  
no one lacks daily bread.  
In Your Realm,  
those with food remember the hungry,  
those with food share their food with the hungry,  
those with food work on behalf of the hungry,  
those with food weep for the hungry,  
even if it makes them feel guilty.*

*God, we are grateful you never forget about the hungry— that you long for the hungry to be fed.*

*God, we are grateful you never forget about those who aren't hungry— that you long for them to feed the hungry.*

*God, the hungry and unhungry stand as one before you;  
loved with the same love,  
both in need of you and each other.  
God of the Hungry, so many are hungry.  
Rescue your hungry children,  
fill their stomachs with food  
and their hearts with gladness,*

*so that they, too, might experience the luxury of dealing  
only with their spiritual hunger,  
their emotional hunger,  
their psychological hunger.*

*Send your Spirit to the hungry hungry,  
and to the unhungry,  
until all feast with Jesus in the new age.  
In the name of Jesus and the hungry hungry we pray.*

*a prayer by Steve Hammond*

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

### **Additional Biblical Texts on Bread**

Check out these Bible stories and see how they help fill in more about bread and God's provision.

**Isaiah 55:1-7** (The gift of cost-free food as a vision of God's grace; bread as that which satisfies)

<sup>1</sup>Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. <sup>2</sup>Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. <sup>3</sup>Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. <sup>4</sup>See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. <sup>5</sup>See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

**2 Kings 4:42-44** (A miracle of God's provision, more than enough bread for a multitude of people)

<sup>42</sup>A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." <sup>43</sup>But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" <sup>44</sup>He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.

**Luke 22:7-20** (Jesus celebrates the Passover and shares the Last Supper with his disciples)

<sup>7</sup>Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it." <sup>9</sup>They asked him, "Where do you want us to make preparations for it?" <sup>10</sup>"Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters <sup>11</sup>and say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'" <sup>12</sup>He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there." <sup>13</sup>So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. <sup>14</sup>When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with

him. <sup>15</sup>He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup>for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” <sup>17</sup>Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; <sup>18</sup>for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” <sup>19</sup>Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>20</sup>And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

### **Songs from the RTLK Songbook**

Big House

Fill My Cup

Let Us Break Bread Together

Breathe

**Night Prayer** (I just love this prayer! Perhaps work it into the rhythm of your cabin’s end of day routine)

*Lord,  
it is night.*

*The night is for stillness.  
Let us be still in the presence of God.  
It is night after a long day.  
What has been done has been done;  
what has not been done has not been done;  
let it be.*

*The night is dark.  
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives  
rest in you.*

*The night is quiet.  
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,  
all dear to us,  
and all who have no peace.*

*The night heralds the dawn.  
Let us look expectantly to a new day,  
new joys,  
new possibilities.*

*In your name we pray.  
Amen.*

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

Campers this age may have the most difficulty understanding the metaphor of Jesus as bread. Use simile: Jesus is “like” bread. Bread is filling food; Jesus like that: he fills us with love, forgiveness, friendship, making up with friends we’ve had a fight with...etc.

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

Campers this age will be more attuned to the injustice of hunger. Perhaps a discussion of domestic and world hunger will fit their passions.

Writing as the dad of kids in their late teens, my children have become attentive to their food needs, how food either adversely or positively affects their health, how food affects their bodies. They are really ripe for discussion of topics around literal and metaphorical hunger.

## **PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

**Scripture:** John 6:35

**Reflection:** With the bread that is Jesus, we are drawn into a life of love. In Jesus' love for others, we can't retreat behind walls of prejudice. In Jesus' embrace of all, the moment we circle the wagons around us with those who are most like us, we see Jesus standing outside that circle with those who are the least like us.

Here's what we taste in Jesus:

- Forgiving the unforgivable
- Reconciling with my enemy
- Risking a measure of understanding for those who have broken our hearts
- Bearing with the unbearable
- Remaining at table with those with whom we mightily disagree
- Not taking our marbles and going home the moment we hear something we don't like
- Giving up some privilege so that others may have enough and exist in peace
- Not reacting in violence when we fear that we will lose

This is the food that gives life to the world.

**Activity:** Gather yourselves for dinner. Share that today is "hike day" at Rainbow Trail. Hike day is a day of adventure and exertion for all campers, no matter their level of physical ability. This is a day campers root for one another and a day when physical nourishment is especially vital. The camp is well-prepared.

At your family meal, begin by sharing a small loaf of bread. Have each family member at home break off a small piece. Remembering that your camper has hiked today, and recalling your own day, ask each family member present to share:

- What has food meant to you today?
- In what ways is Jesus the bread of life?
- When all have shared their thoughts, eat your piece of bread.

**Prayer:** Jesus, you are bread for the world and hope for the hopeless. Thank you for opening your arms wide to hold us and everyone else. Hold us, feed us, fill us with all we need. Help us follow you all the days of our lives. Amen.

## 2019 BIBLE STUDY – I AM, WE Are!

### DAY 3 - “LIFE THAT SHINES – I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

A phenomenon called [phototaxis](#) explains how organisms respond to [light](#) with [motion](#). Insects, such as moths, that move toward lights are considered positively phototactic. Other insects, such as [cockroaches](#), that move away from lights are considered negatively phototactic. One of the most popular theories holds that positively phototactic insects are drawn to lights because they act like a [navigational guide](#). Many insects find their way by keeping a [natural light](#) source, such as the Sun or the Moon, at a [constant angle](#).

God created light at the beginning of earthly time. In Genesis 1 we read: “In the beginning, God created *everything*: the heavens *above* and the earth *below*. *Here’s what happened*:<sup>2</sup> *At first* the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark *fog* draped over the deep while God’s spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters. *Then there was the voice of God*.<sup>3</sup> Let there be light. And light flashed into being.<sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was *beautiful and good*, and He separated the light from the darkness.”

The light of day affects the growth of plants as well. Botanists believe that most plants on God’s good earth cannot survive in total darkness. All plants, except for a few that live on other organisms, use a process called photosynthesis to obtain the energy they need. Most plants are *autotrophs*—they are self-feeding and require sunlight to survive. Bugs require light to find their way. Plants require light to grow. And people, well, they need light to live.

Most of us have had experiences of darkness that have left indelible impressions on us for life. If you’ve ever been caught in a snowstorm in the middle of Iowa in the dead of night, you know how overwhelmingly chilling the darkness can be. If you’ve ever been lost on a trail in the mountains as night falls, you know how frightening and lonely the enveloping darkness can be. These are physical manifestations of darkness.

But what about the emotional darkness that kids; that you and I have lived through. If you’ve ever lived with depression, you know how stifling and scary darkness can be. If you’ve ever been caught in a cycle of bullying, you know how awful and lonely being bullied can be. If you’ve struggled in a relationship with a good friend or lover, you know the darkness of losing your best friend; losing a friendship that matters to you as much as anything you’ve ever been blessed to be a part of. If you’ve lived in a home where parents fight every day, or Dad abuses Mom, Mom abuses Dad or one of them abuses you, you know the pain of darkness.

John 3:19 says: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. Certainly, living in the darkness of losing a friend or losing your way is not evil, but there are times when it is easier to sit in darkness than face the light of day. Sometimes we’d rather not be found out and so we hide in the dark.

Just as bugs need light to navigate their “buggy” journeys and plants need light to grow, we need Light, too. But not just any light. We need Jesus; Jesus who declares he is the Light of the world. Jesus, who promises to shine in the darkness of our lives and show us the way. And Jesus does this, not

because he must, but out of great love for us. Jesus is Life and Light. And, when we become enlightened and lit up, we begin to walk as Children of the Light. And if we are Children of Light, we become light for the world, our friends, and our families. As God's light, we help others on their journeys. As God's lights, we help our friends find their way to what is good, life-giving and positive. We become their partners in the darkness; the darkness where danger lurks and where it is dangerous to dwell, and we lead them to safety. Light always defeats the darkness. And what does Jesus expect in return? Nada...nothing.

**I love a short poem by Hafiz entitled The Sun Never Says. Of course, it is referring to the Sun, S-u-n, not Son, S-o-n, but if you want to, insert Son in the opening line. Even after all this time the sun never says to the earth, "You owe me." Look what happens with a love like that, it lights the whole sky."**

The prophet Isaiah writes: "Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.

**What an amazing promise. What an amazing gift. The Light of the Son shines in the world and we are given life...life that is full of love...love and light that leads to wholeness and peace. Light that is life.**

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

- Honor the darkness that kids live with and in
- Help campers understand that all people find themselves in darkness at some point in their lives
- Inform youth/children about darkness; that it comes in all shapes and forms; physical and emotional
- Teach kids about Jesus' light; that it dispels the darkness of this life and helps us find our way
- Help campers understand the comfort of living in the light of Jesus; of allowing his light to help us grow in goodness and love
- Encourage campers to see themselves as reflectors of the Light of the world; they are Children of the Light

### **MORNING WATCH**

#### **Common Welcome**

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTL and a new day of life. May you find peace and quiet this early morning and may this day bring you closer to your cabin mates and the many other people you will encounter along the way today. More than anything, may you feel God's love and grace as you study, play, laugh and maybe even cry. Enjoy each moment; enjoy your Life in Jesus in this special place.

#### **Introduction to the day**

Life that Shines; Jesus is the Light of the World

## Why we chose the passage and scripture

John 12:35b-36: *“Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going.  
<sup>36</sup> Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light.”*

### **Song: Jason Gray – Glow in the Dark**

*Sometimes the world feels like a mess Full of drama, full of stress  
And life puts a fist right in your ribs You can hide if you choose to  
And no one would even blame you Or you can let them see how you deal with it*

*That even in the darkest place His love can make you radiate*

*Doesn't matter how deep, how dark the night is  
Keep hoping, keep on shining And they'll see His light burning in your heart  
And if the road gets rough, just keep your head up Let the world see what you're made of  
That His love's alive in your deepest parts Like a flame, like a burning star you can shine right  
where you are  
He made you to glow in the dark*

*Don't be ashamed of your past If you're shattered like a piece of glass  
The more broke you are the more the light gets through  
Show your wounds and your flaws Show them why you still need the cross  
Let them see the work He's doing in you*

*That even in the darkest place His love can make you radiate*

*Doesn't matter how deep, how dark the night is  
Keep hoping, keep on shining And they'll see His light burning in your heart  
And if the road gets rough, just keep your head up Let the world see what you're made of  
That His love's alive in your deepest parts Like a flame,  
like a burning star you can shine right where you are He made you to glow in the dark  
Glow in the dark Doesn't matter how  
Glow in the dark Doesn't matter how*

### **Questions for Consideration**

- Remember a time when you got lost in the dark; literally...or figuratively... like the drama of the world.
  - How did you find your way out or home?
  - Who helped you find your way?
  - What does it mean to “trust in the Light of the World” when you are in darkness?
  - Besides the darkness of night, what other darkness have you found yourself in?
  - How is your life like broken glass?
  - How can life in Jesus help you heal?
  - When have you felt the life and love of Jesus burning in your heart? Where were you?
  - When you struggle to stay courageous in the dark, who do you hope shows up?



## Closing Prayer

Jesus, you are the Light that shines in the darkness; sometimes, even in the light of day, maybe even this morning, my life feels dark, stressful and a mess. Be with me and fill my life with your light. Always stay close to me in times of joy and times of sadness and struggle. Thank you for loving me. I love you, too. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY

### \* John 7:53-8:12

*Then each of them went home, Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, <sup>2</sup> but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup> As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. <sup>4</sup> "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?" <sup>6</sup> They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. <sup>7</sup> They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" <sup>8</sup> Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. <sup>9</sup> When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" <sup>11</sup> "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more." <sup>12</sup> Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."*

William Barclay has some old-time commentary that I think is pretty interesting. Couldn't have said it better myself 😊

"The scribes and Pharisees were out to get some charge on which they could discredit Jesus; and here they thought they had impaled him inescapably on the horns of a dilemma. When a difficult legal question arose, the natural and routine thing was to take it to a Rabbi for a decision. So, the scribes and Pharisees approached Jesus as a Rabbi with a woman taken in adultery.

In the eyes of the Jewish law adultery was a serious crime. The Rabbis said: "Every Jew must die before he will commit idolatry, murder or adultery." Adultery was, in fact one of the three gravest sins and it was punishable by, death, although there were certain differences in respect of the way in which the death penalty was to be carried out. Leviticus 20:10 lays it down: "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death." There the method of death is not specified. Deuteronomy 22:13-24 lays down the penalty in the case of a girl who is already betrothed. In a case like that she and the man who seduced her are to be brought outside the city gates, "and you shall stone them to death with stones." The Mishnah, that is, the Jewish codified law, states that the penalty for adultery is strangulation, and even the method of strangulation is laid down. "The man is to be enclosed in dung up to his knees, and a soft towel set within a rough towel is to be placed around his neck (in order that no mark may be made, for the punishment is God's punishment). Then one man draws in one direction and another in the other direction, until he be dead." The Mishnah reiterates that death by stoning is the penalty for a girl who is betrothed and who then commits adultery. From the purely legal point of view the scribes and Pharisees were perfectly correct. This woman was liable to death by stoning.

The dilemma into which they sought to put Jesus was this: If he said that the woman ought to be stoned to death, two things followed. First, he would lose the name he had gained for love and for mercy and never again would be called the friend of sinners. Second, he would come into collision with the Roman law, for the Jews had no power to pass or carry out the death sentence on anyone. If he said that the woman should be pardoned, it could immediately be said that he was teaching men to break the law of Moses, and that he was condoning and even encouraging people to commit adultery. That was the trap in which the scribes and Pharisees sought to entrap Jesus. But he turned their attack in such a way that it recoiled against themselves.”

My thoughts: Jesus was back at his ministry of teaching early in the morning. I’m certain every day was full of intrigue, challenge, deceit and defense. Jesus was, of course, always ready for those who would “do him in.”

In this story from John 8, Jesus is confronted by a bunch of self-righteous keepers of the Law. They intended to trap him by bringing before him a woman who was guilty of a sexual sin, the sin of adultery. It is clear they feel they have Jesus trapped by this; they have an airtight case, this "get-Jesus" committee!

- **Why did they want to trap Jesus?**
- **Why were they so afraid of him?**
- **Do you think they knew at the beginning of the story how powerful Jesus was?**
- **So, where was the man that committed adultery with this woman? Why wasn’t he brought before Jesus, too? Any thoughts...ideas?**

The Scriptures say they were caught in the very act of adultery and yet, only the woman was brought before Jesus. Some commentators suggest that perhaps they knew the man -- he may have been one of their very own -- and they let him go. The Scriptures aren’t clear on this point. In any case, it seems as though there is a double standard going on here. The Scribes and Pharisees knew the law like the back of their hands. They referred to the law in the book of Leviticus in which God, speaking through Moses, had said that adultery was to be punished by stoning.

Those Scribes and Pharisees knew full well that Jesus was a friend of Sinners. He always seemed to fall on the side of the unfortunate and he spent his life and time, not with the righteous (self-righteous) like the wealthy and respected, but with sinners. I have no doubt that these “keepers of the law” expected that Jesus would let this woman go. If Jesus did, he would be going against the Law of Moses and they would ensnare him in their trap.

- **If you had been Jesus, what would you have done?**

They had no idea how Jesus would solve this issue.

- **What does verse 6 say Jesus did?**
- **What do you suppose he wrote?**

Some scholars suggest that Jeremiah 17 gives us the answer...

O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake thee shall be put to shame;  
those who torn away from thee shall be written in the earth,  
for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water. (Jeremiah 17:13)

So, maybe, just maybe Jesus wrote the names of the accusers on the ground. Whatever he wrote, his deceivers thought he was stalling for time. They pushed him pretty hard asking him again and again to answer them.

- **What did Jesus do when they continued to push him for an answer?**
- **What did the Scribes and the Pharisees do when Jesus doodled again and finally told them that the one who was without sin, should cast the first stone?**

Jesus took the wind out of their sails. They were absolutely certain he was going to let the woman go scot-free but instead, he actually does uphold the law of Moses. In effect he says, "Yes, she must be stoned. But I am going to appoint the executioners."

Jesus' knowledge and understanding of their sin, all their sin, shed light on the wrongness of their hearts. For you see, light exposes darkness and sin. The Light of Christ helps us find our way out of danger and darkness.

In this story all of them really, the Scribes, Pharisees and the woman are standing in darkness. Their sin, the Scribes and Pharisees, is self-righteous pride and an attitude of judgment that only belongs to God. The woman's sin is obvious; she had an affair with a married man...maybe a man that belonged to the self-righteous ones. Jesus does uphold the Law because he knows that adultery is sin. It violates marriage. It destroys society when it spreads and becomes commonplace. It wrecks homes; it injures innocent children; it attacks everything that God holds dear!

- **Who is left standing with Jesus?**
- **What does Jesus ask of her in verse 10?**

"Jesus looked up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'

- **What was her response to Jesus' question?**
- **What do you think she felt?**
- **Why was it hard for her to believe that Jesus' love and light would bless her life?**

In a way, Jesus dismissed her accusers; the jury who wanted her to be stoned to death. Jesus could have easily nailed her.

- **What does Jesus say in verse 11?**

Jesus was the only one who had the right to condemn this woman. Instead, he shed light, not only on her sin but into her life. This event occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles so lots of people were going in and coming out of the Temple. Barclay suggests: "Clearly the Temple treasury would be a busy place, with a constant flow of worshippers coming and going. There would be no better place to collect an audience of devout people and to teach them than the Temple treasury.

In this passage Jesus makes the great claim: "I am the Light of the World." It is very likely that the background against which he made it made it doubly vivid and impressive. The festival with which John connects these discourses is the Festival of Tabernacles (John 7:2). We have already seen (John 7:37) how its ceremonies lent drama to Jesus' claim to give to men the living water. But there was another ceremony connected with this festival.

On the evening of its first day there was a ceremony called The Illumination of the Temple. It took place in the Court of the Women. The court was surrounded with deep galleries, erected to hold the spectators. In the center four great candelabra were prepared. When the dark came the four great

candelabra were lit and, it was said, they sent such a blaze of light throughout Jerusalem that every courtyard was lit up with their brilliance. Then all night long, until cock-crow the next morning, the greatest and the wisest and the holiest men in Israel danced before the Lord and sang psalms of joy and praise while the people watched. Jesus is saying: "You have seen the blaze of the Temple illuminations piercing the darkness of the night. I am the Light of the World, and, for the man who follows me there will be light, not only for one exciting night, but for all the pathway of his life. The light in the Temple is a brilliant light, but in the end, it flickers and dies. I am the Light which lasts forever."

- **Finally, what does Jesus declare himself to be?**

Jesus declares himself to be the light of the world. He says in verse 12, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life." Light was an important symbol in the Feast of Tabernacles. During the feast, many emblems and ceremonies remembered the pillar of fire that gave light to Israel during the Exodus. Now, Jesus takes this important symbol and simply applies it to Himself: I am the light of the world. Jesus, who is the light of the world brings light to those who follow Him. If we are not abiding in Jesus, we are not in the light.

The Light of Jesus not only exposes sin, dispels darkness and guides us out of bad and maybe even dangerous places, but it also fills our lives with light and love. Jesus is the Life that shines; and because he is Light, we, as his children are reflectors of his light shining his life and love to every part of our darkened world. As Children of Light, we become light for others.

- **When have you found yourself in a dark place?**
- **When have you hid something that you've done so that your sin would not be exposed?**
- **If you are children of light, what is your job in the world...with your family and friends?**
- **How have you helped your friends find their way out of darkness?**

**\*John 3:1-21**

*There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. <sup>2</sup> After dark one evening, he came*

*to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you." <sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

*<sup>4</sup> "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"*

*<sup>5</sup> Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. <sup>7</sup> So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."*

*<sup>9</sup> "How are these things possible?" Nicodemus asked. <sup>10</sup> Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? <sup>11</sup> I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. <sup>12</sup> But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.*

*<sup>16</sup> "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*

<sup>18</sup> “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. <sup>19</sup> And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. <sup>20</sup> All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But those who do what is right come to the light, so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

William Barclay’s thoughts on Nicodemus: It was by night that Nicodemus came to Jesus. There were probably two reasons for that.

1. It may have been a sign of caution. Nicodemus quite frankly may not have wished to commit himself by coming to Jesus by day. We must not condemn him. The wonder is that with his background, he came to Jesus at all. It was infinitely better to come at night than not at all. It is a miracle of grace that Nicodemus overcame his prejudices and his upbringing and his whole view of life enough to come to Jesus.
2. But there may be another reason. The rabbis declared that the best time to study the law was at night when a man was undisturbed. Throughout the day Jesus was surrounded by crowds of people all the time. It may well be that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because he wanted an absolutely private and completely undisturbed time with Jesus.

Nicodemus was a puzzled man, a man with many honors and yet with something lacking in his life. He came to Jesus for a talk so that somehow in the darkness of the night he might find light.

When John relates conversations that Jesus had with enquirers, he has a way of following a certain scheme. We see that scheme very clearly here. The enquirer says something (John 3:2). Jesus answers in a saying that is hard to understand (John 3:3). That saying is misunderstood by the enquirer (John 3:4). Jesus answers with a saying that is even more difficult to understand (John 3:5). And then there follows a discourse and an explanation. John uses this method in order that we may see men thinking things out for themselves and so that we may do the same.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he said that no one could help being impressed with the signs and wonders that he did. Jesus’ answer was that it was not the signs and the wonders that were really important; the important thing was such a change in a man’s inner life that it could only be described as a new birth.

My thoughts: In John 3 we read a story about someone who was very intrigued by Jesus. Nicodemus was a respected member of the Sanhedrin. He shouldn’t have spent time with him alone. And yet, under the cover of darkness he makes his way to where Jesus is hanging out for the night. Nicodemus feared being found out; that somehow he was taken in by this man of God so he sneaks a visit with the holy One.

- It would be good to speak with the campers about Nicodemus’ fear...about his desire to be incognito and hide his interest and perhaps even growing love for Jesus. He preferred the darkness over the light; at least at this point in his life.
- Why did Nicodemus come at night?
- What was he afraid of?

Here’s how Frederick Buechner describes Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a religious VIP with a list of credentials as long as your arm. He had advanced theological degrees, honorary doctorates, half-a-column in the Jerusalem edition of *Who’s Who*. If you were a Jew living anywhere near Jerusalem in those days, you knew who Nicodemus was—you’d recognize his face when passing him on the

sidewalk. So, it's no wonder he made his way to Jesus when the sky grew dark and no one was around except for he and Jesus.

Jesus spent time talking with Nicodemus trying to explain to him what it meant to be "born from above." Nicodemus not only came to see Jesus in the dark, but he was pretty much in the dark about this "born again" business. Nicodemus did have a long list of credentials, but they meant nothing in the eyes of Jesus. What was important to Jesus about Nicodemus and his life was that he would dump the notion that his high falootin' religious credentials cut any ice with God. Nicodemus had to die to all that. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand that the way into God's kingdom leads through death; death to Nic's old way of life. He must die to self in order to rise to new life in Christ.

- What do you suppose Nicodemus had to give up in order to live with Christ?
- What did Jesus say about what God's light does to a person's deeds?
- What does it mean to live in darkness?
- How would life change if we all chose to live in the light?
- Who in your life (without passing judgement on them) enjoys hiding in the darkness? Is it you? Is it your group of friends? Is it someone else you love?
- How might you help someone "see the Light" of Jesus and enjoy his life that shines in the darkness?

Jesus wraps up his discussion with Nicodemus by speaking to light and darkness, saying that the main problem with people in this world is they *like* the dark. Lots of people think that living in the Light of Jesus, in God's light might be harmful to their health, like baking in the sun too long on a hot summer day. "People like the dark because they don't want their deeds to be exposed in the light," Jesus says. And you have to wonder if Nicodemus, who had used the cover of darkness for his covert visit with Jesus, squirmed a bit at Jesus' words about people loving the darkness!

But we don't know if Nicodemus chaffed under that rhetoric because oddly enough, after verse 9, Nicodemus drops out of the picture altogether. We don't have a clue as to how he reacted to Jesus' words except that he shows up again at the end of Jesus' life. He accompanies Joseph of Arimathea as they together, take Jesus' lifeless body to the tomb after Jesus' crucifixion.

### **A Story from the Old Testament + Exodus 13:17-22**

<sup>17</sup> When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." <sup>18</sup> So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt ready for battle.

<sup>19</sup> Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place." <sup>20</sup> After leaving Sukkoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. <sup>21</sup> By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day night.

<sup>22</sup> Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

1. Take time to talk about how God led the Israelites by night.
2. What was the importance of light?
3. How dark was it in the desert? Have you seen how dark it is?
4. When have you taken a trip with your family into a very dark place?
5. What difference did the light make as you traveled?

## A Story to Share + **The Mouse and the Light** by Lisa Suhay

*"Dedicated to the children of the world who have seen The Shadow. With this story you are given the power of the light. Go out and shine." - Lisa Suhay*

In the center of the most beautiful garden in the world stood the Tree of Wisdom. From this great tree there grew many branches and leaves. It spread its roots throughout the land. The tree was a place of comfort. Creatures would often come to it and sit in its shade and feel its great truths. For many years there was harmony. Then one day a shade from one long branch decided that it was not happy. The shade did not wish to give comfort or shelter. "Fools," cried the shade as it spread beneath the tree. "I know more than any of them. I am not made to serve. I should rule over everything."

And so it was that in pride and hatred the shade tugged and pulled and stretched itself until at last it was able to break its attachment to the great tree. It became the first shadow. Instead of using its power to give shade, it created a cold darkness that blinded all those it touched to the truth. Instead of using its voice to impart great truths to those around it, The Shadow whispered only lies. The Shadow crept away from the Tree of Wisdom and drifted far into a barren place where it crawled into a hole in the sand. It sank deep into the earth. The Shadow grew and plotted. It would wait beneath the surface until a sad or doubting creature came near. Then The Shadow would rise up and overtake the unsuspecting creature and blind it to truth and bend it to its will.

Over many years and many miles the shadow created an underground army. Then the army of The Shadow began to strike without warning bringing fear, sadness and hate to innocent creatures. "You cannot fight. I will win," it lied. Some began to hide and fear the very light of day, for they thought that it was the cause of The Shadow. Others began to hate and fear all the shade of the world, not being able to tell the difference between shade and shadow. It came to pass that creatures began to feel anger toward all things different from themselves. They even became afraid of their own shadows. They stayed in their homes. When they went out they didn't go far.

One day a field mouse went to the Tree of Wisdom, shook its small fist and shouted, "How could you create such a terror upon us? Why is this allowed to continue?" The great tree bowed its huge trunk. It shook and leaves fell like tears. But it did not answer. Then a voice spoke from all around, "I created light and darkness. I made creatures great and small. To one and all I gave the power to build or destroy, bring joy or pain. One among you has chosen darkness and pain. This is not my wish." Though dazzled by being in the presence of this great power the Mouse was still angry. "Why do you not stop The Shadow?" cried the Mouse. "Because I have given that power to those The Shadow harms. The Shadow has grown through the lack of caring in creatures. Now it is your job to stop it," the great voice answered. The Voice told the mouse how to win. ***"You cannot live in fear. Fear only makes The Shadow grow. To be rid of darkness - shine a powerful light of truth. To be rid of cold - bring only warmth wherever you go."*** The Mouse answered, "I will go out and tell the others what you taught me. I will remember not to hate, because hate makes The Shadow stronger."

**Action ideas and Supporting games – See Appendix: Kirberg Games, Day 3**

**Role-play ideas** – Use the story of The Mouse and the Light as a reading in three voices...the mouse, the narrator and the "Voice."

### **ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

**Adapted from a story by Robert Fulghum, author of "Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten**

\* Three voices can tell this story, too...

A teacher was lecturing to a very bored classroom of students. The hour was almost up and all the students were watching the clock on the wall. The second hand was going so slowly. The teacher faced the class one last time and asked, "So, are there any questions?" There was a long pause. The class clown shouted out, "Yes, I have a question." Everyone in the class groaned. "Can you tell us what the meaning of life is?" Everyone laughed and started to get up to go. The teacher held up his hand to quiet the classroom and looked at the grinning clown who was so proud of himself for getting a laugh at the teacher's expense.

"Yes, I will answer your question." The teacher took his wallet out of his back pocket and fished out a small round mirror about the size of a quarter. And then he told this story: "When I was a small child we were very poor. We lived in a small town in the middle of nowhere. One day, while walking down the road, I found pieces of a mirror. There must have been an accident there. I tried to find all the pieces and put them together, but they were too small and scattered. I just kept the largest piece. This one. (He held up the small piece of mirror.)

I scratched it on a stone and made it round. I began to play with it as a toy. What I loved to do most was to try and see if I could reflect the light into dark places where the sun would never shine. I would shine light deep down into holes and dark closets and crevices. It became a game to get the light into the most inaccessible places I could find using the mirror."

"I kept the little mirror. As I grew up, I would periodically pull it out and in idle moments continue the challenge of the game. As I became a man, I grew to understand that this was not a child's game. This became a sign for what I might do with my life. I came to realize that I am not the light. The light doesn't come from me. But the light is there and it will only shine in dark places if I reflect it."

"I, too, am just a fragment of a mirror. The light is much greater than I am. But I can still reflect the light into the dark places of the world. I can try to shine it into the black places that are in the lives of the people around me. Maybe I can help them in that way. Perhaps others may see that and try and do the same thing. That is what I am about. This is the meaning of life for me."

And then the teacher took the small mirror and holding it very carefully, caught the bright rays of the daylight streaming into the window and reflected the light onto the face of the student who asked the question.

### **Final questions:**

1. What does it mean to reflect Christ's light in the world?
2. Has someone ever been that light in the darkness for you? How did they help you?
3. Is there a time that you have been light in the darkness of someone else?
4. As you reflect God's light, what do you hope that others will see? And how do you hope they will respond?

### **Close your study with prayer.**

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

-it's all about dark and light...perhaps candles at breakfast, lunch and dinner...extra lights hanging around

- activities – trust walk using blindfolds...emphasizing darkness and light and how much easier it is to navigate when we are not led blindly but can use our eyes and the light to find our way

- morning and evening worship ideas – I might suggest that evening worship happens after dark

-Round Up and before the All Camp event. All Camp should happen in the dark to emphasize dark and light.

- all camp evening activities – Flashlight tag

- any types of meals used to emphasize the theme



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

\* Songs from the camp song sheet

Shine, Jesus Shine;

Walkin' in The Light;

We Are Walkin' in the Light of God;

Light the Fire;

Little Room;

Set a Fire;

Thy Word;

\* Other new songs (list titles and source)

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light, 815 in the ELW

Be Thou My Vision, 793 in the ELW

This Little Light of Mine, 677 in the ELW

\* Additional scriptures

Matthew 5:13-16

John 1:1-5

I John 1:5-7

Isaiah 42:6

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

\* The Lighthouse by Danny Lizarraga + From Inspirational Christian Stories and Poems

There was in a certain city a harbor where ships from all over the world would come and dock. However, the harbor was in between a treacherous and rocky shore. During stormy nights, ships would see the city lights off in the distance and head toward the lights hoping to find refuge from the pounding surf.

The ships would struggle against the storm as they made their way to the safety of the harbor. As they drew near, seeing the dangerous rocks, the captain of the ship would try to turn and avoid striking the rocks, but it was too late. Many ships were destroyed, and hundreds of sailors lost their lives because they did not know of the danger. You see, the people of the city did not feel that it was necessary to build a lighthouse. Besides, it would cost too much money to build a lighthouse they reasoned. So, year after year and storm after storm ships would be ship wrecked and many lives lost.

There was a man in that city that saw the need. He felt grief and heartache because the people of the city were content to let the ships be destroyed and were not willing to rescue the drowning sailors. So, he took it upon himself to do something about it. He tried to recruit volunteers to help him, but no one wanted to. He persisted, looking for someone to help him, but they all just laughed at him and said that he was crazy to risk his life to try to save strangers and people who looked different.

Determined to make a difference, he sold everything that he had and bought a piece of land close to the shore and built his house there. It was a lighthouse. So, during stormy nights, the man would make sure that the light from the lighthouse was shining as bright as it could so the ships could be warned of the dangerous rocks. His lighthouse saved hundreds of lives and ships from being ship wrecked that year. But it wasn't enough because even with the lighthouse some of the storms were so powerful that the ships struggling to come into the harbor were tossed about by the wind and the waves that they would get smashed against the rocks.

Being a compassionate man, he would run to the roaring sea at the risk of his own life to rescue as many sailors as he could. Then he would bring them into the warmth and safety of the lighthouse. Once there he would heal their wounds and feed them until they were able to sail again.

The man labored by himself for years rescuing sailors and caring for their needs. Each person that he saved was so grateful to him that they couldn't thank him enough for rescuing them from

certain death. But all the man could feel was sadness because many more sailors died in the sea than he could save. "If only I had help," he would say. "If only someone would see the need as I do and come and help. Lord please send someone to help, I can't do it all by myself," he prayed. Then one day it happened, his prayers were answered. His generosity became well known in the land. People in the city began to volunteer to come and help the man keep vigil during stormy nights. Men began to take shifts keeping watch and helping rescue sailors. Then women started cooking and preparing bandages for the wounded sailors. The children did whatever they could to help lift the spirits of the sick.

Ships still wreck along the treacherous shoreline, but now because there are so many people there to help the man, many more lives are saved than are lost. Together Everyone Accomplished Much. Together they made a difference.

- What do you know about lighthouses?
- Where are they located?
- What is their purpose?
- In this story, **how did the lighthouse save some lives?**
- **How did people, filled with "good" light, save lives, too?**

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

\* Ideas to try with Sr High (9-12 grade)

While many of you may not be history buffs, this story begs telling. It is the epitome of what happens when the darkness of sin and evil goes unchecked. My mother was 12 years old when this event occurred. She was a resident of Frankfurt, Germany; a city that was obliterated during WWII. It's worth discussing if you are able to end the discussion on a positive note with the understanding that, while this hateful event and many others like it occurred during WWII, God was still present and Jesus' light still shone in the hearts of many German and American people.

### **A Story about Darkness and the Sin of Kristallnacht Seventy-five years ago, the Nazi government unleashed the Kristallnacht program against German Jews**

#### **By Richard Nelsson**

On the night of 9 November 1938, the Nazi government coordinated a wave of attacks in Germany and Austria, on synagogues, Jewish-owned businesses and homes. This was Kristallnacht - the night of broken glass. Over two days some 90 Jews were killed in an orgy of violence, while around 30,000 Jewish males were rounded up for deportation to concentration camps. Over 1,000 synagogues were burned or damaged.

The Manchester Guardian's first reports of the program appeared on 11 November 1938. The following day, the paper carried a number of reports and pictures about the attacks, including the news that anti-Jew laws were to be introduced in Germany.



The Manchester Guardian, 12 November 1938.

There was a piece about the 'Aryanisation' of Jewish property as well as a chilling interview with a Manchester woman who had been caught up in the violence and arrests.



The Manchester Guardian, 12 November 1938. You may search the archives if you want to read the article.

Joseph Goebbels, the German propaganda minister, did not deny the eyewitness accounts of the attacks, but declared that they were spontaneous manifestations of anger at the murder of a German diplomat by a young Jew. He was referring to Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old who entered the German embassy in Paris on 7 November 1938 and shot Ernst vom Rath, a low ranking official. Reprisals against the Jews began the next day.

The attacks continued, with more arrests and decrees forbidding Jews to engage in retail or export trade. There was widespread condemnation in the British press, while on 15 November, the Guardian noted the political consequences of the persecution including its effect on the policy of appeasement.

The legacy of Kristallnacht was explored by Paul Oestreicher in 2008, while in the same year a huge dumping ground for the destroyed remains of Jewish property was discovered on the outskirts of Berlin. The Night of Broken Glass, a collection of eyewitness accounts, was reviewed in 2012.

### **PARENT DEVOTIONAL**

If you'd like, begin your devotion: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Scripture:** I John 1:5-7

**Reflection:** In some ways, your children are sharing this first verse with you from personal experience; hear it from their voice and heart. At camp on this day they learned that Jesus blesses us with Life that Shines in the darkness. They have come to understand that Jesus really is the Light of the World and if we live in love with him and each other, we are living as God wants us to. Wednesday, we talked about the darkness of the world; physical darkness that happens as the

sun sets each night. And, we talked about the emotional darkness as well. Sometimes the emotional darkness, like depression, bullying, broken friendships and deep loneliness are even harder to navigate; harder to live through than the dark sky and starless night. That's why the Life and Light of Jesus are so important. Without Jesus' guidance, love and grace, our lives would be hopeless. But with light, guidance, love and grace, we not only overcome the light, we become it. And in becoming it, we make a profound difference in each other's lives especially the lives of other young people longing to find comfort and Light in their darkness.

**Activity:** Make sure every family member has a small candle to light. Turn off the house lights and simply sit with one another in the quiet. Take time to breathe in deeply the love and Spirit of God. Then, as each person lights their candle, you should speak the name of someone that you want to share the light of Jesus with. Speak their name...and continue this process until all have had a chance to light their candle and speak the name of a friend or loved one. Then pray:

**Closing Prayer:** Jesus, our Light and Life, the world can be a harsh and stressful place. Please be with us every day as we encounter both darkness and light. Help us to not only receive your light and love but reflect it as well to everyone we meet; especially to the lonely and despairing. This we pray in the name of Jesus, the Light who shines this day in the darkness of our lives and our world. Amen.



## 2019 BIBLE STUDY – I AM, WE Are!

### DAY 4 - “LIFE THAT LEADS - I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

#### **John 10:11-16**

<sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY**

This week we have focused on Jesus as the I AM in our lives. We have learned about Jesus in a big way, from 30,000 feet above as we like to say, as our cosmos God who creates all that is and yet at the same time as a God who came to be one of us. Jesus came in human form being willing to trust that God’s will is life-giving and a will to be trusted. We have learned about Jesus as one who is bread and feeds us, who is the light of the world that removes all darkness, and we know that through Jesus, life is given to us all and we can live abundantly. Today we will discuss Jesus as the Shepherd, the one who leads us so that we can go into the world to walk with and lead others into those places that are life giving and filled with hope. We will discuss that we can trust Jesus meeting our needs. Those needs are met through the responsibilities of the shepherd which are to: know the sheep; feed the sheep; lead the sheep; and protect the sheep.

There is a story that Max Lucado shares that tells the difference between a cowboy and a shepherd. We are in the west and we are surrounded by many cowboys. They work hard. They are critical in herding. They just are not Shepherds.

We read: Behold a hero of the west: the cowboy.

He rears his horse to a stop on the rim of the canyon. He shifts his weight in his saddle, weary from the cattle trail. One finger pushes his hat up on his head. One jerk of the kerchief reveals a sun-leathered face. A thousand head of cattle pass behind him. A thousand miles of trail lie before him. He lives to drive cattle, and he drives cattle to live. He is honest in poker and quick with a gun. Hard riding. Slow talking. His best friend is his horse, and his strength is his grit.

He needs no one. He is a cowboy. The American hero.

Behold a hero in the Bible: the shepherd.

On the surface he appears similar to the cowboy. He, too, is rugged. He sleeps where the jackals howl and works where the wolves prowl. Never off duty. Always alert. Like the cowboy, he makes his roof the stars and the pasture his home. But that is where the similarities end.

The shepherd loves his sheep. It’s not that the cowboy doesn’t appreciate the cow; it’s just that he doesn’t know the animal. He doesn’t even want to. Have you ever seen a picture of a cowboy caressing a cow? Have you ever seen a shepherd caring for a sheep? Why the difference?

Simple. The cowboy leads the cow to slaughter. The shepherd leads the sheep to be shorn. The cowboy wants the meat of the cow. The shepherd wants the wool of the sheep. And so they treat the animals differently.

The cowboy drives the cattle. The shepherd leads the sheep.  
A herd has a dozen cowboys. A flock has one shepherd.  
The cowboy wrestles, brands, herds, and ropes. The shepherd leads, guides, feeds, and anoints.  
The cowboy knows the name of the trail hands. The shepherd knows the name of the sheep.  
The cowboy whoops and hollers at the cows. The shepherd calls each sheep by name.

There are some folks in the world who see God as a cowboy. A hard-faced, square-jawed ranch-hand from heaven who drives his church against its will to places it doesn't want to go.  
But that's an unhelpful image. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd. The Shepherd who knows his sheep by name and lays down his life for them. The Shepherd who protects, provides, and possesses his sheep.

We read lot of images of the Shepherd throughout the Bible:

“The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1).  
“We are your people, the sheep of your flock” (Ps. 79:13).  
“Shepherd of Israel, listen to us. You lead the people of Joseph like a flock.” (Ps. 80:1).  
“He is our God and we are the people he takes care of and the sheep that he tends” (Ps. 95:7).  
“He made us, and we belong to him; we are his people, the sheep he tends.” (Ps. 100:3).

Moses was a shepherd for the Israelites, leading them through the wilderness for 40 years. David was a shepherd before he became King of Israel.

The image of Shepherd is carried over to the New Testament.

“He is the shepherd who will risk his life to save the one straying sheep.” (Luke 15:4).  
“He has pity on people because they are like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt. 9:36).  
“His disciples are his flock” (Luke 12:32).  
“When the shepherd is attacked, the sheep are scattered” (Matt 26:31).  
“He is the shepherd of the souls of men” (I Peter 2:25).  
“He is the great shepherd of the sheep” (Heb. 12:30).

Let's keep in mind that eighty percent of Jesus' listeners made their living off the land. Many were shepherds. They lived on the mesa with the sheep. No flock ever grazed without a shepherd, and no shepherd was ever off duty. When sheep wandered, the shepherd found them. When they fell, he carried them. When they were hurt, he healed them. These folks in Jesus day completely understood the trust that their sheep had for them and therefore could lean into what Jesus was saying.

It has been understood that sheep can be simplistic animals. Their behavior as a group can protect them and yet following each other can be harmful. They tend to wander into running creeks for water, then their wool grows heavy and they drown. They need a shepherd to lead them to “calm water” (Ps. 23:3). Please keep in mind that they have no natural defense — they have no claws, no horns, no fangs. They are helpless. Sheep need a shepherd with a “rod and . . . walking stick” (Ps. 23:4) to protect them. They have no sense of direction. They need someone to lead them “on paths that are right” (Ps. 23:3).

We are often like sheep. We listen to voices that may not be helpful. We listen to our friend groups who promise that they know what is best for us and we allow peer pressure to guide us in making bad decisions. We, too, like sheep, tend to be swept away by waters we should have avoided. We, too, get lost. “We all have wandered away like sheep; each of us has gone his own way” (Isa. 53:6). We need a

shepherd. We don't need a cowboy to herd us with intimidation and fear; we need a shepherd who cares for us and who longs to guide us. And we have one. One who know us by name.

On this our rafting day, where we will be listening carefully to our raft guide and our paddling team, let's explore how to stay close to Jesus and his voice as our Shepherd. Let's think about how do we get to know who Jesus is and how we can stay close to allow him to comfort us, protect us, guide us, forgive us, heal us, and ultimately save us from those things that cause harm.

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

- We will gain a deeper understanding of sheep, how we are like them, and our need for a shepherd.
- We will read about who Jesus is as our great shepherd in John 10:11-16 and in additional scriptures such as Matthew 18:12-14, Psalm 23, and Hebrews 13:20.
- We will explore the sense of trusting Jesus as our Shepherd and what following Jesus means.
- We will explore how allowing Jesus to be our Shepherd can empower us to enrich the lives of others.
- We will explore how we can trust God to help us through the rough, scary times in our lives, to trust that God may take us to places we've never imagined, and trust that we are never alone.

**Staff goal for the week:** Model trust for your campers each day. Have a plan that is in alignment with the plans of your village. Know where your campers are and modify that knowledge with age appropriate groups. Be mindful that trust is not just given, it must be earned. Be mindful that some campers have a tough time trusting anyone given their personal histories. Show up. Listen well. Look your campers in the eyes. Follow through with what you say you will do.

### **MORNING WATCH**

#### **Common Welcome**

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLK and a new day of life. May you find peace and quiet in this early morning and may this day bring you closer to your cabin mates and the many people you will encounter along the way today. More than anything, may you feel God's love and grace as you study, play, laugh, and maybe even cry. Enjoy each moment; enjoy your Life in Jesus in this special place.

#### **Introduction**

Today we will hear about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Sheep need a shepherd. We need the guidance of a great God who loves us, who became one of us, and whose voice we can trust.

#### **Why was this passage chosen and the scripture**

There are many references to God as the great shepherd, many shepherd leaders in the Bible, and Jesus guiding us as a shepherd and in all references love, trust, and good guidance are stressed for the good of the sheep.

*Luke 15:2-7*

*"And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!" So He told them this parable "What man among you, who has 100 sheep and loses one of*



*them, does not leave the 99 in the open field and go after the lost one until he finds it? When he has found it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, and coming home, he calls his friends and neighbors together, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep!'"*

**Song: Shepherd Of My Soul by Kutless**

Nothing shall I want, nothing shall I fear  
Lord, I know that You are near  
You can make me still, You restore my soul  
Lord, I know that You are near

Shepherd of my soul  
You will never let me go  
Because of You  
Because of who You are!  
In the valley low  
There's no fear that I'm alone  
Because of You  
Because of who You are!

Lead us in the path of Your righteousness  
For the sake of Your great name  
You prepare a place where I'm forever safe  
Your mercy finds me all my days

Shepherd of my soul  
You will never let me go  
Because of You  
Because of who You are!  
In the valley low  
There's no fear that I'm alone  
Because of You  
Because of who You are!

Your love, it leads us home  
Yes, Your love, leads us home  
Jesus, Your love, it leads us home  
Oh, Jesus, Your love, leads us home  
Your love, it leads us home  
Jesus, Your love, it leads us home!

You're the Shepherd of my soul  
Only One I will follow  
Because of You  
Because of who You are!  
In the valley low  
There's no fear that I'm alone  
Because of You  
Because of who You are!

## Questions for consideration

- Have you ever thought about Jesus as a Shepherd?
- What do you think Shepherds do for the sheep?
- Have you ever been lost? What did it feel like when you were found?
- How can we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd?
- How do we listen to the voice of God?

## Closing Prayer

Good Shepherd, thank you for caring for us, loving us and knowing us by name. Teach us to follow you to care for all that are close to us, to protect those who are threatened, to welcome those who are rejected, to forgive those who are burdened by guilt, to heal those who are broken and sick, to share with those who have little or nothing, to take the time to really know one another and love as you have loved us. In your name we pray, Amen.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY

We have so many options to review this “sheep and shepherd” theme of Jesus and of who God has been for us in the Bible. Some have been listed in the introduction and some will be listed here.

The image and metaphor of the shepherd is a familiar one throughout scripture. It is utilized so often probably because it would have been easy to understand for contemporary recipients of the stories and teachings. Perhaps the best-known use of this metaphor is Psalm 23. “The Lord is my shepherd” is probably one of the best-known verses of scripture in the Old Testament. The image of God as our shepherd through the valley of the shadow of death is an image of comfort that indeed comforts many throughout life and death.

In John 10, Jesus uses this metaphor as he attempts to teach his followers and the Pharisees about his role in their lives as well as his future with them. In the verses preceding this passage, Jesus refers to himself as the gate that separates the sheep from danger. In verses 11-18, Jesus returns to the metaphor of himself as the good shepherd. The good shepherd is different from a hired worker because he is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. A person who is hired to watch the sheep is not invested in them like the shepherd and will likely desert them when danger approaches. Again, Jesus is not a cowboy. Jesus is a shepherd. Jesus suggests that as the good shepherd, he will not desert the flock and will indeed be willing to lay down his life. Jesus also suggests to the reality of his eventual sacrifice as lambs to the slaughter. In verse 16, Jesus acknowledges that there are more sheep that are not inside the sheep pen. These sheep also need him as shepherd and will be brought in to join the rest of the flock, and all will have the same shepherd. Finally, Jesus leans into his own choice in laying down his life. Not only is it his choice to lay down his life, but his choice to take it up again. Through a post-resurrection Christian lens, we can clearly see this voice naming Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

## Opening Prayer:

Encourage your campers to participate in this opening prayer. Consider one camper to lead, consider a circle squeeze prayer while they hold hands and encourage full participation. Encourage them even to

say a word or two to practice and become comfortable with their voice of prayer. Praying is a privilege! 😊

### Opening Questions or Starting Points:

- (1) Consider asking your campers to name their highs and lows in the last 24 hours or something they have been grateful for since arriving on Sunday.
- (2) Ask about any anxiety anyone may have about rafting. See if anyone has been and what they have liked, learned, and are looking forward to.
- (3) Consider one or more of the following questions to begin the conversation about being lead and following the voices in our lives:
  - Name someone that you will listen to in your life.
  - Do you ever get confused by different voices in your lives? For example, do you hear one thing from your parents and something different from your friends? Do you hear one thing from your parents and something different from your teachers?
  - How much time do you spend listening to God's word? No guilt here, just think about data in and data out. You are who hang out with!
  - How do you feel when you listen to voices that are not helpful?

Let's Read:

As I read (or one of the campers reads) this scripture think about what you hear and what you notice or what you wonder about in these verses:

### John 10:11-16

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."*

What did you hear?

What did you notice?

What do you wonder about?

Now let's talk a little about sheep:

It has been mentioned that sheep are some of the more simple animals in God's kingdom. Let's however take a break to give sheep a little credit as those behaviors actually are instinctive and do serve them well most of the time. In his *Introduction to Sheep Behavior* Richard Cobb notes that **sheep are not stupid**. They rank just below the pig and on par with cattle in intelligence among farm animals. Sheep react to the situations they are placed in according to instincts that have been developed over centuries. **Sheep will run from what frightens them**. In the overall scheme of things sheep are grazers, which means that before domestication, they obtained their entire feed supply by grazing grass and shrubs. At that time their only means of survival was to run from danger and to band together in large numbers for protection. **Sheep are gregarious** (impress your parents with this new word) and that means sheep band together and pretty much stay together when grazing etc. This isn't because they particularly like each other, although they are social animals, but rather for protection. The down side of this is that sheep will follow each other. You've heard the expression, "Get one to go and they will all go." This means that if one sheep will move then the entire flock will follow. This is because of

their gregarious instinct, the desire to stay together for protection yes, even off the side of a cliff. **Sheep will move toward another sheep or friend.** Often times a friend can be a person, particularly if the person feeds the sheep. By using this instinct, shepherds have controlled sheep movement for centuries. **Sheep maintain a flight distance between themselves and others.** Just like humans, sheep like to maintain a distance, or safe zone, between themselves and others. In a normal situation, when the sheep is relaxed, the distance is small. However, if danger in the form of a dog or a strange person appears then it is greatly increased, and the sheep moves away.

Now let's return to more bible verses: John 10:3-4 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and **the sheep recognize his voice and come to him.** He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice." Did you hear that "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

#### **Kirberg Game: See Appendix: Kirberg Games, Day 4**

Have you asked yourselves "Whose voice do I hear and follow? Can I hear the Good Shepherd's voice?" "Do I hang out with God's word enough to know God's voice?"

Let's be clear that hearing a voice in our current world is so difficult. The noise! Oh, the noise in our world! Many voices clamor at us and call us to follow them. Sometimes it is easy to listen to other voices and to the noise of the world. These voices can promise happiness, comfort, and an easier life. When we feel sad, desolate, and have many problems coming at us all at once, listening to these voices can seem very tempting. These are the voices that do not necessarily lead us to life giving choices.

It would do us so much good to hear the Good Shepherd's voice! It would do us good to carve out times of silence to hear the Good Shepherd's words of love for us. His voice is filled with mercy and tenderness, and we need to hear it!

Silence? What? Yes silence! Our current world does not allow for us to be quiet. However, here at Rainbow Trail, you my friends have been so willing to sit in silence this week. Each morning as we enter God time, you have created a space to listen to God's word, songs, prayer, and you have heard encouragement from your counselors and other staff.

I think it is safe to say that our world of noise hinders us from being with God in stillness. Traffic, airplanes, blaring music, social media, TV and various buzzing electronic gadgets have invaded our lives, our homes, our stores and restaurants, our sidewalks, our cars, and even our meals together. Have you watched a table of 4 or 6 people and observed the lack of listening or eye contact while everyone is on their phones? How many of us have our ear buds in rather frequently? Our fast-paced world, along with its torrents of noise, words and images, so invades our lives that it can block our ability to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

So, what in the world are we supposed to do?

*"Be still and know that I am God,"* Psalm 46.

**Activity:** Close your eyes and imagine that you are a sheep and you are sitting in the safety of Jesus' presence. I am going to ask that you sit in silence for one minute and we will again discuss what did you notice, what did you wonder about?

How was it to sit for one minute?

Did it feel so much longer?  
What did you focus on?

Silent prayer, reflecting on the word of God, and listening to what the Good Shepherd wants to tell us are all so important in our relationship with God. Cultivating silence in our lives is deeply rooted in our Christian tradition. In the spiritual classics of the early Church we read about the importance of interior and exterior silence in order to listen to God. As people of a busy time and noisy living we can ask ourselves: What it is that guides me during the day? What am I truly seeking in my life?

HAHAHA. Yeah...right. Have you seen the noise in my life? How can we be still? How can we make room for silence in our busy lives? How can we shut off the noise, within and without, so that we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd?

It is important to include silence in your daily schedule and prayer. I know that if I don't schedule something, it doesn't happen. That is why I get up early in the morning before anyone else in my house and light candles. No electricity crosses my visual path! 😊 I open the blinds to let the sun in and I get on my knees and my face asking for God to lead me in the day ahead. There are also times when throughout the day where I shut off my phone, music, or computer and pray in silence. When I have a long drive, I try to turn off the radio and unplug my phone in the car and be in silence for part of the drive. Please hear me: Phones, computers, TVs and music are not bad, but do we need noise the entire day?

It is also important to have a quiet, calm place where God can speak to us. A place of silence can help us still our minds and hearts so that we can simply listen. This can be a room in the basement, a park, a church or running on trails. You can even find that space, even though it may be a challenge, at school to take a moment and listen. Martin Luther the founder of our Lutheran Churches said: "He who wants to hear God speak should read Holy Scripture." And dear friends, as I tell my youth at each of our "Biblical Burritos" meetings: Your phone can hold the entire Bible! So portable. So light! 😊

So, after we create a space for listening to Jesus to lead us do we consider the question of trust? Why are the sheep willing to be led by the shepherd? Is it because the shepherd does his/her job over and over with care and love and respect? Is it because the shepherd knows the name of the sheep? Is it that the shepherd is caring and loving and feeds the sheep?

When a friend calls you, how do you know it isn't just a prank caller? How do you know it's not your mother, father, brother, teacher or neighbor? You know because you know your friend. By spending time with your friend, you know how they talk—you know the expressions they use, the tone of their voice and the changes in their pitch when they're happy or sad. Have you heard someone say: You sound just like your friend Amy or Brian? That is because we become those with whom we spend time. That's the way it should be with God: You can know God—God's character, nature, interests, pleasures and displeasure, joys and hurts—so well that you recognize God and God's involvement in your life. God is inviting you to know more than just God's voice, though. God is inviting you to know the essence of the great I AM. It's an awesome opportunity.

So why would we trust God? Why do we trust anything? It is because your parents told you to trust something or someone? Do we trust those things that line up with our personal values? Do we trust what we learn at church and our personal beliefs? Keep in mind that we must be wise in listening to certain voices. Remember the voice of Hitler spoke to those in Germany who were downtrodden, he used untruths and many people died due to his ability to convince. Remember there are voices that

cause anger and violence such as the voices of the Ku Klux Klan. There are voices of friends who say: “Hey it is not illegal unless you get caught.” There is the voice of the angry sibling interaction that says: “You can’t do anything, mom and dad will not believe you anyway.” How do we discern the voices that bring life and not death or pain?

When we consider our relationship with God, Jesus understands our human tendencies better perhaps than we understand ourselves. When it comes to our faith, we are very much like sheep in need of a shepherd. Like sheep, we have the tendency to follow. Like sheep, we often confuse true leadership with the kind offered by hired hands (shepherds who are in it for the wrong reason-money or fame). Like sheep, we are endangered by those who prey on our vulnerability, the spiritual wolves. Like sheep, we are perhaps most vulnerable to ourselves and our tendency to wander away from the care of the shepherd and the safety of the flock. We certainly need a good shepherd, like Jesus, who is willing to care and sacrifice for us. Accepting that we are indeed like sheep is the hardest part for many people. It is our human nature to want to be in control of our lives. Yet, to be a follower of Christ, we must accept our spiritual likeness to sheep and our need for a good shepherd. As we continue to ponder the great news of the resurrection, may we be ever aware that to fully experience Christ, we must allow Christ to be the shepherd of our lives.

#### **Kirberg Game: Mouse trap blindfold activity - See Appendix: Kirberg Games, Day 4**

How was it to trust the person who was leading you around the area? Do you think you would have been more concerned and less trusting if we did this activity on Monday rather than today after we have been with each other all week? We can trust God due to who God has been for us through history. God has been faithful. God had given us what we need. God became one of us in order that we may have a full understand of God’s love and hope for us.

Once we are tuned into the living giving voice of God how do we share this leading with others? Many people do not know the voice of Jesus. How can we share the good news to those who are in need of a path that leads to righteousness and a stillness beside waters where they can rest? Think about being a shepherd for others. Are you willing to be lead? Are you willing to take that step and are you ready to lead with a heart that is willing to be led? Are you willing to share a voice of encouragement to those who have no hope? Are you willing to be a voice for those who have been hurt by bullies or parents?

Close your study with prayer.

#### **ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

If you have an active group, have those games ready to hear about listening. Playing “Simon Says” can even keep them occupied for a short time and they would love to be Simon. You can talk about how listening very carefully can help “keep us in game.”

If you have an advanced group and you are willing to go into how some folks fully support our current president and our government representatives and how some do not support the current regime, it may lead to interesting conversations.

You may even discuss Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s actions during WWI. Bonhoeffer was a Protestant Lutheran Pastor, theologian, and active in the German resistance to the policies of Hitler and Nazism. Due to his opposition to the Nazi regime, Bonhoeffer was arrested and executed at the Flossian concentration camp, during the last month of the war. His pastor voice would have spoken for non-violence and yet his desire to remove Hitler from power led to his death.

## IDEAS TO INCORPORATE THEME THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- **Theme for the day ideas:** Sing with me: I just want to be a sheep: Ba Ba Ba Ba I can imagine that many of our villages can have fun with being sheep. 😊
- **Food:** What about shepherd's pie for this day? I know it is heavy, comfort food and it can be easy and fun! What about making sheep for snack out of marshmallows and toothpicks?
- **Hide and Seek Sheep:** Tell all the campers to run and hide in a designated area. ONE camper will be the Shepherd and as the Shepherd finds each "sheep", she/he will bring him to a gated area for the sheep to stay until the end of the game. When the "sheep" are found, they can "baa baa" while waiting for other "sheep" to be found and put in the gate (the "gate" can be formed with chairs or even colored tape on the floor, any Bible study location, etc).
- **Circle of Sheep:** One child can be the Shepherd who will stand in the middle of the circle of sheep. The counselor will walk around the outside edge of the sheep circle and pat each sheep on the back and will "secretly" place a sticker on the back of one camper without anyone knowing who she/he picked for the ONE SHEEP that the Shepherd will find. Then the "Shepherd" will guess who has the sticker - that "sheep" will turn around and let the shepherd see if the sticker is on his/her back; if not, the Shepherd will continue to look for her/his "sheep" with the sticker. IF the sheep with the sticker is found by the Shepherd, then that sheep will become the new Shepherd and that Shepherd will go back into the circle of sheep. The counselor can continue to place a sticker on different children as time allows. (Make sure to take the used sticker off before continuing to play the game).

## OTHER SONGS, STORIES THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Songs: I just want to be a sheep, ba ba ba  
Jesus Lover of My Soul  
They'll Know We Are Christians

Just Be  
Step by Step  
Walkin' in the Light

## IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

Think about asking them about who they listen to and keep them moving with games. Ask more consequential results if they are not listening well to the helpful voices.

## IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

Explore with this age group the struggle of peer pressure and listening to the voices of the world.

## PARENT DEVOTIONAL

**Scripture:** John 10:11-16

**Reflection:** This week your camper(s) have spent time learning and discussing the I AM statements of Jesus. You can read all of those statements in John 6, 8, 10, 11, 14 and 15. On this day we are reviewing following Jesus the Good Shepherd and how we can listen to the voice of this shepherd. We learned that we must spend time in God's word to hear the voice of God, to know who God is, and to help us distinguish between God's living giving voice and the less than helpful

voice we may have in our lives. We discussed how much we are like sheep and how we need the voice of Jesus to lead us into safe pastures to rest in his care and protection.

**Activity:** We are asking our campers to try spending time in quiet listening to God. We are thinking about unplugging to be still and to know that God is God. Do you have quiet times in your family schedule? Do you take time each day to quiet your world to breathe, to listen, and to seek the will of God? Your camper(s) have been quiet each morning for 15 to 20 minutes so think about adding in such a practice in your home.

Practice full listening in your family. Remind members to not interrupt one another. Remind to listen well...not just preparing the next statement you want to say. Do you reflect what the person just said to affirm that you are listening and that the message is received? Do you listen with non-verbal physical expressions such as eye contact, head nodding, proximity, and matched empathy?

**Closing Prayer:** Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Thank you for knowing us by name. Thank you for leading us to life giving waters so we can rest. Help us to grow in our knowledge of you. Help us to listen well and lead others to the path that you have for all of us. In your name we pray, Amen.





## 2019 BIBLE STUDY – I AM, WE Are!

### DAY 5 - “WE ARE LIFE FOR THE WORLD”

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

I love flying...and I love the window seat when I fly. There's something exciting about watching the ground fall away, the cars become like matchbox cars and seeing the earth from 30,000 feet up. I especially love when it's cloudy on the ground and as the plane takes off it makes its way through the clouds to the bright sun above. There is power, beauty and warmth in that sun. But the truth of flying for me is that, as fun as it is to see the world at a distance I never go flying just to fly. The real excitement is found in the truth that plane is taking me somewhere. Usually someplace I'm looking forward to – someplace to discover for the first time or someplace that is near and dear to me.

I think flying is kind of like camp. The destination of camp is exciting. For some it's discovering camp for the first time, for others it's coming to a place that is near and dear. You get to see the world in a new way. You get to experience God in new and powerful ways. Feel the warmth of God's love in ways that bring life. But we never go to camp just to go to camp. The whole purpose of camp is to bring campers closer to the God who feeds, leads, shines and gives them life. And then...camp sends them back home – back into the world where they get to be the beloved, called and sent children of God. Back into a world that *needs* them to be children of God, witnesses for Jesus who bring life and love, shining into other's lives.

We have spent this week looking at who Jesus is – he is life, he is bread, he is light, he is shepherd...and what that means for and in our lives. Today...it's all about who we are in the world, because of who we are in Jesus. Today is about looking around, claiming who and whose we are and then being light and life in the world. Today is about understanding we have been called in this time, in the places where we live outside of camp, to be Jesus with skin on. Sometimes it's easy – many times it's not. But the call to be who and whose we are is there. We can't stay on the mountain – as beautiful and wonderful as it is – we are on the mountain to experience God and be equipped in his love to bring life to the world around us...at home.

But going home isn't as exciting. Going home means going back to places that aren't necessarily safe. Or people who aren't safe. Going home means facing the struggles and troubles that may have been able to take a back seat for a while at camp. Going home can be scary. While campers might look forward to having some of the “comforts of home” back, they also know the culture of home is very different than the culture of camp. So perhaps, the greatest I AM for today is Jesus' promise: I AM with you always. (Matthew 28:20) In that promise comes the reassurance that we are connected to Jesus at all times, in all places, not just camp. In that promise comes the truth no matter what or who we encounter Jesus is with us.

And he doesn't leave us alone by ourselves. He is with us, but he also gives us other people, too. One day I was talking with a friend about choosing to do some traveling by myself. She was encouraging me to head someplace I'd never been – someplace out of the country. As we talked about the possible pluses and minuses of this adventure, I remarked to her, “I can be a whole lot braver, if there is just one person with me.” True for traveling internationally, but also true for life in Jesus. Jesus knew this. When he sent his followers out he sent them out in pairs. Braver together.

As we get ready to send campers home tomorrow, today is the day to remind them the power of connection – with Jesus and with others. Because of our connection with Jesus we can be light and life for other people. Because of our connection to people around us, good bad, close far...we get to show up and be brave - making a difference in the world around us.

Esther was an ordinary Jewish girl who happened to be very pretty. And she caught the eye and the heart of a king. But Esther also found herself in a place where she had to make a decision to do what was right or do what was easy. As she made her decisions, she knew she wasn't alone...Mordecai, her uncle was there to encourage her. The other Jews in town got together and fasted on her behalf. Knowing she was deeply connected to others and to the God she served, Esther was able to be brave and bold. And in the process she changed and saved countless lives. The words Mordecai spoke to Esther encourage us for today as well: "Perhaps you have come to be in this place, for such a time as this." Today we will use Esther's story as a starting place to look at our own lives...and the call on them. We are...the children of God (I John 3:1) chosen (I Peter 2:9-10) and sent (Acts 1:8) We are a light for the world (Matthew 5:14-16) We are those who bring life and light. Perhaps, just perhaps we have been put in the places we are, for just such a time as this.

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

- Campers will hear the promise that Jesus is with them always and be reminded how they are connected to Jesus and each other – not just here at camp, but for always
- Using the story of Esther, campers will be come to understand that God wants to use them right where they are: their homes, their schools, sports teams, etc. They will create "game plans" for when they head home around how they can strengthen connections and be the light and love of Jesus in other people's lives.
- Campers will share their game plans and then be prayed over and blessed to go out, go home knowing Jesus is with them always.

### **MORNING WATCH**

#### **Common Welcome**

Good morning and welcome to a new day at RTLK and a new day of life. May you find peace and quiet in this early morning and may this day bring you closer to your cabin mates and the many people you will encounter along the way today. More than anything, may you feel God's love and grace as you study, play, laugh, and maybe even cry. Enjoy each moment; enjoy your Life in Jesus in this special place.

#### **Introduction**

Today we are...children of God, beloved, sent by the God who gives us life, feeds us, leads us, shines in us and promises to be with us always. Because of who we are, we are called out into the world with

Jesus to bring life and love to others. We can do it –just as we are and together – we can be brave and bold and make a difference in the lives of those around us.

#### **Why we chose the passage and the scripture**

Today's scripture reminds us because of who we are and the promise that Jesus is with us always, we can truly make a difference in the world around us.

*Matthew 20:28 – And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

*I Peter 2:9 - But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

*Esther 4: 14 - Who knows? Perhaps you have come...for just such a time as this."*

**Song: We Are the Kingdom – Francesca Battistelli**

If only we could see  
Who we're made to be  
Beyond the fear and doubt  
That feels so crippling  
Our song would rise today  
Of a King so great  
Who rules the universe but calls us all by name

Oh, oh, we are set apart  
Oh, oh, we know who we are  
We are the Kingdom, we are the light  
You set a fire we cannot hide  
And we'll be Your city burning so bright  
Cause we are the Kingdom  
We are the Kingdom

We will risk it all  
For such a time as this  
Not to gain the world  
But make a difference  
Oh, oh, we are set apart

Oh, oh, this is where we start  
We are the Kingdom, we are the light  
You set a fire we cannot hide  
And we'll be Your city burning so bright  
'Cause we are the Kingdom  
We are the Kingdom

We'll shine Your light and raise it high, raise it high  
The Kingdom of God is alive, is alive

We are the Kingdom, we are the light  
You set a fire we cannot hide  
And we'll be Your city burning so bright  
'Cause we are the Kingdom

We are the Kingdom, we are the light  
You set a fire we cannot hide  
And we'll be Your city burning so bright  
'Cause we are the Kingdom  
We are the Kingdom  
We are the Kingdom

Songwriters: Casey Brown / Jonathan Lindley Smith / Francesca Battistelli  
We Are The Kingdom lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Warner/Chappell Music, Inc,  
Essential Music Publishing

### **Questions for consideration:**

- In the song you just heard, one of the lines says, *“If only we could see who we're made to be beyond the fear and that feels so crippling...”* – what fear and doubts do you have that hold you back? How do you see yourself? What doubts do you have about who you are?
- Read over the scripture verses above. What do these verses say about who you are? Do you believe it? Why or why not?
- When you think back over all you've learned this week about who Jesus is...what are you most thankful for? How might that change you/your life?
- Who are some people in your life at home who need to feel the love of Jesus? Is there anything that keeps you from being able to do this? Being brave and bold in and with Jesus' love – how might you shine light and love into these lives?
- Think of the all the places you exist in: school, home, church, sports team, music groups, friend circles, etc. As you think about all those places – have you ever thought that God might have you in those places to shine his light and love there as only you can? How might that look?

### **Closing Prayer**

Jesus, it's so hard sometimes to believe that you are always with me. Help me trust in your promise to be here. It's also hard to believe that you have chosen me to shine your light and love into the world around me. Help me see the world the way you see it, help me love the world the way you love. Help me trust you want to use me and then give me the opportunity to serve you by loving others. In your name and power, Jesus, I pray. AMEN.

### **SCRIPTURE STUDY**

As I was growing up, my image of missionaries was that they were special people (and I thought, holier people), chosen by God to be sent out into foreign countries to all “those people” who didn't know Jesus. The idea that I could be a missionary, or as we say it at my church today, “on mission with Jesus” right where I was – in my school, home, neighborhood, etc never crossed my mind. Oh I knew that I was supposed to volunteer at church and be nice to people because that's what I was taught Jesus wanted me to do. But, understanding that God had created me to be me, so that I could reach people with Jesus' love right where I was – nope. Didn't really get that at all.

But that is exactly who I am...who we are. As children of God we are claimed and called, shaped and sent. We are created to be on mission in the world around us with Jesus. And that world might take us

to the wilds of Africa or it might take us next door. Both are places that need the light and love of Jesus.

Today, we are going to use the story of Esther as the basis for understanding a couple of key things in this “We Are...” place: 1) we’ll discover how God used Esther to save a nation 2) we’ll look at how Esther was connected and supported and discover how we can be too and 3) we will ask ourselves where God might be calling us to be Esther – for such a time as this.

**First – Esther’s story.** (*I would strongly encourage you to read all of Esther’s story in Old Testament book of Esther... it’s not that long and it’s a very interesting story!*)



Esther’s story takes place during Ahasuerus’ reign – approx. 486-465BC. The Israel nation has been in exile, Jerusalem has been conquered and the temple destroyed. Jews are scattered all over the Persian and Babylonian empires, depending on who conquered their area. Esther’s story begins with a 6-month long feast put on by King Ahasuerus for the nobility of his kingdom- a kingdom which stretches from modern day Iraq, across Turkey, Afghanistan, parts of Greece,

Pakistan, Jordan, Israel, Syria, Egypt, Libya and northern parts of Arabia. At the end of this celebration, the king holds a 7-day feast for the people of Susa, the capital city, rich and poor alike. During this feast the king calls for his queen, Vashti, to appear and display her beauty and enhance the king’s glory.

For some unexplained reason – Vashti refuses, something that was unthinkable in those times. Ahasuerus loses face and as a result Vashti loses her place as queen. After listening to his counselors, Ahasuerus decides to find a new, more worthy queen and the end result is that Esther, a Jew, is chosen. Esther has been raised by her cousin Mordecai after losing her parents and at his instruction, Esther keeps her Jewish identity a secret.

Eventually, as the story progresses, the king is convinced to set out a decree that will annihilate all the Jews in the empire. Mordecai learns of the plot and tells Esther...

#### ***Esther 4:1-17***

*When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; <sup>2</sup> he went up to the entrance of the king’s gate, for no one might enter the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth. <sup>3</sup> In every province, wherever the king’s command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.*

*<sup>4</sup> When Esther’s maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them. <sup>5</sup> Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. <sup>6</sup> Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate, <sup>7</sup> and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king’s treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. <sup>8</sup> Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people.*

*<sup>9</sup> Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. <sup>10</sup> Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, <sup>11</sup> “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is*

*but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days.”*<sup>12</sup> *When they told Mordecai what Esther had said,*<sup>13</sup> *Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.*<sup>14</sup> *For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”*<sup>15</sup> *Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai,*<sup>16</sup> *“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.”*<sup>17</sup> *Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.*

Esther goes to the king, wins his favor and eventually is able to disclose the plot against the Jews and have the decree revoked, thus saving innumerable lives. Esther had no idea how God would choose to use her. But when faced with the opportunity to shine light and love into the world – Esther choose to do so, even knowing it could mean her death. But she wasn’t alone. Esther did what she did in part because she had Mordechai’s support and encouragement. But she also knew she had the support, prayers and fasting of her people. Esther understood her connection – to her people and to the king – put her in just the right place to be able to save.

While most of us will never be asked to face down a king who could have us put to death, we too are called to live lives that shine light and love into other’s lives. Which means we are called to live lives that look out for others, that think about others, that choose to show love, even when we are scared or don’t want to. Because of who Jesus is for us – we can be his love for others.

In order to embrace this called life then – away from camp, as well as at camp – it is helpful to remember a few things. Here’s where the rest of today’s scripture take us.

**Matthew 28:20:** *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*<sup>19</sup> *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*<sup>20</sup> *and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Here is Jesus’ promise – he sends us out, but he goes with us – is with us always. We never go alone. It’s easier to feel God’s presence here at camp – but campers need to know that God they see and experience here is the God who goes home with them, goes to school with them, is at home with them. He never leaves us. All the “I AM…” statements this week help us know the character of our God. Today we need to remind campers this amazing God is ALWAYS with them.

**I Peter 2:9:** *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Here is the reminder of whose and what we are. I Peter, written by the apostle Peter, was written, “to encourage and testify to the true grace of God.” (I Peter 5:12). We are God’s own chosen people…where is Esther’s time, just the Jews were known by this claim, in Jesus we all become a part of the family of God – the holy nation, the royal priesthood. And we’re part of this group so that…we can proclaim, we can share the amazingness of our God. It’s not just for our own safety or salvation – just like Esther’s position wasn’t just for her – but rather because we are this chosen people we get to share our wonderful God.

It is here where we can stop and reaffirm campers for who they are. They hear all the time the ways they aren't measuring up, the things they're doing wrong, the ways people don't like them. Here, as we remember who Jesus is – we also get to remind campers who they are – created in the image of God, with gifts, talents, passions, desires, that make them uniquely them. And they can use who they are, where they are just as they are. They don't have to wait to get bigger, they don't have to wait to grow up, they don't have to wait until someone tells them they can. They are already all that God needs and desires – just as they are.

**Acts 1:8** - *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Here we find Jesus, just getting ready to ascend, talking to his disciples one last time. They want to know if this is "the time" when Jesus is going to restore Israel's kingdom. All this time with Jesus – all his teachings about the kingdom of God, conversations about a people of love, his death and resurrection...and the disciples still want to know when he's going to put Israel up on top. And Jesus is quick to remind them – it's not about Israel being a restored earthly kingdom – this is about the kingdom of God. And they (and we) are receiving power through the Holy Spirit – to be Jesus' witnesses...his witnesses to Jerusalem (home area), Judea (states/country area), Samaria (the place you don't want to go) and to the ends of the earth. THAT is way more important than if Israel will be restored as an earthly kingdom!

Today, this is our call as well. To be Jesus' witnesses to our homes/neighborhoods, our cities, schools, states, country...to the people we don't want to deal with and to the ends of the earth. The disciples' marching orders are ours as well. So, today, you get to help campers envision how they can be life – shining light and love into those places in their own world. This is where the rubber hits the road. Just like above – they don't have to wait – for permission, to grow up – anything. Jesus' sending of us out to the world around us is a sending for all of us no matter what age. It's not about earthly gain – it's about doing the right thing, sharing Jesus' love, showing up and changing lives with others and the power of the Spirit!

I AM...Jesus comes into our lives in so many ways...as bread that feeds, as light that shines, as a shepherd who leads, as a presence always with us. More than anything Jesus is the one who loves us, as we are and sends us to be who we are in the world. Because of who Jesus is – we get to be. Connected to him, we are connected to a power and love greater than anything in this world. Connected to that power, we are connected to the world around us – not just creation, but to the people around us. And that connection can be used for good or bad. So, when the darkness of this world seems to overpower, take over, win the day...we can find lean into the GREAT I AM who claims us, loves us, sends us and go with us and in leaning in go out – bringing life and light with us. What an amazing opportunity we have...changing lives through the power of Jesus!

### **Actual Possible Study**

- Review: Do a quick review of what campers have learned so far...possible questions:
  - What are the I Am's of Jesus we've learned this week? (Life, Bread, Light, Shepherd)
  - Has there been a story or something you remember that caught your attention? In what way is that special to you?

### **Intro to today's theme**

**Who I Am:** *what you need: Who I Am sheets, writing utensils*

Give each camper a "Who I Am" sheet and something to write with. Have them fill out their sheet according to the directions on the sheet (see sheet side A). After everyone has had a chance to fill out



their sheet, have the group scoot in close and then take turns sharing with the group. Make sure you affirm each camper – and if you can add positive for them feel free to suggest things after they’ve had a chance to share. You could say something like: “*Ashley, those are all great things and I love the words you’ve written down about what others would say about you. I would add comforting and helpful, because I have seen you helping others this week and yesterday I saw you comforting Sadie when she got scared on the high ropes.*” Try to do that for each camper!

After everyone has had a chance to share...**say something like:**

*Each of us are made unique and different. One of the hard things in life is that so often we are told we’re supposed to be like everyone else. But each of us God has created beautifully – just as we are. God loves you AS YOU ARE! Isn’t that amazing? We don’t have to be any different than we are – God loves us. And God wants us to help him spread his life and love in our world. But how do we do that? Today we’re going to look at what it could look like in our lives – to live sharing Jesus’ love and life – even away from camp.*

*But first, I want to share a story with you...it’s about a girl called Esther. She didn’t see herself as special, but God used her in a pretty amazing way. You can find her story in the book of Esther in the Old Testament. Let’s find the book now. (Help campers find the book – it’s most likely not a book really familiar to them!)*

Once everyone has found Esther – have them turn to chapter 4. Then **TELL** them the story of Esther up to chapter 4 verse 9. Then have them read from vs 9-17.

**Ask:**

- What was Esther asked to do? (go to the king and ask for mercy for the Jews)
- What was her first response? (no one goes to the king unsummoned, you will die)
- Whose support did she have? (Mordecai and eventually all the Jews in the town)
- What did eventually decide? (That she would go to the king)
- What do you think helped her make that decision?  
(Mordecai’s challenge to her, maybe too she thought about how she was also connected to the rest of the Jews)
- What do you think you would have done?

**Say something like:**

*One of the things Esther realized is that in the power of God she could try to do something pretty amazing. She knew she was connected to God and to people around her and she realized who she was and what she did could impact a lot of lives. So she did it! Luckily, we’re not asked to go before a king who might kill us just for approaching him! But we, like Esther are connected to God and to the people around us and we have the ability to impact and even change lives. Really we do! And while it might seem easier here at camp...Jesus calls us to do this at home too!*

Going home is hard. Camp for most of our campers is a great experience – one they don’t get anywhere else. Jesus is abundantly present and so is grace. So the thought of going home is hard...so is the thought that they actually have the ability to live at home like they live at camp. In the following experiences you want your campers to see how Jesus calls, sends and goes with them.

**Question round:** (have everyone answer, give each person time to share)

- What’s the hardest thing about going home for you?

**Say something like:**

*I know it's hard to go home. Home isn't like here is it? Even if our homes are great – it's still way harder to live the way Jesus wants us to at home. I know that. So does Jesus. And so he gives us this great promise...turn to Matthew 28:20. You can circle this promise or highlight it somehow so you remember it...it's pretty simple but it's a great reminder for us. Will someone read the promise for us?*

➤ Someone reads Matthew 28:20

**Ask/Say something like this:**

*What is the promise here? Yeah it's one of the greatest and easiest to understand I AM statements Jesus makes – I am with you always. That means the God who is here at camp is the same God who goes with us and is at home with us. It's the same God and same love we get to share when we get home too. It's kind of like this...when you arrived here – staff/counselors, we show you love and grace and fun times. We love working with you, being with you – and in part because Jesus' love is in each of us as staff and each of you – you get to experience that love in some pretty amazing ways. Now, when you leave here, you get to do what camp has done for, for others. When you leave here tomorrow – Jesus is calling you to be who you are: Children of God beloved, chosen and sent out into the world, taking Jesus love and light with us!*

**You are My Witnesses exercise: (what you need – the back of the WHO I AM sheets, writing utensils)**

Have your campers turn over the Who I Am sheets – and find on the back the concentric circles. Say to them:

So who's in your world? Who are you connected to? In Acts 1:8 Jesus says this: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"

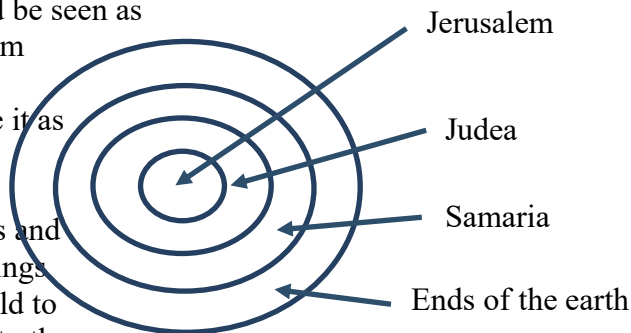
Each circle on your sheet stands for one of those places Jesus talked about here but we're going to identify them as we would today. As we look at each circle label the circle:

Jerusalem: was where they were all living so it could be seen as their **home**...the people closest to them

Judea: was the area they lived in...we could see it as our **neighborhoods, city, state** even

Samaria: was the place no one wanted to go. Jews and Samaritans disagreed about a lot of things and didn't like each other. So to be told to go to Samaria was telling them to go to the **places and people they didn't like.**

Ends of the Earth: This would have been to, well, the **ends of the earth!** Same for us!



Now have them think about who are some people in each of those circles. Have campers write their names in the circle. For example, the first circle is home. So who lives in your home with you? Who is part of your family? Put their names in this circle. Keep going for each circle until they have names in each circle. Some ideas are:

Neighborhood: people at school, on sports teams, in clubs/groups at school, church people, neighbors

People don't like/get along with: bullies at school, groups at school they don't like, could also be a sibling or family member, extended family member

Ends of the earth: Africa, Bolivia, some part of the US they've never been to

Once they have people identified...have them share who they put. If you're short on time – have them turn to one other person in the group and share in pairs. Then say **something like this**:

*Now I want you to look at those names. Think about those people. Pick three – put a star by them. Now think of those people and think of specific ways you could shine the love of Jesus into their lives.*

*For examples:*

*I marked one of my teachers at school I don't really like. One way I could share the love of Jesus with them is to be respectful and say something nice to them each day I'm in class.*

*I marked my mom. I take her for granted and she really does love me. I'm going to share the love of Jesus with her by doing something really nice for her in the next week. And I'm going to try and keep my room picked up because I know that makes her happy.*

If campers have trouble thinking what they could do – ask the group to help come up with ideas. It's amazing what kids can come up with when it's someone else doing it! ☺

Make sure each person has at least three concrete people and ideas how to love on them. If some get done early – have them either pick more people on their sheet – or help someone else out.

### **We're Not in this alone...**

One of the hardest things to face in going home is the feeling campers often have that there is no one at home for them, like the people at camp are there for them. Take a moment to help your campers remember some of the folks who are for them back home. Have them write those names on a corner of their sheet. Remind them – we are often braver if even one person is with us. So, those names they wrote down? Those are the people who are on your side. They are with you – even if they are not physically present.

Remind campers they can still be there for each other even when they are home. They all or most all have phones and text all the time. They have Instagram feeds – what if they made a feed dedicated to encouraging each other? Help them see camp friendship don't have to be just for camp.

### **Time of blessing and sending**

So, it's the last day, the last Bible study time. We've heard how Esther used who she was and where she was to impact the world around her. We've heard Jesus calls us to do the same and he promises to be with us wherever we go. And as great as the mountain and camp are – we know we are called to go back home...to be the hands, feet and voice of Jesus in this world in very real ways.

So to end this time, we are going to bless and pray for each other. Explain what will happen to your campers:

*We're going to make a circle and one at a time, each person is going to stand in the middle. I'm going to read some reminders for us and then the person in the middle will read the names of the people they've chosen to love on back home. Then we'll lay our hands on them and pray for them. We do this to remind ourselves that we are connected to Jesus and to each other. We do this to remind ourselves*

*we are never alone. There are always others who will walk with us and pray for us! Laying hands on people is an ancient practice when people were being set apart for something special. You are special and you are each set apart for something special – bringing light and love into others’ lives. (You might explain when we lay hands on, we lay them gently and in places like arms, shoulders, backs, heads. Also be sure and ask each person if it’s OK to lay hands on them. If someone says no – that’s OK! Just have the group join hands in a circle around them and pray for them that way.) Who would like to go first?*

**Words of blessing spoken over each person:**

*NAME.....child of God, loved just as you are, part of God’s chosen people to share his light and love in the world around you. May you always know, no matter where you are, Jesus goes with you. Be brave. Be bold. Share the love of Jesus!*

You might pray the first time, but invite others in the group to take a turn praying, too. At the end, put yourself in the middle, so your campers can pray for you too! End with a group hug, high five or cheer.

Close your study by giving each camper a “game changer” bracelet. Pray over the bracelets that they will encourage your campers to be game changers in the lives of other people..

**ADDITIONAL STUDY IDEAS**

- **Try It On at Camp**...if need to make the lesson more visual/active... after you’ve completed the study then brainstorm ways your group could love on support staff, kitchen staff, other villages, etc. Make plans and then carry them out!
- **If the study isn’t going well**...help your campers learn by doing. Talk about Jesus’ call to us to shine Jesus’ light and love to those around us. Talk and together have your group choose some ways they could love on folks around camp today. Then go and do. At the end of your time, you might ask some/all of the following:
  - How’d it feel to love others?
  - Do you think you could love on others at home? What could you do?

Then jump to either the Who Am I sheet and after they have filled that out, have them think of three people they could love on at home and how they might do it. They could write it down on the circle side. Remind them Jesus is with them as they try living this out. Have the group circle up and pray together for each other.

- **If the study isn’t going well...or campers are shy about talking about people in their circles**...it can help to “de-personalize” it. So take your group and say something like:

*OK... we’re going to make a list of different people who need to know the love of Jesus. (teachers, parents, other kids, grocery store people, policemen, etc) Now we’re gonna brainstorm some ways people can make others feel loved. One example might be a grocery store bagger. How might someone show love to them? (help them bag, say thank you,) Now let’s make a list of people and how someone might love on them*

- **Another idea:**

For a group that needs to be more active you might try this:

Ask a group member to make a paper airplane, or make one yourself. Tape a coin, rock, or weight to one side of the airplane. Stand on the same side of the space as your group, and ask a couple people to take turns throwing the airplane gently toward the other side of the space.

Next, pick up the airplane and remove the taped object. Have a couple more people throw the airplane again. Now ask the following question:

*How can just one small weight keep the plane from flying correctly?*

Explain that taping a weight to the wing of a paper airplane is like someone weighed down in life with negative things. When we step in and bring love into someone's life, it is often like taking the weight off the plane.

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

**Super Hero** – We're super heroes when we share God's love with others

Whole day is around how we can be super heroes spreading God's love in people's lives

**All Camp** – any game putting super hero in front of: super hero gaga ball, super hero elimination, super hero counselor hunt, etc

**Worship** could be super hero led worship with all kinds of active songs, interactive songs

**Duct Tape Day** – When we stick together we can do amazing things!

There are a thousand uses for duct tape...it can do all kinds of things never "intended" you could have duct tape name tags, duct tape crafts, duct tape made into an "I AM"

**All Camp** – create things with duct tape, play games or do activities where groups have to work together in order to accomplish the tasks

**Worship** – Duct tape worship? The possibilities are endless!

**Meals** – could be sticky food?

**The Amazing Race Day**

**All day long is a "race"** – teams where a certain color to identify them (red, blue, yellow, etc) by a piece of fabric or a stripe of paint, etc. Each part of the day has a "great race activity" to complete?

**All Camp – Amazing Race** – based off the Great Race on TV – each team is given a clue to where they have to go and what they have to do once there. Once the event is complete, to the satisfaction of a "judge" they are given a clue to the next place they have to go and thing they have to do. Be creative with the tasks to do. Make sure the group has to work together in order to complete the tasks. Pinterest is a GREAT supplier of awesome ideas. In your planning, keep in mind our food philosophy. Above all, keep safety a priority.

**Worship** - morning could be the start of the race, evening the "finish line" or champion's circle – emphasizing doing life together.

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

Songs from the camp song sheet

- We are the Family of God
- Here I Am Lord
- They'll Know We are Christians by Our Love
- Sanctuary
- Isaiah 43
- Light the Fire
- History Maker
- Set a Fire

\* Other new songs (list titles and source)

Glow in the Dark – Jason Gray – lyrics/chords:

[https://tabs.ultimateguitar.com/tab/jason\\_gray/glow\\_in\\_the\\_dark\\_chords\\_17648](https://tabs.ultimateguitar.com/tab/jason_gray/glow_in_the_dark_chords_17648)

### Supporting stories (list source)

- **An Afternoon in the Park** (*this could go with the idea that we can be God's light and love as we go home – age doesn't matter!*)

There once was a little boy who wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with Twinkies and a six-pack of root beer and he started his journey. When he had gone about three blocks, he met an old woman. She was sitting in the park just staring at some pigeons. The boy sat down next to her and opened his suitcase. He was about to take a drink from his root beer when he noticed that the old lady looked hungry, so he offered her a Twinkie. She gratefully accepted it and smiled at him. Her smile was so pretty that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered her a root beer. Once again she smiled at him. The boy was delighted! They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word. As it grew dark, the boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave, but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old woman and gave her a hug. She gave him her biggest smile ever. When the boy opened the door to his own house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked him, "What did you do today that made you so happy?" He replied, "I had lunch with God." But before his mother could respond, he added, "You know what? She's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!" Meanwhile, the old woman, also radiant with joy, returned to her home. Her son was stunned by the look of peace on her face and he asked, "Mother, what did you do today that made you so happy?" She replied, "I ate Twinkies in the park with God." But before her son responded, she added, "You know, he's much younger than I expected." – *A Third Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul, Julie A. Manhan, books.google.com*

### IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY DOWN FOR JUNIORS

- Since Juniors are more concrete thinkers, it might be easier on the Circles Sheet to simply help them identify the circles in ways they understand – instead of trying to help them grasp the meaning of Acts 1:8. You could talk about how Jesus calls us to share his love with all kinds of people and here are a few categories of people:
  - our families
  - our schools, sports teams, neighbors
  - people we don't know very well or don't like
  - people around the world
- During the Blessing time – you want to simply pray for each camper...instead of asking for others to pray. But some groups may be up for praying for each other – if so, by all means, let them pray for each other and you!
- \* One other thing to be aware of is that it might not be as sad for Juniors thinking of going home...so make sure and honor if kids are looking forward to going home when you're talking about transitioning back to home.

## IDEAS TO ADJUST STUDY UP FOR SR HIGHS

- Going Home question: this question has the potential for bringing up all kinds of things these campers are having to deal with at home. Listen well. Pay attention. If you feel nudged to pray right then for a particular camper and what they are facing – do so. Let other campers encourage and support. Don't trivialize what they are facing!
- Make sure you really talk with and allow time for the group to figure out concrete ways to stay in touch and encourage/support one another. With today's technology this is easier than ever, then just have to have a chance to think about it and then get the information from each other they need. If possible, connect as many kids as possible while still at camp.
- Have campers pray for each other during the blessing time. They are more than capable and there is power in having your peers pray for you. Make sure they get a chance to pray over you too!

## PARENT DEVOTIONAL

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:28b

**Reflection:** Today is the day we face the reality that as great as camp is, we are all going home. And home is very different than camp. But...the God who is with us at camp is the same God with the same power to be at work in us and through us, that will go home with us. So what do we do when we get home? Is camp just something that happens once a year and we leave it on the mountain – or is what we experience at camp something to empower us at home? Today we talk about how camp equips us to shine the light and love of Jesus and make some concrete plans around how to do that.

Esther is our inspiration. She was a normal girl, who caught the attention and heart of a king. Because of that she becomes a queen and is in a position where she is able to save her entire nation. Her story is found in the book of Esther in the Old Testament. You can read the whole thing – it's not that long and it's a great story! Esther, challenged and supported by her cousin and the Jewish nation, puts her own life at risk in order to save her people. While we aren't usually asked to go before a king who could have us killed, we are called to stretch ourselves and love the people God has placed in our lives.

People we know and love already, people we don't like, people we don't know. We're all connected and as followers of Jesus, we have a call to love others.

**Activity:** How could you as a family choose to show love to people in your world? Brainstorm as a family, ways you could bless/love on people – in your neighborhood, your city, state, and/or the world. Pick one or two of your ideas and actually do them together as a family. Examples of possible ways to bless others:

- *Purge through toys and games and donate unused items to a local charity*
- *Save money together and sponsor a family for a holiday*
- *Bake cookies or goodies and makeup bags/plates to go to all your neighbors. Take them personally door to door.*
- *Contact a local fire station and see if you as a family can bring them dinner some night*
- *Sponsor a child through organizations such as Food for the Hungry or Compassion International – make it a family project to write the letters and pray for your child*
- *Find an older person or couple in your church or neighborhood befriend them*
- *Volunteer at an area food bank or clothes shelf*

**Closing Prayer:** Jesus, we thank you for the promise you give that you are with us always. Call us and nudge our hearts into action sharing your love with a world who desperately needs it. Open our eyes to see our hearts to love the world the way you do, knowing we are this place and time perhaps for such a time as this! Give us great courage, let us walk in your power. In your name, Jesus, we pray, AMEN.



WHO I AM

Things I'm good at:

Things I like to do:

Things I don't like

Three words my friends or parents would use to describe me

Bucket List: Name 3 things on your bucket list

*RTL*C – Day 5  
*I AM with you always*

**You Are My Witnesses**

