

Raising Up Disciples

Jesus modeled what it means to make disciples. Today, many ministry leaders use the term *apprentices*. The first observers of those who followed Jesus in *The Way* referred to them as "Little Christs," which eventually became the word *Christian*. All of this began because Jesus told His followers, "Go and make more"—an admittedly simplified paraphrase of what He actually said.

From that calling grew the Church, metaphorically described as the Body of Christ. As members of that Body, followers of Jesus are called to be ambassadors of *reconciliation*. Years ago, I heard a keynote speaker at a conference for Christian camping leaders say that "*the core mission of the Church is reconciliation*." It was an articulate and compelling message.

The next keynote speaker built on that idea by describing the core mission of Christian camping ministry as *restoration*. He explained that the work of reconciliation—while empowered and sustained by the Holy Spirit—can also be demanding and exhausting. Therefore, Christian camps, as ministries of the Church, exist as holy places set apart for the restoration of those engaged in the ministry of reconciliation.

Certainly, the ministry of reconciliation happens at camp as well. But the point is that camps are not intended to be mere getaways. They are places where followers of Jesus are restored and equipped through rest, worship, teaching, and Christ-centered community so they can return to a world in need as ambassadors of reconciliation.

Decades ago, followers of Jesus embraced His invitation to create places set apart where people could "come away and rest a while." One summer, many years ago, I asked our summer staff, "How do you know when you have truly rested?" We wrestled with that question for several weeks until we arrived at an answer that deeply resonated with all of us:

"I know I've truly rested—been restored—when I am once again eager to serve."

Not merely willing to serve. Not simply feeling obligated to serve. But *enthusiastically eager to serve*.

So, when Lake Beauty Bible Camp says that one of its core values is **Raising Up Disciples**, this is what we mean. We seek to provide environments where individuals and families can come away and experience the restoring presence of God through His creation, His Word, and His Spirit. We do so with purpose: to prepare them to return to a world that longs for reconciliation with God and with one another.

That also means actively sharing and modeling the Good News—in other words, both evangelism and discipleship. Christian camping does both. In my experience, God knows which is most needed in each person's life at a particular season of spiritual formation.

Why spiritual formation?

We are spiritual beings with bodies. Just like Jesus, only in need of being formed into His likeness and character. His Spirit shaped how He was physically present for others. That is what happens at Lake Beauty when we seek to reflect the character of God as demonstrated by Jesus.

Colossians 3:12–17 paints a beautiful picture of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

May it be so for you—and through you.