

# Devotional Thought

NOTE: The following devotional was written by Camp Director Heidi Berk from Ohio. Heidi has a deep passion for the children she serves and these thoughts are part of her team's preparation and prayer for the children in her community. Please feel free to make use of devotional as you see fit.

## Gideon's Story

These precious children have had their childhood robbed from their lives and we have the opportunity to give them what God intended, unconditional love, safety and encouragement. The children of RFKC have been living nightmares, but through Christ they can begin to have hope and healing. As RFKC staff you have the privilege to share His love, hope and purpose. Before you hear their stories and how to deal with their behaviors, you need to prepare yourselves. If you are a believer in Christ you have within you the same power that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20). In our weakness He is made perfect (2 Corinthians 12:9). Also remember our fight is not against flesh and blood (abusive parents, neglectful foster parents or a bureaucratic system) our battle is ultimately against God's enemy.

One of our favorite examples of a Mighty Warrior from Scripture is Gideon. God called Gideon a Mighty Warrior before he was one. Gideon was a simple farmer, his family was a part of the Israelite tribe, but they were being abused by Midianite thieves. The Midianites were stealing their food and animals. Gideon could no doubt relate to our campers, let's see why-

"The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said 'The Lord is with you, mighty Warrior! Then Gideon said 'Sir, if the Lord is with us, why are we having so much trouble? (We have heard this from our campers as well). Where are the miracles our ancestors told us he did and the Lord brought them out of Egypt? But now he has left us and has handed us over to the Midianites.'" The Lord turned to Gideon and said, "Go with your strength and save Israel from the Midianites, I am the one who is sending you. But Gideon answered, Lord how can I save Israel? My family group is the least important member of my family."

Maybe your saying: 'I believe God has called me to minister to these children but can I do it? I don't have the experience, how do I deal with a child when they display a negative behavior? I am not a Mighty Warrior I've never done anything like this before. Why did God choose me?

Just as Gideon, you are chosen and no you can't love any child enough to heal their hurts or change what has happened in their past but we are promised "I can do ALL things through Christ who gives me strength." Phil 4:13.

So instead of saying I can't say, "I can do all things through Christ!" Speak this promise over you and your camper everyday. Every person in camp should know this scripture by the end of the week, post it everywhere!!!

Believe God to work through you as He did Gideon. Gideon doubted God and asked Him to make it very clear to him that he was called. Once again God affirmed Gideon what he asked. He tested God again in Judges 6:36-40. A third time God gave Gideon confirmation (Judges 7:13-15). There is no mistake that you too are here Mighty Warrior! Gideon went on to take the Victory in battle because of the power of the mighty God within him.

God equipped Gideon, He has also given you what you need- "All you need to be mighty in your generation is a shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6)

The Belt of Truth- "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist." (Ephesians 6:14) What is Paul speaking of in these passages? We need to think "Roman soldier" here for moment. The Romans did not wear pants like we do today. They wore robes or togas generally short togas on the battlefield. Having the belt tightened simply meant that he would pull up his toga and tighten his belt a couple of notches, which gave him the freedom to move as needed. The belt is essential to everything else. The breastplate was attached to the belt, as well as the sheath for the sword. If your belt fell off, your breastplate would fall and your robe would come loose. To have your belt tightened means you are ready to move. Ready to battle against Satan's lies.

Satan is the Father of lies. Many lies have been spoken into the camper entrusted to you. You must speak truth into your camper's life. "What is truth?" Where do we find Truth in a world where everyone seems to believe that their Truth is what you should believe? We as believers in Christ know that Truth is the Word of God. In anything in life, in any situation you need to ask, "What does God say about my circumstance?" Colossians 3:17 says, "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with wisdom." For example: a camper says "I can't do it, I'm stupid." God says that "you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength." (Phil 4:13) You are not stupid, "God finds joy in you, He sings for you (Zephaniah 3:17). A common comment heard often at camp is, "If God loves me so much why did He let all these bad things happen to me?" One way we could respond is, "God gave everyone the right to make choices. Adults and children make good and bad choices everyday. The adults in your life have made some bad chooses that have brought hurt, but it is not God

who is doing the hurting but, people. Just as Joseph in the Bible. He was beat up by his brothers, sold into slavery, wrongly accused and put into jail. God was still with him and after Joseph had the chance (giving by God) to make some choices he chose to do things God's way, he said, "What man intended for evil, God intended for good." (Gen. 50:20) He was able to see that the evil done to him, in the end brought many to hope and healing. He was able to forgive his brothers, became second to the King and saved thousands from death, including those brothers who hurt him." When a camper asks you a question say, "Let's see what God says about this situation." Then open your Bible with your camper and you both beginning to search God for the answer. Don't forget to pray and ask God for the answer; reveal the scripture that says the truth. If you still can't find what you're looking for, seek wise counsel. Ask the Bible teacher at camp, another counselor or director. For you and your camper it is a teachable moment you will both grow spirituality. Only with the truth of God's Word will you be able to "Stand firm."

Breastplate of Righteousness- "having put on the breastplate of righteousness." Ephesians 6:14b The breastplate protects a soldier's heart and spiritually it protects our emotions. At camp we can not be ruled by our emotions. We must go on what is truth. We may think by the middle of the week of camp, "I am not getting through to my camper; they have not opened up to me. I am not making an impact, we just have not connected." You must remember the truth- You are planting seeds of love. We may not see the outcome of their healing or see them accept Christ, but it is God who will do the growing. He will begin to tear down the walls they have built over time. The walls of mistrust and insecurity. Brick by Brick the wall will come down, we may only see half a brick fall while at camp. No matter what we do, you must believe that you represent Christ and His love- you are making an eternal impact, beyond what you can see. Hold on to the promise of 1 Corinthians 15:58 "Stand firm, let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord for your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Helmet of Salvation- The helmet of course protects a soldier's head and within your head is your mind. One of the biggest battles we face on a daily basis is within our mind. Then you or your camper have believed a lie you must combat it with the verse-"demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of Christ, and we take captive every thought to make them obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) Another verse: think on these things, whatever is pure, good, faithful, trustworthy and true, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8-9) Christ died to give us salvation. For most of our campers camp will be the first place they will hear this truth. To know that we are saved by Christ and his grace should also be on our minds. Especially when our thoughts or our campers thoughts are filled with, "my life will never be any better, " I have done something really bad, I am being punished by God", "I can't do anything right", "I'll never be smart enough", "I'm so ugly!", nobody likes me or "I am such a failure." You must ask for God to transform your thoughts and the thoughts of our camper. If we have Christ within us, "We have the mind of Christ."

Claim this promise and begin thinking on things of God.

Feet to spread the gospel of Peace- "having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Ephesians 6:15 Looking at this verse in the New American Standard version cross references to word "Shod" to the verse in Isaiah 52:7 "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation." As mentioned earlier, most of these campers will have heard the name of Christ for the first time at camp. They will also hear the message of salvation through Bible Stories and the love you show. Their lives have not been one of peace, order, hope and joy; you offer them all of these things through Christ. You must show them Christ in all you say and do. It can be hard at camp when you are tired or feel defeated. Pray that "God will place a guard over your mouth and watch over the door of your lips." (Psalm 141:3) Remember to speak life into your camper.

Shield of Faith- "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one." (Ephesians 6:16 NAS)

Hebrews 11 mentions many men and women who displayed great faith in God. Read Hebrews 11. Even when they were unsure of God's promise they were obedient and acted in Faith, rather than fear. Obedience to Christ will always equal blessings. Often times we believe in God but we don't believe Him. We don't take Him at His Word. We often believe His promises are for the people of the Bible or a special few. God's promises are for every believer and it's time we started receiving what He has for us. We must show the campers that we believe "with God all things are possible." (Luke 1:37) In a popular Bible study written by Beth Moore, she encourages believers to study God's promises and believe God to do miracles and wonders among them. She begins each session with a five statement pledge- "I Believe that God is who He says He is, God can do what He says He can do, I am who God says I am, I Can Do All Things through Christ and His Word is alive and active in me, I'M BELIEVING GOD!" If you believe God, that He can and will make a godly impact through you this week of camp, He will be faithful to do it!!!! We can't just read His word we must apply it to everyday life and in every situation. Believe God to do great things at camp! He will do more than you ask or imagine!!!

Sword- Word of God- "and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17b) Before camp you must commit several Bible verses to memory. (List of verse at the end of this study) As children we have contests in Sunday School to see who can memorize the most verses. We may do it as children for a special prize, but as adults when we memorize scripture we use those words to defeat Satan and live daily in victory, regardless of our circumstance." All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

(2 Tim. 3:15-17) Without knowing our weapons we are defenseless against our enemy. When we speak truth into our situation those fiery arrows Satan shoots are extinguished. Speak His Word out aloud. Remember God spoke the world into existence. The power in our words, especially when they are Christ's have an eternal impact. You have all you need. Believe God to do great things through you at camp. Pray that He will anoint your words through His spirit and you will speak healing into your camper.

"Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on our own. Take all you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them, you'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long." (Ephesians 6:15-24, The Message)

Scripture to commit to memory:

Galatians 6:9-10 "Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Phil. 4:13

Ephesians 3:20

1 Corinthians 15:58

Hebrews 13:5b

Jeremiah 29:11

Psalms 141:3

Psalms 9:9-10

Psalms 10:14b

PowerPoint ideas- As you are talking about the Armor of God, have a picture of a Roman Soldier. As you talk about a piece of armor place it on him.

Have the same picture of the soldier in print for people to take notes.

We could also have scripture memory cards printed for each person to take with them. Maybe even a bookmark with the Armor of God printed with the scriptures. The following is something I found that may be helpful for each person to have a copy.

Make this prayer, written by Charles Stanley a part of your morning routine:

"Dear Lord, as I get out of bed today, I know I'm stepping into a battlefield. But I also know you've given me everything I need to stand firm. So in the power of Your Holy Spirit, I put on the Armor of God:

"First, I pray that I will not be governed by my feelings, but by the truth. Wrap your Word around me like a belt. Let the breastplate of righteousness keep my heart and emotions safe. And safeguard me from error. I put on the sandals of peace to guide my steps. Plant my feet in Your truth. Empower me to stand firm against attack.

"Next, I place the helmet of salvation on my head. Protect my mind and imagination. Guard my eyes, allowing no sin to creep in. Focus my thoughts on the things of God. May I take up the shield of faith. Protect me from Satan's fiery arrows. Place me shoulder to shoulder with Your army to oppose the Devil's schemes. Finally, I take up the sword of the Spirit, Your Word. Help me to read the Bible in a fresh, exciting way so I will always be ready to deflect attacks and pierce hearts with your truth.

You've empower me to stand firm. Give me the strength for the battle today."

\*\*\* A suggestion I would make for the director- either during training or while at camp before campers arrive, pray over every area of the camp!! We have done this every year and it is amazing how God has honored our prayers.