



2021 Middle School & Combined Sessions

Groups Preview Packet

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A Message to Youth Workers

Dear Group Leaders & Youth Workers,

We probably don't tell you enough about how much we admire you and your work with teenagers. It's been an incredibly difficult year of ministry, and we applaud you for your tireless work in this pandemic era to find creative ways to connect and minister with your youth. You are our heroes!

We are upbeat and optimistic about our camp sessions this summer. As the world begins to slowly emerge from the pandemic, we are working hard with our medical director and team to provide programming and protocols that will keep everybody healthy and safe. When we get closer to the summer, we'll communicate those protocols on our website.

We believe camp plays a vital role (but not the only role) in the spiritual formation of students. Our hope is that what we do at camp will amplify the rhythms and practices your group creates throughout the rest of the year. Our aim is to assist you as you help youth grow in their relationship with Jesus.

Here are a few things to note in preparation for camp this summer:

Volunteer Cabin Leaders - If you are bringing more than seven boys and/or seven girls to camp, we require you to provide volunteer male and/or female cabin leaders to stay with your students during your week at camp. You are responsible for providing another volunteer for every 16 additional campers of either gender: 8 - 23 kids (1 vcl); 24 - 39 kids (2 vcl's); 40 - 55 kids (3 vcl's); etc. These volunteers will stay in the cabin leader room along with the Summer Staff cabin leader. If you have questions about our volunteer cabin leader policies, please contact **Ben Snethen**, our Senior Program Coordinator at Youthfront Camps. Ben or one of our Cabin Leader Supervisors will contact you a few weeks before your session at camp to finalize your volunteers for the week. If you have questions about volunteers, contact Ben at bsnethen@youthfront.com.

Hype Themes

On the first day of camp, we split up the campers into teams to compete in events throughout the session. Each night has a different theme, complete with an event or competition attached to it. We encourage you to participate by bringing costumes and joining in the fun. Here is a little preview of each night:

- **CLUE: The Grand HYPE Heist:** The classic whodunit board game comes alive at camp in a thrilling new way! A prized relic has been stolen from Mr. Body's mansion, and campers are the investigators, solving the clues to take down the conniving caper. Ms. Scarlet, Mrs. Peacock, Dr. Orchid, Mr. Green, Col. Mustard, and Prof. Plum are all invited! But only one was the culprit... Can you solve the Grand HYPE Heist?
 - **Costume ideas:** your favorite Clue character, a room from Mr. Body's mansion, a detective. Please DO NOT bring real or fake weapons.
 - **Volunteer Cabin Leader involvement:** Play along with your campers as they attempt to solve the mystery.
- **Night Strike:** A camp tradition, this game of stealth is played in the woods in the dark. Sneak through zones and past Strikers to get under the infamous Tower of Power. Can you tiptoe your way through the woods to earn the most points for your team?
 - **Costume ideas:** camo, dark clothing, close-toed shoes are a must! No face paint or scary costumes.
 - **Volunteer Cabin Leader involvement:** Play along with your campers or join the action as a Striker. One of the HYPE Crew members can give you instructions on when to meet up and how to play as a Striker.
- **Poolside Yuletide:** It's Christmas in July! The weather outside may not be frightful, but the fireside entertainment, Christmas themed mini-games, and pool party will be delightful. Don your favorite Christmas sweater, or come as a beloved Christmas character for this holiday hang!
 - **Costume ideas:** swimwear, but with a Christmas twist: Christmas sweaters, Santa coats, reindeer antlers, snowmen, etc.
 - **Volunteer Cabin Leader involvement:** Hop into the pool activities! We're always welcoming brave volunteers to show off their skills during the staff belly flop contest! You can also assist with the Yuletide fire (complete with S'mores & hot cocoa) & games.
- **WILD WILD CAMP WEST:** There's a new sheriff in town, and they're bringing the 1880s with them. Come see Camp West transformed into an old frontier town, watch out for rogue cowboys and bandits, and saddle up for the great adventure!
 - **Costume ideas:** cowboys/girls, sheriffs, prospectors, cactuses, tumbleweed, etc. Please DO NOT bring real or fake weapons.

- **Volunteer Cabin Leader involvement:** Have fun getting into character and joining in on the activities. Be prepared to be thrown into “jail” if there’s a bounty placed on you.
- **Midnight Madness:** When it gets dark, we glow up! Glow sticks and neon will light up the night as we enjoy all of camp’s most exciting attractions, at night!
 - **Costume ideas:** bright neon colors, glow sticks, glow in the dark, swimwear for water activities.
 - **Volunteer Cabin Leader involvement:** Dress up and enjoy one last night of fun and dancing in the glow-in-the-dark, blacklight, and neon lighting.

If you have any questions about our HYPE themes, reach out to Ryan Ganaban, our Program Coordinator at Youthfront Camp West: rganaban@youthfront.com.

NOTES FOR COMBINED SESSIONS (1, 8, 10)

These three sessions are open for youth groups to bring both their middle and high school students. For the most part, the schedule will look similar to a middle school session, but they feature some select programming for high school campers. (See the Combined Session schedule below.)

Most important to note for you in these sessions is that the morning schedule looks slightly different. Middle school campers will participate in a Morning Gathering, Camper Reflection, and Cabin Experience as usual. High school campers will take part in some selective programming that includes breakout sessions, spiritual formation exercises, and a dialogue-driven session with the Storyteller later in the morning.

The Storyteller will have approximately 45 minutes with high school campers, starting at about 11:00 each morning. They may lead these sessions by giving a recap of what you shared in the Morning Gathering with the middle school campers, facilitating a dialogue about the morning’s big idea, and/or leading through an experience that you think would help high schoolers reflect more in depth on the theme.

We are looking forward to your group’s time with us at camp. If you have any questions about camp, feel free to contact our Camp West Director, Matt Saunders at msaunders@youthfront.com or our Director of Camps, Andy Garlich at agarlich@youthfront.com.

Grace and Peace,
Youthfront Camp Staff

Youthfront Camps: Learning Theory and Practice

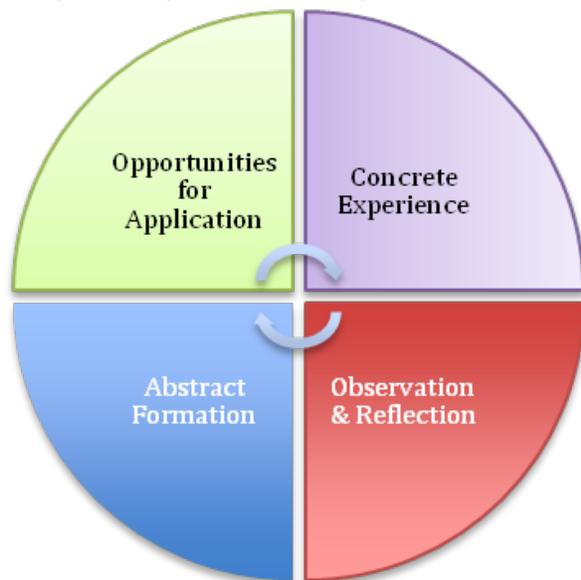
Learning takes place in all types of environments. The most effective learning, however, takes place within an environment that is intentional, authentic, transformative, and communal.

At Youthfront, we are **intentional** about the method of learning that we employ in order to maximize the **authentic** discovery, growth, and learning of each camper. Every activity we facilitate—from worship gatherings to games during free time—is carefully constructed for **transformative** learning in a **communal** context.

We are committed to creating environments for experiential learning. Experiential learning is simply learning by the process of making meaning from direct experiences. Therefore, we construct environments of learning through:

1. Concrete Experience
2. Observation and Reflection
3. Formation of Abstract Thought
4. Opportunities for Application

By intentionally crafting learning experiences using the four elements above, we are able to accommodate the learner's preferred method of learning, whether it be the **converger**, who learns by taking abstract ideas and actively experimenting with them, or the **diverger**, who prefers a concrete experience in which to observe and reflect. Experiential learning also accommodates the **assimilator**, who is able to take abstract concepts and make observations through inductive reasoning, or the **accommodator**, who learns best by *doing*, through concrete experiences and the active outworking of the concepts presented.¹



¹ <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-explrn.htm>

Youthfront is passionate about bringing youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. While there are many effective theories of learning, we believe that the experiential learning theory we practice is best suited for a camp environment where we can facilitate experiences for campers to engage God’s story in an intentional, authentic, and transformative way.

How is Youthfront different than other camps?

Youthfront is built around the fixed hours of prayer, also known as the Daily Office or the Divine Office.

Instead of building Youthfront’s sessions around chapel, free time, cabin times, the snack shop, etc., we think it best to center all of the campers’ experiences on the practice of prayer. Youthfront Camp practices morning, midday, and compline prayer. Each of these prayer times consists of the reading of the Scriptures, music, silence, corporate and private prayer, and confessing the creeds.

Youthfront is interested in helping adolescents ask questions that lead to ongoing engagement.

Youthfront works hard to spark the imaginations of all campers. Our content has been developed to help adolescents think, wonder, and feel. We believe we are most successful when we allow the Holy Spirit to work and do ministry without deliberately manufacturing or manipulating the insights of humanity. If adolescents walk away from Youthfront with more questions about God and the Bible than answers, we believe it is a great thing for their ongoing learning and formation.

What does this approach look like?

Below is a simple table illustrating how Youthfront Camp is distinctly different in our approach to engaging adolescents in learning. The table found on the following page is not intended to be an either/or list of values; rather, it reflects a continuum of moving beyond a teacher-centered approach toward a learner-centered approach.

Moving from...	Moving to...
Preferences of the teacher. Most information that adolescents get is filtered through the skills and preferences of the one disseminating the information.	Needs of the adolescent. Youthfront’s content takes into consideration the needs, styles, and habits of the adolescent and creates learning opportunities with the learner in mind first.
Static in nature. Typically, most learning environments are predictable and fixed.	Always evolving. Youthfront’s content is always looking for ways to create dynamic, unpredictable, and mobile learning opportunities.
Breadth. How much information can we teach?	Depth. How deep can we help learners go in any given topic?
Rote. Memorization is good. However, memorization alone doesn’t produce a lasting effect on a learner.	Experiential. Youthfront’s content provides learners with the opportunity to learn through practice and ongoing application.
Solo. Typically, learners left on their own don’t have the necessary influence of the learning of others to help push them to think about new insights and directions.	Peer to Peer. Youthfront’s content is about learning in community—sharing common opportunities. Often in peer-to-peer models, learning is owned with greater passion and learners are pushed to think more deeply as a result of the interaction with their peers.
Product. Most learners are pushed to be complete, leaving no room for trial, error, self-discovery, etc.	Process. Youthfront’s content is about the process of learning. It recognizes that learners learn at different paces and that the passion to own something takes some longer to acquire than others.

Adapted from *A New Kind of Youth Ministry*, by Chris Folmsbee. Zondervan, 2006. Used with permission.

Middle School Session Daily Schedule

Subject to modification due to Covid Protocols*

(Monday - Saturday Sessions 2, 3, 7, & 9)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<p>1:00pm Registration Begins 2:00pm Camp Kickoff 3:00pm Cabin Time 4:00pm Free Time 6:00pm Dinner 7:15pm HYPE - CLUE 8:45pm Evening Gathering I Am the Bread of Life 10:00pm Cabin Reflection 10:45pm Compline/Lights Out</p>	<p>7:30am Wake Up 8:00am Morning Prayer 8:15am Breakfast 9:15am Morning Gathering I Am the Bread of Life 10:00am Reflection 10:30am Cabin Experiences 12:00pm Midday 12:30pm Lunch 1:00pm Free Time 6:00pm Dinner 7:00pm Evening Gathering I Am the Light of the World 8:00pm Cabin Reflection 8:45pm HYPE - Night Strike 10:45pm Compline/Lights Out</p>	<p>7:30am Wake Up 8:00am Morning Prayer 8:15am Breakfast 9:15am Morning Gathering I Am the Light of the World 10:00am Reflection 10:30am Cabin Experiences 12:00pm Midday 12:30pm Lunch 1:00pm Free Time 6:00pm Dinner 7:00pm Evening Gathering I Am the Good Shepherd 8:00pm Cabin Reflection 8:45pm HYPE - Poolside Yuletide 10:45pm Compline/Lights Out</p>
Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>7:30am Wake Up 8:00am Morning Prayer 8:15am Breakfast 9:15am Morning Gathering I Am the Good Shepherd 10:00am Reflection 10:30am Cabin Experiences 12:00pm Midday 12:30pm Lunch 1:00pm Free Time 6:15pm Dinner & HYPE - Wild Wild Camp West 8:30pm Evening Gathering I Am the Resurrection and the Life 9:30pm Cabin Reflection 10:45pm Compline/Lights Out</p>	<p>7:30am Wake Up 8:00am Morning Prayer 8:15am Breakfast 9:15am Morning Gathering I Am the Resurrection and the Life 10:00am Reflection 10:30am Cabin Experiences 12:00pm Midday 12:30pm Lunch 1:00pm Free Time 4:00pm Talent Show 6:00pm Dinner 7:00pm Evening Gathering I Am the Vine 8:00pm Cabin Reflection 8:45pm HYPE - Midnight Madness 10:45pm Compline/Lights Out</p>	<p>7:30am Wake Up 8:15am Breakfast 9:00am Cabin Clean & Pack 9:15am Camp Finale 10:00am Open Time 11:00am Close Camp</p>

Combined Session Schedule Notes

Subject to modification due to Covid Protocols*

Session 1 (Tuesday - Saturday)

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM Gathering	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx	I Am the Light of the World 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Recap	I Am the Good Shepherd 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Recap	I Am the Resurrection 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Recap
PM Gathering	8:45 pm - I Am the Light of the World	7:00 pm - I Am the Good Shepherd	8:45 pm - I Am the Resurrection and the Life	7:00 pm - I Am the Vine
HYPE	7:15 pm Clue	8:45 pm Night Strike / Coffee Shop for HS	6:15 Wild Wild West	8:45 pm Madness

Session 8 (Monday - Saturday)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM Gathering / Options	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx	I Am the Bread of Life 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Recap	I Am the Light of the World 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Recap	I Am the Good Shepherd 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Recap	I Am the Resurrection 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Recap
PM Gathering	8:45 pm - I am the Bread of Life	7:00 pm - I Am the Light of the World	7:00 pm - I Am the Good Shepherd	8:45 pm - I Am Resurrection and the Life	7:00 pm - I Am the Vine
HYPE	7:15 pm Clue	8:45 pm Night Strike / Coffee Shop for HS	8:45 Poolside Yuletide	6:15 Wild Wild West	8:45 pm Madness

Session 10 (Monday - Thursday)

Note: Session 10 will cover all five of the daily themes instead of dedicating an Evening and Morning Gathering to each daily theme.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
AM Gathering / Options	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx	I Am the Light of the World 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Dialogue	I Am the Resurrection and the Life 9:15 - Middle School Gathering 11:00 - High School Dialogue
PM Gathering	7:00 pm - I am the Bread of Life	8:45 pm - I Am the Good Shepherd	7:00 pm - I Am the Vine
HYPE	8:45 pm Night Strike / Coffee Shop for HS	6:15 Wild Wild West	8:45 pm Madness

Who I AM

Adolescents are trying to answer the question, “Who Am I?” They realize that they are no longer little kids, but they also don’t feel like they are ready to be adults either. Many of them feel an increased pressure to figure out what their “thing” is, whether it’s sports, academics, music, dance, etc. At the same time, they may become increasingly aware of their own shortcomings. The lack of certainty can feel like darkness or blindness, and it may lead to doubt or fear. And for the first time, they may begin to ask big questions about God, faith, life, and why bad things happen to good people.

Similar to how identity formation is an important step in adolescent development, finding one’s identity in Christ is an important step of Christian formation. But what does it mean to “find your identity in Christ”? We can begin by exploring Jesus’ own self-identity as recorded in the Gospel of John (his “I Am” statements) alongside the Creation account of humanity being created in the image of God. As we take a look at who Jesus says he is, we can begin to understand who God has created us to be.

Our session of camp will focus on the I AM statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John. We recognize that the campers are all at different places in their understanding of Jesus and the Bible. Their ideas about Jesus may have been shaped by the surrounding culture, the media, and the church at large. Some of these claims have deep truth; some may only be getting at part of the picture. By returning to what Jesus says about himself in John’s Gospel, we’ll see the connection between Jesus’ words and the “I AM” statements in Exodus, which harken back to the divine name of God told to Moses (“I am that I am” – a mystery of sorts). In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself with rich metaphors that give us wisdom as to how we should understand him and his significance for us in our daily lives. Jesus’ statements are object lessons of sorts, illustrating for his followers his relationship to God and the depth of God’s love and care for humanity. Each of these statements also echo the creation story in Genesis 1:26-27, where God speaks of creating humanity in God’s own image, what we sometimes call the *Imago Dei*. Simply put, we were created to reflect God.

As we take a closer look at these “I AM” statements, campers will explore what Jesus meant with each of these metaphors (Bread, Light, Shepherd, Resurrection, and Vine) and consider their implications for us as humans created in God’s image. Jesus shows us a way of life that often gets lost, and throughout the entire session, campers will be given invitations to trust and follow Jesus into this way of life. By the end of the session, we want campers to walk away being able to state “Who I Am” with an awakened sense of God’s love for them and a desire to live fully in the image of God, which includes loving others as Jesus loves them.

Monday Evening / Tuesday Morning

Bread of Life

Text/Story: John 6:22-40 (context 6:1-15)

Big Idea: In the Gospel according to John, Jesus proclaims that he is the Bread of Life. In that assertion, campers can come to know that God is one who provides in more than just a physical way; but sustains them in a life lived with God's unending presence.

Evening Gathering (General Direction):

We recognize that we live in a world that tells us that we should keep wanting things. Our world makes us believe that no matter what we have, we should always be wanting more. However, some people don't have the luxury of worrying about keeping their style or their tech updated. Some struggle with even knowing where their next meal comes from. This is the reality of the crowd approaching Jesus in John 6. A lot of times we can be like this crowd: constantly seeking the spectacular thing; seeking something to fulfill a "craving." In the case of these hungry people, Jesus' sign satisfies them for the moment, but they keep wanting more.

However, Jesus wants to reveal something more to the crowd, and in turn, is revealing to us something important that we may be missing. Jesus' sign of feeding the five thousand is truly that: a sign. It is meant to point to something greater going on. Jesus' feeding of the five thousand is a way to direct the people toward faithfulness in God, who has always provided life for them.

When Jesus says, "I am the bread of life," he uses the metaphor of bread, an everyday source of food for a 1st Century Jew, to establish himself as a provider of sustaining presence, faithfulness, and fullness of life. Campers will be invited to live without worry about cravings or temporary desires, but, instead, seek wholeness, peace, and love from being in the constant presence of God. That's what Jesus means when he says he is the Bread of Life.

Morning Gathering (General Direction): (additional scripture Gen 1:26-27)

One might ask the question though: what does it mean to "partake in the Bread of Life?" One way to answer this question is by looking at Genesis 1:26-27, where God creates the first humans in the "image of God," and given "dominion" over the earth. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? It is about God giving agency to humanity to continue in the creative acts and will of God. To be made in the image of God is to reflect God's character and God's purposes. From the beginning of the story, God's purpose is goodness: filling the world with life and abundance.

When Jesus invites people to partake of the Bread of Life, he is echoing the Genesis passage, by inviting us into agency with him; to do the works of God in which he is also partaking. Jesus's work is to show that he brings the presence of God in himself. As we are also created in God's image, we are also given this action and agency to bring the presence of God to the world.

Cabin Experience Summary:

Campers will have an object lesson about temporary and everlasting by comparing their experience eating a quick dissolving candy (pop rocks, pixie sticks, etc.) and an everlasting gobstopper. The campers will then engage in a bracket-style "showdown" in which they will be presented with different scenarios that answer the prompt "life would be more complete if..." Once the campers narrow down to the scenario that would "make life most complete," the campers will have a discussion about the two activities, where the goal is to show that even when things seem to promise long term fulfillment, they don't compare to the wholeness that comes from Jesus.

Tuesday Evening / Wednesday Morning

Light of the World

Text/Story: John 9:1-6 (main story), John 8:12 (context), Genesis 1:26-27, Ephesians 2:10

Big Idea: We want campers to see that as Jesus is the Light of the World, they are displays of God's work, reflecting the *Imago Dei* within the world.

Evening Gathering (General Direction):

Campers are no longer little kids, but they may not feel like they are ready to be adults either. Many of them may feel increased pressure to figure out what their "thing" is, whether it's sports, academics, music, dance, etc. At the same time, they may become increasingly aware of their own shortcomings. The lack of certainty can feel like darkness or blindness, and for the first time, they may become keenly aware of how uncertain life is. Life is full of doubts and questions.

As we turn our attention to the story of a blind man being healed by Jesus (in Luke 9), we read that Jesus' disciples hold some uncertainty over the reason for the blind man's condition. It's possible to speculate that the blind man may have also held the same questions about himself. "Why is this man blind, Jesus?" We are all looking for answers that justify with certainty the reasons for our experiences. Jesus' response to the disciples' question didn't pick a side like they were looking for. Instead, he said that God's work would be displayed in the man. Jesus made a statement about himself, "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the World." This was an echo of what he said one chapter earlier (8:12), "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus was claiming that he is the source of hope and guidance. Campers will be invited to trust Jesus and look for ways that Jesus is illuminating their world presently.

Morning Gathering (General Direction):

If Jesus is the light of the world, what does that say about us? We might say that if Jesus is the light of the world, then we are displays of God's work. This idea resonates with the concept of *Imago Dei* (being created in the image of God) founded in the creation narrative. Remind campers about the meaning of this phrase, that we were created to reflect God. This also aligns with Ephesians 2:10 - "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Jesus illuminates this within us. In darkness, all we can see is our brokenness, uncertainties, fears, faults, etc. However, in Jesus' light, our true beloved selves are revealed as reflections of the Divine Creator. We aim for campers to see the connection between Jesus as the Light of the World and us as the reflection of God's image. We aren't the source of light, but we can reflect Jesus' light into the world, helping others to see their true selves in the *Imago Dei*, God's reflection.

Cabin Experience Summary:

Campers will participate in an interactive and contemplative retelling of the biblical story, focusing on the role of light. The experience will take place in the chapel, beginning with the room being completely dark. The story will be divided into four movements: Creation, Exodus, Exile, and Hope. Images and word art on screens will be used to illustrate the story, and as each movement progresses, campers will help bring light to the room by lighting candles and turning on various lights. Campers will leave a completely lit room with instructions to practice reflecting God's light to each other during the remainder of this session.

Wednesday Evening / Thursday Morning

The Good Shepherd

Primary Scripture:

John 10:1-18 (11-18 primarily)

Supplementary Scripture:

Psalms 23; Jeremiah 50:4-7; Matthew 18:10-14; 1 Peter 2:23-25, John 15:12-13, Revelation 5, Matthew 25:31-46

Big Idea: We want campers to know that they belong to Jesus and to see him in his role as the Good Shepherd, caring for all the people in the world.

Evening Gathering

This particular “I am” statement is about relationship. The central characters in this story are the Good Shepherd and his sheep. His sheep know him, they listen to his voice, and they follow him (v. 27). Jesus directly compares his own relationship to the Father with the relationship between the Good Shepherd and his sheep (v. 14-15). This would be a great time to explicitly tell the campers that we are his sheep. Our relationship with Christ is directly comparable to his relationship with the Father. That is a very big deal!

One final piece of this story for us to consider is Christ’s statement(s) about the Good Shepherd’s ultimate role. He mentions the Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep five different times in verses 11-18. There is clearly some foreshadowing in there. However, it might be more important for us to think about that sacrifice in terms of relationship. What does it mean for us to know that Christ loves us so much that he’s willing to face the thieves and the wolves on our behalf? Campers will be invited to trust Jesus’ goodness and accept his love.

Morning Gathering

In this illustration, Christ draws a contrast between himself and the cultural/religious leaders of the Jewish people. They come to steal and to destroy. He comes to lead and to protect. What does it mean for us if we place ourselves as the sheep in this story? More than any of the other I Am statements of Christ, this one gives us a sense of identity. It’s more about who we are than what we do. One of the common stereotypes of sheep is that they are unintelligent creatures who mindlessly wander around and get into trouble without a shepherd to lead them. That belief, true or not, isn’t what Christ is saying about us in this passage. He’s telling an elite, powerful group that all of the people out there in the world do not belong to them. They don’t belong to a government, a king, or even a set of religious beliefs. As the sheep belong to the shepherd, the humans in this world belong to Christ. In his words, he has come so that we “may have life, and have it to the full” (v. 10).

Cabin Experience Summary:

Campers will participate in a facilitated personal drawing led by their cabin leader. This drawing will highlight likes, hobbies, personality traits - different pieces of themselves. It will take them on a journey to reflect on who they are, their peers and who they are, and how Jesus sees us. Bringing together the crafts as a whole, the campers will see all of the different attributes, likes, hobbies, and traits that make them who they are. They will see that together, they belong together and are cared for by each other and by Jesus.

Thursday Evening / Friday Morning

Resurrection and Life

Text/Story: John 11:25, John 11:1-44 (context)

Big Idea: We want campers to see that as Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, their lives are unfinished stories, who, as the *Imago Dei*, help to cultivate new life in places of death and loss.

Evening Gathering (General Direction):

At this stage of life, middle schoolers have likely experienced some type of personal loss, whether it's a loss of friendship to a loss of a loved one who died. It's hard to imagine someone not feeling like the year of 2020 was filled with events of disappointments and losses. To middle schoolers, these events can feel overwhelming as if they were the end of the world. If life were a video game, these moments would result in giant, bold, all-caps "GAME OVER" on the center of the screen.

After Lazarus died, Jesus' interactions with Martha and Mary indicate that they also believed nothing could be done to help Lazarus. In the middle of the interaction with Martha, Jesus explained, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). Martha's response seemed to indicate that she believed Jesus, but her objection to having the tomb opened (found later in verse 38) revealed doubts about the present possibility of Jesus' words. In other words, she thought about resurrection as a some-day possibility but not as a present-day probability.

In this gathering, we will acknowledge what it feels like to go through loss, while at the same time acknowledge that Jesus offers hope for a new life that rises out of death. Campers will be invited to trust Jesus with the things that are dead or feel like death, and look for ways that Jesus creates new life out of these things.

Morning Gathering (General Direction):

Because Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life" we trust that Jesus creates new chapters out of what we feel are story-ending tragedies and losses. Jesus gives us hope so that what seems like a final chapter actually becomes an unfinished story.

It should be noted here that Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life doesn't mean that we won't feel hurt or sadness when we experience loss. However, if Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, then that means our lives are unfinished stories. Turn attention once again to the concept of *Imago Dei* that we've been learning about each morning. There is a responsibility we've been given. We are invited to be about the work of finding new life in the midst of places of death.

Cabin Experience Summary:

Campers and cabin leaders will walk through a trail with stations designed to help us reflect on the themes of resurrection. The final station will be a central location where everyone has the opportunity to symbolically contribute to the concept of “new life.”

Friday Evening

The Vine

Primary Scripture:

John 15:1-17

Supplementary Scripture:

Matthew 22: 36-40

Big Idea

We want campers to see that the life we are all called to live is a life connected to Jesus. His most important command for his disciples and for us is to love one another.

Evening Gathering

This is the final “I Am” statement recorded in John’s gospel. It appears as though this illustration is a continuation of the conversation Jesus and his disciples were having in chapter 14. He was preparing them for life after he was gone, or so it seemed to them. But the metaphor here speaks of something else. Multiple times throughout this story, Christ tells his disciples that he will remain in them (vv. 4, 5, 7) as well as asking them to remain in him (vv. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10). Take some time to explain what a vine is (an easy example might be tomatoes, squash, or other vining garden vegetables). In the same way a vine and its branches produce fruit, Christ is calling his disciples (and us) to produce fruit in the world. We do this by being connected to Christ in the same way he is connected to the Father, and by following his commands (v. 9-10). And what is Christ’s command? To love one another as Christ loves us (v. 12). Near the end of this section, Jesus makes a point to tell his disciples that they are not his servants. They are his friends. He loves them. He wants them to experience the sort of joy that he himself feels. But most of all, he wants them to love one another. This teaching echoes the “Greatest Command” in Matthew 22 where Jesus says to a group of Pharisees, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (37-40) Campers will spend some time talking about what it means for us to treat one another with the sort of love that Christ had for his disciples. They will be invited to live with this kind of outward-moving love in their friend groups, their families, and their communities.