



AFTER CAMP SESSIONS

CLAIMED: WILDLY LOVED BY GOD

After Camp Sessions is a curriculum featuring customizable lessons that connect camp to everyday life. ACS was created to serve 6th-12th grade, and designed to use in small groups, large groups, or one-on-one. No previous camp experience is required to use these sessions, so they are ready to go even for students who couldn't participate in camp this summer.

In each session you can expect to see:

Welcome - A short activity related to the theme of the lesson and introduces the basic concepts of conversation in a real and tangible way.

Intro to Theme - Designed for leaders as a verbal introduction to students to help them understand what the theme is, or to be used as a guide for a longer lesson or sermon of your own creation.

Prayer - Directly related to each session's theme, the prayer is brief and easy to hand to a student or leader to share some of the responsibility during the session.

Scripture - References are given within the lesson for ease of reading. The full text is included at the end of each session.

Conversation Questions

Level 1 - Introductory or opening leading questions that warm up the group to talk about themselves and experiences they've had with the theme.

Level 2 - Getting into the conversation these questions usually deal with what's going on in the world, culture, or community around you, and start to dig in to scripture at a basic level.

Level 3 - Opportunity to share on a deeper or more personal level and include a question with a call to action related to each session's theme. These questions also make a great send-home piece for families or mentors to do on their own following each session.

Reflection Practice - A short activity and reflection related to the session's theme. The accompanying booklet provides an outline for students to use for each session and to keep and record their thoughts and insights.

Blessing - Each blessing is designed to be done as one peer speaking to another. It may also be done by a leader speaking to the large group as a whole.

Take Home - This is an opportunity to continue the conversation from each session with a suggestion of an additional activity or conversation that can be done individually, with a parent, with a mentor, or in whatever format works best in your context. The take home pieces are framed from the perspective of a task to the student. Feel free to adapt this to fit with how it will best be used in your context.

Session 1: You are good because God Created You.

Welcome -- 2 Truths and a Lie

- Each person in the group gets a turn.
- When it is your turn, tell the group two things about yourself that are true and one thing that is untrue (this is your lie).
- Try not to tell both of your truths first and then the lie because that makes it easier to guess.
- Everyone in the group has an opportunity to try to guess which statement was the lie.
- Once everyone has guessed, the person will reveal what was true and what was false.
- If only one person was correct, that person can go next. Or, the person sitting closest to the last person can go next.

Intro to Theme -- You are good because God created you.

Today's session dives into the tension between what is good and what is messy in our own lives and the world. God created us good--out of that goodness, we are called to love one another.

Prayer

Gracious God, You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit. You created all of us good, and love us so that we can love others. Be with us in our conversation as we share about who you created us to be, and what we do with messiness in our lives. Amen.

Scripture

Psalm 139
1 John 4:7-12

Conversation Questions

Level 1

- Share something unique about yourself that no one here knows about you.
- What's something you feel like you're good at?
- What does GOOD mean to you?
- What's the difference between good and perfect?

Level 2

- What are some of the good things in the world? Some of the bad?
 - in the news?
 - at school?
 - at church?
 - at home?
- How do we reconcile that there are bad things in the world, but that God created the world good?
- Looking at 1 John 4:7-12: What role does love play in the middle of these bad things?

Level 3

- Have you had a time in your life where you feel like you've been separate from God?
- How do you reconcile that there are things inside of you that aren't always good?
- How does it feel that God sees all of you (even the bad) and still calls you good?
- How can you live out God's call in 1 John 4:11-12 this week?

Reflection Practice (Booklet)

On the page with the blank Gingerbread Man, encourage students to write / draw the ways that God sees you as good.

If you want to go deeper: share with the group/partner what you wrote.

Blessing

Turn and say to each other:

"God sees all of you and claims you as God's good creation."

Take Home - Parent/Mentor Conversation

- Strengthfinders / Strengthsquest
 - <https://shop.gallup.com/strengths/strengthsquest-online-program-retail-card.html>
 - https://www.strengthsquest.com/234665/default.aspx?g_source=link_sq3&g_campaign=item_243761&g_medium=copy

Session 1: You are good because God Created You.

Psalms 139:1-16 The Message (MSG)

A David Psalm

GOD, investigate my life;
get all the facts firsthand.
I'm an open book to you;
even from a distance, you know what I'm
thinking.
You know when I leave and when I get back;
I'm never out of your sight.
You know everything I'm going to say
before I start the first sentence.
I look behind me and you're there,
then up ahead and you're there, too—
your reassuring presence, coming and going.
This is too much, too wonderful—
I can't take it all in!

Is there any place I can go to avoid your Spirit?
to be out of your sight?
If I climb to the sky, you're there!
If I go underground, you're there!
If I flew on morning's wings
to the far western horizon,
You'd find me in a minute—
you're already there waiting!

Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the
dark!

At night I'm immersed in the light!"
It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;
night and day, darkness and light, they're all
the same to you.

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into
something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from
conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out before
you,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day.

1 John 4:7-12 The Message (MSG)

God Is Love

My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

Session 2: You are enough because God knows you.

Welcome

Send your students out to write with dry erase markers on the mirrors around church: "I am imperfect. I am enough."

Intro to Theme -- You are enough because God knows you.

Today's session names the reality that we are both imperfect and enough. We are worthy of love, because our identity doesn't come from the world, it comes from God.

Prayer

Gracious God, you know us. When we don't know how or what to pray, you still hear us. Be with us today as we talk about how we are enough even when we don't feel like we are. Amen.

Scripture

Romans 8:27-37
Philippians 4:10-13

Conversation Questions

Level 1

- What is one thing you feel like you can never have enough of?
- Who is someone you feel like really knows who you are?
- What is the meaning / story behind your name?

Level 2

- Why are names so important?
- Romans 8:29, MSG - "God knew what he was doing from the very beginning." What do you think about this?
- What does the world tell you is "enough"?

Level 3

- When in your life do you feel like you're not enough or life is imperfect?
- Who in your life tells/shows/expresses to you that YOU are enough and worthy of love?
- How can hearing that God knows who you are help you this week when you feel like you aren't enough?
- How can you share the message that you are imperfect and you are enough with someone else this week?

Reflection Practice

As a small group, individual, or in groups of 2-3, take a selfie in front of one of the mirrors that students wrote on earlier in this session that says -- "I am imperfect. I am enough." If you chose NOT to do the opening activity, write this phrase on a sheet of paper and take a selfie in the mirror holding the sheet up.

- Journal: (2-5 minutes)
 - What was it like to stand in front of that mirror and have a photo taken?
 - How do you feel about those two statements?
- Opportunity to share with the group

Blessing

Turn and say to each other:

"You are imperfect. You are enough. You are worthy of love."

Take Home - Parent/Mentor Conversation

Have a conversation with a meaningful adult in your life about being imperfect and being enough.

- What are some ways that you've felt imperfect in your life?
- How have you been affirmed for being enough in your life?

Session 2: You are enough because God knows you.

Romans 8:26-39 The Message (MSG)

26-28 Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

29-30 God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

31-39 So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.

We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

Philippians 4:10-13 New International Version (NIV)

Thanks for Their Gifts

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Session 3: You are able because God goes with you.

Welcome

Creative Play! Pull out finger paint, markers, Play-Doh, Legos, and give time for students to create something, even if they think it's bad. Encourage students to choose something they don't necessarily KNOW all about. Hide the whiteout and the erasers and go to town.

Alternative: Blindfolded Trust Walk (<https://www.icebreakers.ws/small-group/trust-walk-teambuilding-activity.html>)

Intro to Theme -- You are able because God goes with you

This session is about naming things that hold us back and using creativity to push us outside of our comfort zones. God is always with us, enabling us to share our faith with others.

Prayer

Gracious God, all that exists comes from you including each of us. Stir up our kindness, creativity, and curiosity today. Amen.

Scripture

Matthew 28:16-20
Isaiah 43:1-4

Conversation Questions

Level 1

- Share about a scary moment in your life.
- What's something you would only do if someone went with you?

Level 2

- How many times in your life have you been shushed?
- How many times in your life have you stopped yourself from doing something because you thought you would look stupid?
- What does the world say that you are able or not able to do? (stereotypes?)
- How does that contrast with what God says we are able to do?

Level 3

- What does Matthew 28:16-20 say that you are able to do?
- When have you shared your faith with someone else? Why or why not?
- When have you had the opportunity to share your faith and not taken it? Why or why not?

Reflection Practice

Using markers, crayons, pencils, etc. create a DIY Permission Slip that completes this statement:

- I give myself permission to...

Sign the bottom of your permission slip, giving yourself permission to do/be this this week.

Blessing

Turn and say to each other:

"God goes with you, so you are able."

Take Home - Parent/Mentor Conversation

Pick something you've never done before to do or experience with a meaningful adult in your life.
ex. Try a new food or restaurant, meet a neighbor you haven't yet, explore a part of town you've never been in, learn a new skill, try rock climbing, etc.

Session 3: You are able because God goes with you.

Matthew 28:16-20 New International Version (NIV)

The Great Commission

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Isaiah 43:1-4 New International Version (NIV)

Israel's Only Savior

But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;

the flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush[a] and Seba in your stead.

Since you are precious and honored in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give people in exchange for you,
nations in exchange for your life.

Session 4: You are free because God forgives you.

Welcome - Strength Contest

Supplies: things that are awkward and/or heavy to hold or carry, but will not be damaged if dropped.

Invite 2-4 people up front.

Explain: You need to hold all of this stuff off the ground for 2 minutes. You can do it any way you'd like to using only what you have already on your person. Take the next 30 seconds to make a plan and then I'll say go and start the timer.

Intro to Theme -- You are free because God forgives you.

This session we explore the heaviness and burdens of our lives, what grace is, and how the freedom we have from God gives us hope. God gives us grace so that we are free to live in spite of our failures.

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of grace. Open our hearts and minds as we talk about things that are heavy in our lives. Amen.

Scripture

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Psalms 103:10-12

Conversation Questions

Level 1

- Tell about a time when you carried something really heavy.
 - Refer to the Strength Contest in the Welcome (Activity).
 - Why did you feel like you had to hold it on your own? Why did you choose to do this as a group?
 - Did you feel overwhelmed or weighed down at any point during that activity? When?
- What does the world say it means to be free?
- What does God say it means to be free?

Level 2

- What does God want us to be free from/of?
- What is reconciliation?
- What is grace?
- When have you felt or seen freedom in your life?
- Talk about a time when you forgave someone or someone forgave you.

Level 3

- How does it feel when you are forgiven or when you forgive someone else?
- How do you show grace to yourself?
 - When you fail at something?
 - When you don't feel good about yourself?
 - When life feels overwhelming?
- How do you show grace to other people?
- Who do you need to forgive or receive forgiveness from this week?

Reflection Practice

Give each student a sheet of paper and writing utensil. On one side of the paper in each corner, write something that you want to let go of by giving it up to God. Fold the paper hotdog style. Then fold the paper again hamburger style. Fold the folded edges together making a triangular "sail" shape. Tear in half from the angled folded edge. Unfold to reveal a cross, and if you have the resources available, burn the torn corners of the paper.

Journal: Now that you've given these things to God, what will you do with the freedom you've gained? How does this give you hope?

<https://youtu.be/fQWi32twLOs>

Blessing - *This is taken from the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) Holy Baptism Liturgy.*

Around the baptismal font or another source of water:

Leader: Through water and the Holy Spirit, God gives us new birth, cleanses us from sin, and raises us to eternal life.

Explain: Students will dip their finger into the water and make the sign of a cross on your forehead. Alternatively, turn to your neighbor and make the sign of the cross on their forehead for them.

Take Home - Parent/Mentor Conversation

- With a trusted adult in your life, have a conversation about what freedom is and who is or is not free.
 - Consider pulling from recent news articles and current events in order to expand this conversation beyond your own personal freedom and forgiveness.
- Consider attending a Healing Minnesota Stories tour.
 - <http://mnchurches.org/justice/HealingMinnesotaStories.html>

Session 4: You are free because God forgives you.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 The Message (MSG)

16-20 Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.

21 How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 New International Version (NIV)

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Psalms 103:10-12 New International Version (NIV)

he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Session 5: You are connected because God calls us together.

Welcome

Explain: What happens in this space stays in this space. Encourage students not to share the results of this activity outside of this group.

Have all participants stand facing the leader on one side of the room. When you read the following statements, instruct students to move from one side of the room to the other, facing in the same direction. Once everyone is done moving, have everyone that just moved turn around and face the other group. Then ask them to return to one side of the room and read the next statement.

Move to the other side if you or someone you know...

- has a best friend.
- plays a team sport.
- is part of a musical group or theater production.
- has felt welcome at church.
- had a fight within a friend group.
- has been bullied or harassed online.
- has felt alone.

Intro to Theme -- You are connected because God calls us together.

This final session speaks into the chaos of living in relationship with other people and how God calls us to love one another.

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for creating us to be in community. Even when it's difficult, help us to love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

Scripture

John 15:5-17
1 Peter 3:3-9

Conversation Questions

Level 1

- What qualities are good in a best friend?
- What are some activities that you participate in that connect you with others?
- Share a time when you felt out of place.

Level 2

- What does it mean to you to be in community? (Friends, church, global, etc.)
- How do we love one another the way God calls us to in John 15?
- What would our world look like if we lived according to 1 Peter 3:8-9? Do you think it's possible?
- What does it mean for us as the church to be leaders in the community?

Level 3

- What makes it difficult to love other people in our world?
- What is some of the brokenness that we see/feel in community?
- What can you do about these types of brokenness?

Reflection Practice -- Neighborhood Prayer Walk

Take time outside in the parking lot or walking through the community for 10-20 minutes to walk and pray silently (or out loud) about the brokenness that we referred to in our discussion.

Blessing

If you can do communion, do it!

Have your group stand in a circle and turn to the left and make the sign of the cross on their neighbor's forehead and say:

"You are loved by God, remain in God's love."

Take Home - Parent/Mentor Conversation

- Together with a trusted adult, identify one or two ways that your church is active in the larger community.
- Serve the community together in one of the ways that you identified.

Session 5: You are connected because God calls us together.

John 15:5-17 New International Version (NIV)

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

1 Peter 3:3-9 New International Version (NIV)

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.