

Youth Sunday School Lesson

Gretna Glen Camp and Retreat Center 2019

“Power of Camp” Youth Lesson

Start off your lesson by making sure you know the names of all of your students including new kids and visitors – go around the room and ask everyone to share their name, and something they like about being outside (you might want to re-visit that later).

Lesson: “Distractions”:

Resources: Whiteboard/ Chalkboard/ Easel, Markers/ Chalk

Goal: Realize the need for quiet spaces and opportunities to “get away” and retreat. People need opportunities to take a break from the craziness of everyday life and it’s getting harder and harder to do that in the digital age.

For this introductory activity, ask the students in your group to list the things in their everyday life that demand or take up their time. It can be healthy things, unhealthy things, and anything in the middle. As they state these things write them up on your board/easel, and don’t add too much commentary – just try and fill up the space with as much as you can, leaving about 6 inches on the left side (for a column you’ll use later. Once you’ve completed your scrambled mess of words, go around the room and ask each person how that list makes them feel. Write down just their answers (no names) on the left side. You’ll likely get things like stressed, overwhelmed, busy, etc. If a student gives a sarcastic answer, push them to *really connect* with how it feels when you have to be doing all of those things.

Debrief: What do you think we should do to respond to all these distractions? Where is there room for God in all of this stuff?

Read Luke 5:16 – “Yet He (Jesus) frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray.”

Closing – Why does God want us to retreat and get time away? If Jesus had to do it, what makes us think we don’t need to? What are some healthy ways to get away and find time with God? When you spend a week at camp – you will have time every day to talk about God, and experience a break from all of these distractions. Do you think that God wants us to take opportunities like this?

Luke 5:16 says, “Yet He (Jesus) frequently withdrew to the wilderness to pray.”

Matthew 14:23 says, “After He (Jesus) dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.”

Luke 6:12 says, “One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and He prayed to God all night.”

Jesus went into the wilderness and up to the mountains to be close to God. Camps like Gretna Glen exist to be that mountaintop for you. Camp was made for you.

*Optional – Do a breathing exercise – ask all the kids to close their eyes, and when you count to three they should breath in and hold that breath for 10 seconds. Repeat this 2 more times, and ask how that felt to take time to focus on just the simple act of breathing.

Additional Activities:

Game: Silly Nillies

This is a fun game where each person in the group writes down something silly that they would like to see someone else do (within reason – no destruction of property or self harm, and no “dares” that could be deeply embarrassing). Once they’ve written down their thing (examples: draw your name in the air with your knees, hold your breath for 30 seconds, etc.) they throw it in a hat, or bowl, and then you will go around the room and each person will have to draw a “silly

nilly” and perform the act described. An adult can veto any “silly nilly” they feel they should, and ask the person who made it to try again if you’d like.

Why play this game? Playfulness is important, and it helps us to build stronger connections with others. Have fun with it and make sure that no-one is being picked on yet you’re all “Laughing together”.

Activity: Power of Positivity

This game is simple yet profound:

Supplies needed – a Timer (phone or stopwatch), 3 balls per person (plastic, tennis, wads of used paper, whatever), a bucket large enough for all the balls, a 30x30 ft. play area, and a pad of paper and pen for the game leader.

Introduce the game:

Tell the group: “We’re going to play a simple game, and learn something cool while doing it. The goal is that each person will start standing about 3 feet from the bucket, and then you will throw all three balls into the bucket, one at a time. After you land your first ball in the bucket, you must take one step back, and then again before you throw your last ball. If you miss a shot, you must try again until you make it. This is timed and we will definitely do this at least TWICE.”

Now – you have an important job of tracking a small detail while you time them. Every time someone “misses” the group “reacts” – if their reaction is negative (loud sighs, unhelpful comments, negative comments, giggling at the person, etc.) then you mark it down under a negative column. If they react positively (“come on you got this!”) then you mark it down under a positive column. This seems like a lot of work but it’s totally worth it.

AFTER ROUND 1:

Tell the group their time (initial, unchanged time) and then explain that you were tracking something. For every negative reaction when someone missed (define negative reaction) you are going to add 5 seconds to their time. For every positive reaction you will subtract 5 seconds from their time. Now let’s try this again!

In this second round – you will track the same details, but it’s likely you’ll have too many positive comments to count which is okay, just give it your best guess.

The magic! Okay – not only is your group’s time going to be in the negatives (if not, try a 3rd round and really encourage positivity) – but you will SEE the change that all this positivity has on your group. Their smiles get bigger – they laugh together, they may even throw the balls better! Discuss how this felt as a group!

Debrief: At camp – we get to experience the power of being in a positive place surrounded by people who care about each other. This game is just a taste of what camp can be like.