

Vesper/Inspirational Program Ideas

Vesper and other inspirational programs provide an opportunity to reflect on the day's activities and reinforce an atmosphere of acceptance, tolerance and understanding. Keep in mind these suggestions as you plan meaningful programs:

1. Involve as many campers and teen leaders as possible.
2. Plan a "cooling down" activity right before the vesper program so that participants are in a receptive mood.
3. A focused, serious, motivational program is much more effective than a drawn-out chaotic jumble of topics.
4. Use audio equipment so that all speaking and/or singing voices can be heard. Participants who cannot hear will quickly lose interest.
5. Use a location where meditation is encouraged.
6. Clearly state the expectations for this type of camp activity to all participants prior to the beginning of the program.
7. Be aware of religious and cultural diversity and plan a program that would be motivational to all participants.
8. Sit in a circle or semi-circle to encourage unity and togetherness.
9. Practice all parts ahead of time so that participants are comfortable with their role - this includes actually reading any speaking parts.
10. Use drama when reading speaking parts and sound enthusiastic.
11. Ask extra adults or teen leaders to stand in locations where they can quickly deal with any disruptions with minimal interruption to the program.
12. At the close of the program, dismiss participants quietly to their cabins in an orderly manner.

Please Listen

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving me advice - You have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way - You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem - You have failed me,

Strange as that may seem. Listen! All I ask is that you listen. Don't talk or do - just hear me. Advice is cheap; 20 cents will get you both Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the same newspaper.

And I can do for myself; I am not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering - but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself - you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But when you accept as a simple fact that I feel what I feel, no matter how irrational - then I can stop trying to convince you and get about this business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling.

And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice. Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people - because God is mute, and he doesn't give advice or try to fix things. God just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

So please listen, and just hear me, and if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn - and I will listen to you.

SONG: "Wanna Talk About Me" - Toby Keith

.....

My New Best Friend

Today I met a great new friend
Who knew me right away

It was funny how she understood
All I had to say.

She listened to my problems
She listened to my dreams

We talked about love and life
She'd been there, too, it seems.

I never once felt judged by her
She knew just how I felt

She seemed to just accept me
And all the problems I'd been dealt.

She didn't interrupt me
Or need to have her say

She just listened very patiently
And didn't go away.

I wanted her to understand
How much this meant to me

But as I went to hug her
Something startled me.

I put my arms in front of me
And went to pull her nearer

And realized that my new best friend
Was nothing but a mirror.

SONG: "Man in the Mirror" - Michael Jackson

The Bible

A young man from a wealthy family was about to graduate from high school. It was the custom in that affluent neighborhood for parents to give the graduate an automobile. Bill and his father had spent months looking at cars, and the week before graduation they found the perfect car. Bill was certain that the car would be his on graduation night.

Imagine his disappointment when, on the eve of his graduation, Bill's father handed him a gift-wrapped Bible! Bill was so angry, he threw the Bible down and stormed out of the house. He and his father never saw each other again. It was the news of his father's death that brought Bill home again.

As he sat one night, going through his father's possessions that he was to inherit, he came across the bible his father had given him. He brushed away the dust and opened it to find a cashier's check, dated the day of his graduation, in the exact amount of the car they had chosen.

SONG: "Good Intentions" or "Three Crosses" - Randy Travis

The Secret of Happiness

There is a wonderful fable about a young orphan girl who had no family and no one to love her. One day, feeling exceptionally sad and lonely, she was walking through a meadow when she noticed a small butterfly caught unmercifully in a thornbush. The more the butterfly struggled to free itself, the deeper the thorns cut into its fragile body. The young orphan girl carefully released the butterfly from its captivity. Instead of flying away, the little butterfly changed into a beautiful fairy. The young girl rubbed her eyes in disbelief.

"For your wonderful kindness," the good fairy said to the girl, "I will grant you any wish you would like."

The little girl thought for a moment and then replied, "I want to be happy!" The fairy said, "Very well," and leaned toward her and whispered in her ear. Then the good fairy vanished.

As the little girl grew up, there was no one in the land as happy as she. Everyone asked her to secret of her happiness. She would only smile and answer,

"The secret of my happiness is that I listened to a good fairy when I was a little girl."

When she was very old and on her deathbed, the neighbors all rallied around her, afraid that her fabulous secret of happiness would die with her. "Tell us, please," they begged. "Tell us what the good fairy said."

The lovely old woman simply smiled and said, "She told me that everyone, no matter how secure they seemed, no matter how old or young, how rich or poor, had need of me."

SONG: "Don't Worry, Be Happy"

A Gift for Two

It was a beautiful day for sightseeing around downtown Portland. We were a bunch of counselors on our day off, away from the campers, just out for some fun. The weather was perfect for a picnic, so when lunch time came, we set our sights on a small park in town. Since we all had different cravings, we decided to split up, get what each of us wanted, and meet back on the grass in a few minutes.

When my friend Robby headed for a hot dog stand, I decided to keep her company. We watched the vendor put together the perfect hot dog, just the way Robby wanted it. But when she took out her money to pay him, the man surprised us. "It looks a little on the cool side," he said, "so never mind paying me. This will be my freebie of the day."

We said our thanks, joined our friends in the park, and dug into our food. But as we talked and ate, I was distracted by a man sitting alone nearby, looking at us. I could tell that he hadn't showered for days. Another homeless person, I thought, like all the others you see in cities. I didn't pay much more attention than that.

We finished eating and decided to head off for more sightseeing. But when Robby and I went to the garbage can to throw away my lunch bag, I heard a strong voice ask, "There isn't any food in that bag, is there? It was the man who had been watching us. I didn't know what to do." "No, I ate it already."

"Oh," was his only answer, with no shame in his voice at all. He was obviously hungry, couldn't bear to see anything thrown away, and was used to asking this question. I felt bad for the man, but I didn't know what I could do. That's when Robby said, "I'll be right back. Please wait for me a minute," and ran off.

I watched curiously as she went across to the hot dog stand, crossed back to the trash can, and gave the hungry man the food. When she came back to us, Robby said simply, "I was just passing on the kindness that someone gave to me."

"That day I learned how generosity can go farther than the person you give to. By giving, you teach others how to give also."

SONG: "It Takes Two" - Rob Base

Sparky

For Sparky, school was all but impossible. He failed every subject in the eighth grade. He flunked physics in high school, getting a grade of zero. Sparky also flunked Latin, algebra and English. He didn't do much better in sports. Although he did manage to make the school's golf team, he promptly lost the only important match of the season. There was a consolation match; he lost that, too.

Throughout his youth Sparky was awkward socially. He was not actually disliked by the other students; no one cared that much. He was astonished if a classmate ever said hello to him outside of school hours. There's no way to tell how he might have done at dating. Sparky never once asked a girl to go out in high school. He was too afraid of being turned down.

Sparky was a loser. He, his classmates ... everyone knew it. So he rolled with it. Sparky had made up his mind early in life that if things were meant to work out, they would. Otherwise he would content himself with what appeared to be his inevitable mediocrity.

However, one thing was important to Sparky - drawing. He was proud of his artwork. Of course, no one else appreciated it. In his senior year of high school, he submitted some cartoons to the editors of the yearbook. The cartoons were turned down. Despite this particular rejection, Sparky was so convinced of his ability that he decided to become a professional artist.

After completing high school, he wrote a letter to Walt Disney Studios. He was told to send some samples of his artwork, and the subject for a cartoon was suggested. Sparky drew the proposed cartoon. He spent a great deal of time on it and on all the other drawings he submitted. Finally, the reply came from Disney Studios. He had been rejected once again. Another loss for the loser.

So Sparky decided to write his own autobiography in cartoons. He described his childhood self - a little boy loser and chronic underachiever. The cartoon character would soon become famous worldwide. For Sparky, the boy who had such lack of success in school and whose work was rejected again and again, was Charles Schultz. He created the "Peanuts" comic strip and the little cartoon character whose kite would never fly and who never succeeded in kicking a football, Charlie Brown.

SONG: "Charlie Brown" - Coasters

I Try to Remember

1. Everybody Doesn't Have to Love Me

Not everybody has to love me or even like me. I don't necessarily like everybody I know, so why should everybody like me? I enjoy being liked and being loved, but if somebody doesn't like me, I will still be okay and still feel like I am an okay person. I cannot make somebody like me, any more than someone can get me to like them. I don't need approval all the time. If someone does not approve of me, I will still be okay.

2. It Is Okay to Make Mistakes

Making mistakes is something we all do, and I am still a fine and worthwhile person when I make them. There is no reason for me to get upset when I make a mistake. I am trying, and if I make a mistake, I am going to continue trying. I can handle making a mistake. It is okay for others to make mistakes, too. I will accept mistakes in myself and also mistakes that others make.

3. Other People Are Okay and I Am Okay

People who do things I don't like are not necessarily bad people. They should not necessarily be punished just because I don't like what they do or did. There is no reason why other people should be the way I want them to be, and there is no reason why I should be the way somebody else wants me to be. People will be whatever they want to be, and I will be whatever I want to be. I cannot control other people or change them. They are who they are; we all deserve basic respect.

4. I Don't Have to Control Things

I will survive if things are different than what I want them to be. I can accept things the way they are, accept people the way they are, and accept myself the way I am. There is no reason to get upset if I can't change things to fit my idea of how they ought to be. There is no reason why I should have to like everything. Even if I don't like it, I can live with it.

5. I Am Responsible for My Day

I am responsible for how I feel and what I do. Nobody can make me feel anything. If I have a rotten day, I am the one who allowed it to be that way. If I have a great day, I am the one who deserves credit for being positive. It is not the responsibility of other people to change so that I can feel better. I am the one who is in charge of my life.

6. I Can Handle It When Things Go Wrong

I don't need to watch out for things to go wrong. Things usually go just fine, and when they don't, I can handle it. I don't have to waste my energy worrying. The sky won't fall in; things will be okay.

7. It Is Important to Try

I can. Even though I may be faced with difficult tasks, it is better to try than to avoid them. Avoiding a task does not give me any opportunities for success or joy, but trying does. Things worth having are worth the effort. I might not be able to do everything, but I can do something.

8. I Am Capable

I don't need someone else to take care of my problems. I am capable. I can take care of myself. I can make decisions for myself. I can think for myself. I don't have to depend on somebody else to take care of me.

9. I Can Change

I don't have to be a certain way because of what has happened in the past. Every day is a new day. It's silly to think I can't help being the way I am. Of course I can. I can change.

10. Other People Are Capable

I can't solve other people's problems for them. I don't have to take on other people's problems as if they were my own. I don't need to change other people or fix up their lives. They are capable and can take care of themselves, and can solve their own problems. I can care and be of some help, but I can't do everything for them.

11. I Can Be Flexible

There is more than one way to do something. More than one person has had good ideas that will work. There is no one and only "best" way. Everybody has ideas that are worthwhile. Some may make more sense to me than others, but everyone's ideas are worthwhile, and everyone has something worthwhile to contribute.

SONG: "I'm Alright" - Kenny Loggins

Lessons in Baseball

As an 11-year-old, I was addicted to baseball. I listened to baseball games on the radio. I watched them on TV. The books I read were about baseball. I took baseball cards to church in hopes of trading with other baseball card junkies. My fantasies? All about baseball.

I played baseball whenever and wherever I could. I played organized or sandlot. I played catch with my brother, with my father, with friends. If all else failed, I bounced a rubber ball off the porch stairs, imagining all kinds of wonderful things happening to me and my team. It was with this attitude that I entered the 1956 Little League season. I was a shortstop. Not good, not bad. Just addicted.

Gordon was not addicted. Nor was he good. He moved into our neighborhood that year and signed up to play baseball. The kindest way of describing Gordon's baseball skills is to say that he didn't have any. He couldn't catch. He couldn't hit. He couldn't throw. He couldn't run. In fact, Gordon was afraid of the ball.

I was relieved when the final selections were made and Gordon was assigned to another team. Everyone had to play at least half of each game, and I couldn't see Gordon improving my team's chances in any way. Too bad for the other team. After two weeks of practice, Gordon dropped out. My friends on his team laughed when they told me how their coach directed two of the team's better players to walk Gordon into the woods and have a chat with him. "Get lost" was the message that was delivered, and "get lost" was the one that was heard. Gordon got lost.

That scenario violated my 11-year-old sense of justice, so I did what any indignant shortstop would do. I tattled. I told my coach the whole story. I shared the episode in full detail, figuring my coach would complain to the League office and have Gordon returned to his original team. Justice and my team's chances of winning would both be served.

I was wrong. My coach decided that Gordon needed to be on a team that wanted him - one that treated him with respect, one that gave everyone a fair chance to contribute according to their own ability. Gordon became my team member.

I wish I could say Gordon got the big hit in the big game with two outs in the final inning, but it didn't happen. I don't think Gordon even hit a foul ball the entire season. Baseballs hit in his direction (right field) went over him, by him, through him, or off him. It wasn't that Gordon didn't get help. The coach gave him extra batting practice and worked with him on his fielding, all without much improvement.

I'm not sure if Gordon learned anything from my coach that year. I know I did. I learned to bunt without tipping off my intention. I learned to tag up on a fly if there were less than two outs. I learned to make a smoother pivot around second base on a double play.

I learned a lot from my coach that summer, but my most important lessons weren't about baseball. They were about character and integrity. I learned that everyone has worth, whether they can hit .300 or .030. I learned that we all have value, whether we can stop the ball or have to turn and chase it. I learned that doing what is right, fair and honorable is more important than winning or losing. It felt good to be on that team that year. I'm grateful that man was my coach. I was proud to be his shortstop and his son.

SONG: "Take Me Out to the Ballgame"

Vespers/Inspirational Messages from "Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul"

Vespers - Perspectives

Participants: 2 campers (represent father and a son/daughter)
 5 campers for closing thoughts
 Narrator to tell story

NARRATOR -

One day a father and his rich family took his young son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose to show him how poor people can be. They spent a day and a night in the farm of a very poor family. When they got back from their trip the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

Son - **"It was great, Dad!"**

Father - **"Did you see how poor people can be?"**

Son - **"Oh Yeah!"**

Father - **"And what did you learn?"**

Son - **"I saw that we have a dog at home, and they have four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of the garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have electric lights in the garden and they have the stars. Our patio reaches to the front yard, they have a whole horizon."**

When the little boy was finishing, his father was speechless.

Son - **"Thanks, Dad, for showing me how poor we are!"**

NARRATOR -

It all depends on the way you look at things? If you have love, friends, family, health, good humor and a positive attitude toward life, you've got everything - more than money could buy! We have some 4-H'ers who want to share some perspectives on "Winners and Losers"

Camper 1 The winner is always a part of the answer;
 The loser is always a part of the problem.

Camper 2 The winner always has a program;
 The loser always has an excuse.

Camper 3 The winner says, "Let me do that for you."

The loser says, "That's not my job."

Camper 4 The winner sees an answer for every problem;
The loser sees a problem in every answer.

Camper 5 The winner says, "It may be difficult, but it's possible."
The loser says, "It may be possible but it's too difficult."

Narrator How would others describe you? Are you a winner or loser?

Vespers - The Carpenter's House

Participants: Narrator
3 Campers to share "words of wisdom"

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer of his plans to leave the house building business and live a more leisurely life with his family and friends.

He would miss the paycheck, but he could get by. The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and asked if he could build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and inferior materials.

When the carpenter finished his work, the builder came to inspect the house and handed the key to the carpenter. "This is your house," he said, "my gift to you."

If he had only known he was building his own house, the carpenter would have done it all so differently. Now he had to live in the home he had built none too well.

So it is with us. If as we build our lives willing we are willing to put up less than the best and do not give the job our best effort, then with a shock we look at the situation we have created and find that we are now living in the house we have built.

Think of yourself as the carpenter. Think about your house. Each day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. Build wisely. It is the only life you will ever build. Listen to these "words of wisdom" from your fellow campers.

Camper 1

Life is a do-it-yourself project. Your life tomorrow will be the result of your attitudes and the choices you make today.

Camper 2

Always be a first-rate version of yourself instead of a second-rate version of somebody else - Judy Garland

Camper 3

Character is what you are willing to do when the spotlight has been turned off, the applause has died down and no one is around to give you credit - Ann Landers

Camper 4

Most of the shadows in this life are caused by standing in our own sunshine - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Vespers - If You Think You Can You Can

Participants: 10 Campers to share final thoughts

Materials: Candles or flashlight for each speaker

Light candles or flashlights as each part is spoken. If ceremony takes part at the pool area- float candle once part is read. If ceremony takes part in another location - disperse among audience once part is read

- Camper 1** If You Think You Can You Can
You can be a total winner - even if you're just a beginner
- Camper 2** Raise that C up to an A. Get a part in the school play
If you think you can, you can
- Camper 3** It's not your talent or the gift at birth,
It's not your bankbook that determines worth
- Camper 4** It's not the color or texture of your skin,
It's your attitude that lets you win
- Camper 5** You can ride your own black stallion. You can wear a gold medallion.
If you think you can, you can
- Camper 6** You can learn to ride a bike, Up a mountain, you can hike
If you think you can, you can
- Camper 7** You can wear a diamond crown. You can get back up, when you've
been down. If you think you can
- Camper 8** It doesn't matter if you've won before,
It makes no difference what the halftime score
- Camper 9** It isn't 'til the final gun if there were one,
So keep on trying and you'll find what you've won
- Camper 10** You grab your dream, and you believe it. Go out and work, and you'll
achieve it. If you think you can, you can
- NARRATOR** - As you think back on your week at camp you tried new things,
experienced new challenges, and made new friends. We hope the
new things you have learned about yourself and others remain with
you as a light in your life and that you become a light in the life of
others.

Vespers - The Mountain Story

Participants: Campers to represent father and son/daughter
Teen Leader to provide "echo" from hidden location
Narrator
3 Campers to share final thoughts

NARRATOR - A son and his father were walking on the mountains.
Suddenly, his son falls, hurts himself and screams: "**AAAhhhhhhhhhhh!!!**"
To his surprise, he hears the voice repeating, somewhere in the mountain:
"AAAhhhhhhhhhhh!!!"

Curious, he yells: "**Who are you?**"

He receives the answer: "**Who are you?**"

Angered at the response, he screams: "**Coward!**"

He receives the answer: "**Coward!**"

He looks to his father and asks: "**What's going on?**"

The father smiles and says: "**My son, pay attention.**"

And then he screams to the mountain: "**I admire you!**"

The voice answers: "**I admire you!**"

Again the man screams: "**You are a champion!**"

The voice answers: "**You are a champion!**"

The boy is surprised, but does not understand.

Then the father explains:

**"People call this ECHO, but really this is LIFE.
It gives you back everything you say or do.
Our life is simply a reflection of our actions.
If you want more love in the world, create more love in your heart.
If you want a better team, improve your skills.
This applies to everything, all aspects of life;**

Life will give you back everything you have given to it."

LIFE IS NOT A COINCIDENCE, IT'S A REFLECTION OF YOU!

Camper 1 What lies beneath us, and what lies before us, are tiny matters compared to what lies within us

Camper 2 Never grow a wishbone where your backbone ought to be

Camper 3 The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or heard, but must be felt with the heart - Helen Keller