



# FOCUS TRAINING 5

Publication series prepared specifically for training summer camp volunteers.

## SPIRITUAL COUNSELING



### INTRODUCING SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

The Counselor should take the initiative to introduce spiritual conversation with every camper under his or her watch. This should be done one-on-one and should be done early in the session. Some leading questions are:

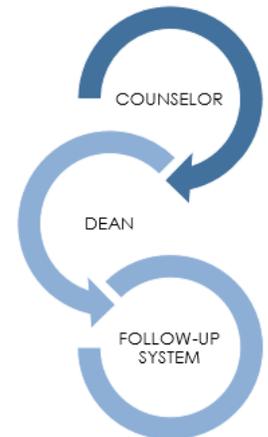
- Where do you attend church?
- Are you a Christian?
- What activities are you involved in at church?
- Why did you come to camp?
- Do you ever read the Bible?
- Tell me about your spiritual walk.

Once you determine where the camper is coming from spiritually, then ask other questions that help the camper know you are interested in them.

Do not be judgmental of them or their family. Once you have opened a door for dialogue, involve the Scriptures and/or the Dean in the conversation. Refer campers who want to accept Christ to the Dean.

Do not pray what is called "The Sinner's Prayer" with the campers as it has no Biblical basis. If a camper wants to accept Christ as Savior, they must be shown the role of baptism and Holy Spirit. (Acts 19) But, do pray with the camper. You can pray for God's leading, for continued growth, for commitment, for forgiveness, etc.

### THE SPIRITUAL COUNSELING CHAIN



### SIX BASIC NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

1. The need to believe that life is meaningful and has purpose.
2. The need for a sense of community and deeper relationships.
3. The need to be appreciated and loved.
4. The need to be listened to and to be heard.
5. The need to feel that one is growing in faith.
6. The need for practical help in developing a mature faith.

*(George Gallup Pole - 1992)*



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## RULES FOR SAFE COUNSELING

1. When feasible, counsel in teams.
2. Never counsel alone, always be in sight of others.  
(At a table, under a tree, on a bench, on the playground, at a pavilion, etc.)
3. Do not counsel alone with a camper in a dorm.  
(The porch might be okay, if others are within sight.)
4. Always have the camper and yourself fully clothed while counseling. If a need for counseling comes while you are changing clothes, finish dressing before beginning.
5. If you feel a camper has a crush on you, consider having someone else do the counseling.
6. Have a hands-off policy while counseling. It is okay to hold hands for prayer, give a hug of affirmation at the close or hold a sobbing campers.
7. Show compassion without it being misunderstood for affection.
8. Do not spend too long with a camper. Most times, 5 minutes will be enough. If the counseling session requires more than 15 minutes, you should have at least two counselors present.

## DOCTRINAL TRADITION

The teachings at camp should fall well within the traditional position of the supporting churches as a group. You should teach only what is held in common by these churches.

Campers should be encouraged to study the Scriptures on their own to determine their own doctrinal position of Biblical issues.

Leaders who cannot agree on doctrine must take care not to draw campers into their disagreement.

The Camp Manager has the responsibility to keep the teaching program on a sound course consistent with the traditional position of the Restoration Movement.

The following is offered as a guide to a few areas that have suffered as problems in the past:

- Not eternal security, but neither eternal insecurity.
- Not faith only, but neither baptism only.
- Not speaking in tongues, but not neglecting the role of the Holy Spirit.
- Teaching on rededication should also include teaching on the Lord's Supper.

## CONCERNING PROOF TEXTING

When one takes isolated verses of Scripture and uses them to prove a point or form a doctrine, it is called proof texting. It is not an accurate way to understand Scripture as it ignores other relevant Scripture or it does not allow for the context.

Proof texting is often used to defend differing views of the plan of salvation and is a popular method used by tract writers. When it comes to the plan of salvation, a more accurate method of study is to do case studies of those who were actually accepting Christ. All of those case studies taking place after the establishment of the church can be found in the book of Acts.

## THREE RULES FOR EFFECTIVE COUNSELING

1. LISTEN. LISTEN. LISTEN. It's not what you know, it's how well you listen.
2. Ask clarifying questions.
3. Let the camper find the solution or resolution.



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## THE PLAN OF SALVATION

God's plan for redeeming the world is revealed by understanding the entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments.

When it comes to "what must I do to be saved," the answer comes primarily from the book of Acts because that is where the question was asked.

The basis of God's plan is communication – someone must teach and someone must listen. (Acts 8:30-31) Once this takes place and the listener wants to respond, the Scriptures are quite clear.

**The Beginning.** We begin the salvation process when we recognize that we have sinned against God and are hopelessly lost from the presence of God. It starts with a strong desire to surrender your life to the will of God and ask for His forgiveness. (Acts 2:37, 16:29-30)

**Believe.** Not just acknowledge but believe that God really can save you. Even the devil acknowledges the presence of God. (James 2:19) Believe enough to trust him with your life like a jailer did in Acts 16:31.

**Repent.** Telling someone that God expects them to change what they are doing is often included in the answers given to questions concerning salvation. Acts 2:38 is a good example. Another example is when Paul was on the road to Damascus when he realized he was working against God, and decided to change and do what God told him to do. (Acts 8 and 22)

**Baptize.** Every person in the book of Acts who chose to accept Christ was baptized. It was not a "magic formula," but Peter tells us later it was the answer of a good conscience. (1 Peter 3:21) Some mistakenly teach that Paul was saved when he saw the bright light on the road to Damascus, but Paul himself says his sins were not washed away until he was baptized. (Acts 22:16)

**Serve.** The book of James makes it really clear that no one was saved to sit. If your response to God is real, then you will be active for him.

**Forgiveness.** When one is forgiven, he should learn to forgive others. Do not neglect the teaching of this truth.

**The Church.** The new Christian needs to assemble with other Christians. Be sure they understand the purpose of the church.

**Note:** Some teach that one is saved by faith alone and they base that on Romans 1:17. A careful reading of this passage of Scripture will show that it is not talking about the process of a sinner coming to Christ, but rather of the overall approach Christians are to take toward God. God's ability to save us must simply be accepted on faith. It is true that we are saved by God's grace since He must be willing to forgive us.

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## TYPES OF INVITATIONS OFFERED

### 1. The invitation to accept Christ.

This is to be coupled with extensive counseling.

### 2. The invitation to commit their life to specialized Christian service.

This decision should be followed up by the home minister as how to prepare for service.

### 3. The invitation to rededicate their life.

This invitation becomes a little more complicated as one of the purposes of the camp program is to get each camper to rededicate his or her life. But some campers feel the need to do it in a special way in front of others at a time of worship. This invitation should be followed up with prayer, counseling and teaching concerning the role of the Lord's Supper.

**Other public responses:** may include requests for prayer or help with deep spiritual burdens. These should be handled on a case-by-case basis.

**Note on rebaptism:** The Scriptures do not teach rebaptism into Christ but in Acts 19, some followers of Jesus who had been baptized into John's baptism were baptized into the baptism of Jesus. Sometimes a camper was baptized early in life for a wrong reason and will come under conviction while at camp to respond anew to Christ. When this happens, care should be taken to make sure the new decision is valid. Often, the first decision was valid, but did not carry all of the emotional trappings of a baptism at camp, thus the camper thinks the first decision was not valid. As campers age, they learn more about Christ and sin, so they confuse rebaptism and rededication.



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## PROBLEMS WE ARE NOT EQUIPPED TO HANDLE

- Some behavioral problems need consistent and professional counseling.
- Some spiritual problems need an "at-home mentor" and a caring church.
- Some family problems need the involvement of a state agency as well as a caring church.
- Clarify needs with the Dean to be included in the Dean's Report and consult with the Camp Manager for follow-up action.

## WHAT IS SUCCESS?

An excerpt from "A Survival Guide for Retreat Counselors" by Stan White and Sheri Evans.

**RENEWED PERSONAL COMMITMENT:** Spend time with God daily. His Word is where you'll find strength in times of weakness and fuel when you're running on empty. Prayer, for yourself and for each camper, is a vital ingredient in a fruitful ministry. You'll be surprised at the spiritual growth spurt you'll experience from this brief episode... If you are disciplined and totally dependent upon Him.

**UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS:** Often we think of spirituality in terms of big decisions: salvation, rededication, and so on. In reality it is made up of little ones, such as deciding to get along with parents or a sibling, helping at home, remaining sexually pure until marriage, submitting to authority, maintaining personal integrity or spending time daily in God's Word. Yes, salvation is the first step toward spiritual growth, but do not judge your success as a counselor on how many campers you lead to Christ, rather by your faithfulness to Him.

Let God work through you as you imitate Jesus Christ. Watch God work in the lives of your campers, and be prepared for God to work in your life.

Years from now, may your campers say they remember their leader who spoke the word of God to them. May they consider the outcome of your way of life and imitate your faith.

## PHONING FOR PERMISSION TO BAPTIZE

If a camper desires to be baptized at camp, the Camp Dean will phone the camper's parents for permission.

It is best to have the camper present when the phone call is made. This allows the parent to talk with the camper to determine sincerity. Parents are wary of their child simply "following the crowd" because other campers are getting baptized.

Baptism is always taught as the biblical perspective of being "into Christ." They are not being baptized into the "Christian Church/ Church of Christ Denomination." The church they attend is a matter to be worked out with the camper and his parents. Knowing this will help parents who do not attend a Restoration Movement church to understand that this baptism is an act of obedience to Christ and not proselyting.

## BAPTISMAL SERVICE

A camper should not be baptized at camp without the expressed consent of the camper's parent or guardian. If the parents desire to be present for the camper's baptism, every effort should be made to honor that desire.

Baptisms should take place in the swimming pool. If the camper desires to be baptized in the river, please consult the Camp Manager. Campers should dress modestly for baptisms. Play clothes, with a swimsuit beneath would be appropriate. Those doing the baptizing should also dress modestly. A counselor should be available with a towel following the baptism.

## WHO SHOULD BAPTIZE CAMPERS

The Dean should organize the baptismal service and designate the person to do the baptizing. The camper should be asked if they have a preference. If no preference is given, the Dean should designate the baptizer based on other circumstances. (Is someone already in the water doing other baptisms? Who has had a great influence on the camper?)

Sometimes the parent wishes to do the baptizing. Most campers know only what they have seen at church, so they assume the preacher does the baptizing.

**CAUTION:** On rare occasions, a counselor will put more emphasis on who should do the baptizing. A counselor should not seek to feed their own ego by talking the camper into letting him do the baptizing.