

PHILOSOPHY



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All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:16–17

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Original Purpose and Vision—excerpt from Preamble to Bylaws

Early in 1972, Walt Brock and WC (Chuck) Chastain met together on several occasions for discussion and prayer, endeavoring to establish an organizational tool to fulfill the vision God was placing in their hearts. This vision was to develop a youth ministry aimed at reaching youth with the gospel of salvation and the truths of the Word of God before they became sin hardened and while they were still inclined to trust Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:1–14). They felt that such a youth-oriented ministry must incorporate the following to be successful:

1. Must be geared to the specific ages, needs, and characteristics of the children and young people.
2. Must recognize and work very closely with the two God-ordained institutions that have responsibility for youth: the family and the church.
3. Must develop a three-pronged approach to reaching young people:
 - A youth camp ministry aimed primarily at helping young people to make God-honoring milestone decisions.
 - An educational prong through an academy, a boarding school, and/or a college and Bible institute, as God leads.
 - A literature prong aimed at follow-up and long-term growth administered through the home and church.



IRONWOOD MISSION STATEMENT

Ironwood is a **home missions ministry** using the unique aspects of the camping ministry to **reach young people** for the Lord Jesus Christ, **strengthen families** and **serve local churches**. It is **a place of decision** in the areas of salvation, full surrender, and consistent Christian walk.



THE BROKEN I, Ironwood's registered brand, stands for our brokenness before the Lord Jesus Christ and complete dependence upon Him. Based on Psalm 51: 15–17, the principle of brokenness teaches that God desires 100% dependence on Himself in humility and obedience. The Broken I stands not only for Ironwood being broken before our Lord, but also for "I" as an individual needing to be broken before the Lord.

CORE VALUES

1. The Bible is the foundation for all that we do, and we must put it into practice by trusting God.
2. We must endeavor to keep focused on spiritual and eternal values. We do this by remembering whom we serve and why.
3. We must help build one another. We must help each other grow in teamwork, abilities, and relationship skills.
4. Loving people is best evidenced through remembering that service is our privilege and then practicing it.
5. We must communicate a true desire to serve others first.
6. We must use what God has given us today, with a pioneer spirit if necessary, while pressing toward an ever-improving excellence in all that we do.
7. We must use the unique aspects of the situation in which God has placed us to the fullest extent. This includes viewing our location, our staff team, and our constituency as gifts from God.
8. Our ministry team extends well beyond our location; therefore, we must establish and maintain a resource network.
9. Our aim is to eliminate distractions; all those things that distract our guests from really hearing the Word of God.
10. We must never quit; there is no substitute for sticking to it.



Original Red Boxcar, 1981

Now part of the Whistle Stop in Rivertown



Cattleman's Lodge, 1975

We still use the table, stools, and countertop

GROWTH PHILOSOPHY

Growth is important within the following context:

1. Be content in God's will with what He has provided so far.
2. Grow slowly, being careful not to outgrow our fundamental constituency.
3. Stress quality over quantity.
 - Do not go beyond the point in size that a camp loses its camp flavor and effectiveness.
 - Do not grow beyond our ability to manage and control all facets of the ministry in order to keep it right.
4. Be consistent with our vision, purposes, doctrines, code of conduct, philosophy, and principles.
5. Give precedence to spiritual growth and spiritual values over the physical.
6. Keep working to improve not only quality, but also quantity wherever consistent with the above.
7. Remember that we are a camp that specializes in small-group service.

A ministry must either move forward, or it will move backward. There is no such thing as a status quo. Progress can be made in other areas than just through facility advancement. We can work to improve our abilities, our program, our operations, or our service. Growth is sometimes defined as growth in numbers or in facility, but we have found that growth can come in any one or all of the following five areas independently of growth in property.

1. Program—doing what we do with the unique aspects of camp in an ever-improving way.
2. People—increase in spiritual maturity as well as in skills, abilities, knowledge, relationships, management, and responsibility levels.
3. Policy and procedures—need to be constantly adjusted or added to.
4. Process—doing what we do better and better. Sequencing, communication, serving others, and stewardship areas are constantly being improved.
5. Property—may be the easiest area in which to grow, but we believe it is an area God may withhold until the other areas are growing or until property growth can in some way effect growth in people.

KEY PRINCIPLES IN OUR MINISTRY

1. Whether big or little, physical or spiritual, always give God the glory for anything done through or by our ministry. He is worthy!
2. Spiritual decisions are the key to success in a camp ministry. A camp ministry is one of the best methods with which to present people the opportunity and responsibility to make decisions for the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Take care of what you have before you get more. God is glorified through a good maintenance program. As our ministry and facility have aged, this principle has grown in importance.
4. We must use wise, frugal stewardship of what God places in our care for use in our service for Him.
 - Never spend more than necessary, while making sure the quality is adequate.
 - Do not do anything just to earn money; this is a spiritual ministry.
 - Stewardship includes the spiritual, mental, and physical growth and general well-being of staff.
 - Every officer and staff member is accountable for his area of responsibility.
5. Principle of sacrifice—nothing for God is accomplished except through the sacrifice of His people. Giving, laboring, and using our time results in seeing souls saved and lives changed.
6. Principle of extra effort—the camp ministry is in essence an extra-effort tool being used to reach the lost sheep of our generation. Extra effort is needed to help young people come to the fold.

If something is worth doing, it is worth doing right. If you can't do it right, it is worth doing anyway. Do the best you can right now with what you've got; don't sit around and wait until everything is perfect to start reaching others for the Lord Jesus Christ. Endeavor to improve quality, doing things in such a way that our Lord Jesus Christ is honored and glorified.

Finally, brethern, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you. 2 Thessalonians 3:1



STAFF PHILOSOPHY

This Christian ministry would be absolutely impossible to operate without a staff that is in full agreement with our doctrines, code of conduct, policies, and philosophy. This agreement must be not only in word or deed, but also in spirit. Therefore our goal is to search out and recruit only those people for our staff who . . .

- are born-again Christians;
- are fully dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ;
- are absolutely sure God has called them not only into full-time Christian work, but also to full-time Christian work at Ironwood;
- are growing in their spiritual life, being a good example while serving Christ and others;
- are loyal to the Lord, the ministry, and each other, in love preferring one another, letting nothing be done through strife, and being a friend in deed to each other, causing no divisions or splits through griping, complaining, gossiping, or comparing;
- are able by conviction and willing in spirit to sign our doctrinal statement and general code of conduct each year.



CAMP PHILOSOPHY

- Camp is FUN and YOU is in the middle. Campers having fun at camp is critical. We must not think about how much easier it would be to maintain the facility or how hard it is to work around them as they have a good time. Campers are not the enemy.
- Ingredients of camp are fun, safety, and spiritual impact.
- Service is a privilege.
- Finish right—you are known by how you finish, not by how you start.
- Balance of prioritized flexibility—efficient quality.
- First impression is a lasting impression.
- A can-do attitude.
- Never stop teaching.
- Never stop learning.
- Project is the curriculum.
- To God be the glory.
- People, not program.



THE HEART of CAMPING

Christian camping is a wise methodology perfected in the last century for the purpose of effective, spiritual impact on every camper through the preaching, admonishing, and reaching of Jesus Christ through God's Word and the work and example of God's servants empowered by the Spirit. This wise methodology has five key ingredients that comprise the heart of camping. Without all five key ingredients, camp would cease to be camp, and its effectiveness diminished.

Hearing of the Word of God

Eliminating Worldly Influences
and Life's Distractions

Away from Home Overnight
in a New Setting

Reflecting on the Word and My
Life in a Creation Context

Trained Staff Leading Unique,
Organized Activities

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deuteronomy 6:7

In this verse giving instructions to parents are two key truths dealing with teaching the Word to young people. First we must teach diligently, or piercingly, so that it will get through to their brains. The second is to teach constantly, no matter the situation and in more than a formal teaching situation—using each “teachable moment.” An effective camping program will have both formal and informal teaching and preaching times to present the Word to the campers.

ELIMINATING WORLDLY INFLUENCES AND LIFE'S DISTRACTIONS

Believers will never live in a perfect spiritual vacuum—an earthly life without the temptation to sin through the lust of the flesh, the influences of the world, or the attack of Satan. However, Christian camps attempt to lessen the pull of the world. Not all distractions pulling campers away from considering the gospel are sinful, so distraction elimination is two-pronged.

First, eliminating as many offenses as possible—Christ identified them in Matthew 18:5–10—stumbling blocks and things that entrap, entice, or cause one to sin. We don't allow rock music, recording devices, drugs, alcohol, immoral behavior, and such at camp. Because of all the electronic devices and gadgets permeating our society, eliminating distractions is becoming more challenging. We endeavor to stay current and relevant without becoming pharisaical and without compromising.

Second, addressing physical and personal needs that can detract from the preaching of the Word and the Holy Spirit's work—for example, camp food has had a poor reputation for years, so our goal is to take away any focus



on food by making it pleasing in taste and quantity. This allows campers to focus on the message during a service rather than looking forward to visiting the snack shop. Other areas we pay close attention to include cleanliness, cabin comfort (especially bedding), and temperature of meeting rooms. We are following the lead of our Savior when He on two occasions fed the thousands with plenty left over, made the effort to get His disciples away for a rest when they needed it, and set up a stage (a small boat pushed out from shore) so all could hear and see Him as He taught them.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you. 2 Thessalonians 3:1

OPERATIONS TEAM DISTRACTIONS

The operations team has some direct control over the items on its top ten list. "No answers" may seem like an odd number-one priority, but we have found over the years that the worst thing we can do when a camper asks a question is to say, "I don't know, and I can't help you find out." A staff member may not know the answer to every question that comes his way but should know how to find the answer and be willing to do so.

PROGRAM TEAM DISTRACTIONS

For the program team, and showing no love for campers is the number-one distraction. Exhibiting a selfish or self-centered view is a sure distraction for the camper. An others-first love is an absolute must for ministers (a.k.a., servants) in the camping ministry.

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

OPERATIONS TEAM DISTRACTIONS

1. No Answers
2. No Flexibility
3. Unsafe
4. Electricity
5. Water
6. Housing
7. Dirty
8. Hot/Cold
9. Horrible Food
10. Noise/Quiet

PROGRAM TEAM DISTRACTIONS

11. No Love
12. Inconsistency
13. Unknown Purpose
14. Unknown Needs
15. Communication
16. No Preparation
17. Staff-centered
18. World Influence
19. Unmanaged Risk
20. Never Go Individual

AWAY FROM HOME OVERNIGHT IN A NEW SETTING

Being away from home overnight in a new setting is one of the most important aspects of camp and is often ignored without realizing its value for both adults and youth campers. Although series of nightly meetings at a church with or meetings scheduled at a nearby hotel can be effective, it is not a true camp methodology. By going home every evening, participants do not get away from their familiar settings and, the group going to a hotel, especially, will discover a host of distractions to occupy their minds.

DISRUPTED COMFORT ZONE AND HABITS. The average young person in America spends more time on a daily basis watching TV, playing video games, or chatting on the computer than going to school. Adults often move through life in an unthinking routine. When routines or comfort zones are disrupted, adults and young people are more likely to focus their attention on their new surroundings, pay closer attention during preaching and teaching times, or spend time immediately after a service thinking about the message and its impact on their lives.

SENSES ON ALERT. Campers not only have new surroundings but also are around new people and have a new schedule. The new surroundings aspect of Christian camp methodology leaves a lasting, eternal impression. When God's Word is preached or taught, campers are more alert and their focus can switch to reflecting on the Word as it relates to their lives. When asked, many people remember fondly events at camp as well as key spiritual decisions.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD & MY LIFE IN A CREATION CONTEXT

Often campers come from cities where they are surrounded by paved streets, sidewalks, buildings, power lines, cell towers, bridges, high rises, billboards, and shopping malls; stars aren't visible at night because of all the streetlights, headlights, security floodlights, and brightly lit houses. Camp provides campers a view of creation and an opportunity to get close to it, reminding them the Creator is interested in them and loved them enough to die on the cross for them. Having time and opportunity to consider God's Word and one's life in the context of creation is an absolute essential of camping methodology.



When honestly considered, God's creation will always point to Him, but the gospel must still be presented. Without clear presentation of the Word, campers may see the Creator but not their Savior. A quick look through the gospels reveals that 80% of Christ's illustrations were from nature. In Psalms the imagery regarding God, His power, and His majesty comes from descriptions of creation and the laws of nature. Campers are in awe of God when they ponder the vastness of the universe, the power to create from nothing, or the fragile beauty of an intricate desert wildflower growing only when conditions are ideal. When campers consider the testimony of creation, they have no excuse for not considering God's Word and believing in Him.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Psalm 8:3–4

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Deuteronomy 4:39

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Romans 1:19–20

In Matthew 6:24–30, God's creation shows He is a loving and providing God. He created and provides for the lilies of the field and challenges believers to have faith in His care for His children. Verse 30 says, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"



Throughout the Bible, believers are encouraged to consider God's creation and learn from it. In a creation setting, campers have an opportunity to reflect on what God has already done for them (e.g., the miracles of God's provision and answered prayer), the sacrifice of Christ upon Calvary, and His testimonies (the Word). They can also evaluate what changes are needed for them to align with His Word and will.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Proverbs 6:6

Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. 1 Samuel 12:24

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? Ecclesiastes 7:13

I will consider thy testimonies. Psalm 119:95

Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Haggai 1:5

For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. Mark 6:52

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Hebrews 12:2-3

**** *Your mission statement is truly lived out. Christ's love shines through all your staff. Not only would I come back, I am going to report to our youth leaders and encourage them to bring the youth to camp.—HD*

Never underestimate
the simplest lesson
or the briefest
wink of time. It
may be the star in
someone's horizon
for all eternity.

American Camp Association



TRAINED STAFF LEADING UNIQUE, ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES

Designing a program which aids accomplishment of the camp mission and on the surface appears to be simple is the result of decades of adjustments and fine tuning. Care is taken to balance fun activities and the spiritual impact goal of camp. Trained staff leading games and activities give the counselors advantages when it comes time to discuss spiritual matters, as well as the advantage of ensuring each activity is balanced in terms of competition, fairness, safety, and fun.

We begin each summer with two weeks of summer staff training—gaping holes are left in our training if we shorten it. The combination of our summer staff team, who interact most directly with the campers, and our resident staff team, whom most of were once summer staff and have served more than ten years, has far-reaching benefits—safety, knowledge of facility and activities available, skill in teaching the various specialized outdoor activities, understanding of the mission, and training in counseling for salvation, full surrender, and consistent Christian living.

Unique, organized activities—games not usually played at home—surprise campers and level the playing field for all. No young person has an automatic advantage based on prior skills and abilities. Many have little skill component that automatically gives the athletic male an advantage in the week-long competition.

In contrast to a public campground where everyone is camping out and doing his own thing in regards to timing, meals, and activities, an organized camp is organized around its spiritual goals, daily schedule, activities, and meals—planning, organizing, leading, and controlling what is going. Activities are planned to be age-group specific in their skill level, fun quotient, and interest level. The schedule balances activity and rest to help campers stay awake when the Word is preached. Each day includes small group discussions, time for one-on-one talks and teachable moments, and personal devotion.

In planning the schedule, we consider nutrition, sleep, safety, excitement, new experience opportunities, adventure, quiet personal time, contemplation, individual youth group needs and goals, new friendships forming, and the overall purpose of reaching young people for the Lord Jesus Christ, strengthening families, and serving churches. Allowing activities to overwhelm spiritual objectives changes camp from a ministry to a recreationally centered, organized camping program.