

Unique, Relational Fun

"If we're not having fun while we're doing this, we're doing it the wrong way."

It's a light-hearted statement, but there's truth in it.

I learned this somewhere during my years in Christian camping. I don't remember exactly where or when, but I know it's true. At the same time, I know how difficult it can be to define fun—or to intentionally create an environment where fun and spiritual formation happen together. Not every moment is fun, and fun isn't limited to isolated moments. Still, when done well, it becomes one of the ways God draws people into deeper relationships with Him and with one another.

Here are a few ways Lake Beauty Bible Camp lives out our core value of **Unique, Relational Fun**.

During summer staff training, every staff member is assigned to a "family" led by two year-round staff members. These families eat lunch together every day, and after the meal they compete in light-hearted, creative games for points and whatever rewards those points may eventually earn.

The real prize, however, isn't the competition. It's the trust-based relationships that develop among people who barely knew each other two weeks earlier. Sharing fun experiences together opens the door to deeper relationships and stronger commitments to serving as the Body of Christ.

Very few families have a yard as big as the one at Lake Beauty.

In the praise song *Big House* by the Christian band Audio Adrenaline, there's a line about a "big, big yard where we can play football." For decades, one measure of fun at camp has been giving campers opportunities to do things they simply can't do at home.

That includes large-scale, all-camp games. Some are highly active; others are slower-paced and focused on solving problems together. Often, costumed staff members become part of the experience by interacting with campers as themed characters. Within the larger camp community, smaller groups build relationships while sharing memorable experiences together.

Another example is 9-Square in the Air.

In 2010, a junior high youth pastor in St. Louis combined elements of three different games into one activity designed to bring students together. The result was something uniquely effective. Players with different interests, personalities, and athletic abilities all participate on relatively equal footing.

The game moves quickly but not aggressively. There is no single winner or loser. Instead, players naturally rotate through the court and waiting line, either participating directly or enjoying the laughter and antics from the sidelines. The experience creates connection, shared joy, and a sense of belonging. As an added bonus, players spend much of the game with their hands raised—something researchers have found can positively affect confidence and mood. Perhaps there's a reason Scripture often calls us to lift our hands in praise.

I was a shy and self-conscious kid growing up. Participating in skit nights with my cabin helped build my confidence and uncover some of the creativity God had placed within me. It also taught me to appreciate the creativity and personalities of others.

At camp, skit nights aren't performance-based. They're emotionally safe spaces where silliness, laughter, creativity, and the occasional surprisingly insightful moment come together. They celebrate individuality within a supportive and non-judgmental community. And, of course, the camp costume closet continues to demonstrate the remarkable power of putting on the right outfit to become a character—something that may even remind us of Colossians 3:12-17.

Then there are the silly songs.

Some involve exaggerated actions. Some include call-and-response moments that build energy throughout a cabin and across camp. Others simply tell delightfully goofy stories. All of them are better experienced at camp than almost anywhere else.

The silliness helps lower the social barriers reinforced by the world around us. For a week or a weekend, campers step away from everyday pressures and experience something closer to what the Kingdom of God looks and feels like when it becomes the primary focus of daily life.

And finally—for the purposes of this newsletter, anyway—where else can you spend a week living alongside old friends and brand-new ones, sharing belly laughs, serious conversations, heartfelt prayers, and authentic discussions about real-life challenges, all within a community that provides just the right amount of guidance and care?

Really—where else?

All of this takes place in an outdoor environment created by the God of Wonder and shared with others who desire to follow Him and be formed into His likeness.

That may be the truest expression of **Unique, Relational Fun**.

Or perhaps a better word would be **Joy**.