

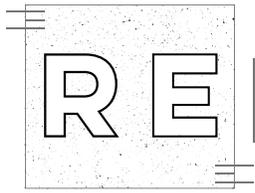
# REIMAGINE

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**“MY PEOPLE, HEAR MY TEACHING; LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH. I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH WITH A PARABLE; I WILL UTTER HIDDEN THINGS, THINGS FROM OF OLD—” PSALM 78:1-2**

**2018 SUMMER YOUTH WEEKS**

**PARENT’S CAMP CONNECTION**



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## PARENT'S CAMP CONNECTION

### Youth Week Theme: Re-Imagine

Have you ever heard something and just knew you had a handle on what you heard? You felt you totally understood everything about the subject. Then you discussed it with a more knowledgeable person only to discover the meaning you imagined was wrong?

Jesus dealt with that in His day, too. What many thought was going to be His kingdom was not what He had in mind. He used parables to help convey truths about who He was and what He taught. Parables were used in the Old Testament, as well. Check out our theme passage from Psalm 78.

### Main theme verses: Psalm 78:1-2

- 1 My people hear my teaching;  
listen to the words of my mouth.
- 2 I will open my mouth with a parable;  
I will utter hidden things, things from of old—

The next few verses also convey what we will be teaching and why:

- 3 things we have heard and known,  
things our ancestors have told us.
- 4 We will not hide them from their descendants;  
we will tell the next generation  
the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,  
his power, and the wonders he has done.
- 5 He decreed statutes for Jacob  
and established the law in Israel,  
which he commanded our ancestors  
to teach their children,
- 6 so the next generation would know them,  
even the children yet to be born,  
and they in turn would tell their children.
- 7 Then they would put their trust in God  
and would not forget his deeds  
but would keep his commands.
- 8 They would not be like their ancestors—  
a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
whose hearts were not loyal to God,  
whose spirits were not faithful to him.

Jesus chose to communicate truths with parables. A parable is an earthly story that has a heavenly meaning, an everyday truth that has a spiritual application. He knew many needed a new way to understand His commands and teachings – to re-imagine how they thought His kingdom would be versus how it really was. Stories or parables use

situations or scenarios to help people grasp a concept, especially if what is conveyed differs from what they believed previously, regardless of whether truths were built on untruths or swayed by cultural norms.

A new way of thinking and acting is difficult, especially if the old way is ingrained from tradition, customs, or stories told for generations.

Re-imagine. What about Jesus and His teachings do you need to re-imagine? The way He truly is or perhaps the principles and commandments on which He stands firmly? Are we more prone to follow what we have always heard or imagined, or are we open to discover the truth in God's Word? God's Word stands forever and is true for all people and for all time. However, the times and culture in which they lived affects their belief system.

Not much has changed. Our culture affects our belief system.

How many of us read the Gospels in a flat, ho-hum — maybe boring — way?" We need to treat Jesus' various teaching methods with respect, discern how each method works and consider what we need to do to respond to them.

We want to take a fresh approach to some of Jesus' parables and look at why He chose the hero in the story or why He needed to explain further His Kingdom. Our prayer is that we all re-imagine the kingdom of God the way Jesus lived it and loves us through it.

### **A Little Background into the Methods Jesus Used**

Jesus' teaching is about 80 to 90 percent poetic in style, filled with various figures of speech. In Matthew 5:29, when Jesus said those who lust should cut out their eye, He did not mean it literally. Those who are blind can still lust (especially if they were able to see in the past and have a great memory.) Instead, Jesus' words refer to taking drastic action, to remove oneself from stimuli that produce lust. This figure of speech is called hyperbole. The application of that teaching might be for those who are struggling with pornography to get rid of the internet, or have strong accountability with friends.

In addition to hyperbole, Jesus uses similes, which are comparisons that use "like" or "as." For example, "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed," (Matthew 17:20). He also uses metaphors, such as when He says, "I am the door of the sheep," (John 10:7). The point of the mustard seed simile is the kingdom of God grows bigger than what is expected. The metaphor comparing Himself to the door is to proclaim that Jesus is the way people get into the kingdom. The key thing to consider with figures of speech, parables and object lessons, to ask what is the connection between the main figure and the spiritual truth Jesus wants to communicate.

One can identify a main figure in about two-thirds of the parables. Some examples are king, father, slave owner, landowner, and shepherd whose actions in some way mirror God's. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father represents the love of God. Historical context will help unpack the parable. A wealthy Middle Eastern head of household would have been considered undignified if he had run after his son when he saw him coming up the road. Respectable fathers simply would not have done this. The parable reveals the father only cared about his son's homecoming rather than what others thought. Oftentimes in parables, the central character represents God.

In addition to main figures, there are contrasting characters in many parables. For instance, one parable contains a good son and a wicked son while another surrounds the story of a lost sheep and one that was found. Frequently, the one who turns out to be the good example is not who you think — re-imagine what you thought. We learn the meaning of the parables from the actions of main characters. When our lives or attitudes line up with the wrong character in the story, conviction arises to change us so that we are aligned with what Jesus is teaching.

## As parents, are we doing enough to live a life as followers of Jesus Christ?

Looking at the rest of the verses from Psalm 78, we read,

- 5 He decreed statutes for Jacob  
and established the law in Israel,  
which he commanded our ancestors  
to teach their children,
- 6 so the next generation would know them,  
even the children yet to be born,  
and they in turn would tell their children.
- 7 Then they would put their trust in God  
and would not forget his deeds  
but would keep his commands.
- 8 **They would not be like their ancestors—  
a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
whose hearts were not loyal to God,  
whose spirits were not faithful to him.**

If I do not want my children or grandchildren to be stubborn, with rebellious hearts that are not loyal to God, this psalm instructs me to teach my children continually what God has done.

In Jana McGruder's book, *Nothing Less: Engaging Kids in a Lifetime of Faith*, new research reports that only 29 percent of born-again Christians say their personal faith plays the most significant role in their approach to parenting. There is a temptation for many adult believers to separate their relationship with God and their relationship with their children. Our faith in the Lord and our calling as parents must be connected in order for our children to see how the Word of God informs our walk as parents.

McGruder writes, "The more concrete this fusion of faith and parenting, the stronger our children will grow in their individual walks with the Father" (p. 22).

McGruder reflects, "The Bible might be the most beloved and neglected book in America. 89% of households own a copy, and 41% of households own four or more copies, but only 20% of Americans have read the Bible in its entirety, 23 % have read only a few sentences or less of the Bible" (p. 22).

\*Here are some other findings in McGruder's book:

"The largest impact predictive of stronger spiritual health is the child regularly reads their Bible while growing up."

"We know there is no perfect recipe but what if we were intentional to study God's word to impact our parenting? We spent time reading and encouraging our children to read it. Read it together. One of the other predictors of a strong faith is listening to Christian radio – hiding God's word in our hearts through music. Trust God to lead you and your family well – but it does take effort, planning, and praying. "

While your teen is at camp this week, we will look at these daily themes. Questions that follow each theme will help you connect with your teen about what was learned at camp.

**Each day we will look very specifically at these:**

• **Tuesday** – Repent

Purpose: For us to understand how important it is to God for one lost person to repent and receive salvation.

Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

• **Wednesday** – Forgiveness

Purpose: To help youth define sin and realize they are sinners, connect their need for forgiveness to their sin, understand they cannot pay for their sin by being good, and encourage them to offer forgiveness to others.

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

• **Thursday** – Re-Imagine Faith: Faith in Action

Purpose: To help students understand God calls us to love all people with our actions.

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

• **Friday** – We are to Sow the Seeds of the Gospel

Purpose: To help students realize they are to share the gospel with others. We are not responsible for the decisions of others – we are simply called to share the good news.

Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; John 20:21; 1 Peter 5:8; Luke 8:1-15

**Questions to ask your teen:**

**Tuesday**

I saw where you studied the parables about the lost coin, lost sheep and the lost son. When it came to the prodigal son, what did you learn about the father and how to treat those who have sinned but have repented? (Luke 15:32.) How do you feel when you see someone repent and turn from wrong to right? How should we treat people who have not kept the commandments but who are sincerely sorry?

**Wednesday**

Tell me about Wednesday – how did you discuss forgiveness? Those who have experienced God's forgiveness must extend that same forgiveness to others. Jesus' point was that our forgiveness was to reflect God's forgiveness that knows no boundaries.

I heard you also did a creative small group time where you went around to different rooms and had different activities. Tell me about that.

**Thursday**

Did you learn anything about the Good Samaritan? Anything jump out at you on how the men responded to the hurt man? Did you see any connection to anyone in your life? In your school? Jesus says they will know you are His by how you act. Do you think people know you follow Jesus by how you act? Anything I can help keep you accountable for that seems to be hard to resist but you know is not an action that pleases God?

Lessons from the Good Samaritan story:

1. He was willing to get involved.
2. He ignored racism.
3. He had money.

4. He had a good name. The innkeeper trusted the Samaritan, probably because he had proven himself trustworthy.
5. He was generous.

How can we use these lessons in our own life?

### **Friday**

The church's mission is to glorify God by proclaiming the gospel to the lost. To glorify God is to exalt Him or make Him look good as He truly is. The gospel (good news) is at the heart of glorifying God because God is sending His own Son to pay the penalty for sinners so He can offer forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a gift to all who believe and exalts God's love, grace, holiness, and justice as nothing else can. So Jesus' ministry was centered on proclaiming the gospel.

**Ask:** Do you think sharing the gospel is hard? Why? Is it because you are afraid? Of what? How can I help you be prepared to share the gospel so you won't be fearful that you don't know how?

These questions are to help your son or daughter know that you care what they learned at camp. Use these to open communication. Study the Scriptures from each day so you know what God's Word has to say about the subject. Pray for your child each day that what they are learning is not only heard but also clearly comprehended by your teen. If you know your child has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior – pray that God leads them in that decision this week.

Many of you wish you had taken time during your teen years to really look at your actions and what path you were headed down before you made some decisions that really affect your lives today. Take time to ask for forgiveness if that is still between you and the Lord – or even between you and someone else. Then pray for your teen to understand the gift of being intentional with their lives. Pray they learn to make their decisions count for God – in living their lives in leading their friends to the Lord. Surveys tell us that more than 90 percent of those who make a decision to follow God and believe He has a plan for them through His gift of Jesus, are made before the age of 19. They may never see the people in their school again after graduation but knowing they help someone encounter Jesus as their Lord and Savior – that is priceless and they will see them again in heaven.