

## Five thoughts about making an impact at summer church camp

I love summer church camp and know that many of you reading could be heading to a summer camp as a leader or participant over the next few weeks. As leaders in those short term ministry situations, here are some things to think about:

- 1) **Be a model for the students** with your actions, not just your words. Words are important. Teaching kids the Word of God is crucial. But in addition to the words we use, we must also model the behavior of a disciple. Live within the rules of the camp. Set a good tone with your attitude and your joy as you minister together with other adults. Model Christian community and love, within the adult leadership that will be working in the camp. Give students something to think about as you present a Christ-like attitude with your words, your patience, and your generosity.
- 2) **Don't try to be one of the kids.** What students need most is a genuine, authentic, ministry minded, mature adult who takes the kids seriously and loves them for who they are. You don't have to be totally in style or super cool to make an impact – you just need to be there. It's been said that the two things youth need more than anything is stability and love. Have confidence that God is going to work in and through you in the way that you have been wired up and gifted to help each student learn what it means to be a more faithful follower.
- 3) **Love them all, focus on a few.** A week of camp is comparable to two years of Sunday school (if you figure you are with the kids about 16 hours a day for six or seven days and only an hour on a Sunday morning all year). We have a great opportunity to begin some relational ministry with them. Instead of trying to know everyone a little bit, make sure that you specifically get to know the kids from a small group or from a particular church (depending on how large the camp attendance). Befriend them, know their names, eat some meals when they are, and participate in activities with them. Don't ignore the others; just focus your energy in four or five students that you connect with naturally.
- 4) **Grow with the camp.** We can't just come into the ministry event acting like a bull in a china closet. Overly loud and crazy people during the first few hours of a weeklong camp can make campers wonder what they have gotten themselves into. A better approach might be to pace yourself – start by introducing yourself to a few people, learn their names, and then, as the week goes on, allow the camp to grow together. Don't change your personality – just remember that for you, as a ministry leader for the week, you are coming into the experience on a different level than the students. We don't want them to feel uncomfortable. Grow with them.
- 5) **Build memories.** Come up with a nickname, make up a new game, start a tradition around lunch or dinner, develop a certain hand shake, or whatever else comes natural to you so that you are able to build the memories with the students. Long after they forget what we “told them” during devotions and bible studies, they will have the memory of your connection to them. The memories I have of summer church camp remind me that part of the fabric of who I am is because I was at church camp during my childhood and teenage years. Those memories are a fond reminder of that important time in my faith journey.



Tim Price  
Harvest Ministry Teams  
407 Edwardsville Road, Troy, IL 62294  
618-667-6241  
[www.harvestministryteams.com](http://www.harvestministryteams.com)