



Compassion and a Campfire

**Mount Calvary's answer to
VBS "*Off the Grid*" for families
with Middle School Youth!**

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

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

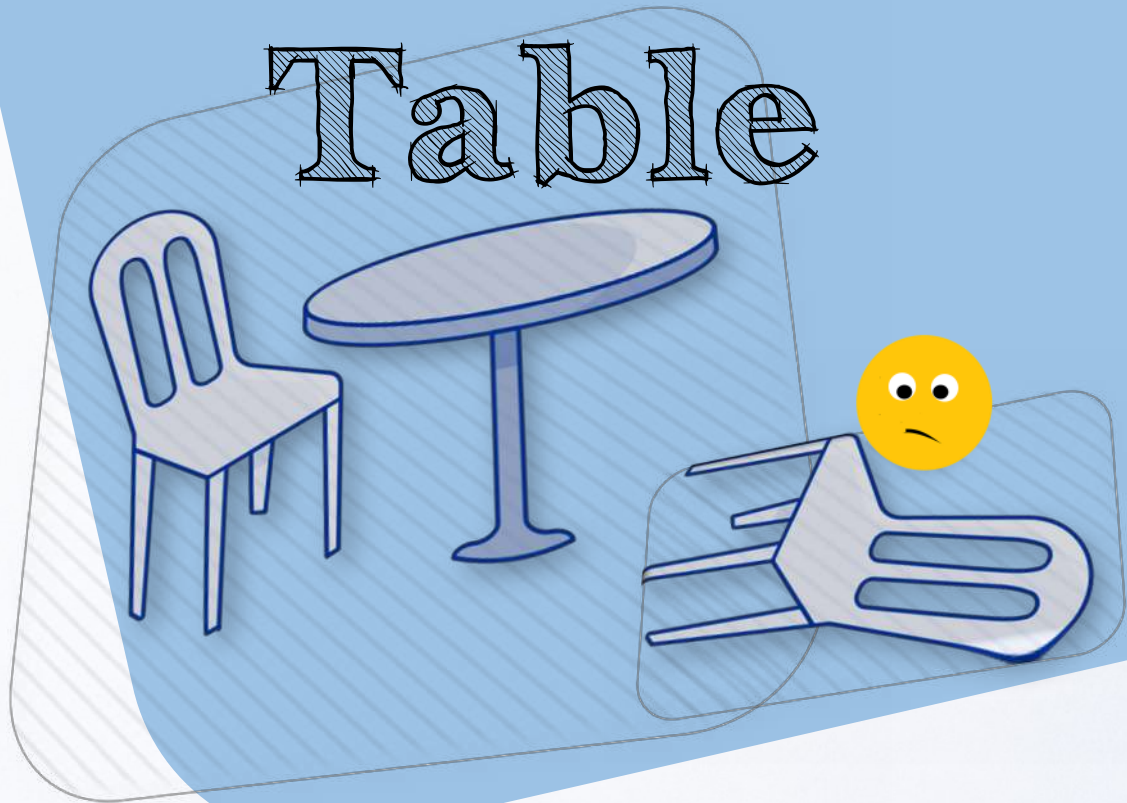
2. You can use the story and activities around a real campfire, a “pretend” campfire or even a candle!

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.

Session 1...

At the Table



Compassion is the ability to feel for another living being and helps us see and welcome. To see and welcome is how accept one another. When we gather at the table, we begin to accept each other in the same way God accepts us. You can practice recognizing and sharing in the feelings of others.

Through the parable of the father and the two brothers in Luke 15:11-32, you will see how compassion empowers us to release 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.



The Campfire

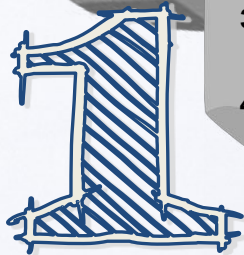
Luke 15:11-32

Look it up in your own Bible or use the reading from The Message included in this packet on the next page.

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.

1. Can you think of a time when someone showed you compassion?
2. Share a time when someone acted compassionately toward you?
3. What other words do you know that are like the word compassion?
4. What feelings did you feel when you heard the story?
5. What are the feelings of the dad? The older brother? The younger brother?
6. Who shows compassion? Who receives compassion?

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?



The Story of the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

The Message

¹¹⁻¹² Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'

¹²⁻¹⁶ "So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

¹⁷⁻²⁰ "That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father.

²⁰⁻²¹ "When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

²²⁻²⁴ "But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.

²⁵⁻²⁷ "All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.'

²⁸⁻³⁰ "The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'

³¹⁻³² "His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'"



2

Blessings & Bruises

Blessings & Bruises is taken from a practice called the Examen. The Examen is an ancient prayer practice that enables you to find God in your daily life. It is based on a technique designed by St. Ignatious Loyola (note the above “*ancient*” 😊). Blessings & Bruises 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!

&

Where have you felt God?

What has brought you joy?

Who is someone who blessed you?



Where has God been absent?

What has made you sad or mad?

When have you been anxious?

Share where you feel bruised...



3

Create an Altar

It's normal for people to associate a particular spot with God - it could be a place in nature, the sanctuary of our church, or a Bible camp. This is a great space to create an altar. This can be a spot of praying, blessings, remembering, the telling story and family time.. Below is listed some directions to create your own Altar space.

- Generally, altars are in one specific place and are created on a small table, a rock, a spot on a shelf or dresser, the dinner table or by your campfire. Your altar can be created and re-created every week, can be created once and left up. Altars are special areas to lay out things that are important to you and point to God!
- On your altar you can put candles, photos, Bible verses, stones, crosses, etc. These items can remain on the altar or be removed weekly and replaced with new things. It is good to invite everyone to bring important items of their choice to the altar!
- Keep it simple and fun!

The dressings of the altar seem to allow people to enter into their own experience of sacred space and time.

Zone out and let your worries melt away.
Listen for God in the serenity around you and give thanks for the time you have to



coloring at the table

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



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.



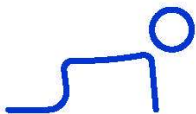
Sit on the floor, legs crossed. Take three deep, slow breaths together, with one person saying the following during inhales and exhailes:

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



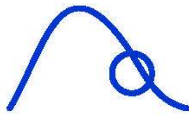
Move into child's pose (Balasana). Kneel forward, big toes together, knees making a "V," and stretch your arms forward. Let your forehead rest on the ground. Stay in this position for as long as feels comfortable for the people in your group. While in this pose, one person can say:

"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."

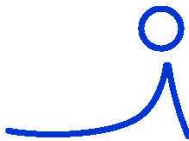


From table top pose, stretch your hips up, your legs back, and your arms straight into downward facing dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana). Hold this pose while breathing in and out a few times. One person can say:

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

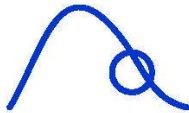


From downward facing dog, lower your hips into plank pose (Phalakasana), then lower further to the ground.



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."