



The Power of Camp Study
2019 Camper Survey
Data Report

Prepared by Sacred Playgrounds LLC
December 2019



Introduction:

This report contains data from a three-part survey of summer campers from twelve camps affiliated with Christian Camp and Conference Association (CCCA). Campers were surveyed on the first day of camp and the last day of camp. A third survey was sent via electronic mail two months after their camp experience. This series of surveys was designed to gather camper impressions of the camp experience and also measure growth over time. The surveys measured various camper outcomes, including enjoyment, happiness, and self-confidence, though the strongest emphasis was on growth in faith commitment. All campers who participated had parental permission, gathered by the individual camps.

Measurements are based on the findings of the Effective Camp Research Project, which originally studied a group of six Lutheran camps in Wisconsin during the summers of 2015 and 2016. The findings of this initial study can be found at www.effectivecamp.com. This study demonstrated that the Christian summer camp model has 5 fundamental characteristics: faith-centered, relational, participatory, safe space, and unplugged from home. These characteristics interact dynamically to give rise to the Christian summer camp experience. When all 5 characteristics are present, the experience has positive and recognizable impacts that extend beyond the week of camp, impacting family devotional practices, church participation, personal well-being, and faith commitment.

The study is ongoing. In 2018, nine CCCA participated in what became known as the Power of Camp Study. In 2019, eleven camps participated in the Power of Camp Study. A twelfth camp, HoneyRock (WI), administered the survey on their own and provided the raw data for inclusion in the analysis. For this reason, there are 12 camps represented in this report.

What is in this report?

Page 3 of this report has a brief overview of the highlights you will find in the pages that follow. Read this first. We worked to find things to celebrate, along with areas for improvement. We also tried to explain some of the things that may be confusing.

Pages 4-8 contain data tables and charts with the majority of the data from the camper surveys. Pages 9-12 compare camper data over time, particularly focusing on 18 survey items that were included on all 3 surveys. These pages delve deeply into the question of camper growth and whether that growth lasted in the months following camp. These pages also contain statistical information about whether findings were statistically significant.

On pages 13-15, you will find analysis according to the 5 fundamental characteristics identified in the Effective Camp Project, including evidence for what happens when there are breakdowns in the camp model.

Page 16 assesses the strength of support campers receive at home and in their congregation. Page 17 addresses differences among camps and ways in which two camps participating in the 2018 POC study used the findings to impact their campers in 2019. Page 18 takes a closer look at a sub-group of campers that did not have supportive home/school environments.

Page 19 contains a word cloud and simple word analysis from an open-ended question on the follow-up camper survey.

All charts and tables are referenced according to page number. For example, Figure 5A is found on page 5.

Report Highlights and Findings

General Reflections:

- The response goal was 150 campers from each camp participating in both the first and last day surveys. Several camps fell short of this goal (*Figure 4A*) for a variety of reasons. The 3 camps with fewer than 100 total matched surveys have individually unreliable data. Additionally, many of the follow-up surveys had no matching on-camp surveys, limiting the use of this portion of the data set. Fortunately, the data set is large enough to offer a reliable look at multiple aspects of the camp experience, particularly when combined with the 2018 POC data.
- The camper population surveyed in 2019 was nearly identical, in terms of demographics, to the participants from 2018. The two data sets had statistically equivalent breakdowns in gender, age, race, camper type, and frequency of religious practices (pages 4-5).

Strengths and Celebrations:

- Most campers had **overwhelmingly positive** experiences at camp. They reported high levels of enjoyment (*Figure 6B*). The vast majority (at least 90%) also agreed that they had fun, learned more about God, and tried something new at camp (*Figure 7A*).
- Campers showed **significant growth** in 17 of 18 items measured in the survey (9A). For many survey items, this growth persisted at least 2-3 months after camp (10A). This confirms the finding that the camp experience has significant, lasting outcomes. Campers also exhibited growth in faith practices (11B), and they themselves recognized the impact of camp months later (9B).
- Most campers experienced camp as a **safe space**. Campers reported being picked on, left out, or having to hide their true selves significantly less frequently at camp than in their home and school environments (*Figure 6A*). It was confirmed that camp can be a positive learning and faith formation environment for campers who come from challenging home lives (page 18).
- Perhaps most significantly this year, the data demonstrate that **specific program interventions result in positive camper outcomes**. Two camps that participated in the 2018 study implemented targeted interventions in their camp programs, and they drastically impacted very specific camper outcomes (page 17).

Challenges and Other items of note:

- Camps differ in their overall effectiveness and adherence to the five fundamental characteristics of the camp model. The differences were stark in 2019, with 5 of the 12 participating camps showing no elevated breakdowns in the five fundamentals and 4 others showing elevated breakdowns in all 5 characteristics (pages 13-15). These breakdowns are associated with lower camper outcomes related to faith, self-confidence, and desire to return to camp (14C and 15A).
- While breakdowns were more common at some camps than others, the majority of campers still reported positive experiences. More influential than the individual camp to a breakdown in the camp model was the camper's home life and faith background. Those that came from less supportive homes were more vulnerable to breakdowns in the camp model. For example, those who were unsure of their support in home and school were 11 times more likely to experience a breakdown than their peers who had supportive home and school environments (page 14).
- Campers that came from challenging home lives had more positive outcomes when they attended camps in which the majority of their fellow campers came from supportive homes. In comparison, campers attending camps that served a majority of campers from challenging or unsupportive home environments had less positive experiences overall (page 18)

Figure 4A: Respondent Summary, by Camp

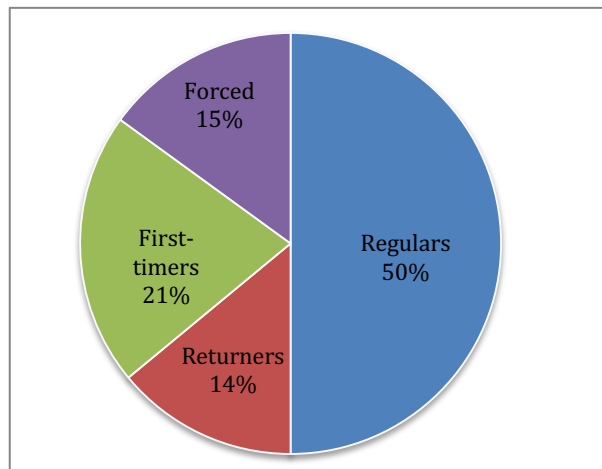
Camp	First day responses	Last day responses	MATCHED First + Last	Follow-up responses
Berea (NH)	200	200	200	66
Bethany Birches	128	124	120	29
Camp Judson	228	146	115	44
Clydehurst Christian Ranch	146	145	144	52
Eagle Sky of the Ozarks	41	41	41	51
Miracle Camp and Retreat Center	152	152	152	27
Mount Gilead (CA)	191	191	187	36
Mount Hermon	244	215	201	76
Salvation Army Camp Happyland	33	21	11	7
Salvation Army Redwood Glen	270	259	254	47
Wildwood Hills Ranch	98	151	65	49
HoneyRock	173	184	163	53
Total	1904	1823	1653	537

4B: % Returning/first time campers

First time at this camp	28%
Second time at this camp	14%
2+ previous times	58%

4D: Gender:

Male	44%
Female	55%
Other answer	1%

4C: Camper Type

Regulars: Been to camp multiple times before and plan to return again

Returners: Been to camp once or twice before, may not be sure about returning

First-timers: First time at camp, and not forced to come

Forced: Felt forced/compelled to come

4E: Age:

10 and under	10%
11	14%
12	18%
13	18%
14	17%
15	11%
16	7%
17+	5%

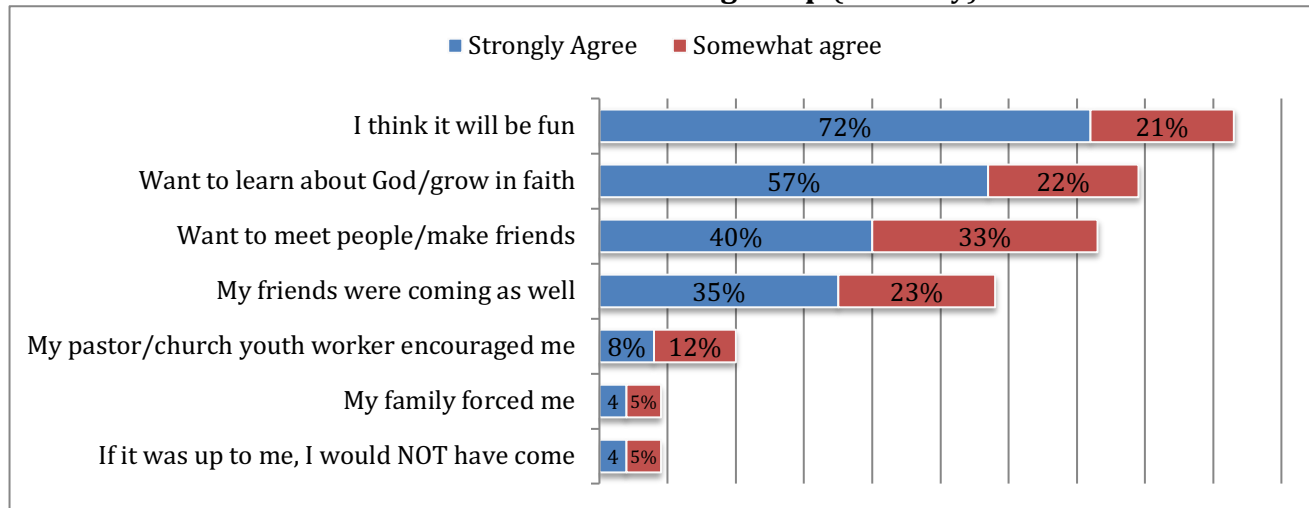
4F: Christian Tradition:

Just Christian	55%
Nondenominational	15%
Baptist	6%
Catholic	4%
Other denomination	13%
Not Christian	7%

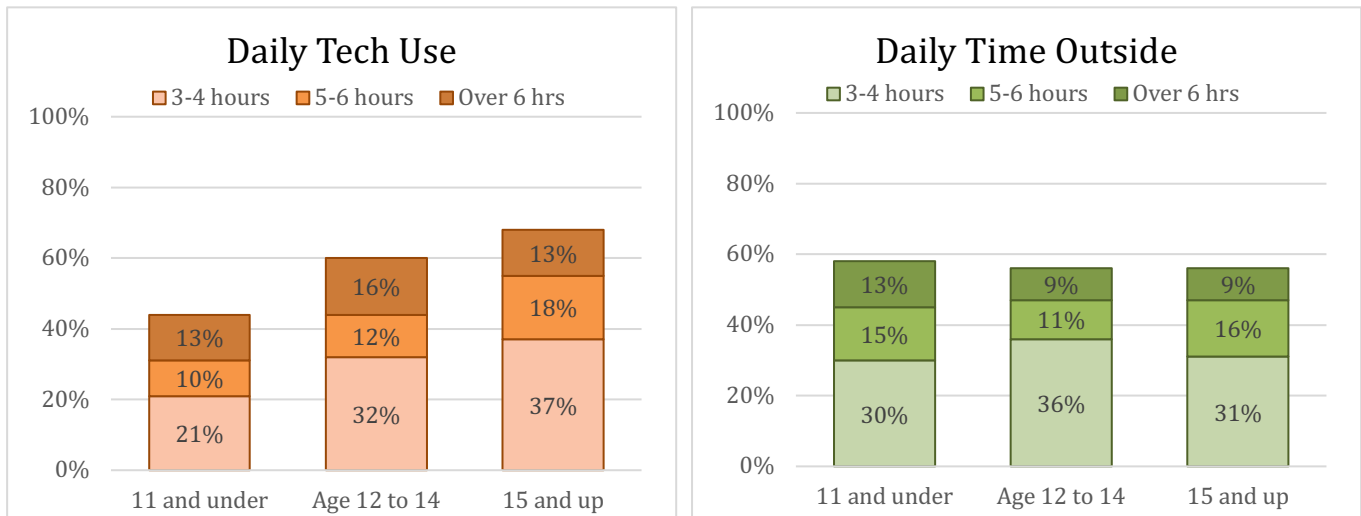
4G: Race:

White	72%
Mixed race	12%
Hispanic/Latino	7%
Black/African-American	4%
Asian	3%
Other	2%

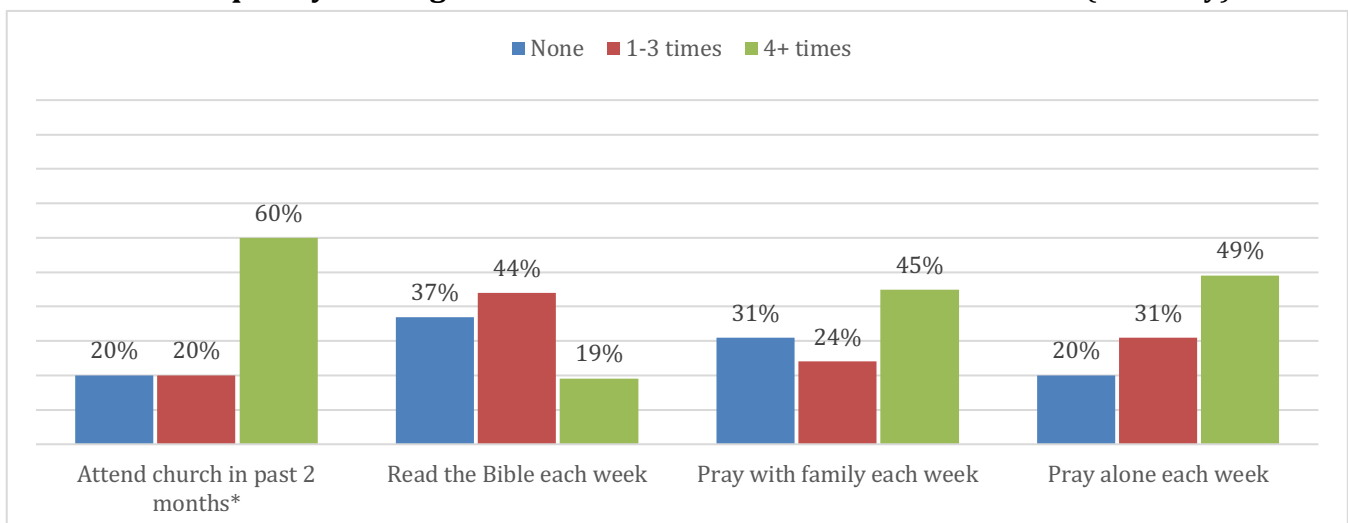
5A: Motivation for attending camp (First Day)



5B: Time Spent on Technological Device and Outside on Average Day Off (First Day)

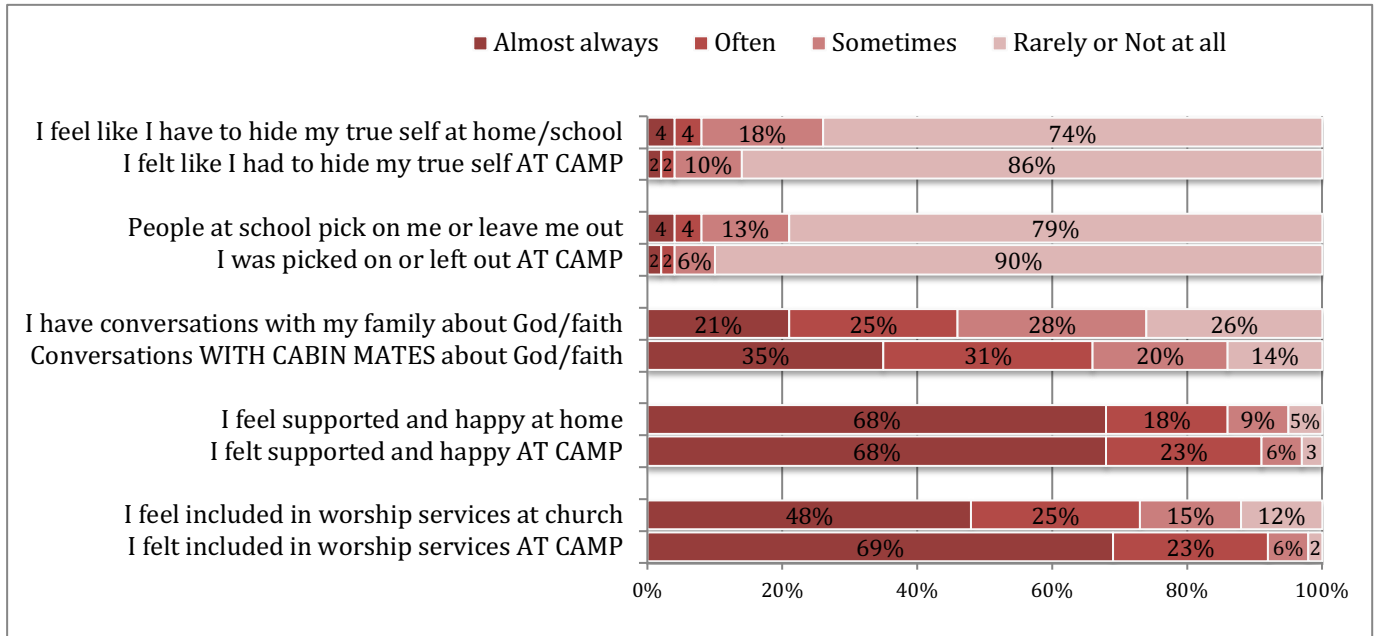


5C: Frequency of Religious Practices in the Months BEFORE CAMP (First Day)

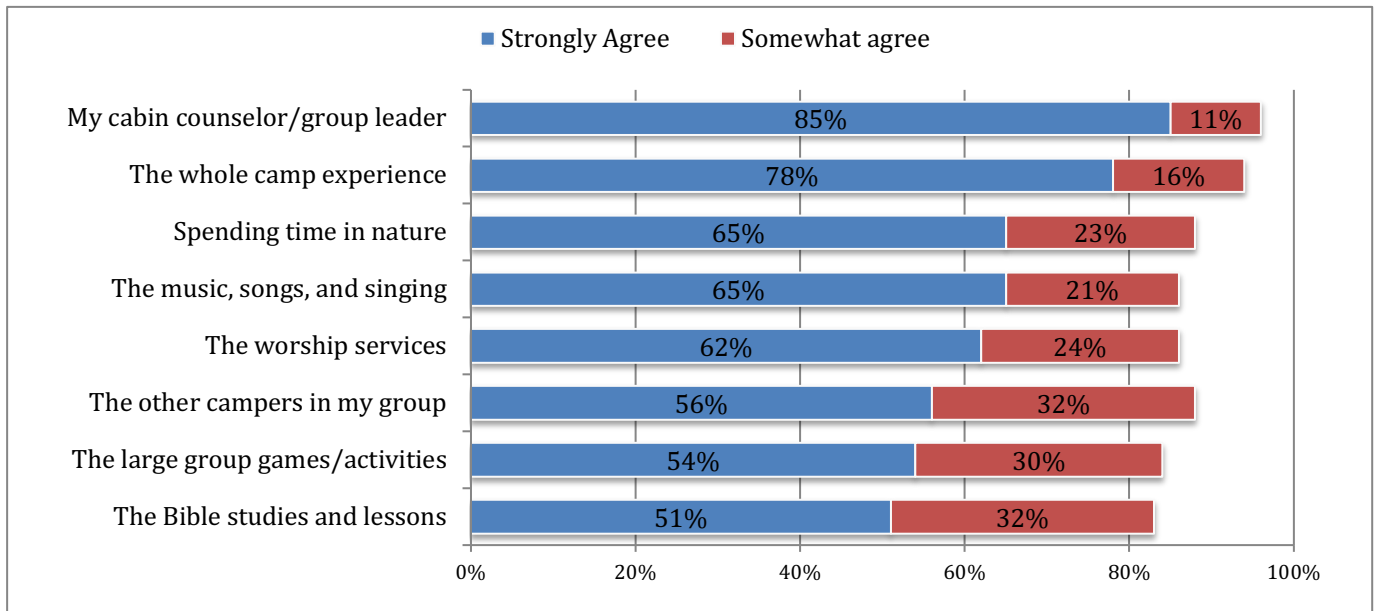


*13% of respondents had not been to church at all in 2019

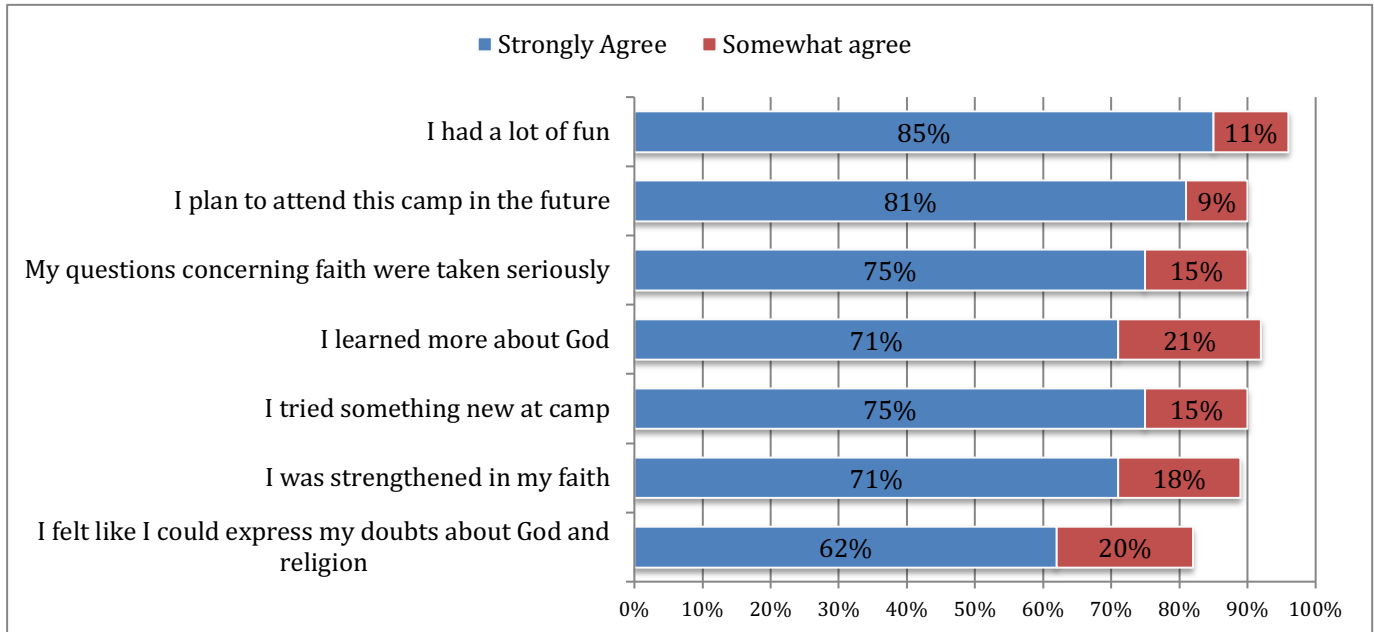
6A: Impressions of Home (First Day) Compared with Impressions AT CAMP (Last Day)



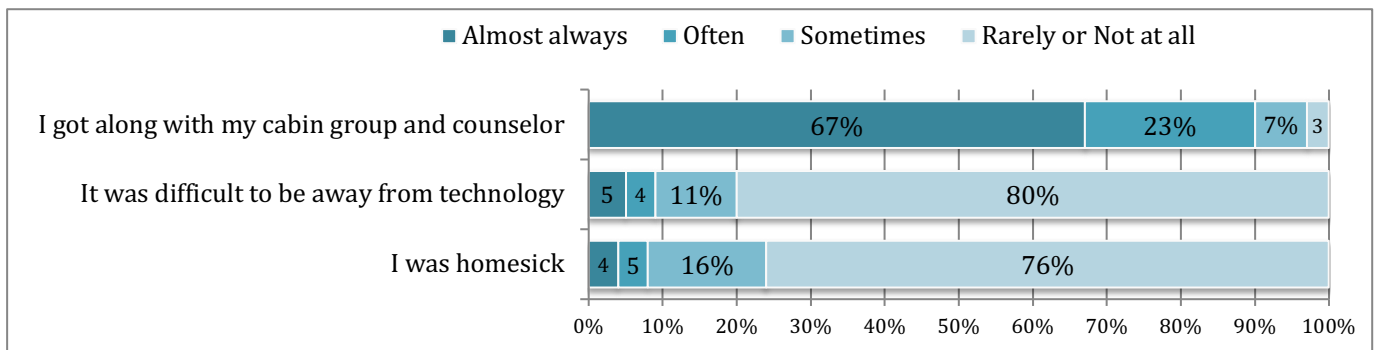
6B: What Campers Enjoyed about Camp (Last Day)



7A: Last Day Impressions of the Camp Experience (Last Day)



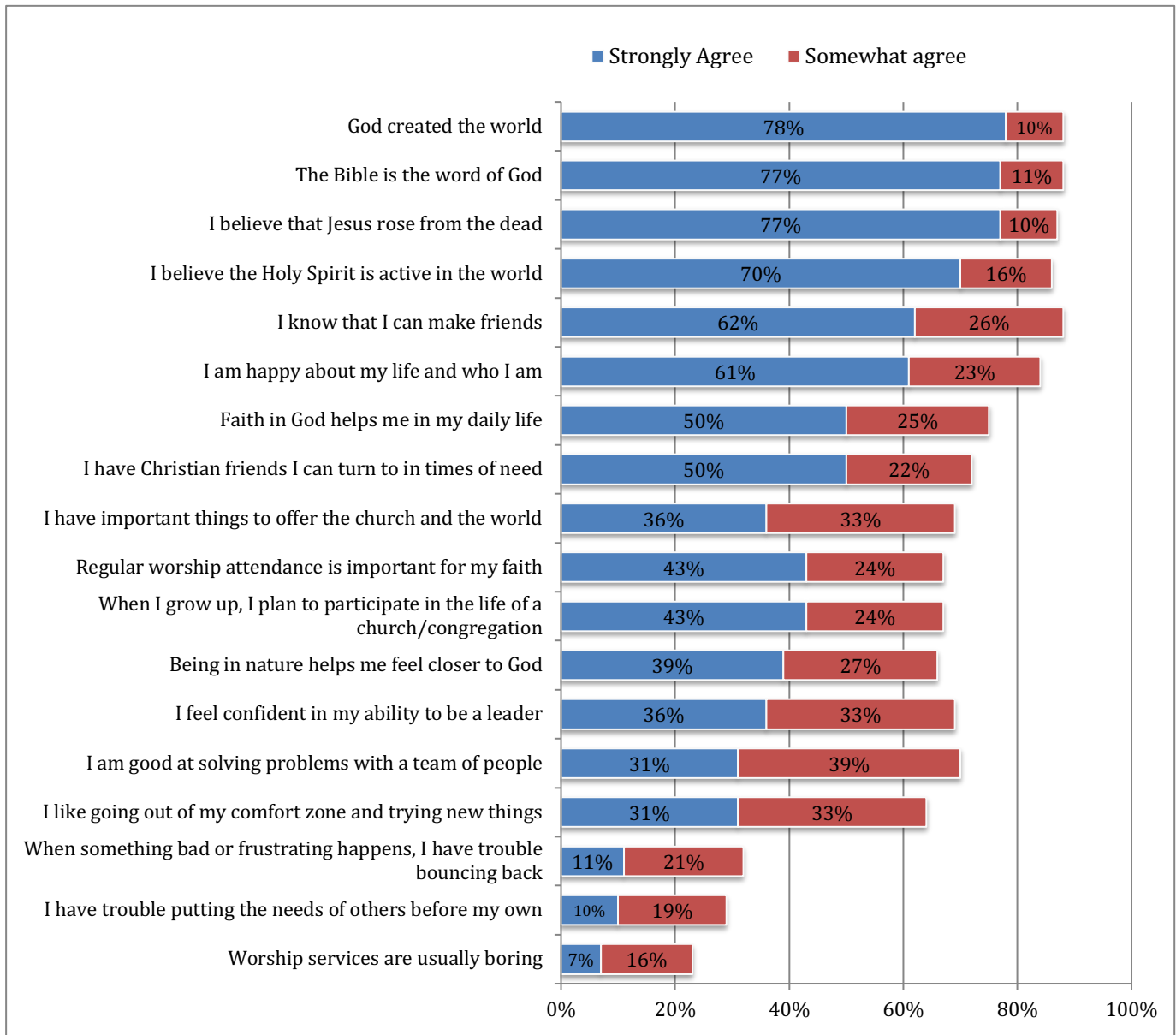
7B: Other Impressions at Camp (Last Day)



Adult Visitors: In total, **14%** of campers reported that an adult from their congregation visited them while they were at camp. This varied from camp to camp. Adult visitors were somewhat common (between 20%-30% of campers) at Eagle Sky, Mount Gilead, Mount Hermon, Camp Happyland, and Redwood Glen. This was uncommon (10% or fewer campers) at Berea, Bethany Birches, Camp Judson, Clydehurst, Miracle Camp, Wildwood Hills, and Honeyrock.

- Those who had an adult from their congregation visit were significantly more likely to agree that they were strengthened in their faith, felt like they could express their doubts about God and religion, enjoyed the Bible studies/lessons, and enjoyed the worship services.
- Those who had an adult visit reported significantly more frequent conversations with their cabin mates about God and faith.
- Those who had an adult visit were also significantly more likely to agree that they came to camp, in part, because their pastor or church youth worker encouraged them to come and that they came because they wanted to learn more about God and grow in their faith.

8A: First Day Responses to 18 Measurement Items (First Day)

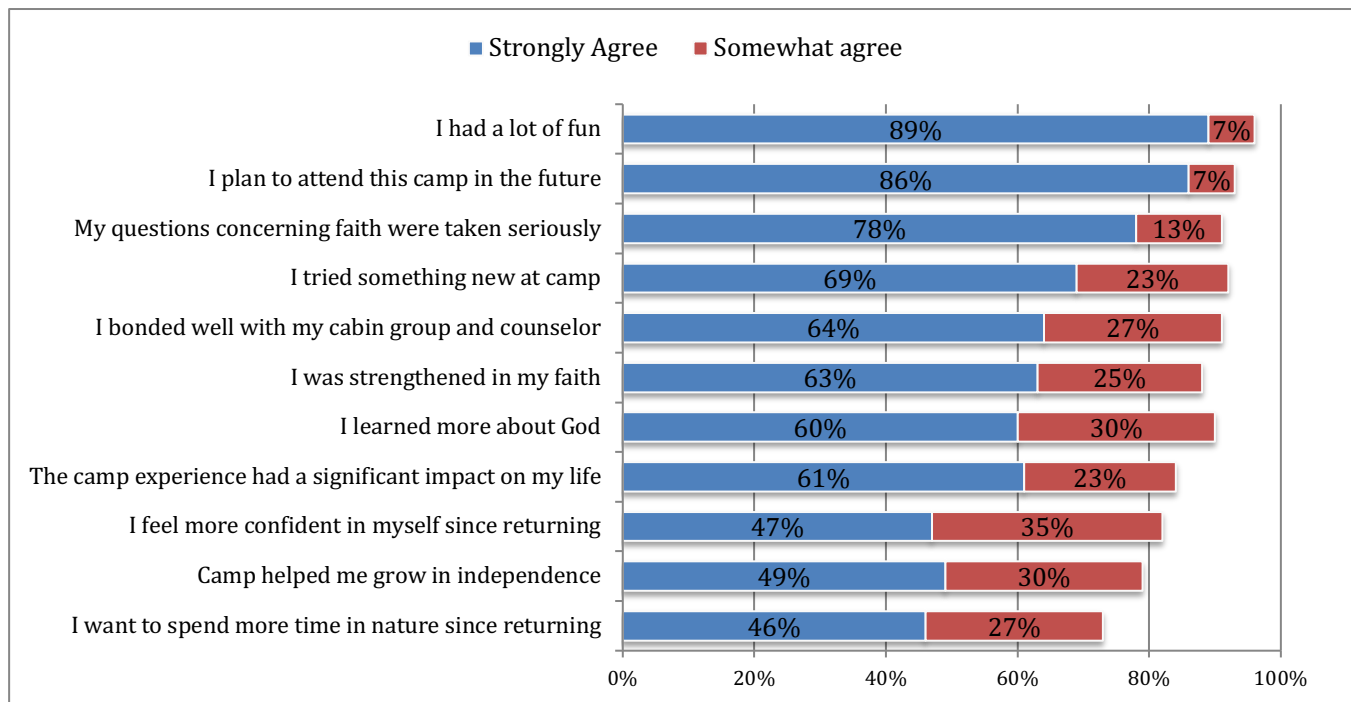


9A: Measuring Growth During the Camp Experience

The following table lists the 18 items that were included in all three questionnaires. The numbers represent the *average* level of agreement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The right-hand column indicates whether or not the observed change was statistically significant. For the statisticians in the room, the indicators are **YES** ($p < .001$), **Yes** ($p < .01$), and **Some** ($p < .05$). *None* signifies that the observed change was not statistically significant. Arrows indicate whether campers grew (↑) or declined (↓) in the measurement.

Question	#	First Day Agreement	Last Day Agreement	Significant Change?
God created the world.	1527	4.64	4.70	YES ↑
I know that I can make friends.	1553	4.47	4.62	YES ↑
Worship services are usually boring.	1375	2.43	2.11	YES ↓
I am good at solving problems with a team of people.	1509	3.86	3.95	Yes ↑
I believe that the Holy Spirit is active in the world.	1501	4.52	4.67	YES ↑
Regular worship attendance is important for my faith.	1437	3.93	4.07	YES ↑
I have important things to offer the church and the world.	1382	3.96	4.18	YES ↑
Faith in God helps me in my daily life.	1440	4.14	4.35	YES ↑
I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things.	1532	3.72	3.94	YES ↑
I feel confident in my ability to be a leader.	1517	3.87	4.05	YES ↑
When something bad or frustrating happens, I have trouble bouncing back	1469	2.80	2.64	YES ↓
I believe that Jesus rose from the dead.	1459	4.60	4.68	YES ↑
Being in nature helps me feel closer to God.	1453	3.90	4.09	YES ↑
The Bible is the word of God	1471	4.64	4.71	YES ↑
I have Christian friends I can turn to in times of need.	1461	4.02	4.06	none
When I grow up, I plan to participate in the life of a church/congregation.	1362	3.96	4.12	YES ↑
I am happy about my life and who I am.	1495	4.40	4.47	Yes ↑
I have trouble putting the needs and wants of others before my own	1434	2.65	2.55	Yes ↓

9B: Follow-Up Impressions of the Camp Experience (Follow-up, 519 campers)



10A: Power of Camp 18 Measurements Analysis, including cases with all 3 surveys matched

Question	n	T1	T2	T3
God created the world.	290	4.76	4.83**	4.83**
I know that I can make friends.	288	4.54	4.68**	4.73***
<i>Worship services are usually boring.</i>	265	2.25	1.83***	2.00**
I AM GOOD AT SOLVING PROBLEMS WITH A TEAM OF PEOPLE.	283	3.99	4.00	4.23***
I believe that the Holy Spirit is active in the world.	280	4.70	4.80*	4.83**
REGULAR WORSHIP ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT FOR MY FAITH.	273	4.22	4.26	4.39**
I HAVE IMPORTANT THINGS TO OFFER THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.	261	4.21	4.35*	4.44***
FAITH IN GOD HELPS ME IN MY DAILY LIFE	274	4.35	4.57***	4.64***
I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things.	287	3.77	4.01***	4.01***
I FEEL CONFIDENT IN MY ABILITY TO BE A LEADER.	280	3.94	4.14***	4.21***
<i>When something bad or frustrating happens I have trouble bouncing back</i>	279	2.78	2.54**	2.80
I believe that Jesus rose from the dead.	278	4.81	4.86	4.86
Being in nature helps me feel closer to God.	269	4.07	4.28***	4.29***
The Bible is the word of God	276	4.84	4.88	4.86
I HAVE CHRISTIAN FRIENDS I CAN TURN TO IN TIMES OF NEED	280	4.18	4.25	4.36**
WHEN I GROW UP, I PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE OF A CHURCH/CONGREGATION	251	4.29	4.39	4.47**
<i>I am happy about my life and who I am.</i>	279	4.46	4.54*	4.50
I HAVE TROUBLE PUTTING THE NEEDS AND WANTS OF OTHERS BEFORE MY OWN	273	2.52	2.45	2.35*

Asterisks indicate that the T2 or T3 value was significantly different from T1 at $p < .05$ (), $p < .01$ (**), or $p < .001$ (***).

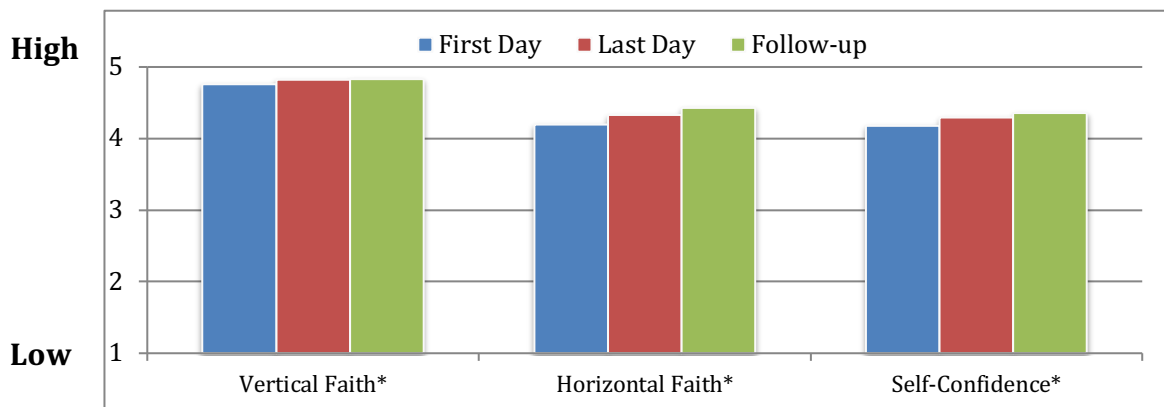
- Only two of the above 18 variables showed no change through the duration of the study. These were “I believe that Jesus rose from the dead” and “The Bible is the word of God.” It is notable that these items began in T1 higher than any other variable, leaving almost no room for growth, so the lack of statistical change may not indicate a lack of growth but rather the limitations of a 5-point scale. Numerically, the average increased, though not significantly.
- Five of the variables showed significant growth from the first day to the last day of camp that was **maintained** through the follow-up survey (T3). These are indicated in bold.
- Only three of the variables showed evidence of a sort of *camp high*, growing significantly from the first day to the last day but then showing significant post-camp decline in the months following camp. These are indicted in italics.
- The remaining eight variables showed evidence of POST-CAMP GROWTH following the camp experience. These are indicated in all capital letters. With the exception of “I have Christian friends I can turn to in times of need,” all of these showed significant growth from the first day to the last day of camp (see table 9A). They showed continued growth through the follow-up survey. It is possible that camp served as a sort of catalyst for ongoing growth in these measurements. However, the data suggest that this perceived post-camp growth is actually related to **breakdowns in the camp model**. Some campers that experienced a breakdown in the camp model actually regressed in certain measurements from the first day to the last day, rebounding to pre-camp levels by the follow-up. The inclusion of these individuals in the data set make the average growth from the first day to the last day appear small, though campers with positive camp experiences exhibited the typical pattern of growth that was maintained through the follow-up.

Does it Last?

In order to get a more succinct picture of their overall growth, several items that were answered in all three surveys were combined to form three indices:

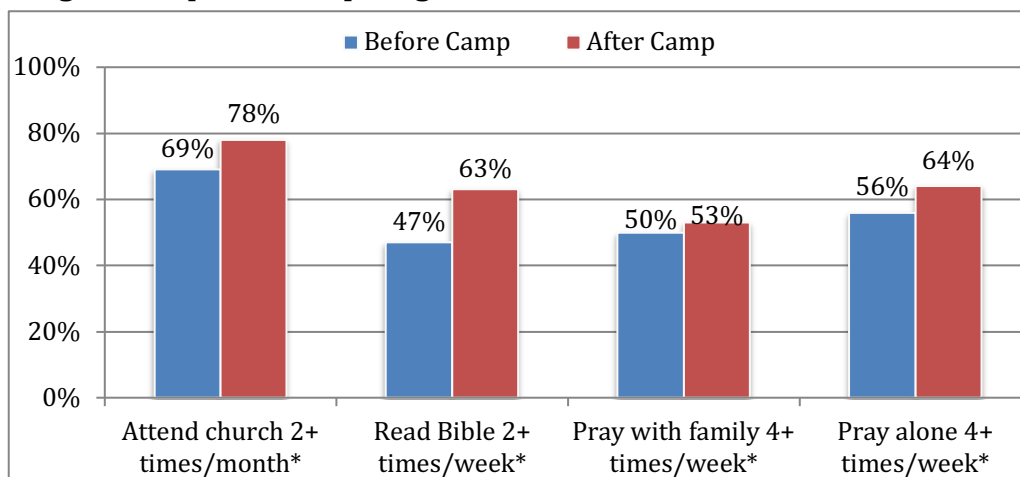
1. **Vertical faith** (or *cognitive belief*): “I believe that Jesus rose from the dead,” “I believe the Holy Spirit is active in the world,” “God created the world,” and “The Bible is the Word of God.”
2. **Horizontal faith** (or *faith relevance*): “Faith in God helps me in my daily life,” “I have important things to offer the church and the world,” “When I grow up, I plan to participate in the life of a church/congregation,” and “I have Christian friends I could turn to in times of need.”
3. **Self-confidence**: “I know that I can make friends,” “I am good at solving problems with a team of people,” “I am happy about my life and who I am,” and “I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things.”

11A: Camper Outcome Indices, including only those who completed all 3 surveys ($n=290$)



The growth pattern at participating camps shows consistency across all three indices. There was significant positive growth from the first day of camp to the last day of camp, and this growth was entirely retained through the follow-up survey 2-3 months following camp. It is notable that the Vertical Faith measurement began extremely high (4.75 on a 5-point scale), but it still showed significant positive growth. Horizontal faith and self-confidence show irregular step patterns due to negative experiences of a sizeable number of campers that kept the last day averages lower than normal.

11B: Percentage of Campers Participating in Christian Practices 2 Months Before and After Camp



Participation in Christian practices increased following camp. The increase was statistically significant for all four of the above practices. The growth was least apparent for family prayer.

Factors that Contributed to Camper Growth

Not every camper showed evidence for growth in belief, faith relevance, and self-confidence. The majority, in fact, showed no growth. However, there are limitations to growth indices, so we should take campers at their word when they say that they were strengthened in their faith, learned more about God (*Figure 7A*), or claimed that camp had a significant impact on their lives (*Figure 9B*). Specifically, there were campers who literally had no room for growth in our indices. That is, they *strongly agreed* with each measurement on a specific index on the first day of camp. This was the case for 56% of the campers on the belief index, 16% on the faith relevance index, and 12% on the self-confidence index. If we remove these campers that had no possibility for growth according to our measurements, the following percentages of campers showed growth in each index:

Figure 12A: % Campers Showing Growth

Index	# campers	%
Cognitive belief	650	65%
Faith relevance	1277	57%
Self-confidence	1395	54%

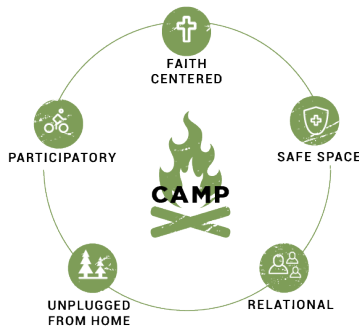
The figures in 12A represent some differences from the same figures from the 2018 data set. Growth in self-confidence was identical in 2019 and 2018. Growth in faith relevance was slightly higher in 2018 (60%). However, growth in cognitive belief was significantly higher in 2018, when 74% of campers exhibited growth in this outcome.

In 2018, the study isolated 3 key factors that contributed to campers showing growth in each index. While these factors proved important among 2019 campers, the effects were not as significant as in 2018. The 3 factors identified in 2018 were:

1. Increased agreement with: "I liked/enjoyed my cabin counselor/group leader."
2. Increased frequency of: "I got along really well with my cabin group and counselor."
3. Increased frequency of: "I had conversations with my cabin mates about God and faith."

In 2019, the impacts of these 3 key factors were partially diluted in the data set because the 5 fundamental characteristics were uneven across the camps. Additionally, there were other key factors for the individual growth indices. For both the self-confidence and faith relevance indices, the most important single factor identified was increased frequency of: "I felt like I had a say in my camp experience and my input mattered." This item is a key indicator of the participatory characteristic of camp. For camp to be most effective, campers must have agency in their experience.

For the belief index, the two most important factors identified were increased enjoyment with "The Bible studies and lessons" and "worship services." These are indicators of the faith-centered characteristic of camp. Campers that did not enjoy the faith-forming aspects of camp were less likely to grow in faith or belief.



The Christian Camp Model

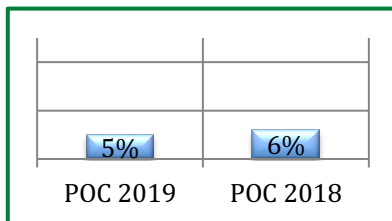
The Effective Camp Research Project (ECRP) has demonstrated that there are 5 fundamental characteristics that, when present, give rise to a Christian camp experience that is demonstrably impactful in the weeks immediately following camp. The findings also show that when one characteristic breaks down, the entire model breaks down. This has real consequences for the quality of the experience, the types of impacts, and the desire to return to camp.

Frequency of potential breakdowns at Power of Camp camps in 2019:

Breakdowns in the camp model are not simple or cut-and-dry, so the percentages below are *indicators* only. The camper survey uses specific metrics to determine which campers may have experienced a model breakdown during their time at camp. Each of the 5 fundamental characteristics is measured according to a combination of several variables on the last day camper survey. The percentages indicate the campers that showed a *potential* breakdown in this characteristic. The numbers from 2019 are compared with 2018.

13A: RELATIONAL

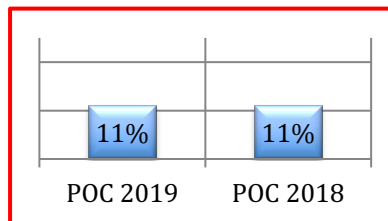
Goal: < 5%



These breakdowns were uncommon. They were determined by campers' responses to enjoyment of counselor, enjoyment of fellow campers, and reports of getting along with the cabin group.

13B: SAFE SPACE

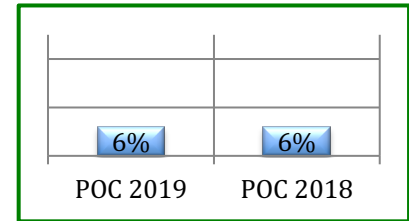
Goal: < 8%



Safe Space was a common characteristic to show breakdowns. They were determined by responses to feeling picked on/left out, feeling supported/happy at camp, and having to hide true self.

13C: UNPLUGGED FROM HOME

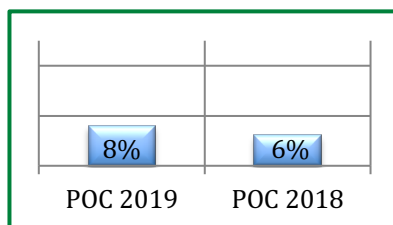
Goal: < 6%



This characteristic is difficult to measure. Breakdowns were determined by feelings of homesickness and difficulty of being away from technology, along with responses to trying something new.

13D: PARTICIPATORY

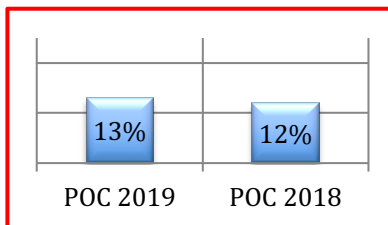
Goal: < 8%



Participatory breakdowns were determined by responses to feeling like they had a say in their camp experience, feeling included in worship, and enjoyment of games or nature time.

13E: FAITH CENTERED

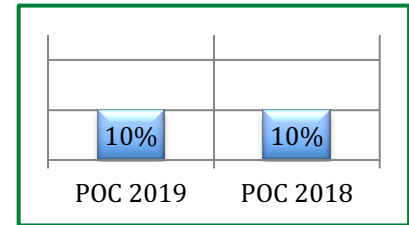
Goal: < 10%



The faith centered characteristic was inconsistent across the camps studied. Breakdowns determined by enjoyment of Bible study, freq. of faith conversations, and faith questions being taken seriously.

13F: MODEL BREAKDOWN

Goal: < 10%



This measurement combines all 5 characteristics and shows the percentage of campers that experienced potential breakdowns in 2 or more of the fundamental characteristics.

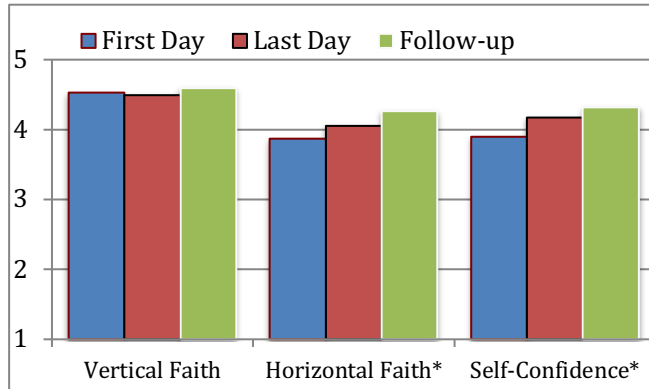
Reflections:

The above averages of breakdowns in each of the 5 characteristics belies the differences among the camps studied in 2019. Five of the camps involved in the study had no elevated levels of breakdowns in any of the 5 fundamental characteristics. In contrast, four of the camps had elevated breakdowns in *every* characteristic. The remaining three camps had elevated breakdowns in some characteristics but not others.

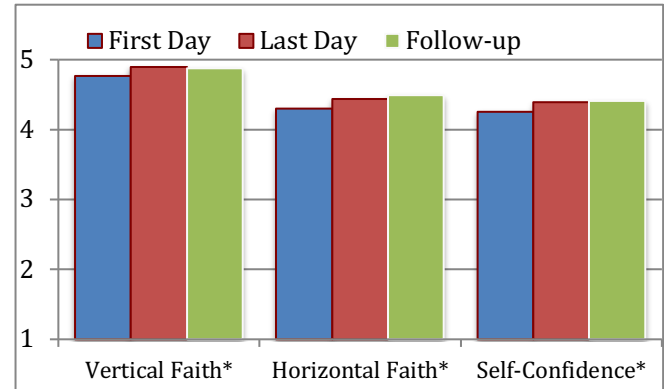
Effects of a Breakdown in the Camp Model:

Four camps in the study exhibited elevated levels of breakdowns in all 5 fundamental characteristics of camp. Five other camps exhibited no breakdowns in any of the 5 fundamental characteristics. This discrepancy allows us to compare the camper results from these camps.

14A: Camps with model BREAKDOWN ($n=51$)



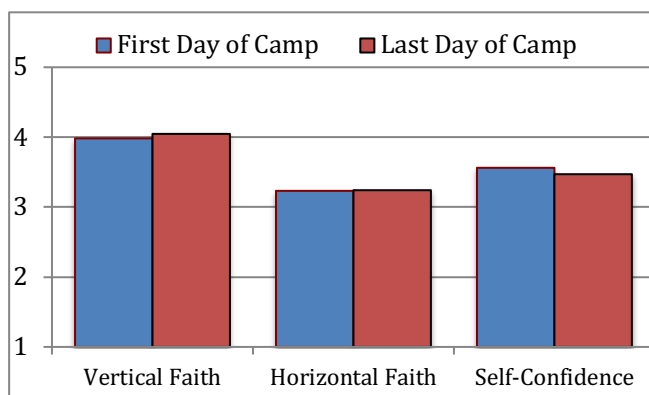
14B: Camps without Breakdown ($n=1345$)



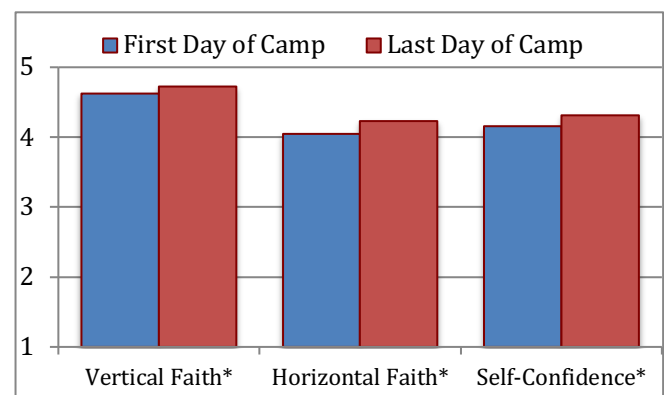
Campers attending the four camps with increased levels of breakdowns in the camp model (14A) experienced uneven growth. A majority of campers at these camps still grew in horizontal faith and self-confidence, though the growth was irregular because a high percentage of campers experienced breakdowns in the camp model and *declined* in these measurements. In contrast, the camps that did not have elevated levels of breakdowns (14B) showed consistent growth from the first day to the last day of camp, with the growth persisting through the follow-up survey. Last-day survey responses indicate the consequences of increased levels of breakdowns. For the camps with elevated levels of breakdowns, 81% of campers agreed they grew in their faith and 89% planned to return. In camps without elevated breakdowns, 92% grew in faith and 94% planned to return.

The difference in experience becomes clearer when comparing the individual campers who experienced a camp model breakdown with those who did not. Campers experiencing a model breakdown (14C) showed no growth in either faith measurement, and they *declined* in self-confidence (the follow-up indicates that most rebounded to pre-camp levels following camp). In contrast, campers without a model breakdown (14D) grew significantly in all three measurements.

14C: Campers with model BREAKDOWN ($n=141$)

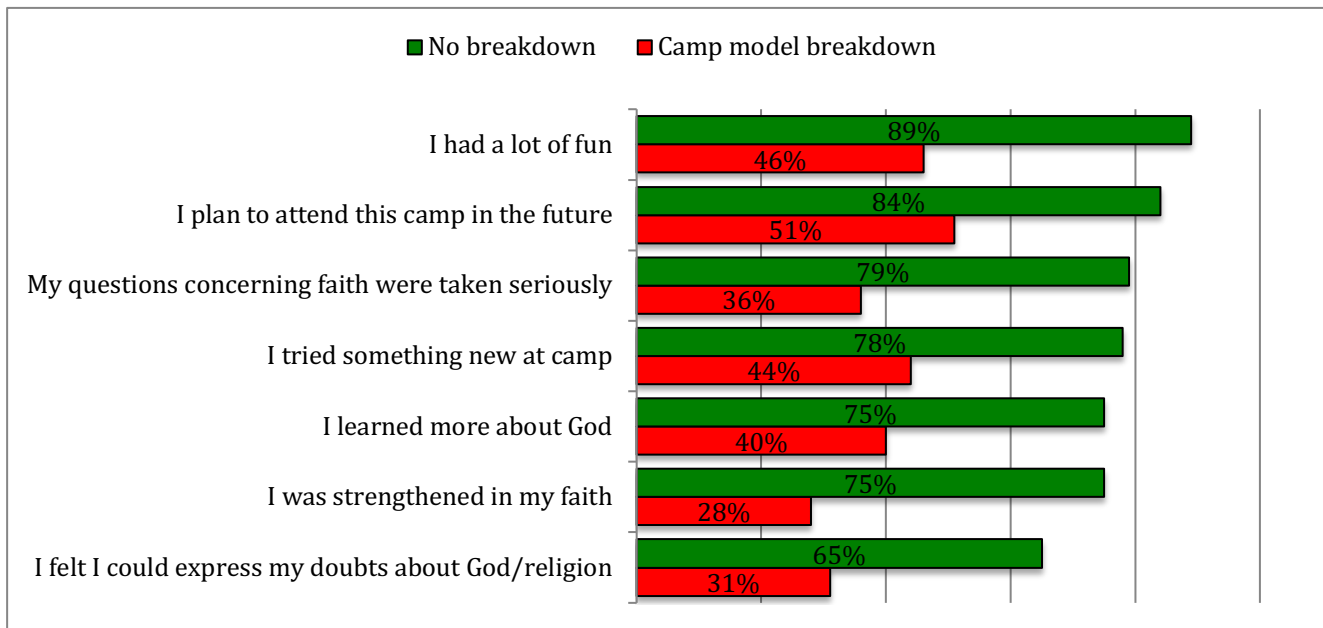


14D: Campers without Breakdown ($n=1442$)



In summary, Figures 14A-14D demonstrate that the camp experience is highly individualized in terms of model breakdowns and outcomes. Even at the camps with high levels of model breakdowns, the majority of campers had positive experiences and exhibited growth in outcomes. However, some camps were clearly better than others at facilitating effective camp experiences.

15A: The Effects of camp model Breakdown on Last Day Impressions (% *strongly agree* with statement)



Breakdowns in the camp model negatively affected perceptions of every aspect of camp. The difference in experience is even greater than that measured in the 2018 survey.

Demographic Differences Related to Model Breakdowns:

AGE:

Younger campers were more likely to experience a breakdown in the Unplugged from Home characteristic, since they are more likely to be homesick.

Older campers were more likely to experience a breakdown in Participatory, since they generally place a higher value on having a say in their camp experience. Again, camper agency is key.

FAITH BACKGROUND:

Those with less faith background were more likely to experience breakdowns in most of the fundamental characteristics, but the difference was most evident in the Faith-Centered characteristic. Campers categorized as disengaged and apathetic about church (see Figure 16B) were over 7 times more likely to experience a breakdown in Faith-Centered compared with their peers who were active and engaged in a home congregation. Additionally, those categorized as unsupported in their faith lives at home were nearly 6 times more likely to experience a breakdown in Faith-Centered compared with their peers who had strong and supported faith at home (16C).

HOME SUPPORT:

Campers who experienced unstable support at school and home were much more likely to experience breakdowns in all 5 fundamental characteristics. The difference was most pronounced in Safe Space, in which campers who were categorized as unsure of their support in home and school were more than 11 times more likely to experience a breakdown than their peers who were categorized as secure and supported at home and school (see Figure 16A). This group of campers is explored in more depth on page 18.

Partnerships and Faith Ecology

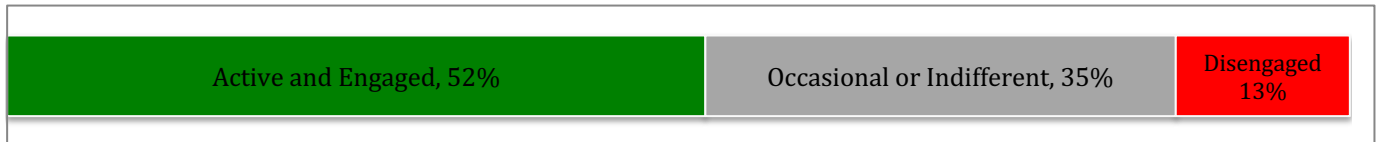
The findings of the Effective Camp Project and the Power of Camp Study make clear that camp does not function on its own, but rather as part of a larger ecology of faith formation. This ecology is different for each individual camper and includes their home life, online presence, school, extra-curricular groups, and church community. Strengthening these partnerships is of utmost importance for your camping ministry and the long-term impacts associated with the camp experience.

16A: Feelings of Support at Home and School:



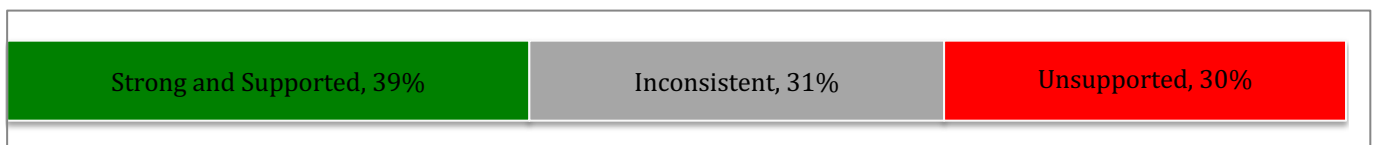
Feeling secure and supported in the home and school environments is essential for positive youth development. This is also the dimension of the campers' lives on which camps have the *least* amount of direct impact. For various reasons, young people may feel unhappy or unsupported in these environments. *This does NOT indicate that they are physically unsafe or are in immediate danger, since questions assessing these concerns were not included in the camper survey.* Those who were unsure about support (17% of POC campers) generally have much lower levels of self-confidence (according to our measurements), are more likely to feel homesick at camp, less likely to get along with their cabin group and enjoy fellow campers, and much more likely to feel picked on or left out at camp. These numbers are statistically equivalent with 2018.

16B: Church Engagement:



Camps and congregations are typically close partners in ministry. The camper survey examines this partnership from the campers' perspectives by measuring not only how frequently they attend worship services but how *engaged* they feel in the life of their home congregation. The Power of Camp Study has demonstrated that camp experiences help increase this engagement. Camp experiences are most effective for faith formation when they are combined with worship attendance and feelings of belonging in a home congregation. Campers who are "active and engaged" attend church at least monthly, do not agree that worship services are usually boring, feel included in worship services at least sometimes, and agree that regular church attendance is important for their life of faith. About half of POC campers were active and had robust support in their home congregations, while 13% had an almost complete lack of church connection.

16C: Faith in the Home:



No other measurement better predicts camper faith measurements than faith in the home. This is also the external characteristic on which camp can have the *greatest* effect. Remember that some campers come to the immersive faith experience of camp with very little faith support in the home (30% of 2019 POC campers). They return to these same home environments with the potential to influence them through things such as family prayer at meal times, family devotions, and conversations about God and faith. Just over a third of POC campers (39%) came from homes in which their faith was strong and supported (frequent conversations about God/faith, family prayer multiple times per week, and personal prayer or Bible study at least several times per week). Camps ranged widely in this measurement, from a high of 60% "strong and supported" faith in the home to a low of just 16%.

Differences Among Camps

Camps varied widely in their clientele and programs. As noted above, they also differed sharply in their effective use of the camp model. This inconsistency in the camp model is partially due to the differing contexts of these camps and their campers. The camp model is only effective to the extent that it is applied to specific contextual realities.

Several of the participating camps served a high percentage of at-risk young people. Five camps had fewer than half of their campers categorized as having a “secure and supported” home environment (see Figure 16A), including two camps (Wildwood Hills and Camp Happyland) that served more kids categorized as “support unsure” than those categorized as “secure and supported.” These camps have different challenges in ensuring camp is a *safe space* than camps serving a lower percentage of at-risk youth.

Two camps (Wildwood Hills and Bethany Birches) served more unchurched or religiously disengaged campers than those who were active and engaged in a congregation. This also greatly affects the camp environment and presents numerous challenges to the *faith-centered* characteristic of camp. On the other side of the spectrum, three camps (HoneyRock, Miracle Camp, and Eagle Sky of the Ozarks) served camper populations with more than two-thirds active and engaged in a home congregation. These campers were naturally more receptive to engaging in Christian practices at camp and growing in their faith.

There were also clear differences in diversity. Participating camps had as many as 93% of their campers white/Caucasian and as low as 16% (Camp Happyland).

Intervention

This was the first year that camps repeated the study from a previous summer, allowing us to begin comparing results over time. Two of these camps (Redwood Glen and Camp Judson) reported implementing specific interventions as a result of their 2018 study findings. In both cases, these interventions resulted in measurable results.

Redwood Glen responded to their high breakdown rate in the *safe space* measurement by adopting a new program strategy for afternoon activity time in 2019. This was designed to make afternoons feel less like school recess, which is often interpreted as unsafe for children accustomed to being picked on or left out. In the new program, there was more staff supervision and direction of camper activities. As a result of this intervention, Redwood Glen reduced the breakdown rate in the *safe space* measurement by 5 percentage points from 2018 to 2019.

Camp Judson leadership staff was surprised by how many of their campers came from homes where faith was not practiced regularly. They responded in 2019 by adding an instructional time focused on prayer before the first camp meal on Sunday evening. The summer staff were intentional throughout the week about engaging the campers in prayer and encouraging the campers themselves to pray both aloud and silently. In the follow-up survey, the results were clear. The percentage of campers reporting that they were praying with their families four or more times per week nearly doubled, from just 38% reporting this on the first day of camp to 67% in the months following camp.

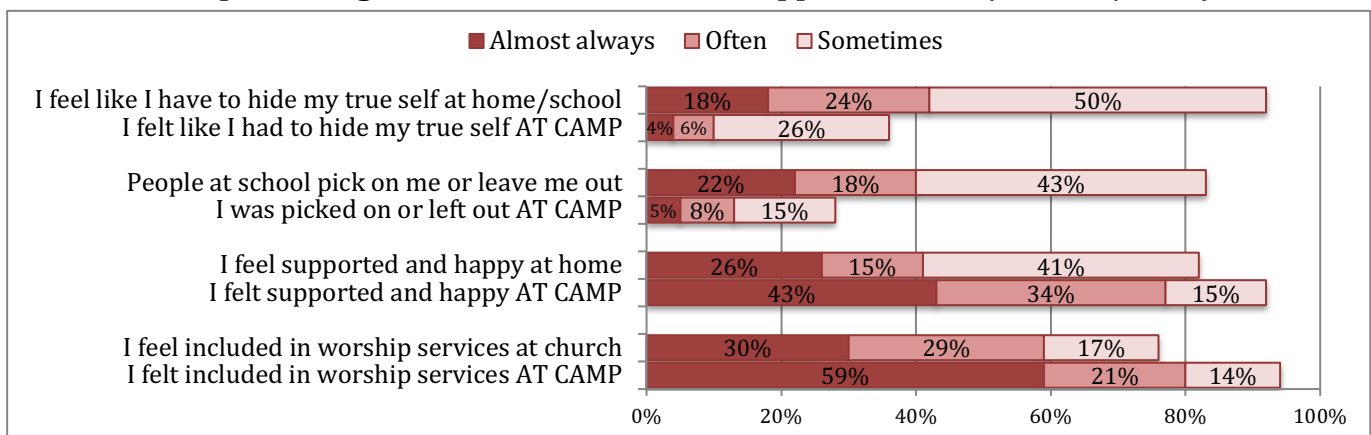
Does Camp Work for At-Risk Kids?

318 responding campers (17%) were categorized as having *unsure support* at home and school. This means that at least two of the following three things were true on their first day survey:

1. They indicated feeling safe and happy at home only sometimes, rarely, or not at all.
2. Indicated feeling like they had to hide their true self at home or school sometimes, often, or always.
3. Indicated that people at school pick on them or leave them out sometimes, often, or always.

As a group, these campers reported very positive experiences, including 90% agreeing that they learned more about God and 82% agreeing that they were strengthened in their faith. While these figures are lower than their peers (see Figure 7A), they are still very positive. Additionally, these campers showed growth in the faith relevance measurement, which continued through the follow-up survey. Growth in belief (vertical faith) was non-significant for this group, and the self-confidence measurement showed uneven growth because of the number of individuals experiencing a breakdown in the safe space characteristic.

18A: Impressions of Home (First Day) Compared with Impressions AT CAMP (Last Day) for Campers Categorized as Unsure of their Support at Home/School (n=255)



It is clear from Figure 18A that, while campers coming from unsupportive home and school environments experienced more breakdowns in safe space at camp than their peers (see Figure 6A), they experienced camp as more supportive overall than their home and school environments. They were more susceptible to feeling picked on or left out because of past experiences, which their cabinmates may not know about. Over three-quarters of these campers (77%) felt supported and happy at camp often or always. This is a positive sign that camp is a healthy place for a large majority of them. It is important to remember that 93% of their peers (not categorized as unsure of support at home) felt supported and happy at camp often or always.

The experiences of at-risk campers differed according to the makeup of the camp they attended. About half attended camps where the majority of campers had *secure and supported* home and school environments. These campers were picked on and felt they had to hide their true selves far less than their peers who attended one of the 5 camps in which only a minority of campers had a secure and supported home and school environment. The difference was especially clear for campers who were picked on or left out. Those who indicated they were picked on or left out “almost always” at home or school were compared based on the makeup of their camps. Of those attending camps that were majority secure and supported, only 18% reported being picked on or left out sometimes, often, or always. In comparison, of those attending camps in which the majority of campers did not come from secure and supported homes, 53% reported the same.

These data suggest that at-risk campers may have a more positive experience when a majority of their fellow campers come from secure and supportive homes. However, it is important to note that these findings are far from conclusive, as the study did not assess the different qualities of each camp or the range of experiences that might be included in feelings of being picked on or left out.

