

Dear Parent,

If your son or daughter is typical, then he or she is probably counting the days until the church bus or van heads up to Forest Home for five glorious days away from home. If you're a typical parent, you're probably counting down the days too, not just because you're looking forward to some peace and quiet but because you expect that something special is about to happen in the life of your child.

And there's a good chance that something will. Going to summer camp has been a life-transforming experience for many. There are countless stories of men and women who trace their spiritual birth or re-birth to a mountaintop experience they had at Forest Home. I still remember the night around a campfire more than 50 years ago when as a 13-year-old, I gave my life to Jesus. I made a decision that has left an indelible imprint on me not because I was manipulated or coerced into doing so but because I was in a special place, away from the normal routines of life where I could hear God's voice speak to me in a new way. Being a junior higher, I had a sense that it was time for me to take a giant step forward in my spiritual development, to make my faith my own, and that's what I did.

Author and professor John Westerhoff once wrote that a week of camp is worth 52 weeks of Sunday school. I can't say whether or not that's true, but I do know that a week of camp gives young people a very unique opportunity to experience God and to hear His voice in a way that is unlikely to happen anywhere else. That's the reason why Forest Home exists and that's why the staff at Forest Home is so looking forward to meeting your son or daughter this summer. I'm sure God is looking forward to meeting them there too!

Let me share one other thing I've learned from 45 years or so of taking kids to camp: The support of parents is key to the camping experience. Camp doesn't begin and end when your child goes up and down the hill to Forest Home. It really begins several weeks before they get there and continues long after they get home. That's where you come in.

Here are a few things you can do to help your son or daughter get the most out of summer camp:

- Pray during the days and weeks prior to camp. Pray for the staff as they prepare. Pray for travel safety for the students. Pray that they'll have a great time after they get there, especially on their first day. Pray that they will feel safe yet adventurous as they get out of their comfort zones and experience all that God has for them.
- Be sure to encourage your son or daughter as they prepare to leave for Forest Home. Share their excitement and anticipation. Make sure they have everything they need for the week and talk about what they might experience at camp to alleviate any fears they might have about going. Make a big deal out of their getting to go to camp. After all, it IS a big deal.
- Write letters to your son or daughter while they are away. It takes a few days for letters to arrive (usually), so it's good to send some in advance. Here's the info to put on the envelope.
 - Forest Home Camp
Adventure Mountain

40000 Valley of the Falls Dr., Forest Falls, Ca. 92339

- Pray for your kids and for the camp while your kids are away. Look over the daily schedule and pray for your son or daughter at various times of the day when you know they will be spending time with God, involved in cabin discussions or hearing the Gospel proclaimed at meetings. Pray for the staff and cabin counselors, that they will have patience and understanding and just the right words to say at the right times.
- When your son/daughter returns home, make a big deal out of it. You don't have to throw a party, but let your kids know that you missed them and can't wait to hear about their week. A less-than-enthusiastic welcome can quickly extinguish any fire lit in their hearts up the mountain.
- Take time after camp to have conversations with your son or daughter about what they learned and experienced. Be a good listener. There's a good chance that he/she will tell you every detail of the week, which may seem rather silly to you but very important to your son or daughter. If he or she made a spiritual commitment at camp, offer encouragement and ask how you can help them live out their new commitments at home. Find ways to help your child make the changes and treat those attempts to change, however feeble they may be, with grace and understanding.
- Keep praying. There is little doubt that seeds were planted in your son or daughter's heart that need to be watered and cultivated before they will bear fruit. Pray that your child's experience at Forest Home will continue to be source of strength and spiritual transformation in his or her life.

Last summer I had the privilege of being a cabin counselor at Forest Home with a very loud and rambunctious group of middle schoolers from my church. Frankly, I don't know how those boys put up with me. I snored all night long, used more than my fair share of hot water and scored minus points for our team in most of the games. But they still like me (I think) and they are still talking about what they heard and experienced at Creekside. I pray that your kids will also have a wonderful, life-changing week at camp.

For Christ and for families,

Wayne Rice
Pastor to Generations
College Avenue Baptist Church, San Diego