

Time Out for Renewal

By John Ashmen

FOCUS
SERIES

Focusing
on the
Foundations
of Christian
Camping

On an average weekday, Gary hops up at dawn, downs two cups of coffee, grabs his cell phone and races off to a demanding job with a communications firm.

At noon, he slams a Big Mac and fries then charges through several afternoon appointments. On the way home, he picks up his shirts from the cleaners and his son, Sean, from karate class.

Meanwhile, his wife, Lynn, is already home, going through the mail and shoving leftovers into the microwave. After a rushed dinner, she scoots out to a parent-teacher conference, on the way dropping daughter Katie off for her flute lesson.

Gary heads to his computer, first to pay bills then to draft an overdue business proposal that he e-mails to an associate halfway across the country. If he finishes early, he catches some of the late news and Letterman.

Somewhere about midnight, Gary unplugs Sean's Xbox, arms the alarm system, shuts off the lights and falls into bed. Six hours later, the whole scenario starts again.

What's wrong with this picture? Most people would say there's nothing wrong with it. Sounds pretty typical.

And therein lies the problem. We live in such a hurried, harried world that overextension and enervation are the norm. Somebody needs to run into Gary's life—and maybe yours—and call, "Time out!"

Millions of people have found a Christian camp, conference center or retreat center the ideal place for a change of pace. Unparalleled emotional, physical and spiritual revival can be realized. The testimonies of prominent Christian leaders printed on these pages affirm the value of such an experience. In fact, some of them made their most significant spiritual decisions in such settings.

Read the testimonies on pages 2 and 3, then consider the impact that a week or weekend at a Christian camp, conference center or retreat center might have on you, your child, your family, or your church or group.

Peruse the following timely reminders and consider also how you, as an adult, would benefit from a Christian camping encounter.

You Need Time Out for Relaxation

I recently called a friend in Denver to learn the results of his EKG. He said the doctor couldn't find anything wrong with his heart and suggested his chest pains were related to stress. Not surprising in this day. In fact, some doctors estimate that up to 60 percent of all hospital

Spending a week or weekend at a Christian camp, conference center or retreat center can benefit your entire family.

patients are there because of stress-related problems.

Our society does not know how to relax. We take domestic problems to the office and bring work problems home. Even children are no strangers to stress.



Christian Camp and
Conference Association

Michael W. Smith

Singer, songwriter and Dove award-winning artist. Through his albums and live concerts, Michael leads others to worship and glorify God.

One of my favorite things to do in the summer is load up my family and head to camp. I've been going to Kanakuk-Kanakomo Camps for years, and it has radically changed my life.

Camp, by its very nature, is a place apart from the everyday routines of our lives. It's a place to think, grow up, meet new friends and discover more of who we really are. Through camps in which God is honored in all activities, I've seen thousands of kids radically touched by the Lord and their lives changed forever!

I've seen the excited faces of young kids at camp for the first time, and I've seen those returning for the 10th time, and in both, there is a bond that lasts a lifetime.



Joni Eareckson-Tada

Author and founder of JAF Ministries, a national outreach to the disabled. Joni hosts a syndicated radio program and is an advocate for persons with disabilities.



I so much appreciate the value of Christian camping. For one thing, I came to the Lord Jesus Christ at a Young Life camp. And shortly after that, a lot of discipleship went on in my life as a young teenager [at camp].

Christian camping is such a place of fellowship, such a marvelous opportunity for friendship. Where would we be without the Lord Jesus and the Christian friends we connect with in His body?

(Recorded at a CCCA National Conference)

Mike Holmgren

A former NFL coach, Mike and his wife, Kathy, are loyal supporters of Mission Springs, a CCCA member camp/conference, in Scotts Valley, Calif.

The foundation of Bible teachings that were laid through Christian camping at Mission Springs, before and after our marriage, were solid and prepared us well for our Christian walk. Each summer, as we rest from a busy school year and prepare for the "season," we come to Mission Springs for renewal.

We believe in the ministry of Christian camping so much that we've sent all four of our daughters to Frontier Ranch. Our two oldest daughters have worked on the staff.

(Used with permission from Mission Springs.)



Dawson McAllister

Host of the nationally syndicated radio talk shows for teens, "Dawson McAllister Live" and "Dawson McAllister Late Nights." Dawson also provides an off-air HopeLine for young people to find answers to their problems.

I grew up in a Christian home, but I received a real wake-up call at a Christian camp in Indiana when I was 16. That's when I made a firm commitment of my life to God and to be a leader for Him.

I'm a huge believer in camp ministry today. For my money, there's nothing like having five days to pull kids out of their environment to concentrate on Christ. Camp allows them to slow down and see who God really is. It also gives them enough time to develop a trust with their counselors and open up about deeper life issues.



Pushed by parents or peers to perform beyond their years, and rushed into maturity by the educational system and exposure to mass media, many kids emerge from their teen years totally frustrated and confused.

Spending a week or weekend at a Christian camp or conference does not immediately empty out years of bottled-up tension, but prolonged exposure to peace and quiet, in a Christ-centered atmosphere, can definitely mellow all that's inside.

I know some wonderful, not-so-far-off places—Christian camps and conferences—where you can sit back and watch the western sky turn from dusty rose to deep indigo. You can lay on the dock in the moonlight and listen to loons on the lake. You can inhale the freshness of a mid-morning rain in the meadow. It's difficult to experience such sensations and not meet Monday morning relaxed and renewed.

You Need Time Out for Reflection

Few of us wash dishes at the sink and ponder the world through the kitchen window. Instead, we throw the plates and silverware in the Whirlpool and rush to the next task.

By end of day, rather than sit on the front porch in a rocking chair, we flip on the tube and "process." It's great to have modern conveniences, but it's a shame they keep us from giving our brains a break.

Where were you when you came up with that million-dollar idea? Or worked through that major issue in your life? You probably weren't in front of your computer terminal or at a meeting. More likely, you were walking through the woods or driving by yourself late at night. All of us need such time-outs for reflection.

At a Christian camp or conference, you'll be challenged from

the Bible, God's Word. Walking back to your bungalow or drifting in a canoe the next day—without things to do, places to go, people to see—you'll have time to contemplate...and maybe make a choice that will change your life.

You Need Time Out for Physical Renewal

Look at yourself. When was the last time you ate a balanced meal? Worked your heart rate up to maximum? Got enough sleep? No wonder you feel fatigued!

Check into a Christian camp, conference center or retreat center for some professional pampering and the motivation to live well.

When somebody says "camp food," do you think back to hot dogs-and-beans and shepherd's pie? The fare you'll find these days, especially in a conference or retreat center, reflects the dietary concerns we all have. Believing that a Christian's body is the temple of God's Holy Spirit, these places specialize in healthy home-cooked meals...and, OK, maybe a special treat now and then (because you're worth it).

There are a myriad of recreation options at a Christian camp or conference. On the more casual side, there's no better place to take long walks (maybe hand-in-hand with your spouse or close friend). Swimming, biking, tennis and traditional sports are always popular. And the daring can experience everything from rock climbing to parasailing. (Have you ever been on a ropes course?) But if you'd rather, you can also sneak a nap, and no one will tell.

There's a direct correlation between how you take care of yourself and how fit you feel. Consider a Christian camp, conference center or retreat center for physical renewal. The exercise alone will rejuvenate you.

You Need Time Out for Fun

Did you know there's a strong link between laughter and longevity?

Seriously! People with a good

sense of humor are likely to live longer than those who are stern or sour. Sadly, the pursuit of success has stolen years of cheer from many men and women.

Fun is not just for the frivolous, nor is it reserved for the retired. It's for everyone who wants a balanced life. If you're not regularly enjoying an activity—a game, sport, hobby, art—that brings excitement, laughter and a sense of fulfillment, you're probably not as healthy as you could be.

Christian camps, conference centers and retreat centers are incredible outlets for fun. Find one where you can play often and play hard. Don't be a spectator in the game of life. If that's where you are, you might leave before the final quarter.

You Need Time Out to Rediscover Your Family and Make New Friends

Chuck Swindoll, author, pastor and chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, has long been a supporter of Christian camping for the entire family. In an interview with CCCA, he spoke about the value of total family involvement.

"All the Swindolls have enjoyed and benefited from Christian camping for many, many years," he said. "In fact, I can't recall an unhappy or unrewarding experience that we've ever had."

He went on to talk about some of the positive things that happen when families get together in a camping environment:

They relate eye-to-eye, sometimes for the first time in months, without the distraction of TV, radio, phone and so forth.

Families have time to think through some of their values and their priorities. And parents have an opportunity to reinforce what they teach in their homes.

Christian camping provides a perfect opportunity to meet new friends and deepen friendships.

Christian camping has a way of "clearing away the fog," the routine, of our walk with Jesus

Christ. And it refreshes our time with Him.

"If home is a place where life makes up its mind," Swindoll concluded, "then Christian camping is a place where those things can be lived out day to day."

You Need Time Out to Hear God Speak

Scripture frequently tells of people who went off to the wilderness, away from the maddening crowd, to hear God's special message for their lives.

Moses got marching orders for the Israelites while camping out in the desert. David, on a hillside, learned the skills he needed to win and retain his job as king. The apostle Paul, after his conversion, had an extensive retreat in the wilderness to reflect on his past and on how he might turn all of that around for the cause of Christ.

When He really wanted their undivided attention, Jesus took His disciples to the mountain as well as to many other places away from the rush of "suburban" Jerusalem life.

Picture the smoke rising from a crackling campfire on Galilee Beach. The stars are sparkling overhead. Thirteen close friends, having rowed across the whitecaps earlier in the evening, are savoring a fish dinner and soaking up the warmth from the flickering orange flames. The conversations are light and sprinkled with laughter.

In a momentary lull, the Master looks up with a smile and says, "I want to tell you something very important." All eyes are on Him as He continues...

The Master still speaks today.

He wants to tell you something very important. Take time out and come hear what He has to say. He doesn't speak any louder in the outdoors; it's just easier to hear Him. ➔



Jerry B. Jenkins

Author of more than 150 books, including the bestselling "Left Behind" series. He owns Jenkins Entertainment, a film company, and the Christian Writers Guild.

I trace my life's work and ministry back to two consecutive summers at Camp Hickory Conference & Retreat Center in Ingleside, Ill., where God spoke to me through His servants.

Statistics show that nearly a quarter-million become believers at CCCA member camps and conferences each year. And more than 400,000 Christian leaders trace their choice of profession to decisions made at camp.

But these are more than statistics. Each represents someone who was once a malleable, impressionable kid who was open to the Spirit on a hot summer night, perhaps unlike he or she had ever been before or would be again. Countless camp workers and volunteers never know whom they might be influencing or what might become of the camper or young staffer who is listening.

I, too, am more than a statistic.

Brandon Heath

Singer, songwriter and Dove award-winning artist. Brandon has also merged his public platform with his heart for community, working with Young Life, Blood:Water Mission and Restore International.

I've been volunteering at camps ever since a Young Life camp brought me to Jesus over 15 years ago. I'm not sure that I'll ever stop. This place keeps me sane, and these kids keep me young.

When I brought my little brother Alex with me to camp one year, he said, "This is the best week of my whole life." I'm sure this is a week that will be etched in both of our memories for life.

I encourage you to go and spend some time with someone you need to invest in—someone who loves you and desires more time with you, too. I asked Alex yesterday what his favorite part about camp was and he said, "Hanging out with you."



Dr. Wesley K. Stafford

President and CEO of Compassion International. Wess is an internationally recognized advocate for children in poverty.

Christian summer camps usually provide an opportunity for children and young people to learn about God's love for them in a variety of creative ways with an opportunity to respond to that knowledge through salvation and/or spiritual growth. Quiet, reflective devotional times often result in changed lives and an eternal impact for the Kingdom of God.

One such discussion around an evening campfire when I was 17 changed the course of my life forever. A devotional talk on forgiveness prompted me to contemplate the cruelty I had experienced at the hands of missionaries overseeing a boarding school in the Ivory Coast, and I made a conscious decision right then to forgive those who had hurt me, even though they did not deserve or ask for my forgiveness. I made a decision to let God use those hurts to shape me for ministry and leadership. That was a turning point in my life, one that set me on the course to become an advocate and champion for children as president of Compassion International.

Summer camps provide the impetus for similar life-changing decisions, and I highly endorse the experience.



Luis Palau

Beloved international evangelist. Luis has preached to more than 25 million people in 72 countries.

On the last night of camp, my counselor and I went outside and sat on a fallen tree. Using Romans 10:9-10, he explained the Gospel to me, and I opened my heart to Christ. I gave him a big hug, and we ran back to the tent. I crawled under my blanket with my flashlight and wrote in my Bible, "On Feb. 12, 1947, I received Jesus Christ as my Savior."



Christian Camps and Conference Centers

- A Christian camp generally refers to a youth facility that capitalizes on the outdoor setting; many camps also offer comfortable, year-round accommodations for families and various adult groups.
- A Christian conference center or retreat center is typically a facility for education and training that benefits from aesthetically pleasing surroundings and provides a variety of recreation and lodging options.
- Most Christian camps, conference centers and retreat centers offer programmed events as well as opportunities to rent their facilities.
- The ministry of Christian camping also includes day camps, wilderness camps, trip camps, travel camps, work/mission camps, rental-only camps, program-only camps and outdoor centers.
- Every year, over 6 million people participate in programs at CCCA member camps/conferences, and every year tens of thousands come to faith in Jesus Christ through that experience.
- Additionally, 130,000-plus churches in America are served by CCCA member camps and conferences.

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- Many CCCA members are ADA-approved and offer programs for the physically challenged. Others work with special populations such as troubled youth and the economically disadvantaged.

For information on camps and conferences across the country, visit www.FindAChristianCamp.com.



Christian Camp and
Conference Association

P.O. Box 62189
Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2189

Phone: (719) 260-9400

Fax: (719) 260-6398

E-mail: info@ccca.org

Web: www.ccca.org

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