

Linked *by* Love

**NEW
for
2024**





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Welcome to InsideOut

Church camp leaders may find themselves acting as educator, guidance counselor, maintenance person, mentor, or song leader—sometimes all at the same time. You are also the embodiment of Christ Jesus to others longing to know God’s love. This can feel overwhelming, but as people of God we know that our great responsibility is matched by an even greater potential. The Spirit will guide you, your staff, and the campers in your work while the prayers of many cheer you on.

For this work you need to have the skills of a teacher, the comfort of a parent, and the wisdom of an elder. This curriculum is here to support you in that work. In the pages ahead you will find biblical theology done by scholars (who are also camp leaders), activities designed to help you share the Bible stories, games and projects that reinforce ideas and skills, and a whole lot of camping fun!

How to use InsideOut’s *Linked by Love*

Your purchase gives you access to all the tools needed for a great summer of camp. Activity files can be opened in either PDF or MS Word formats, allowing you the choice of a vibrant layout or an easily edited document. In each, you will find:

- **Biblical and Theological Overview** for each of seven days;
(Video version available on our YouTube channel.)
- **Daily Guides** followed by age-specific **Daily Activities** for each day;
- **Worship and Devotions** offering experiences and tools divided into two age-groups;
- **Extras** section for crafts, games, science and nature, challenge course and group building activities, multi-day projects, and “Table Talk” conversation starters. This section also includes a complete list of **Story Resources** for exploring scripture and reflecting on daily themes.

Linked by Love also contains **Artwork and Graphics** suitable for T-shirts, marketing, and other use within the camp. These include daily icons that match the themes, providing a visual expression of the concepts campers are learning.

You will also find “Letters from Camp,” templates you can use to stay connected with campers and families all year long.

Daily Guide

Each Daily Guide begins with a *Title*. The reference *Scripture Passage* is given. The *Scripture Focus* is one or two verses from a key moment in the story. It may be used as a memory verse. If not indicated otherwise, the *Scripture Passage* and *Scripture Focus* are taken from the *Common English Bible (CEB)*. Next, a *Theological Summary* is provided that demonstrates how the scripture and theme connect with campers. *Today, campers will...* describes the aim of the activities of that day. Next, the *Daily Activities* are categorized with five different labels. Really, they are just notating contemporary words for ancient Christian practices or spiritual disciplines. You could call them “things Christians do in community.” For each day’s activities, you will see things that fall under the categories **#PLAY**, **#PRAY**, **#CREATE**, **#SERVE**, and **#LEARN**. Some activities may fit more than one category. *Leader Notes* call attention to special details that counselors and other staff may want to be aware of. Finally, a *Prayer* for the day that reflects the theme.

Daily Guide

Day 1: theme and scripture for the day

Scripture Focus: Quoted from the CEB. If another translation or paraphrase is recommended for your age group, it will be listed here.

Theological Summary: This is a sentence that relates the scripture to the theme of the day.

Today, campers will...

- These will list some goals for your campers today.
- You may have one or two to whom you want to give special attention.
- You will also find one acknowledging a legitimate fear.

Daily Activities: This is a list of the activities that will be featured this day. Instructions and information will be found on following pages.

Labels show which of the five categories that the activities fall into. As you plan your day, you will want to have at least one activity from each category. The categories are things Christian communities do together. They are:

PLAY includes games, sensory experiments, physical challenges

PRAY includes prayer or reflection

CREATE includes creative writing, arts, music, crafts, design, drama

SERVE includes outreach projects, consideration of others

LEARN includes Bible reflection, life application, understanding theme

Leader Notes: This section lists theological road bumps to be aware of, special notes of main theme, or important reminders about the nature of camp.

Prayer: This is a short prayer that reflects the daily theme that any leader can use if needed.

Daily Activities

Daily Activities include step-by-step directions for each experience with one highlighted as a feature activity. Each will be **titled** and **labeled** so that you can quickly find the one you're looking for. The directions include three sections: **Supplies**, **How**, and **Try This**

Supplies lists the items or resources you will need to complete the activity. How many of each item you will need will vary depending upon your group size.

How gives step-by-step instructions—whether those are game rules, recipes, discussion questions, or other pointers.

Try This: Sometimes there are opportunities to take activities to another level. “Try This” will offer suggestions for expanding an activity, adapting it for a different setting, or using some aspect of an activity in worship or other camp activity. This is our way of providing more resources, while inviting you to use your own creativity in reimagining activities and teaching moments.

Story Resources

Following the **Daily Activities** you will find **Story Resources:** supplemental material in various media such as a list of storybooks that are faithful to the biblical text, a script for a play, a video that can be found online, or a contemporary film. You will want to check this section before camp to see if there are books or DVDs you want to borrow from your library or purchase. These are not required for any activities. They are intended to be supplemental resources that support the daily themes and scripture. A complete list compiled from all age groups is also available in the extras section.

Worship and Devotions

Another thing Christians do together is worship. At camp, worship offers the unique chance to experiment—to try things that your campers might never have experienced in a traditional congregation. It also offers campers the opportunity to express their own creativity in worship. To support the worship work of your campers, *Linked By Love* offers a full section of worship ideas and resources. This includes cabin devotions as well as liturgical resources. You will find innovative ways to share scripture, daily stewardship and communion resources, and some creative worship elements that will enhance worship for indoor or outdoor sanctuaries. This section also contains song recommendations. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of resources, but rather a jumping-off place for your planning, or a backup if you run short on time and energy. Daily Worship is divided by age group with a section designed for Children and Intergenerational worship, and another specifically written for Youth. Cabin Devotions are divided the same way.

Customizing Camp

Your camp is special, and InsideOut is customizable to your setting. Some of the variables that may change the experience are:

- Number of days/length of camp
- Style of staffing (volunteer or paid)
- Specialty Camps (music, arts, drama, sports, adventure, etc.)
- Denominational or doctrinal content
- Special resources you have (garden, animals, waterfront)
- Time of year/weather

Planning ahead is key as you provide the right leaders with the right resources from the curriculum: Everyone needs the daily overview chart, so they know the themes and learning goals for the day; special activity leaders need sections specific to their area; know in advance which activities you want to use as all-camp experiences, and which will be done in other settings.

Suggestions for Shorter Camps

- 1 Day—For a retreat study or an open house event: Days 1 and 7 combined.
- 2 Days—For an overnight camp or a lock-in: Days 3 and 4 plus 1 John 4 reading.
- 3 Days—Days 1, 3, and 4 is a great combination.
- 4 Days or longer—This depends on your age group:
 - Day 6 is the hardest scripture for younger campers to grasp.
 - Day 4 is the most common scripture and could be dropped with older campers.
 - Days 1 and 7 could be dropped and those scriptures added into worship.

While the material is laid out for seven days, there is more than you could ever fit into one week. To extend the materials for a longer camp, split a few days in half.

Shape Your Day

A typical schedule at camp includes three meals, worship, keynote or plenary sessions, small-group sessions, large-group activities, free time, recreation, and cabin and hygiene time. There is a lot to get into a day: This makes for a long day for your campers and for your leaders. When planning your day, be sure that it includes enough time for rest at night and that you provide a little downtime (especially for volunteers) during the day. It is important to find opportunities to give campers choices, which may take the form of picking which craft project they want to work on or where they want to go for a snack.

As you plan your days at camp, take note of the arc of the week. Each day's theme and scripture build on the last. Your individual days at camp have an arc too: In the early part of the day, your campers will be presented with the Bible story; throughout the day, Daily Activities will give your campers opportunities to come into deeper understanding of the scripture, of their community, and of God; by evening, your campers are relating the knowledge gained from the day to their world. Don't neglect time for prayer and worship, or time for play and creativity. Balance is very important.

About Your Campers

In addition to being familiar and comfortable with the content of the resource and the scripture, counselors need to understand the campers with whom they will be working. You don't need to be a certified teacher or neuroscientist to understand and respond to the needs of your campers.

In the past decade, significant discoveries about human learning and development have been made. While it is important to understand some general physical and social milestones your campers display, it is equally important to learn to assess and meet the needs of your individual campers. Children and adults within specific age ranges have multiple factors that determine the kind of input they require to learn and grow. As you get to know your campers, learn some facts about how brains work and how to maximize their potential.

Safety First: *In order for a human to learn, the environment he or she is in must feel safe.* Because the human brain developed as a tool to ensure safety, it functions best when it is safe. Safety is physical, emotional, and rational, and as a leader you need to consider how safe you are making your campers feel. Affirmation of behaviors that are safe will inspire confidence, and your campers will be more willing to take risks, a necessary element in learning.

Learning Is Physical: *Healthy, moving bodies make for active brains.* Even emotional and spiritual development depend upon physical health. Be sure to provide your campers with lots of physical activity, healthy foods, and plenty of rest. Camp can be a demanding physical endeavor, but science is showing that this is part of what makes it so transformative. Also, healthy habits formed at camp can make it home with your campers.

Every Body Is Different: *Each individual's needs are unique to them.* Life experience, gender, physical development, and chemistry shape not only desires but also needs. Remember that not all of your campers will benefit from all activities. It is important to get to know your campers' physical limitations and interpersonal abilities. Learn about each of your campers' special needs, and be sure to communicate your findings with other leaders.

Generations Change: *Knowing how they see the world helps.* Your campers are part of the most private and practical generation on record. They see the importance of affirming others' beliefs, even when they disagree. They are technologically connected but still lonely. Learning is best done in collaboration, and personal exploration and visual images hold great power. They struggle to feel safe, but are intentional about caring for others.

For more specific information about different age groups, you can look at the **Developmental Characteristics** file at www.OutOfCurriculum.com.

Daily Overview for *Linked by Love*

DAY	SCRIPTURE	THEME	CAMPERS WILL
Day 1	Colossians 3:12-14	Linked in Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be invited to think about themselves as beloved • Explore God in the midst of loving relationships • Be encouraged to build deeper connections within the camp community
Day 2	Luke 10:38-42	Linked through Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate that everyone is welcome at camp • Be invited to set aside distractions and be present with each other • Honor the different ways we create and respond to welcome • Imagine the impact of inviting Jesus into their relationships
Day 3	Job 2:11-13	Linked and Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the power of presence in a friend's time of need • Learn that God is with us when we are with each other • Come to know that each person's emotional needs are unique
Day 4	Luke 15:11-32	Linked by Grace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be assured that God freely offers grace and love to everybody • Learn that owning mistakes is the first step toward reconciliation • Examine how forgiveness in action can be difficult • Explore reconciliation as something to be celebrated
Day 5	Exodus 18:5-24	Linked in Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how honest conversations deepen healthy relationships • Ponder how receiving Spirit led truth helps us grow • Discuss the challenges everyone faces when one tries to do it all • Consider the benefits of relationships like Jethro and Moses in their own lives.
Day 6	Philemon 1:8-17	Linked to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how their own prejudices and biases impact their relationships • Reflect on how their strengths can be used to advocate (stand up) for others • Examine the way mending relationships can open us to unexplored possibilities • Discuss how advocacy based on Christ's love is powerful
Day 7	1 John 4: 7-9; 19	Linked to Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be reminded that love is from God and that God's love is an example of how to love others. • Be sent to share God's love in their relationships

NARRATIVE OVERVIEW

We know that love comes from God, and sometimes we experience it directly. More often, God's love in manifest in relationships of all kinds that weave in and out of our lives. We see God's love in close friends and family – those we are born into and those we chose along the way. We see God in quiet moments where we are present with each other and in acts of profound grace when we have been far apart. We hear God in life guiding and life changing words of truth from those who know and love us. We know that such love links our lives, teaching us about commitment, intimacy, grace, and faith. As we seek to create and strengthen life giving relationships, we remember that such love flows from God, links us all together, and we give thanks.

Images for Each Day

These images represent the themes of each day of *Linked By Love*. They are simple to reproduce, and they can be found in the Art folder.



Day 1
Linked in Love
Colossians 3:12-14



Day 4
Linked by Grace
Luke 15:11-32



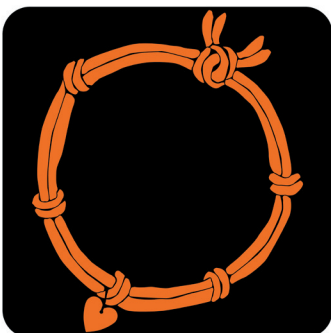
Day 2
Linked through Ac-
ceptance
Luke 10:38-42



Day 5
Linked in Truth
Exodus 18:5-24



Day 6
Linked to Change
Philemon 1:8-17



Day 3
Linked and Present
Job 2:11-13





Day 7
Linked to Love
1 John 4: 7-9; 19

More Support Online

With helpful tips, free downloads, thought-provoking articles and more, you are not alone in your outdoor ministry. Connect with the camping community.


Check us out and join in:

 Facebook.com/
insideOutChurchCampResources

 InsideOutCurriculum.com

 Spotify Playlist



 Keep checking back for new resources and tools created by partner camps to support *Linked By Love*.



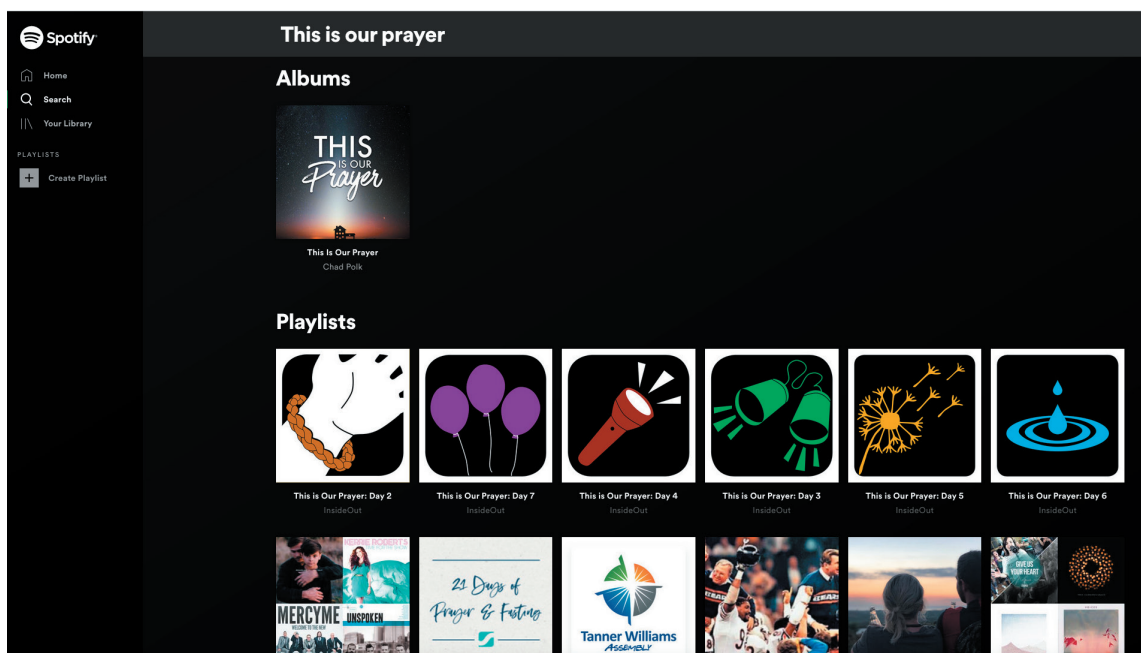


This year we're introducing a new resource as part of our program offerings. Music has always been one of the best ways for people to connect with each other and with God, so we've created a playlist of songs to go with each day of *Linked By Love*. Just search for *Linked By Love* and scroll down to Playlists.

Spotify is a versatile music platform that can bolster the great things your camp is already doing in a number of ways, such as:

1. Include songs in your daily worship that tie in the theme of the day.
2. Have something to play in the background during arts & crafts, free time, etc.
3. Connect with campers who feel the presence of God more tangibly in music than they do in sermons or activities.
4. Use individual songs on the playlists for Bible studies and devotions.
5. Show campers how many styles of Christian music there really is, and how even songs that weren't originally written for a worship setting can still be used for contemplative prayer.
6. Encourage your campers and staff to follow InsideOut on Spotify so they have something to remind them of camp in the off-season.

We hope you'll use and enjoy our latest resource! It is completely free to use.



Biblical and Theological Background



Day 1: Linked in Love

Colossians 3:12-14

Today's scripture asks us to do some very difficult things. Paul is trying to teach the church how to get along, echoing the single lesson we hear throughout scripture: love one another. We still repeat this lesson all the time in church, but it is actually really hard. This letter to the Colossian Church challenges us to both give and receive love, at the same time. It also reminds us that to love in this way, requires us to forgive, adding one more difficult task to Paul's instructions.

The reason loving can be so difficult, is that for it to really be love, we have to both send it out to others and receive it from others as well. It is not enough that we give it; because if we are not also receiving it from God, our friends, and our family, our loving well will run dry. We can't give what we don't have. Also, those arms that reach out to others need to be prepared to receive that hug or words of affirmation back.

How we experience giving and receiving love plays a big role in the development of our self-esteem and self-worth. These two work together, building our sense of capability. If we have a high sense of our own abilities, then we believe we are strong enough to handle challenges that come our way. If we have a low sense of our capabilities, we feel vulnerable and may do things to protect ourselves, such as put ourselves first or avoid others. Neither is helpful for building relationships and living in love.

The powerful impact of neglect is worth naming. We may not have heard negative messages in our life but being ignored is also hurtful. The excuse, "I didn't say anything mean to them," only goes so far. When people

feel unseen, they feel unlovable and are limited in their opportunities to share their love with others. Helping people experience God's love is a powerful tool, as God reminds us that we are cherished and never alone. Camp is a place where previous neglect can be confronted by the powerful combination of community and God's presence.

So, how good are you a loving? Is it easier for you to give or receive love? Be aware of your own strengths and growing edges as you share God's love with campers and other staff. Be intentional about sharing love and receiving love. Be attentive to campers you do not have an easy connection with and make sure not to neglect them. Just a simple smile to assure someone you see them can make a big difference. Be mindful of how you personally experience God's love, taking time to fill up your own tank along the journey.

Remember, this passage is also about grace and forgiveness. Loving others can be hard enough without using our energy on resentment of others or shame and guilt for ourselves. To truly love requires that we also work toward forgiveness. Forgiveness works a lot like love: we have to practice giving and receiving. When we experience forgiveness for ourselves, we can wholeheartedly extend it to others. God's unending grace and forgiveness is a gift we can claim and experience that impacts us deep into our heart and can be felt in our bones. This experience of forgiveness, like receiving love at an early age, can make the sharing of forgiveness easier.

How good are you at forgiving? Is it easier to forgive others or forgive yourself? Sometimes we are really inconsistent in this area. We might offer forgiveness to others easily but struggle to forgive ourselves. Sometimes we forgive ourselves for our own mistakes but struggle to receive forgiveness from others when we have wronged them. Remember, campers will come with their own struggles regarding forgiveness. Camp is a place to explore and learn. We will emotionally bump into each other as we live in community with one another.

Part of a camp staff's work is guiding campers as they learn to learn from mistakes and grow in their ability to forgive themselves and others. As we go about this

work, campers can see themselves as beloved children of God who are worthy of the love and grace they receive. As the camp community grows into such love, we can see God more clearly and know that we are linked to each other by this love.



Day 2: Linked through Acceptance

Luke 10:38-42

This story is revolutionary! If not for us, it would have been for those present with Jesus, and even for some churches just fifty years ago. Women in the 1st Century were supposed to serve like Martha. Hospitality was about doing household chores and providing food and drinks to the guest. Men were supposed to be the ones who spent their time studying with learned teachers and sitting at their feet. But here is Jesus with Mary, a woman who is behaving much more like a disciple than a maid. Jesus lifts her up as a model of what he believes hospitality should look like. Jesus affirms the importance of presence and attentiveness, not just business.

Among other things, this is a story about “welcoming.” Our theme for the day is “Linked Through Acceptance,” but acceptance is a word with a broad spectrum of uses. We can accept something, acknowledging its presence or naming it as a reality. I can accept that I have work to do, even if I don’t want to work. I can accept a person is present, even if I wish they were not. God’s love calls us to do more than acknowledge others, truly welcoming them into community. We are challenged to assure them that they are in a safe place. I wonder when you have experienced the different extremes of acceptance in your life.

What must it have felt like to Mary and Martha to have Jesus in their home? Maybe they were excited, maybe even joyful to have him there. Surely, they each wanted to show him hospitality by taking care of the tasks that

would have made him comfortable. Welcome might look like excitement and curiosity, or enthusiasm about the teachings of their guest; it might be arms open wide and true happiness at receiving a guest. And isn’t that the real welcome we all hope for? To truly welcome someone into a community, we go out of our way to make others feel at home, like Mary and Martha did with Jesus.

Now, you might notice that Martha critiques Mary, and Jesus critiques Martha. Martha does not understand that Mary is welcoming Jesus in a different but also authentic way. Martha is caught up in expectations and anxiety over the event. Jesus says nothing until Martha complains. When she is not able to see the value in Mary’s work, Jesus speaks up. He starts by confronting her worry.

When we get anxious, it is often because we are thinking about the future or the past. Sometimes we are thinking about what others might be thinking. Whenever our thoughts linger, it becomes difficult to enjoy what is right in front of us. We can lose our sense of gratitude, and our actions become more of a duty than an expression of love and hospitality. We may still accept others, but it is hard to share the full acceptance of a warm welcome and abiding peace.

This story reminds us that slowing down and keeping things simple can seem counterproductive but can change our attitude and allow love to be shared more fully.

Taking a pause can also allow our hearts and minds to get on the same page. Biases can be challenged by the unconditional love we know Jesus calls us to share. Frantic work can be paused long enough to make sure we don’t miss those we are serving, especially those who feel neglected or unloved. I wonder: when have you seen the church so busy or focused on something that people were left unloved, neglected, or disrespected? Where have you seen acceptance that did not measure up to a full welcome?

God’s radical welcome to all of us as beloved children is our model of extending hospitality to one another. As you think about what it might mean for you to truly welcome Jesus into your own heart this week, think also about who around you might need to feel that radical welcome and how you might share it. Use your own gifts. Don’t try to be someone else. We all serve in our own way, just like Mary and Martha, and God can use us all to extend a warm welcome into this beloved community.



Day 3: Linked and Present

Job 2:11-13

We often talk about being there for each other, but sometimes it's a little complicated to define "being there." Sometimes it is about listening or supporting. Sometimes it is about standing up for them or with them. Sometimes it is keeping a secret or keeping them company. In our story today, we see Job's friends literally sitting with Job in silence and it makes all the difference.

It is probably helpful to name that Job does not show up in a traditional timeline or chronology of scripture. It is a story that stands on its own. It is a hybrid book with different styles of writing woven together, combining story and poetry in beautiful ways. This also invites us to read the book a little differently. Job is intended to be read and discussed, with wisdom coming from our reflections rather than specific teachings in the story. It's like a scenario for debate, and in wrestling with the story, we grow in lots of ways.

Some of us have seen a lot of hurt in our lives and might identify with Job, but for many it is easier to identify with the friends who come to support him. They cry with Job and participate in all the same rituals that Job did when he was first faced with all this hurt. Still, no one spoke to him. The friends just sit in solidarity, knowing how deeply Job is hurting. Their tears show that they understand his emotions and empathize with him. Their participation in his rituals and customs shows that they know and understand Job. They don't just have compassion. They know his culture and traditions. They know what brings meaning and gives comfort to their friend. By participating, they are in solidarity with Job. Then, they just sit for a while. No words could do it justice.

By being present, we can represent God's presence, to friends or those in need. Once we open our mouths,

we tend to represent ourselves: Our own feelings and worries come out and we can make things worse. If you want an example, keep reading the book of Job and see how bad things get when the friends decide it's time to talk. It's not good. In difficult times, we are called to simply help people stay connected to God and each other. Our presence connects us and provides support that goes far beyond words. We may feel like we are not doing anything to help when we just hang out with a friend who needs us but being with someone can do a lot. We can be the presence of God to our hurting friend. Our love and friendship can be the reminder of God's love and friendship with that person, even if they may feel like God is far away.

When we are little, we get our first doses of a hormone in the body called oxytocin. It is sometimes called the "love hormone" or "cuddle chemical." It is released when we are held by our earliest care givers, and in romantic relationships, but also when we give and receive empathy. It's what we are looking for when we feel like we need a hug to lift our spirits, and the other person feels better, too. You might notice it in the sigh of relief we make when we feel like we are seen and understood. It's great when we can identify with each other, but to feel truly understood, we need to be heard. Listening to each other to simply hear their story allows the uniqueness of their personal experience to come through.

But sometimes it is just so hard not to talk! We have our own feelings that want to ooze out. Sometimes we have wisdom to share from our own experience. Sometimes we think we can bring comfort. Occasionally that is true, but it can be difficult to figure out what is wisdom, and what is our own issue. We can be impatient. We can be judgmental. We can become exhausted with all the powerful emotions. We can think someone is overreacting. We can think it is their fault. We can think lots of things, but before we give voice to any, we need to make sure it is about caring for someone in need rather than breaking the tension so we can move on or get out of a situation.

That is the beauty of God's presence. God never tires of being with us and never speaks over us. We know that God understands our suffering because God, as a parent, has experienced the loss of a child, in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, God even experienced being humiliated and physically hurt. So, our presence alone can be a gentle reminder that God is always with us and understands our struggle. When we pray about our

struggles or lift up the hurt of someone else, we can trust that God understands.

For campers, sitting in silence may be new or even physically difficult. We are a multitasking and multisensory society. Camp can be a place to practice stopping to just be present with God and others. Camp can be a place to practice communication beyond words as we pay attention to each other's body language, behaviors, and mood. Camp can be a place to practice listening to others or trusting others with our hurts. Camp staff need to model active listening and empathy; this will allow campers to feel safe, feel known, and discover God in ways they had not imagined.



Day 4: Linked by Grace

Luke 15:11-32

While this story may seem familiar, be prepared to hear it for the first time. There is a chance one of your campers might be doing just that, and others may have heard it so many times they have stopped listening for how God might be speaking through it in a new way today. There are lots of ways to approach this story, but for this day of camp, we want to think about the distances between people.

We all have an ego. So do the characters in the story. The younger brother seems to think pretty highly of himself, demanding what was “owed to him” as his share of the inheritance. In the process, he distances himself from family. The older brother sees himself as better for having stayed and puts up a barrier between himself and those gathered to celebrate. In both cases, their ego allowed them to justify their own act of separation.

Neither son's situation is really fair. Both, at different points, felt they deserved something. The father probably had his own feelings about that too. All three of them had choices about how they would respond

to the actions of others. Instead of asking what is ‘fair,’ Luke asks us to imagine what grace would look like at each turn. We are reminded that none of us is perfect and that we all make bad choices at times. We can give thanks that God is not about what is ‘fair’ but about how grace can be shared.

This story shows us the power of grace. The younger son finds the humility to admit he was wrong and returns home, closing the gap between himself and family. He receives grace from his father, who sets aside his own ego to hike up his robe and run to his returning child. The father didn't worry about how he might have enabled this child, or if others would see him as a naive or permissive parent. He just ran and covered his son in grace. Later, he goes out looking for his older son who is also pulling away. The father does not yell at him and doesn't talk tough. Instead, the father begs him to offer grace. In both cases, the father tries to span the gap that has been created, setting aside his own ego and pride.

Instead of validation, the story calls us to be humble and reflect on our own levels of responsibility. Instead of pushing others away or distancing ourselves, the story calls us to stay in relationship with each other. Sometimes we create distance because we think too little of ourselves. Sometimes we create distance because we think too much of ourselves. Either way, when we can admit our faults, we close the distances our egos have created. We can rediscover love where we might have expected judgment. We can see God manifest in the grace shared between us and know that we are never truly alone. This is good news!

Forgiveness is something we can all do. It is a personal task. Reconciliation is a more complicated process that requires another so that a relationship can be healed. For that, more than one person must find their humility, reflect on themselves, and be prepared to offer grace. First though, we have to be ready to forgive. Forgiveness is something we choose to do; it is not easy, but it can be life changing. Forgiveness can involve looking at things from another person's perspective and having empathy or compassion. Forgiveness can involve an acknowledgement of our own role in a conflict and deciding the hurt we carry is not worthy the emotional toll.

In her book, *Traveling Mercies*, Anne Lamott writes, “Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.” In today's story we see what it looks like when the work of forgiveness is done.

Before the younger son can get out his apology, the father is running to him. Grace is already at work. We might assume the same grace is already present for the older, brooding, brother as his father pleads for him to come join the party. In neither case was their a question about grace being deserved. That is the power of grace. It is not about our human standards of fairness. Grace is an unmerited gift. We receive grace by simply being humans—children of God. We are the ones who put conditions on God’s love and grace. We are the ones who let our biases and hurts dictate who we will and will not forgive. We are the ones who let our egos create distance between us and others. We create our own distance between us and God.

Camp is a place to practice grace. It is not just about “saying grace” for a meal. Yet, each meal we eat can remind us that there are lots of things we receive that we have not worked for. Camp is full of opportunities to show grace and talk about the importance of claiming God’s grace in our lives. Today’s scripture will reach everyone in a different way: Different campers and staff will relate to different characters in the story. Be open to where the story and the campers lead the conversation today, but make sure that when the day ends, everyone knows they are loved and forgiven by God and that we have closed the distances between us.



Day 5: Linked in Truth

Exodus 18:5-24

There is some irony in today’s story. God sent Moses to bring the people out of Egypt. Even God did not try to do everything alone! Yet, Moses is burning himself out trying to be all things to all people. If it is OK for God to delegate, surely Moses can let go of some responsibilities, right? It takes a trusted voice to help Moses evaluate his leadership style and self-care, and in that conversation, we get important lessons about respect and boundaries.

It is clear from the way they greet each other that Moses and his father-in-law care about each other. Moses could receive the advice of the older, wiser man, even though Moses was the one who had been talking to God. Jethro is worried about Moses trying to lead a huge community through difficult circumstances while also navigating their interpersonal relationships and conflicts. Jethro’s concern is for Moses, but there are two sides to the issue: One is self-care for Moses; the other is a concern for the people. Moses respects Jethro enough to listen. Jethro respects Moses enough to tell him the truth.

Moses also has to learn to respect the community he serves and trust people to rise up and lead alongside him. He clearly needs to learn some boundaries so that he can be the best leader possible. How can he focus on the big tasks ahead if he is distracted by other issues? How can Moses have the strength needed if he is not keeping a healthy balance in his life? By setting some boundaries, Moses is able to affirm the gifts of others and care for himself.

Boundaries and respect are important, and we can see in this story how love and truth telling are part of both. We all have lots of responsibilities. Some of those responsibilities keep asking more and more of us: This can be family or friends who are demanding of our time or don’t listen when we share our own needs; this can be work or school acting like they are the only responsibility we have, this can be our own insecurity, telling us that we need to prove ourselves, again and again. Loving others means we respect their boundaries, including when they tell us “no.” Loving others means trusting them enough to state our limits. If someone does not respect our boundaries, they are not acting out of love, but rather control. They can look alike. Both can heap on attention and affirmation, but the goals are clearly different.

Jethro shows us the power of speaking to those we love with honesty and respect rather than judgment. Moses shows us the importance of listening and the powerful potential of mentors in our life. We don’t just do everything a wise mentor tells us, but we do listen and trust their good intentions. In conversation with a mentor, we can find new ways forward that we might not have imagined before. None of us can succeed in life alone. We all need others in order to see our own hopes and dreams come about. The Search Institute and other researchers have long suggested that young

people need at least one adult outside their family who they trust and can speak with openly; they have suggested that three to five is even better. This is very true in Christian communities where wisdom and love are passed down from one generation to the next.

How good are you at taking advice in your own life? Who is it that you trust to say the difficult things? What keeps you from hearing those who love you? If you can answer these questions, then you are truly blessed. If you are still wrestling with them, that is OK too. We are all works in progress, and none of us can find all the answers alone.

Imagine how empowered those who were asked to help by Moses must have felt. Imagine the deep affirmation of someone you respect asking you to help them. You could offer that same type of experience to your campers. By being on staff, you hold a position of power and respect. When you invite others into the work and respect their gifts, they find meaning and feel included. That doesn't mean we pass off all our work onto campers: That would be teaching them bad boundaries. If we let love lead the way, respect the gifts each camper brings, and are willing to set aside our "need to be needed," then the Holy Spirit can do amazing things!



Day 6: Linked to Change

Philemon 1:8-17

This is the shortest of all of the Apostle Paul's letters collected in Scripture, but it packs a real punch. Paul is writing to Philemon who is a partner in the work of the Lord but who has also been a slave holder. The person carrying the letter to Philemon is Onesimus, who Philemon once considered his slave. Paul explains that Onesimus has been serving God alongside him and has now been sent to Philemon for reconciliation.

Paul is pleading with Philemon to see Onesimus as a "beloved-brother," both in the flesh and in the Lord—so Paul is saying it is not enough to just acknowledge that Onesimus is a brother spiritually while still physically treating him as a slave. Philemon should treat Onesimus as both an equal in Christ and as family.

Slavery is a practice that holds great weight in our North American context, both socially and historically. It is a great sin for which we find ourselves still repenting and reconciling. We know how deeply, even people of faith will dig to justify such a clearly inhumane practice. Paul does not gently suggest or lovingly nudge Philemon. Paul uses every tool of authority, manipulation, guilt, and shame to push Philemon into making the right choice. If you read on, Paul even ends the letter by saying that he hopes to personally come and visit soon. In other words, "if you don't do what I say, I'll come deal with this myself." Paul knows that getting others to change the way they see the world and see other people is difficult but necessary, and nothing in his rhetorical arsenal is off-limits.

There are two types of change that Paul is asking for in this letter: He is asking Philemon to change his understanding of Onesimus: Paul is also asking Onesimus to change the way he sees himself. Remember, the person carrying this letter is Onesimus. We don't know if he knew the contents of the letter. We don't know exactly how he felt but there had to be some fear and anxiety swirling in him. Could Onesimus see himself as an equal anymore than Philemon could accept him as such? Maybe that is why Paul has him carry the letter. Onesimus needs to participate in his own emancipation and be part of the change he wanted to see.

The word "bias" derives from a French word that means "slope" or "angle." It's not that we see some people as good or others as bad. It means that we have an unlevelled perspective. We lean a direction that we might not even be aware of. When the world around us has adjusted to the slope, with everyone pretending it's level, or changing society to meet the unnatural perspective, it can be even more difficult to create change: We have to convince people that their perspective is off, and often convince society that our shared equilibrium has been corrupted. Paul is asking Philemon to find balance again and see Onesimus through the eyes of Christ—as his brother—as a person

of equal value and worth. Paul is asking Philemon to receive Onesimus as one made in the image of God and thus reminding Philemon that all people are created as such. Paul is also trying to help Onesimus see himself through this same lens. This would be revolutionary for both men and for the society around them. Such change would also transform them personally.

Seeing each other through the eyes of faith and not through the eyes of the world—even if it goes against everything our culture tells us—is the message of this text. It is calling for a radical change. It is calling for a change in our mindsets and a change in our treatment of others because, just like Paul admonishes Philemon, it is not enough to just spiritually *say* we are all siblings in Christ—we must live physically acting it out—we must be prepared to act on that change in mindset. Imagine a world in which everyone was treated as an equal—fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God! That world is what we hope the Kingdom of God is like—and we need to live out the values of the Kingdom right now.

The good news is that God creates us with creativity and the capacity to imagine something different. God creates us with adaptability and the capacity to create and embody change. We can learn to see ourselves as more capable and worthy than we might have once imagined. We can learn to see others in ways that we had missed or refused to see. This work is deeply personal yet also communal in its application. To change the way we see ourselves in the long term, we have to challenge the voices that shape our perspective. We cannot just have a spiritual awakening where we understand that we are all equal. We have to live it out in tangible ways. We have to hear Paul's call to be family in Spirit and in practice.

There are campers who are desperate to make changes in their lives. They have been at the wrong end of slanted power dynamics or seen through others' biases until they begin to live as if they are less lovable. Make sure you affirm their beauty as Children of God. Some campers will carry powerful privilege in the world and have voices that can bring about change. Make sure you affirm their beauty as Children of God. Help campers find partners for their journey and the work ahead. Remind them that relationships can give us the strength, resources, and balance needed to make real change.

We have no idea how this letter is received. We do not have Onesimus' or Philemon's letter back to Paul after their moment of reintroduction. What we do have is the power to choose our own response: We can reach out and reconcile with others; we can learn about the ways we have held power over others, even when we did not realize it, and work towards reconciliation; we can work for change in this world, linking all God's children together as chosen family, in Spirit and in practice.



Day 7: Linked to Love

1 John 4: 7-9; 19

All the love we experience first comes from God, who is the source of all love. We are able to love others because we were first loved by God. This passage from John tells us to look to Christ to see the depth of God's love for us. Rather than the traditional shape of a heart, imagine the cross as a symbol of love. On the cross, there is the vertical or north and south beam. This symbolizes God's love coming into us. There is the east and west, horizontal beam, which is God's love extending out to others—like arms reaching out to hug. As we have learned this week, we need both. We need love coming into us from God in order to extend that love out to others. This is how Jesus loved, coming into the world by the love of God and then sharing that love through his words, deeds, and relationships. He was constantly being filled by God's love in order that he could continue to share it. He didn't keep love to himself, but he knew that love is meant to be shared. Our love is meant to be shared as well. So we become linked to love through the shape of the cross—God's love enters us, and we then share that love with one another.

God created us to give and receive love, both physically and emotionally. Our relationships impact our body in lots of unseen ways. There are lots of chemicals in our body that are generated in relationship with others,

and not just hormones. When we laugh together, cry together, share a hug, or stand up for justice together, our bodies receive doses that empower and heal. Our bodies are wonderfully made, and we are still learning the powerful ways our brains function. One thing we know for sure is that we are built for community. We are not robots, but sensitive beings that need engagement. As we share our lives together, we affirm to others that they are loved. When we accept care from others, it reminds us that we are lovable and loved. In this, we are linked together and reminded that from the beginning, God created us as connected beings. We are connected to each other and to God.

As you lead this last day of camp, remind campers to look and reach up, to establish that connection to God; remind them to look around and reach out to establish connections with others. Remind them that in the center of both is their own heart, ready to give and receive love. We are built for and linked to love.

Staff Devotions

This section is designed for use by staff. It is important to have time together to pray, to share concerns and joys, and to remind one another why you are doing this. You can connect your devotion to a staff meeting if that works best, or you can find a separate time and place. Each devotion can be used alone as well.

You may designate different people to be the leader each day, or you may choose a staff member to act as your chaplain. Each devotion suggests an activity or focus, and some may require a small amount of supplies to be gathered ahead of time.

Begin your devotion together by designating the time as holy. Light a candle or dim the lights. Play some soft music or sing a song. The devotions allow time to share personal prayers and they offer guided questions to invite those prayers. You may choose to say these aloud, silently think about them, speak them with a partner, or write them in a journal. Before you begin, it is helpful for the chaplain to explain what prayer form you will be using. To close, the materials offer a blessing that staff members can give one another. Your group may be huggers or hand-shakers, or you may prefer to pray together as partners. Find the means of blessing each other that works best for your group dynamics.

Staff Devotions

Day 1: Linked in Love

Colossians 3:12-14

Welcome to camp! Whether it's your first time serving here or a long-awaited return, you have finally made it home. And we're so happy you're here.

Think about the relationships that have brought you to this point. Who are the important people in your life and who thinks of you as an important part of their life? The relationships we form have a powerful impact on our life.

This week's scriptures and themes will invite us to look at different types of relationships and how God's love is woven through them all.

Read Colossians 3:13-14 and think about the list of things Paul asks the Colossian community to "put on" and what that expression might mean.

Questions for Reflection:

- Which of the things Paul invites us to "put on" is easiest and hardest for you?
- What difficult relationships impact the ways you welcome people or build new relationships?
- How might Paul's words speak to your experience or guide your actions this week?

Prayer: Lord of Love, link us together and bind us in the power of your Spirit. Help us find ways to connect, support, encourage, and empower others. Help us open our own hearts so that we can make authentic connections and grow as people of God. A

Staff Devotions

Day 2: Linked through Acceptance

Luke 10:38-42

Today is all about making people feel welcome, so it's interesting to have a story where someone is welcoming Jesus and it gets awkward. We can all relate on some level.

Welcoming others who push our buttons or trigger our biases is hard. Just welcoming those we love can be hard when we are tired or stressed. How have you felt welcome at camp and how do you think different campers are receiving the welcome?

Read Luke 10:38-42 and imagine yourself in the house with Jesus, Mary, Martha, and the rest observing this moment in time. Who do you identify with and how do you feel about the main people in this story's words and behaviors.

Can you reflect on a time that someone else or a group left you with all the work? Can you think of a time when you wish you had set aside your work to focus on a relationship that deserved more attention?

Notice that Jesus does not get involved until Martha starts complaining. Jesus may not be critiquing their different choices as much as their attitudes. Mary and Martha are very different people and that is OK. The problem comes when Martha wants Jesus to make Mary live up to her expectations. Besides triangulating Jesus into the relationship, Martha's words are cutting towards her sister.

Questions for Reflection:

- How do you make someone feel welcome who is nervous, scared, or lacks trust?
- What does it mean to invite Jesus into a relationship?

Prayer: Spirit of the Living God, move among us today. Help us see our differences and practice respect. Help us see our own motivations and practice self-awareness. Help us see you in the face of each other, including those who get on our nerves or expect us to do things a different way. Amen.

Staff Devotions

Day 3: Linked and Present

Job 2:11-13

We have probably all told a story that includes the line, “then my friend said...” which is followed by shock, surprise, or disbelief. We have all heard a friend say the wrong thing at the wrong time. Sometimes it has been us, trying to hide from the words that just came out of our mouths. The friends in today’s scripture seem to be aware of the potential they hold for messing up the moment, and chose to sit in silence, for a while.

Read Job 2:11-13 and think about a time when others just sat with you in a time of need. Think about a time you sat with someone else.

Today’s scripture also has some other traditions related to grief within it. Think about the rituals and traditions in our world today. What brings you comfort when you are sad, grieving, or deeply hurt? What other traditions do you know of in other cultures or religious traditions? What is it about these practices that bring comfort?

Questions for Reflection:

- When has the presence of another person been like the presence of God for you?
- How might your presence be healing or helpful to someone else?
- How do we know when to talk and when to just be present with campers?

Prayer: Lord, we give thanks for the power of sheer silence and the profound nature of people’s presence. Help us be attentive to others and follow their lead as we support them in healing and growing. Help us recognize the presence of others, and of your Spirit, when we are convinced that we are all alone. Amen

Staff Devotions

Day 4: Linked by Grace

Luke 15:11-32

Let's start by being clear. Grace is a complicated concept and even messier in practice. The more we can eliminate what it is not, the closer we come to bringing grace into focus. Grace is not reconciliation, although they are related. Reconciliation is between two or more people and requires work from both sides to bring about healing. Grace can be done alone. Letting others hurt you without speaking up is not grace. Grace deals in truths, and the bigger the truth, the easier it is to find grace.

Looking at things from our own perspective or facing things from a place of hurt and anger makes it hard to see the big picture. When we take time to think about the experience of others and listen to their truths, we can often see more and begin to understand them. It doesn't mean we ignore their actions, but it does allow some space – space for grace.

Read Luke 15:11-32 and think about the story from each person's perspective. Whose perspective is each character taking into account and which characters are struggling to see the bigger picture? Who do you find yourself drawn to in this story and how might that reflect your own experience?

Questions for Reflection:

- When have you been given grace without having to ask for it?
- How does forgiveness change us, even if we have told no one?
- What forgiveness are you working on in your life?

Prayer: God of grace, help us open our eyes to the experiences of others and take time to imagine things from their perspective. Help us set aside our need to win or prove ourselves, so that our own limits don't limit the bounds of your grace. Amen.

Staff Devotions

Day 5: Linked in Truth

Exodus 18:5-24

Who can tell you things that others are nervous to say? Who will listen to you when they won't hear it from others? Sometimes these are friends. Sometimes it's a family member. Other times, this is the role of a mentor who sees more in us than we do, or helps us see the world in new ways.

According to Search Institute and other research groups, all of us need mentors who are older than us and not in our immediate family. We need coaches, teachers, neighbors, bosses, and others with experience and expertise. We need people we can go to with our questions, and trust that we will receive honesty and support.

Read Exodus 18:5-24 and think about the wise words in your life; who have they come from? Who knows you well enough, cares enough to be honest, and has enough personal experience to give advice worth listening to? That is not an easy thing to find. Still, we know that having a handful of these special people can make all the difference in our lives.

Questions for Reflection:

- Who has been a mentor to you in this current chapter of your life?
- What do you look for in a mentor or hope for out of a mentor in the days to come?
- How are mentors and camp counselors similar and different?

Prayer: God of truth, speak through those we trust and guide us in new ways. Help us speak words of encouragement and challenge to those we love. As we forge unique relationships with each other, may we all be about the building of your beloved community. Amen.

Staff Devotions

Day 6: Linked to Change

Philemon 1:8-17

Tact can be a powerful tool in getting others to do what we want. The lack of tact can be hurtful or at least counter-productive. In today's scripture, Paul uses just about every persuasion and debate tactic you can imagine and the combined result feels like he may have crossed the line from being tactless to just plain tacky.

Besides the messy justice issues around poverty, slavery, and the shared humanity of all people, this scripture has Paul playing with power in uncomfortable ways. He sends a vulnerable person into a dangerous place with an even more dangerous message. Paul uses guilt, shame, threats, and the authority of his role in the Church.

Reread Philemon 1:8-17 (or the whole thing just for fun), and imagine you are the one receiving this letter. Then imagine you are the one delivering the letter: Don't forget, the letter is about you! What emotions are you left with and what do you imagine happened after Philemon finished reading it?

Questions for Reflection:

- What does it take for you to respect someone's power?
- When have you seen a person in authority abusing their power?
- How do we know when we have crossed the line while working for social justice?

Prayer: Lord, give us wisdom to navigate the messy issues in our lives and in our world. Help us empower others and speak for those who are silenced. Help us set the oppressed free and fulfill the teachings of Jesus, but Lord, help us not lose ourselves or hurt our cause along the way. Guide us and forgive us along this journey God. Amen.

Staff Devotions

Day 7: Linked to Love

1 John 4: 7-9; 19

Where have you experienced love this week? Have you given the credit to God? If God's love flows through us and around us, then we know that the Spirit is part of all our relationships and our communities. How easy it is to take all of our connections, friendships, and special moments for granted. Still, God is love and love is a gift from God.

When we are tired, how easy is it to forget that God is love?

When we are lonely, how easy is it to forget that God is love?

When we are angry, how easy is it to forget that God is love?

How easy is it to speak, even as people of faith, with words that lack love?

Read 1 John 4: 7-9, 19 and think about what relationships have taught you about love and about God. Maybe those relationships were more focused on learning to drive or helping you through a break up. Maybe those relationships were centered around a sport or activity. Still, how did they teach you about love?

Questions for Reflection:

- How can you let God's love be more fully part of your relationships?
- What have you learned about your own role in relationships while at camp this week?
- How will this week change or guide you in the days ahead?

Prayer: Lord, you link us by love so that we might go and share your love. You link us in love so that we might be joined to you through those around us. May the love we have received be the love we share, and may we find moments to pause and seek your presence in the midst of all our relationships. Amen.



Day 1: Linked in Love

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Colossians 3:12-14

Scripture Focus: Colossians 3:12

Therefore, as God’s choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Theological Summary: In God’s view, we are beloved children of God. That link calls us to be kind, gentle, humble, and compassionate.

Today, campers will...

- Be invited to think about themselves as beloved
- Explore God in the midst of loving relationships
- Be encouraged to build deeper connections within the camp community

DAILY ACTIVITIES

TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Circle Links	PLAY	Learning names
__ Group Chains	CREATE LEARN	Create a paper chain
__ The Dirty Ditch	PLAY LEARN	Easy Challenge game
__ Signs of Love	PRAY SERVE	Making signs for each camper
__ What’s the Deal	PLAY	Putting cards in order
__ Kindness Watch	PRAY LEARN	Pray, color and chat

Leader Notes: Remember this is the most frightening day for young children. They may have never spent a night away from home. It is a new environment and very stressful for some children. Take time to tell the children what the schedule is and what is coming up next, how long activities might be and when meals will be. It helps build trust that there is a plan. Speak gently and slowly; It is more comforting.

Prayer: Holy Lord God, You are with us here in this special place. You have blessed us today with new friends and have reminded us that we are loved. Amen

Daily Activities

Circle Links

PLAY

Supplies: None

How: While the campers are sitting in a circle, invite each individual to introduce themselves by name and then share something they like (e.g., pizza, baseball, watching clouds). If other campers like the same thing they raise their hands and shout “link to [camper name]!” Then continue with the next camper’s turn. Encourage the campers to share something that has not been said yet.

Try This: Consider changing the question from something they like to something they like to do, somewhere they would like to visit, or food they like to eat. Keep it positive. Do this during the day when you are waiting or transitioning to other activities. Each discovered link helps your campers grow closer together.

Group Chains

CREATE LEARN

Supplies: Paper strips, markers, tape or staplers

How: Give each camper a marker and a handful of paper strips. Pair campers together and ask them to find things they have in common with their partner. For each commonality, have them write or draw it on a strip and then make a paper chain out of the strips. Challenge them to see who can make the longest strip of links in 5 minutes. Have them introduce themselves as a pair to the group, using the items they have in common. Then change partners and do the same thing again. At end of activity, link all the chains together to make a long chain to decorate your group common area.

Try This: Use the links to physically link partners, wrist to wrist, so the group is in a circle by the second round. Talk about how we are all linked together by God’s love and care and ask them how it feels to be connected to others.

The Dirty Ditch

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: Chalk, two ropes, yarn (something to mark the edges of the ditch with)

How: Make two lines on the ground about 30 feet from each other to mark the edges of the “ditch”. Ask the campers to imagine the ditch is filled with stinky mud and that the only way to cross the ditch is to hold hands with other campers. If they let go of another camper’s hand without holding another’s, they will sink into the mud and be trapped. The goal is to get the whole group across the ditch safely. Only one camper can move at a time. Two campers can be safe in the middle of the ditch if they are holding hands. Once campers accomplish the task, try it again with the rule that no more than 3 campers can be holding hands at the same time. Staff may have to help start this process with the youngest campers.

At the end of the game debrief: Did the group work well together? Point out how considerate they were of each other as they helped each other cross. Name the positives they experienced, even if it was difficult.

Try This: If there is a camper who is uncomfortable holding hands, ask them to be the judge and to watch for anyone dropping handholds. You can time the campers and do this activity again later to see if your group can do it faster. If campers are really good at this, choose a camper or two who can only use one hand as they cross.

Signs of love

PRAY SERVE

Supplies: Paper, crayons or markers, scissors

How: Put all the campers’ names into a container so they can draw names. Then invite them to make a sign for the person whose name they drew. Invite them to ask questions about the person they are creating the sign for, so they can include favorite colors or draw things that person likes. The signs can be placed by beds, used as seat markers at meals, or placed in a collage around your group meeting space. When they are finished, say a prayer of blessing for all the signs: ask God to help keep each person safe and give thanks for them being at camp. Collect the signs to use later, or go as a group to hang the signs where they will be used.

You could revisit this at the end of the week by having campers bring their name signs to group, and letting others write notes or draw pictures on the back as a closing blessing.

What's the Deal

PLAY

Supplies: Uno cards, timer (optional)

How: Using only number cards, give every camper a card to hold on their forehead but explain that they cannot look at their own card. They are also not allowed to tell each other what card they have. They can only tell each other whom they match with. Matches can be made by the color or number of the card. Invite the campers to look at each other's cards; then, help each other find someone who matches them. When campers find a match, they can link elbows. Challenge the group to make the longest possible link. If you pick out just enough cards for the group, you can make sure there are enough matches for them to make a full circle.

Try This: You can replay this during the week and use a timer to see if they get faster with practice. Some decks of cards are waterproof, making this a fun game for the shallow end of the pool.

Kindness Watch

PRAY LEARN

Supplies: Paper, crayons or markers

How: Invite campers to share a time at camp or on their way to camp that they saw someone showing kindness. Read Colossians 3:12-14 together, then ask if the campers know what it means to be beloved. Let them explain, or explain that they are known and loved beyond measure by God. Explain that God's love reminds us to love each other. Challenge the campers to watch for kindness and compassion throughout the week and to point it out when it is happening. Give the campers paper and crayons or markers. Read Colossians 3:12-14 again, then invite the campers to draw a picture of what love or kindness looks like to them, then allow time for them to share. After each camper shares, say a prayer of blessing for them. Here are some words if you need them: "Holy God, thank you for (camper name); be with them and keep them safe this week. Let them know just how beloved they are."

Try This: If you have a more mature group, you can ask them to help you define the other words in the scripture and brainstorm examples of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.



Story Resources

Enemy Pie, Derek Munson:

A little boy learns that kindness and generosity can change an enemy into a friend.

It is a good way to talk about how we "put on" kindness, generosity, and love in the world.

"Put On Love", Seeds Family Worship: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kN5sdqms2Lg>
A song Based on Colossians 3:12-14.

Take Home Sheets



Day 1: Linked in Love

Scripture to Read: Colossians 3:12-14

Questions for Reflection:

- What does it mean to “put on” something like compassion or love?
- Which of the things the Colossians were asked to “put on” sounds hardest?
- How does this advice differ from much of the world around us?
- How might you practice “putting things on” in your daily life?

Activity to Share:

What if the words in this scripture were actual pieces of clothing or accessories? What might they look like or how might you wear them?

1. Give each person a piece of paper and let them draw a stick figure. Now, each person can dress their stick figure in clothes that represent a positive trait they want to share. You can use the ones from Colossians or add others. It might be as simple as heart shaped earrings, or a shirt that says, “I care.” Different colors might represent different feelings or ways of caring. There is no wrong way to do this. Once everyone is done, take some time to share your work and affirm each other’s ideas.
2. Practice using the phrase, “Put that on!” as an affirmation when you see someone do something good, or hear a story that inspires you to share God’s love. For example, if someone to another’s hurt with kind words, you could say, “Put that on,” as a way to say, “keep it up,” or If you see a social media post about a good deed you could repeat, you might say, “I’d put that on,” as a way to say, “I could do that!” Be creative with your use of this expression and see if it makes a difference for you or others.

Challenges for Living It Out:

- Pick one trait you want to try and practice daily for a week. Spend some time studying what forgiveness is and is not.
- Think about who you might forgive that would lighten your own heart.



“Linked by Love” is part of camp resources developed for *InsideOut Christian Resources for Outdoor Ministries.*

Themes include:

- All Things New: Look What God Is Doing!
- Get Real: Finding Your True Self in Jesus
- Power Up! Living in the Spirit
- Fearless Faith: Courage in Community
- Branching Out: Connecting Through Christ
- Beyond Belief! The Universe of God
- Peace Works: Empowering the Next Generation of Peacemakers
- This Is Our Prayer
- Creation Speaks
- What's in a Name
- FruitFULL Faith
- **Linked by Love**

Sneak Peek at 2025

ANOTHER WAY Preview

We can all find ourselves dug-in, in a rut, or just plain stuck sometimes. Whether it is changing ourselves, the world, or allowing God to do something beyond our imagination, all of us are blessed by those moments when Jesus shows us “Another Way”!

DAY	THEME	SCRIPTURE	
1	Be Still	Psalm 46:1-3, 10 (NRSV)	
2	Get Real	Luke 18:9-14	Pharisee and Tax Collector
3	Know and Grow	Acts 9:1-22	Saul to Paul
4	Wild Ideas	Matthew 3:1-6	John the Baptist
5	Change the Rules	Numbers 27:1-8, 11b	Daughters of Zelophehad
6	All In	Acts 10:1-36	Peter and Cornelius’ Dreams
7	Go!	Isaiah 43:19-21	

Narrative Overview

Jesus often confronted the world around him with another way of being and by his example, we are reminded that God always invites us to reimagine who we are and how we do things. Being at camp, we are already finding another way, apart from the trappings and distractions of home. In the peace of this space, we will explore what would change if we lived as our authentic selves and respected the truths of others. In this humility, we will imagine how growing changes the way we live. In this potential for transformation, we will imagine how our personal change meets the change we seek in the world. Whether we are addressing unfair rules or dreaming of a time when all people belong, we know that God calls us to do a new thing and faithfully forge another way.