

Family Camp — Get Away, Go with the Flow, Give it Away

Family Camps at Lake Beauty are a big deal! Several extended families plan their annual vacation rhythms around them. Their children attend multiple youth camps, and many of them eventually become summer staff. The weekends are relaxing, fun, and full of meaningful conversations around campfires and picnic tables...and then there are the S'mores!

Over the years, these weekends have grown significantly. Labor Day Family Camp now brings more than 400 people to camp in cabins, tents, RVs, and for day visits. Fourth of July Family Camp draws a similar crowd, and with local neighbors invited to join us for the fireworks, we can have close to 1,000 people on site! Memorial Day Family Camp sees more than 350 people gather at camp.

With that many people coming together, Jodi Bertrand, Program Director, and I have been asking an important question: **How can we strengthen the core purpose of these weekends as a means of serving the churches that own this ministry?**

One idea we've been exploring is to give the weekend a more intentional spiritual flow. Rather than simply gathering for chapel sessions and enjoying time together, what if the content—and even what happens in between chapel sessions—helped people experience and practice the mission of the Church within their own communities, all within the stated mission of LBBC: *to proclaim Jesus and reflect His love?*

Each week of youth camp has an intentional flow to its content and spiritual formation practices we offer and guide campers through.

Why not offer a similar flow to Family Camp?

Given that Christian camping has a core purpose of restoration: so people can return to their communities and engage in the Church's purpose of reconciliation, we are experimenting with the following flow (and would appreciate your input):

1 — You are part of the Family of God.

Family Camp is more than a gathering; it is a gathering of the Body of Christ. We come with different experiences, gifts, stories, and perspectives. Through the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us, we both give to and receive from one another. We want to create space throughout the weekend to ask what it means to be part of God's family—and to experience it together.

2 — You are loved.

We all need reminders of this truth and of what it looks like to love one another well. At camp, acts of agape love naturally happen all around us. When we notice and name them, we become better at recognizing and nurturing that same kind of love when we return home.

3 — You belong.

We live in a divisive world that often invites us to belong by making someone else the enemy. Family Camp offers something different: a place to gather around something—and Someone—that transcends our divided allegiances. There is something restorative about simply being together as the Body of Christ.

4 — Grace abounds.

Family Camp is about *being with* each other, not *doing*—except perhaps doing a bit more playing! There are few efforts to change one another because we recognize that transformation is up to Jesus. Camp is a safe place to be vulnerable, receive what He has for us, and recognize the abundance of His grace.

5 — Live in that grace.

Awareness of grace helps us understand it. Seeing it in others inspires us. Receiving it requires humility. And fully accepting it brings transformation. Family Camp is an intentional environment where Jesus transforms lives—and those who attend help create that environment for one another.

6 — Your neighbor needs it.

What we receive from our Father at Family Camp is meant to restore us so His Spirit can fill us to overflowing—with grace our neighbors need, too. We don't simply come to receive. We come to be renewed so we can return home and give it away.

Get away. Go with the flow. Give it away.

Come to a Lake Beauty Family Camp and stay a while. Receive what Jesus has for you. Be reminded that you are loved. Remember that you belong. Experience the abundance of His grace.

And when you return home, stay in daily relationship with Jesus—proclaiming Him and reflecting His love, and modeling that love for others.