

He First Loved Us

We love because he first loved us. ~ 1 John 4:19

Discover the Context

1 John 4:7-19

 What did God save you from? Why do some Christians forget what Jesus saved them from? Do you see yourself as unlovable? Do you have a hard time loving a difficult camper or irritable staff member? Why? What needs to change in them? What needs to change in you?

 Find intentional ways you can cultivate relationships with campers. Think of how campers will see what Christ is like through you. Love on them as much as you can.

 Jesus, thank you for loving me even when I did not love you. Thank you for loving me all the way to the cross and for being committed to transforming me into your likeness. Let your love flow through me so that campers and parents may see your love and experience its power. I am yours. Forever.

The first time I ever served at camp was a doozy. I had a group of high school basketball players under my wing that were as different and diverse as you could imagine (age, race, size, culture—you name it). They did not understand each other, and by mid-week they were at each other's throats. This group had not bonded the way I had hoped.

I took a hard look at myself and realized I needed to initiate a heart-to-heart conversation. So during our small group time, I confessed to the group my frustration. I explained that I had anger in my heart toward some of them and asked for their forgiveness. I explained that I loved them, and I wanted each one of them to get all they could out of the week we had together. Then I asked if anyone would like to confess something on their heart related to another person in the group. One by one each of them had something to say. At the end of that evening God brought everything to the surface and completely changed the dynamics of our group.

It was important that I, as their leader took the initiative. I had to deal with my own heart and attitude first. I asked God for forgiveness and help. Then when they saw that I loved and cared about them, it made them want to love and care for each other.

In 1 John—and throughout Scripture—we see God's love for us. Even more amazing is that God's love comes to us when we are rebellious sinners (Romans 5:8). We are not deserving of his love in any way. Yet he initiated love toward us. Nowhere is that better seen than in the sacrificial death of Jesus.

How did God love us first? He sent his own Son on a rescue mission to deliver his people by suffering the penalty for our sins. Let that sink in. Deep.

Whatever your role at camp, pray that God will help you to love those you serve. Remind yourself every morning of the love of God that was poured out to you on the cross. Those you serve may frustrate you, be unappreciative of your leadership, or inattentive to your sacrifices. Love them anyway. That's what God did for you. SAM