



Give Them a Chance


Therefore, let us no longer judge one another. Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister.

~ Romans 14:13

Discover the Context Romans 14:13-23

 What are some of the externals we use to judge campers? Are they accurate? Helpful? Misleading? Why? How can looks be deceiving when it comes to campers?

 If you are a counselor, pray each night for your campers by name. If you're not a counselor, pick several of the campers you know to pray for each night. You can do this while lying in bed, simply asking God to work in their lives this week.

 Another good rule to follow is to not share negative stories about campers from previous years. It can be harmful to pass on a preconceived judgment about a camper without giving the benefit of the doubt. A lot can happen in a year, and we should believe that God can change hearts and behaviors.

I've long governed my work at camp by a single, effective rule, and every year I pass it along to the new staff to follow: Never judge a child before you've met their parents.

Maybe you're nodding because you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Some campers come from homes where parents expect perfection, and everyone is required to strive toward that unreachable goal. Some campers come from homes where family love and affection are scarce. Some campers are missing a parent because they are deceased, in prison, or otherwise absent.

You'll see kids at camp who are being raised by their grandparents or other extended family. You'll meet kids whose parents have more money than they know what to do with and those whose parents can barely keep the bills paid. Some might be children of immigrants—legal or otherwise—and they live in fear of separation. Some parents battle addictions, and some are still out chasing their own adolescent dreams.

Domestic stability seems to be the exception in society today. Certainly there are campers who have a decent life at home—parents who get it right most of the time and who are able to provide for their children. And you will most likely also see campers who have a very different kind of experience. You are called to love and support each camper in the way they most need to be loved and supported.

Please, watch what you say and how you say it! Be careful how you interact, and make sure you do not show favoritism. Don't make jokes that will hurt anyone and keep a check on your sarcasm. Be certain that nothing you say or do becomes a stumbling block to a camper who needs to meet Jesus. You represent Christ to your campers; you reflect our God who loves each one completely. It is a high calling, and you must pray for the wisdom and grace to do it right. 