Camp Ministry Research
What we know and how it can help our ministries

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Common Perceptions

- Camp is theologically shallow.
- Camp is all fun and games.
- Camp ruins kids for church.
- Camp is a Mountaintop Experience.
- Any benefits fade quickly after the experience.
Peer Relationships
Independence
Social Comfort
Friendship Skills
Environmental Awareness
Leadership
Self Esteem
Adventure and Exploration
Values and Decision Making
Spirituality

National Study of Youth and Religion 2003-2008

- 39% of all American teenagers have been to a religious summer camp at least once
- 53% of Mainline Protestants
National Study of Youth and Religion 2003-2008

- Those who attended camp as youth were significantly more likely to participate in communal religious practices as young adults, including church attendance.

- Those who attended camp as youth were over 3 times more likely to remain religious 5 years later than those who did not attend.


www.theconfirmationproject.com
Fall 2014 Camp Survey Summary

- 332 individual camps representing 50 states
- 16% Episcopal Church
- 22% Presbyterian Church (USA)
- 26% Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- 34% United Methodist Church
- 4% Other (American Baptist, UCC, Mennonite, LCMS, Brethren, Non-Denominational)
Geographic Location

- Northeast 16%
- South 31%
- Midwest 34%
- West 19%

ELCA camps are concentrated in the Midwest (61.2%) and Episcopal camps are concentrated in the South (49.1%).

Other Details

- 99% are co-educational
- 51% are ACA accredited
- Average cost of 1 week summer camp: $383
- Average summer staff salary: $223
- 2/3 report 10% or less minority campers (only 2% report more than 50%)
- 84% report at least 10% of campers receive $ aid
- ¼ of camps report having 1 full time staff member or none at all
LOM Camps in 2014

• More than 80% of responding directors were male
• Least diverse campers and staff members
• Much more focus on outdoors, in general
• Noticeably higher rates of offering travelling day camp, family camp, and confirmation camp
• Highest, on average, in measures of faith formation and connection to congregational ministries

Camp is a place to unplug from technology (no cell phones, computers).

93% “agree” or “strongly agree”
40% do not use or see multi-media/technology even weekly
***“Unplug” does not necessarily mean “no multi-media”***

2014 Camp Director Survey
Faith formation/practices should be incorporated into all aspects of camp life.

92% “agree” or “strongly agree”

2014 Camp Director Survey

Top 6 Priorities of Camp

Fall 2014 Survey of 332 Mainline Camps

1. Participant safety
2. Fellowship/community building
3. Self esteem/character building
4. Facilitating participants’ experiences of or encounters with God
5. Individual faith formation
6. FUN for all participants
6 Big Ideas from Research

1. Camp is more than FUN and GAMES
2. Christian camp experiences lead to greater engagement in congregations and Christian community.
3. Camps are effective because they take Christian community seriously.
4. Camps are effective because they are places to UNPLUG.
5. Camps are effective because they take young people seriously.
6. Camps are effective because they take experience seriously.
Day Camp  Adult retreats
Residential Camp  Service-Learning
Family Camp  Conferences
Adventure trips  Church retreats

What is Christian camp?

Theologically shallow?
All fun and games?
Mountaintop experience?
Life-changing?

All Camps in USA
(11 million summer campers)

Profit  Non-profit  Religious (25%)  Agency
Jewish  Christian  Muslim

Conversion  Nurture

UMC  PC(USA)  Lutheran  UCC
(175,000)

VA  WA  WV  WI  WY

Age 11-14
6 CAMPS

15 groups
386 parents
1200 camper surveys

Target
Narrow Focus
% of surveyed parents agreeing with statement (out of 386).

- Child’s experience was at least 8 out of 10: 94%
- My child had fun at camp: 97%
- Child grew in self confidence: 81%
- My child grew in his/her faith: 90%
- It is clear that camp impacted my child: 92%
- My child met an adult role model: 87%
He has been more self-confident and wants to be more in charge of himself. He also talked about his faith and questions he had raised there. Interestingly, he held back on something they talked about because he felt it was personal to the individual having shared it. He seemed on the edge of a big change.

(Lutherdale parent)

She always comes back saying “please and thank you.” She reminds us all to use kind words and she tries much harder to help out and be pleasant. She also reads her Bible a lot.

(Sugar Creek parent)

She is excited and happier, more willing to connect with others. She is more considerate and she adds in things when we are talking like, “I wonder if Jesus did this?” and she is a little more willing to help others. She is listening better, too. It’s not extreme changes, but I notice them.

(Camp Wapo parent)

**Major finding:**

The Christian summer camp experience impacted the participants in positive and recognizable ways, and these impacts extended to their families, churches, and others in their supporting networks.
Last day survey
Based on 1,134 Camper Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% somewhat agree</th>
<th>% strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I learned more about God.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried something new at camp.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was strengthened in my faith.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had a lot of fun.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My questions concerning faith were taken seriously.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I plan to attend this camp in the future.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>74%</td>
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Campers increased most in:

1. Worship services are usually boring.
2. Being in nature helps me feel closer to God.
3. I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things.
4. I know that I can make friends.
5. I have important things to offer the church and the world.
6. Faith in God helps me in my daily life.
2-3 Month Follow-up
Based on 278 Camper Respondents

- I want to spend more time in nature.
  - Strongly agree: 33%
  - Moderately agree: 38%

- Camp helped me grow in independence.
  - Strongly agree: 49%
  - Moderately agree: 31%

- I feel more confident in myself since camp.
  - Strongly agree: 45%
  - Moderately agree: 37%

- Camp had a significant impact on my life.
  - Strongly agree: 53%
  - Moderately agree: 33%

Camp is Safe
Camp is Relational

Camp is Faith Centered
Camp is Participatory

Camp is Different from Home
“MY CAMP”

Other Camp

- Does it WRONG!
- Not quite as good
- Not as meaningful

Faith-Centered
Different from home
Participatory
Safe Space
Relational

"MY CAMP"
The Sanctuary

On Belay
Theological Playground
Questions and Discussion