

Articles by Paul Parmer

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Overcoming that "After Camp Spiritual Dive"

This year Jim had determined the story would be different.

This year he certainly would live a life honoring and glorifying to the Lord.

At camp it had seemed it would be so easy.

But now it was just like last year.

His enthusiasm for spiritual things had lasted only two or three weeks.

Then he had slipped right back into the same old rut he had been in before.

Jim knew definitely he was saved.

He had assurance of that from the Word of God (1 John 5:13).

He distinctly remembered the night at camp when he had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior (John 5:24, Acts 16:30-31, and Romans 10:9-10).

Jim wished he could be back at camp right now.

"Why couldn't a guy just live at camp all year?" he wondered aloud.

A smile began to spread over his face as he reviewed the wonderful times he had had at camp.

He remembered crawling out of bed in the morning, struggling to get dressed, and then hurriedly running out to the spacious area in front of the dining hall for exercises.

He remembered the sweaty feeling of playing ball under the hot summer sun, and the delight of the spine-tingling dip in the lake which followed.

The smile finally stretched its way across his face as he remembered his cabin's disastrous singing attempt at the annual talent show.

The chattering of a squirrel in the tree beside him brought his thoughts back to the present.

The frown returned to his face.

Jim wanted to cry, but he was too old to cry.

"Camp really seemed to recharge my spiritual battery, but it certainly didn't take long for my spiritual strength to run out," he thought.

"Why couldn't things here at home be the same as they were at camp?

What made camp such a great spiritual help anyway?"

Then

Jim began to answer his own questions.

First, there were the great messages which he always looked forward to.

He visualized Uncle Ben standing at the front of the chapel, his booming voice ringing out the simplicity of the gospel and the challenge of living the Christian life.

It was after one such message he had received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior (John 1:11-13).

"But here at home the preacher's so boring he almost puts himself to sleep," Jim thought.

Then he began to recognize he was being too critical.

He felt ashamed as he realized how little attention he usually paid to the messages.

"I wonder what would happen if I looked forward to the messages here at home and tried to get as much out of them as I could," he considered.

At camp there were also the devotional times of Bible reading and prayer.

"How well have I done since camp?"

Jim quizzed himself.

He recalled how diligently he had read his Bible and set aside time for prayer when he had first come home.

He knew the few verses he was now reading and the hurried minutes he was now spending in prayer, every once in a while, just before signing off for the night, were not enough.

He could still remember his counselor's advice:

"Jim, you must take time each day to read your Bible and pray if you're going to grow as a Christian (1 Peter 2:2).

When you read the Bible, the Lord speaks to you, and when you pray, you speak to the Lord.

Both parts of this two-way communication system are necessary and important for spiritual growth.

Next,

Jim's thoughts drifted back to the good times playing sports, planning skits, and just goofing off with the guys at camp.

Even when they put some girls on the team, a softball game at camp seemed more fun than a game with the guys here at home.

Why?

Jim concluded that it was more fun at camp because the kids there didn't get mad so easily, and there was not the constant swearing and dirty language which was always present in the games here at home.

Part of his problem, Jim knew, was the group of unsaved guys he ran around with.

He cringed as he remembered the time he had been too cowardly to refuse a cigarette when everyone else in the group was smoking.

He recalled the times he had missed the meetings at church to hang around with the guys (Hebrews 10:25).

He was thankful he had been home the time some of his "friends" had been caught shoplifting.

At camp it had seemed it would be so easy to help them and witness to them, but he hadn't even told them he had gone to a Bible camp.

He knew he should make a break with these unsaved guys.

They were tearing him down spiritually.

Tears came to Jim's eyes again.

"Lord

Jesus," he said, "I realize now the problem is not that I'm not at camp, but that I'm not the Christian I should be here at home."

There in the shadow of the boulder, as the sun was about to set, Jim renewed his commitment to the Lord.

First, he confessed the sinful things he had done since camp.

He promised to forsake them, and to maintain close fellowship with the Lord by promptly confessing future sins (1 John 1:9).

Second, he determined to set aside a time each and every day for Bible reading and prayer.

Third, regardless of the cost, he would break his connection with the unsaved guys he had been running around with.

That wouldn't be easy.

It would mean ridicule and loneliness, but he would draw his strength from the Lord and look forward to the time when the Lord would give him a close Christian buddy his own age to share his life with.

Finally, he realized he must attend church regularly to take advantage of the Bible teaching as well as the fellowship and sharing with other believers.

Jim knew he must learn to lean on the Lord for the help and strength to accomplish these goals.

He knew how miserably he had failed in his own strength.

He knew his own efforts couldn't produce any better results in the future (John 15:5, Philippians 4:13, and II Corinthians 12:9).

"It's difficult enough to try to overcome just one of these problems," Jim thought.

“What a gigantic job it is when you group them all together.”

Nothing is easy though, he decided.

He thought of his neighbors, Julie and Debbie, who had gone to a Basketball Camp last summer.

They hadn’t learned everything about basketball at that camp.

He groaned as he thought of the many hours since then they had spent in their back yard shooting, dribbling, passing, and rebounding.

But they finally made the team.

Wasn’t living for Jesus Christ worth even more effort?

The sun dipped behind the western horizon, painting the clouds brilliant shades of pink and purple.

Jim started toward home, thinking of the big job which lay ahead.

Suddenly Hebrews 13:6 came to mind.

It was one of Uncle Ben’s favorite verses and one of the memory verses at camp.

“So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can man do to me?’”

Jim smiled with relief as he thought aloud, “Camp next year will be great, but there’s no reason the time between now and then can’t be just as great.”

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