

Ice Camp

Dear Youth Leaders,

Thank you for registering your youth group for a weekend of Ice Camp at Miracle Camp and Retreat Center. We are excited to serve your group and partner together in ministry as we make the good news of Jesus known. This packet will give you a thorough overview of the weekend so you can know what to expect while you are here.

First off, here are a few things about Miracle Camp, what we believe, and why we host Ice Camps:

1. **Miracle Camp exists to serve churches.** We want this weekend of Ice Camp to be a blessing to your church and your youth ministry. It is our aim to provide a safe, distraction-free environment where the Spirit can work. Our staff is passionate about serving churches—we work hard because we know that this retreat can set you up with numerous discipleship opportunities as you return home.
2. **Relationships are at the heart of ministry.** Ice Camp is designed with your group's relationships in mind. We love taking care of the weekend activities, meals, and scheduling so you can be freed up to talk, laugh, and interact with your students. In order to encourage time with your students, we intentionally schedule youth group activities and break-out discussions into the weekend. These time slots can be used for whatever your group needs, so be sure to equip your volunteer leaders to take advantage of these opportunities. Make sure each of your leaders gets a set of the included questions and are prepared to lead a small group.
3. **Please join us in prayer for the weekend.** When Jesus sent out the disciples in Luke 10, he sent them out with no resources. He wanted them to completely trust in him and his power to change lives. At Miracle Camp, we have many resources at our disposal, but we cannot force genuine heart change in a student's life. We do not want to forget it is only Jesus who can change lives. And since that's the case, we have to pray.

If questions arise about the details of your retreat as you are reading this packet, please feel free to contact our office at info@miraclecamp.com. We would be happy to help you with anything you need as you prepare for this weekend.

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Theme ABIDE

CHAPEL SESSIONS AND SMALL GROUPS

The retreat schedule is built around four sessions where you and your students will worship together in singing and learn from sound, biblical teaching. Time is set aside after each session for group breakouts in order to provide time for your students to meet and discuss how they can apply God's word to their life. Our speakers are given the same discussion questions from the following pages; their goal being that the content of the teaching sets up students to discuss the provided questions. Spend some time familiarizing yourself with the questions before the weekend, and make sure your leaders are trained and comfortable so they can facilitate gospel-centered small group times with your students.

THEME OVERVIEW

The story of humanity begins with Adam and Eve enjoying perfect fellowship with God in the garden of Eden. But this only lasts for a short while before this communion is broken by the Fall. The rest of the Bible's story tells about God's plan to redeem a fallen humanity, bringing them once again to a place where "God himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev 21:3).

This is a theme we can trace throughout the metanarrative of Scripture: God's desire to be in relationship with his people. Yes, God created humans to be in fellowship with him, but sin has ruined this relationship and caused humans to be separated from God. So God came to the rescue through the person of Jesus Christ, whose name Immanuel, literally means "God with us." God's primary way of restoring the severed relationship of Genesis 3 was by dwelling among his people in the flesh, and inviting them to find life once again with God. While we know that one day we will fully be with God in the new heaven and the new earth, this promise is already fulfilled in part because of the finished work of his son Jesus, who is with us now in Spirit.

One of Jesus' core teachings on this topic comes in John chapter 15. Jesus exhorts his followers to live a life that abides (remains) in him. And this is the passage we will be using as our launching off point for Ice Camp this year. A true and right relationship with God starts by simply abiding in Jesus.

Inspired by Skye Jethani's book, *With*, we will explore four ways that we as humans tend to distort our intended relationship with God. Instead of enjoying life with God, we wrongly try to find life under God, over God, from God, or for God. Each of the sessions will focus on a passage of Scripture which illustrates one of these flawed ways of thinking, and show that a life **with** God is a life that is more abundant and full.

So, whether students know Jesus well or hardly know him at all, this theme will hopefully prompt them to think critically about how the Bible describes a right relationship with Christ. If students are coming into this weekend with misconceptions about who God is, heavy religious burdens they have placed on themselves, or even an inflated sense of their own holiness, we pray that God shows them a more beautiful way forward. He simply wants them to enjoy living a life with him.

Session 1

PASSAGE: John 9:1-7, Matthew 23, John 15

BIG IDEA: We place an unnecessary burden on ourselves when we believe that God mainly exists to punish us for our bad behavior. When our view of God reduces us to a slave living under the rule of a tyrant, we are missing out on the freedom offered by Jesus in the gospel.

TALKING POINTS:

1. What is man's main purpose in life? To glorify God and enjoy him forever.
 - Scripture shows us that the everlasting "happy ending" of our story is simply this: God being **with** us.
2. Jesus makes his intent clear to us: he wants to have a personal relationship **with** him.
 - A right relationship with God and a right way of thinking about him looks like living life **with** God.
 - In John 15, Jesus uses powerful vineyard imagery and calls us to **abide** in him.
3. This weekend we will explore four ways that we distort this intended relationship. Instead of simply enjoying life with God, we instead seek to find life under God, over God, from God, or for God.
4. The error of life lived under God:
 - This mindset was at the heart of the disciples questioning Jesus in John chapter 9.

GOSPEL CENTERED DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. How would you describe the "life under God" mindset in your own words?
2. How does this worldview show up in the story of the blind man in John 9?
3. Why is it easy for humans to fall into this type of flawed relationship with God?
 - What are some examples of ways you've lived a life **under** God?
4. What half-truths exist in the "life under God" way of thinking?
 - How does this way of relating to God ultimately fall short?
5. Can you think of any other places in Scripture where people struggled with this concept?
6. Read part of Matthew 23 (especially verse 4).
 - What are some ways that the Pharisees were guilty of leading people in thinking that life was meant to be lived "under" God or some sort of religious system?
7. Why can it sometimes be hard to identify people who are living under God? (Read Matthew 23:27-28).
8. How does the gospel free us from this way of thinking, living, and relating to God?
9. Spend some time looking at John 15.
 - How does Jesus desire for us to relate to him? How is a life that abides in Jesus better than a life lived under God?
 - How is the gospel good news for someone struggling with the burden of being **under** God?

Session 2

PASSAGE: Numbers 20:2-13, John 15

BIG IDEA: A life lived “over God” places oneself at the center of the universe and views God as a being that can be manipulated for one’s own selfish desires. Rather than humbly submitting to God and desiring a relationship with him, a person with this mindset only obeys God when it is convenient.

GOSPEL CENTERED DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. How would you describe the “life over God” mindset in your own words?
2. Do you sometimes wish that God was more predictable?
 - Why is it a good thing that our relationship with God cannot be reduced to a formula?
 - Have you ever struggled with thinking this way before? (If I just _____, then God will _____).
3. How did Moses exhibit this kind of thinking at Meribah?
 - One of the things that stands out in this story is that Moses was trying to do a good thing. He was trying to give water to thirsty people!
 - How did Moses’ sin get in the way? What “formula” might have Moses been trying to force upon God?
4. What are some examples from our culture today of how people treat God in this way?
 - In your life, how you are personally tempted to drift into a lifestyle of putting yourself “over” God?
5. Can you think of other examples in Scripture where people sinned by putting themselves “over” God?
 - How does this worldview show up in the actions of Adam and Eve?
 - It’s been said that the issue of pride is at the root of every sin. Do you agree or disagree?
 - How is every sin you and I commit just like the first sin committed by Adam and Eve?
6. Are there other examples (either in Scripture or from people you know) you can think of where people tried to manipulate God? Or where someone’s pride got in the way of truly following in faith?
7. What is wrong with only relying on God when we sense that he is truly needed? Wouldn’t God be happy with his people growing up and figuring out how to live life on their own?
 - Do you think that the more a person matures in their faith, the less they should have to find themselves relying on God?
 - What does mature faith look like in John 15?
8. What types of “fruit” do you think people will bear if they keep living a life that is “over” God?
 - What kind of “fruit” will we bear if we live a life of abiding with Jesus?

Session 3

PASSAGE: Luke 15:11-32, John 15

BIG IDEA: Merely seeking life “from” God reduces God to a being who only has value so long as he continues to give us the things that we want. Jesus’ intent is for us to glorify God as we enjoy life with him, so we are drastically missing out if we make our lives’ sole purpose our own happiness.

GOSPEL CENTERED DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. How would you describe the “life from God” mindset in your own words?
2. What evidence do you see in Scripture that it is actually okay to desire and receive things “from” God?
 - What is the danger in overemphasizing this aspect of our relationship with God?
3. How does the younger son in the parable illustrate this kind of mindset with his own father?
 - Which did he love more - his father...or his Father’s stuff? How do his actions prove his answer?
 - In which ways do you sometimes treat God like this?
4. Professor Christian Smith says that sometimes Christians are tempted to reduce God to a “divine butler” or “cosmic therapist.”
 - What does he mean by this?
 - How does each of these portrayals of God reflect a “life from God” mindset?
5. Why might this worldview be appealing and attractive to people?
 - How would your life be different if you actually got everything from God that you wanted?
 - Why is it a good thing that God does not act like our personal vending machine?
6. Is it wrong to ask God for things?
 - When **can** it be wrong to ask God for things?
 - When we ask God for things, how should we go about it?
7. What ultimately led the younger son to return to his father?
 - Did he genuinely feel sorry? Or was he just thinking that once again his father was his best chance of improving the condition of his life?
 - The father runs to greet his son before he even has an answer to this question. What does that tell you about the father’s character?
 - Even though we are all guilty of sinning against God, how does this story encourage us?
8. Sometimes when we look at God we see a cosmic vending machine, a butler, a therapist, or a big puppet master. But what does God see when he looks at us?
9. Are there other examples in Scripture of people wrongly desiring life from God more than just desiring God himself?
 - How did Adam and Eve wrongly just desire to have life **from** God?
 - How could we say that idolatry is the root sin at the center of this way of thinking?
 - How is life **with** God a better way of relating to him?
 - How do Jesus’ words in John 15 encourage you tonight?

Session 4

PASSAGE: Luke 15:11-32, John 15

BIG IDEA: Rather than simply receive God's love, we are sometimes tempted to try and work "for" it. We wrongly serve God because we think that it will give us significance...but Jesus invites us to live life and serve freely with him.

GOSPEL CENTERED DISCUSSION STARTERS:

(Even if you don't take time to discuss these things before you leave camp, here are some things you can encourage your students to think about personally, or you can schedule a time to meet with your small group again in the coming week).

1. How would you describe the "life for God" mindset in your own words?
2. Again, what good half-truths are there when it comes to living a life "for" God?
 - Why could it be considered dangerous to live a life that is too focused on living life "for" God?
3. Do you think it's fair to say that living a life "for" God could sometimes be a form of idolatry?
 - Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. What does Paul mean when he instructs the Thessalonians to "live a quiet life"?
 - How do you think you can balance doing things like good kingdom work, faithfully following your call, and being a part of your church, with also living a quiet life as Paul instructs?
4. Discuss how the following thought can feed the "life for God" worldview: "I need to prove to God (and others) that I have value."
 - Have you ever struggled with feeling like you needed to prove your worth? (To parents? Friends? God even?)
 - What sort of things did you do to try and prove that you were important or worth loving?
 - What are some things you have attempted to do "for" God so that he would love you more? Or give you more blessings in your life?
5. Have you ever tried to clean up your sins for God? Or have you ever tried to make yourself look better than you really are so that God would think more highly of you?
6. How does the older son in the story portray this kind of thinking?
 - What matters more to the older son: how much he has done for his father or how much his father loves him?
 - What did the older son expect in return for the life that he had lived "for" his father?
 - Both sons are similar in this way: they wanted to "use" their father for what he could give them. The only difference is that the younger son simply took the gift, whereas the older son tried to work for it.
 - Which of these lifestyles do you tend to drift to more often?
7. Discuss the following statement: the gospel frees us from a life that is motivated out of fear of insignificance and allows us to operate out of a place of assurance.
 - How might have Adam and Eve's story looked different if they rightly understood this truth?
 - Are there other places in Scripture where people wrongly tried to do things for God's approval?
8. We love to compare ourselves to others. Sometimes we even compare our church to others.
 - How many missions trips have you been on? How many ministries do you serve in? How many friends did you invite to youth group? How many Bible verses have you memorized? How many people come to your church? How many people got baptized this year?
9. How does Jesus' teaching in John 15 combat this kind of thinking?
 - How is the gospel good news in light of this discussion?

Preparation

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE INFO

- Arrival and registration will be from 7:00-9:00pm EST on Friday night.
- Please call if you will arrive later than 9:00.
- Staff members will greet you at the camp entrance to give you directions as you arrive.
- Your entire group will begin by going to the cabin and moving in.
- Upon arrival one leader needs to check-in at Bankson Lodge.
- There is an option which includes pizza, salad, breadsticks, and pop for your whole group onsite when you arrive on Friday which would be \$10.00 per person. Please contact us two weeks prior to your arrival if you are interested.
- There will be a meeting in the chapel for all of your leaders at 9:30 before the first session Friday night.
- Departure time is by 10:30am EST on Sunday morning.

HOUSE RULES

Adult leaders serving as weekend disciples play a key role in every student being safe, hearing God's word, and enjoying the weekend. In addition to encouraging leaders to pray for their group prior to the weekend, we also suggest sharing the 8 "House Rules" MCRC promotes for youth group events:

1. **Honor:** How can you and your students be a blessing to—and honor—others? (Rom 12:10)
2. **Respect:** Care for the facilities. Staff have to maintain them and other guests use them.
3. **Service:** Help students own responsibility. Clean cabins, bathrooms, meal tables, etc.
4. **Safety:** Parents are entrusting us with their children. Use good judgment.
5. **Temperance:** Avoid things in excess or gluttony. No food challenges.
6. **Humility:** Pray. Ask for help when you need it. Respect boundaries and areas that are off-limits.
7. **No Pranking:** Even seemingly "harmless" pranks can damage property and hurt others' feelings.
8. **Lights Out Time:** Get sleep and respect other groups trying to do the same. Value attentiveness.

Programming

PROGRAMMING

Outside of the four main chapel sessions, your group will have a mixture of structured activity time as well as free time to explore camp and break off to separate activities. This time is designed for your students to bond together, build relationships, make memories, and enjoy awesome activities. Please encourage your leaders to remain present and engaged during this time, seeking out students who they want to know on a deeper level.

FREE TIME ACTIVITIES

Tubing, sledding, snow shoes, and broomball highlight the outdoor activities available during free time. Our extensive property also offers beautiful hiking trails and plenty of places to make awesome snow forts. The gym, game room, and chapel lounge are great indoor locations to hang out and bond. These will be open all weekend. The Coffee Shop and Camp Store will have snacks, drinks, and souvenirs for sale, so make sure your students bring extra money if they want to buy anything. (We accept cash, credit cards, and mobile pay.)

TOURNAMENTS

Dodgeball, broomball, and basketball tournaments are often highlights of the weekend that almost the whole camp participates in. Students can form their own teams and come up with a fun name, dress up in costumes, or even make fun chants. It's a great way for your youth group to bond together via a shared experience and even have fun meeting and playing with other groups. We encourage leader participation, but just remember, you are here for the kids. Help them have fun and keep things from getting over-competitive.

STRUCTURED ACTIVITY TIME

A couple times throughout the weekend, each church will have some structured activities where your whole group will be together. Some of these activities will also be available during free time. These set aside times just give you an opportunity to do something with everyone from your group together at one time (not spread out like during free time). Some activities will have multiple groups assigned to make the game more fun. These activities will be scheduled out for you ahead of time, **so please email us three weeks before your weekend to let us know which of the following activities you'd prefer for your group.**

- Gold Rush
- Snow Football/Ultimate
- Capture the Flag
- Snowshoes
- Archery (no snow)
- Archery Battle
- Hatchets (HS only)
- BB Guns
- Climbing Wall (no snow)
- Team Building Initiatives
- Karaoke/ Lip Sync/ Name That Tune
- Indoor Space for Free Time
- Campfire & S'mores
- Bikes (no snow)

Schedule

This is a **SAMPLE SCHEDULE** for what the weekend could look like. Each weekend the schedule will be different based on the number of groups coming to Ice Camp, but this schedule reflects everything you will get to do over the weekend; only the times may vary. Here is a tentative flow of what to expect:

FRIDAY

7:00-9:00 - Arrival & Move in
8:30 - Tubing Hills open
Open Gym
9:30 - Leader Meeting in Chapel
10:00 - Session 1
11:15 - Youth Group Breakouts
12:00 - Back to Cabins

SATURDAY

8:30 - Breakfast
9:30 - Structured Activity Time
11:00 - Session 2
12:00 - Youth Group Breakouts
12:30 - Lunch
1:30 - R&R
2:00 - Structured Activity Time
3:00 - Free Time Activities
5:30 - Dinner
7:00 - Session 3
8:15 - Youth Group Breakouts
9:00 - Dodgeball Tournament
Other Open Activities
11:00 - Back to Cabins

SUNDAY

8:30 - Breakfast
9:30 - Session 4
10:30 - Departure

The Structured Activity time slots will be filled with Tubing, Broomball, Coffee Shop, and the Gym/Game Room/Camp Store. The remaining activity slot openings will be filled with some of the top activity choices you chose.

Checklist

DO THESE THINGS BEFORE YOU COME

- ☐ Pray for the weekend.
- ☐ Begin promoting the retreat and gathering sign-ups throughout the fall.
- ☐ Check out this webpage to get promo materials to help promote to your group: www.miraclecamp.com/icecamppromo
- ☐ Email us with an updated count of your group before the 30-day threshold so we can release spots to other youth groups on the waitlist.
- ☐ Prepare your youth leaders well. Share the list of “house rules” with them and give them a copy of the theme and discussion questions.
- ☐ Let us know about the Friday evening meal option by emailing us at info@miraclecamp.com 2 weeks prior to your arrival.
- ☐ Let us know your activity preferences 3 weeks out.

WHAT TO PACK

- ☐ Boots and snow clothes for outside
- ☐ Clothes and shoes for the gym
- ☐ Bible, notebook, and pen
- ☐ Bedding (twin size)
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Towel and toiletries
- ☐ Medication (We do not have any over-the-counter medication on campus)
- ☐ Spending money for the Camp Store and Coffee Shop
- ☐ Water Bottle



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| 1 | Lakeview |
| 2 | Staff Housing |
| 3 | Woodlands |
| 4 | Craft Shack/Hillside |
| 5 | Gym/Game Room |
| 6 | Camp Store |
| 7 | GagaBall |
| 8 | Outdoor Basketball |
| 9 | Maple Ridge |
| 10 | Evergreen |
| 11 | Waterfront A |
| 12 | Boat House |
| 13 | Waterfront B |
| 14 | Playground |
| 15 | Sand Volleyball |
| 16 | Bankson Lodge |
| 17 | Health Office |
| 18 | Outdoor Chapel |
| 19 | Chapel |
| 20 | Center Circle |
| 21 | Disc Golf Starting Hole |
| 22 | Judson |
| 23 | Judson Bowl |
| 24 | Hickory |
| 25 | Staff Housing |
| 26 | Putt Putt |
| 27 | Homer Field |

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|----|--------------------------|
| 1 | Staff Housing |
| 2 | Maintenance Garage |
| 3 | High Ropes |
| 4 | Climbing Tower/Zip Line |
| 5 | BB Guns/Hatchet Throwing |
| 6 | Archery Range |
| 7 | Trap Shoot |
| 8 | Main Trail/Great Divide |
| 9 | Creation Center |
| 10 | Toboggan Run/Tubing Hill |
| 11 | Paintball Course |
| 12 | Staff Housing |
| 13 | Pickleball |
| 14 | Razz Field |
| 15 | Disc Golf Starting Hole |
| 16 | Mountain Bikes |

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|---|-------------------|
| A | The Wall |
| B | The Whale |
| C | Nitro Crossing |
| D | Code Breaker |
| E | Tee Pee Shuffle |
| F | Spider Web |
| G | Trust Fall |
| H | Wild Woosley |
| I | Low Wire Traverse |
| J | Giant's Toothpick |
| K | Island Crossing |