

Compassion and a Campfire



Mount Calvary's answer to
VBS *"Off the Grid"* for Adults

Welcome to Compassion and a Campfire – Mount Calvary's answer to Vacation Bible School off the grid and open to all ages!

There really is nothing like a **Campfire**. No matter the season, a campfire shines a “welcome” to all who see it! People have been circling a fire for longer than any of us can imagine. The fire was heat, light, warm food, and a place to be together. Those gathered were family, friends, and community - tasks were done, plans made, dreams dreamed, problems solved, laughter shared, and stories were told. Life was lived. Around the campfire nothing was impossible and those who gathered knew they belonged and who they belonged to.

Even though it is no longer a matter of survival, or the only place we gather, we all have memories of campfires where we gathered, sang, ate too many s'mores and maybe told a ghost story or two. Campfires are magical in their ability to become sacred space! And around the campfire we too know belonging.

Compassion is the ability to feel for another living being. Compassion alludes to kindness and sympathy, but there is something deeper, something even more profoundly powerful, in its meaning...in Latin, 'compati' means “suffer with.” Compassion means someone else's heartbreak becomes your heartbreak. Another's suffering becomes your suffering. The Bible is filled with the word compassion. Not only God's compassion towards us, and people's compassion for one another but most importantly the compassion of Jesus toward all.

This summer, in this time, we are going to play with these two beautiful words and invite you to an “almost” off the grid experience! We will explore 5 different biblical stories – the story is what we “gather around” like a campfire; each story invites or gathers us in. Each story will have different activity options – think of these activities as the “stones” that surround the “fire” or the story itself. The stones hold the story and help us to know it! Below are listed some very helpful hints!

1. Compassion and a Campfire comes in 5 different versions! The versions for High school and older can be done with friends, family or by one's self.

- Families with younger children
- Families with Middle School teens
- High School Youth & Young Adults
- Adults

2. You can use the story and activities around a real campfire, a “pretend” campfire or even a candle!

3. These materials can be spread out over time and campfires. You can choose one “stone” over another – whatever works for you or your family!

We hope you enjoy this offering and wish you blessings on the journey.

Compassion is the ability to feel for another living being - it is the practice of recognizing and sharing in the feelings of others. Compassion helps us see and welcome. Gathering at a table together encourages relationship, and sharing a table helps us to begin to accept each other in the same way God accepts us.

Through the parable of the father and the two brothers in Luke 15:11-32, we will see how compassion can empower us to release the anger and judgment we may hold toward others, ourselves, and the world for not being what we wanted or needed. We will learn how compassion inspires seeing, forgiveness, and welcoming.

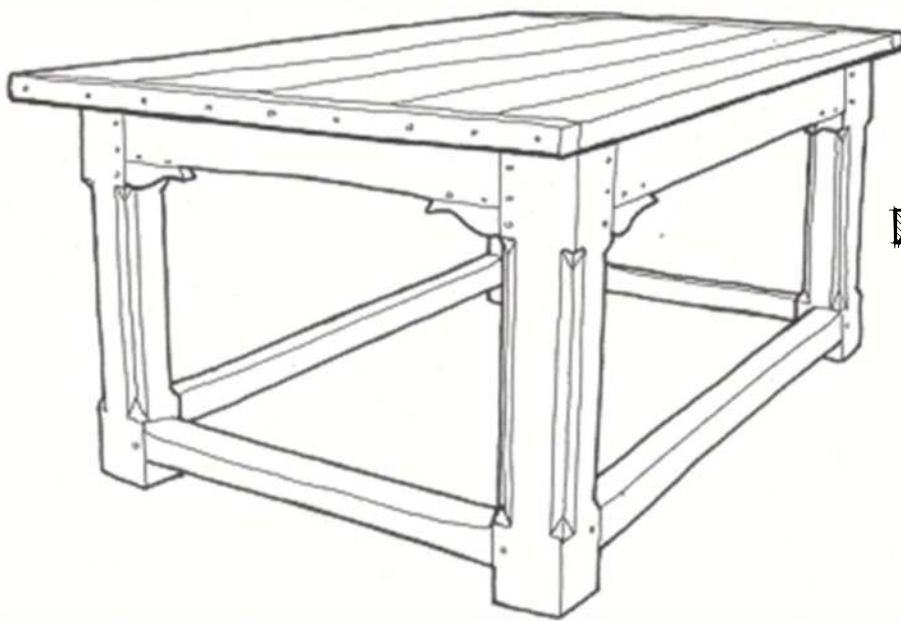
Session

1

At

the

Table



The Campfire

Luke 15:11-32

Look it up in your own Bible or use the one included in this packet on the next page. The **1st Stone** is included below as a way to read and sit with this particular story!



LECTIO DIVINA

With others or by yourself, use the Lectio Divina to explore the text.. *EXPECT to hear God!*

- Step 1 ~ Read the Luke 15:11-32 a couple of times. Another option is to read different versions of the text. If there are more than one of you, Invite others to read different versions of the text.
- Step 2 ~ Sit quietly with the text for 5-10 minutes (called reflecting or ruminating, it means to “chew on” or “digest”). Pay attention to where your mind goes, wanders or is taken. Highlight words that stand out to you.
- Step 3 ~ Take some time to share with the others in your group what you are thinking ~ if you are by yourself, JOURNAL your thoughts and ideas.
- Step 4 ~ Pray silently, on paper or together about what you have heard or learned.
- Step 5 ~ End by sitting quietly in God's presence.

Remember, the goal of the Lectio Divina is simply to spend time with God and God's story and word.



The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

¹¹Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' ³¹Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

2

bible journaling

A Bible journal is a hybrid diary where you keep both notes on your study of the Bible and a record of things that happen in your everyday life. Over time, as you analyze and study the Bible, you can apply what you've learned to your life experiences. It can also be a reflective journal as you think about a story, or particular set of verses.



Because this is supposed to be fun, AND to alleviate any anxiety you may be feeling about writing in your bible, you have been provided a "journaling page". The page before this is like a page in the NRSV!

What should I do...

Take notes

Highlight stuff that "stands out"

Write words that pop into your head

Draw or color

Do "wondering" questions

Don't let the example scare you!!!

Use markers or colored pencils



service

3

Often, compassion leads to service. As you think about "the table", think about someone who is at the table alone right now, what that person may need, and how you might meet that need. Maybe a nice note, a candle, a loaf of bread delivered to a front door will speak volumes of understanding and compassion!





questions & wonderings

1. What are your first impressions of this story?
2. Share a time when someone acted compassionately toward you?
3. Where does compassion first “show up” in this story?
4. What feelings did you feel when you heard the story?
5. Can you identify with any of the people in the story?
6. What are the feelings of the dad? The older brother? The younger brother?

1. Do you think the older brother ever came to the party?
2. Who sits with you at your dinner table? What do you talk about?
3. How do you welcome each other when someone's had a hard day or doesn't want to sit at the table?
4. Who is hard to welcome to the table?

When we listen to stories, we can learn so much from the feelings of the people. This is one way we learn compassion.

We see, listen, and recognize what people are feeling, and this helps us to feel their joy and their hurt with them.

Sometimes it requires a bit of imagination on our part because the story might not tell us directly what people are feeling. For example, we might focus on the younger brother and father, but the older brother has something to show us, too. Compassion helps us to see how every human being is important and loved by God.





DEEP BREATHS
are like little love
notes to your body.

Yoga

Yoga began as a spiritual practice in ancient India, centering on bringing the mind, body, and spirit into oneness with the Divine. This meaningful practice has grown globally, with people of all faiths and belief systems finding nourishment in different variations - a powerful reminder of how we learn from one another. When we say, "Namaste," we connect with siblings across the world.

Breathing is the heart of yoga, and breath itself is a physical way to receive and release. As we reflect on the ways compassion makes us release, accept, and welcome, we will focus on breath alongside some basic yoga poses.



Sit on the floor, legs crossed. Take three deep, slow breaths together, with one person saying the following during inhales and exhailes:

INHALE:	I see...	EXHALE:	...and welcome.
INHALE:	I see...	EXHALE:	...and welcome.
INHALE:	I see...	EXHALE:	...and welcome.



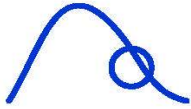
Move into child's pose (Balasana). Kneel forward, big toes together, knees making a "V," and stretch your arms forward. Let your forehead rest on the ground. Stay in this position for as long as feels comfortable for the people in your group. While in this pose, one person can say:

"Child's pose is a position where we connect with God's creation (earth) and God's Spirit within each of us as we bow our bodies and our hearts."



From child's pose, move into table top pose (Bharmanasana). Feel the steadiness of this pose, and how your hands and knees firmly plant into the ground. One person can say:

"The table is a place of regrounding. Feel your steadiness. There is room for everyone at God's table."

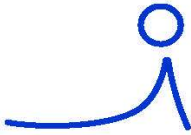


From table top pose, stretch your hips up, your legs back, and your arms straight into downward facing dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana). Hold this pose while breathing in and out a few times. One person can say:

"We let ourselves be stretched and prepared to see what's to come."

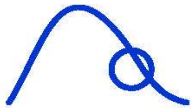


From downward facing dog, lower your hips into plank pose (Phalakasana), then lower further to the ground.

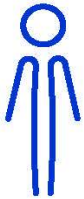


Straighten your arms and stretch your upper body, head toward the sky, into upward facing dog (Urdhva Mukha Svanasana). Hold this pose while breathing in and out a few times. One person can say:

"We face the sun and welcome what this day holds for us."

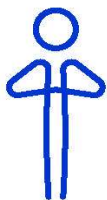


From upward facing dog, lower your upper body back to the ground, then push your hips and legs up into downward facing dog once more.



From downward facing dog, jump both feet forward (or step one foot, then the other) to meet your hands. Slowly roll your back up until you are standing straight and tall in mountain pose (Tadasana).

(If desired, flow through this same sequence two-three more times. From standing position, lower your arms to touch the ground, then kneel into table top. Move through the sequence again, focusing on breath and flow).



Reach your arms up to the sky, then draw them into prayer form, right by your heart. End with a bow of your head and hands as you share the foundational yoga greeting - "Namaste" - a call to see one another the way God sees each of us. One interpretation of the phrase is "The Light in me sees the Light in you."



coloring as a prayer

Be still and know I am God...

Listen for God in the serenity around you and
give thanks for the time you have to
just BE with God for a while.

WELCOMING
one,
your warm, wide arms
are **ALWAYS** open
drawing us into your Love.

Make **our ARMS** YOUR OWN

helping us SEE & WELCOME
with COMPASSION all

those we meet.

Amen

the Examen

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern his direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience.

The method that's presented here is adapted from a technique described by Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*.

St. Ignatius thought that the Examen was a gift that came directly from God, and that God wanted it to be shared as widely as possible.

The Examen can also be called Blessings & Bruises and can be done daily or whenever you feel the urge. They are a great "around the campfire" conversation and way of connecting! You can even journal or draw them!

consolation

1. the act of consoling; comfort; solace
2. the state of being consoled
3. something or someone that consoles

Other words like consolation:

relief • help • support • cheer

*Where have you felt the presence of God?
What has brought you joy this day?
Where have you found peace?
What or who has blessed you today?*



desolation

1. an act or instance of desolating
2. The state of being desolated
3. devastation or ruin
4. deprivation of companionship; loneliness
5. sorrow; grief; woe

Where you have felt an absence of God?

Have there been moments of unrest?

Do you feel "bruised"?

