



TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN  
**SILVER BIRCH RANCH**

***Camp Counselor Training Manual***

# Silver Birch Ranch

## Camp Counselor

## Training Manual

### Chapter 1

#### Silver Birch Ranch's Objective

An apple tree produces apples, an orange tree produces oranges, and a Christian camp should produce Christians. Often times, we fail to produce well-rounded believers. There may be many reasons for the shortcoming. One reason may be untrained leadership. We want Silver Birch Ranch counselors to be trained so that we might be better able to accomplish our task. This is our primary reason for a counselor training program. Every believer has strengths, every believer has the capability to be used at the Ranch, and every believer should pursue the task of refining his skills to become a better instrument in God's work. Our camp has a unique characteristic –unpaid staff. Your service is a gift unto the work of Silver Birch Ranch. We only motivate our counselors the way God has motivated every believer. This includes spiritual reward, satisfaction of seeing lives freed from sin and its enslaving power, watching believers grow in their daily walks, and the realization that God has used you in a very significant way. It has been said that one is able to count the seeds within an apple, but no one is able to count the number of apples produced by one seed. The work is hard, but the reward is great! Often times our labor seems unfruitful, but as we continually deal with every camper in a personal way, God will receive the glory and give the increase.

Here at the Ranch we believe and teach (our Doctrinal Statement) that:

1. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (*II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21*). Scripture is inerrant, complete and the only infallible authoritative Word of God.
2. The Godhead eternal exists in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and these three are one God (*John 1:1-14; Matt. 28:19-20*).
3. Jesus Christ, the Son of God took upon Himself humanity being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. His death was a vicarious and atoning death, His life was sinless, and His miracles literal. He rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven and is now interceding as our High Priest and will personally come and visibly set up His millennial kingdom (*Col.1: 15; Phil 2:5-8; 1 Peter 2:24-25*).
4. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer at the moment of salvation and is the comforter and helper as well as the convicter of sin. We believe that God, in grace, gives gifts to every believer for use in the ministry to which He has called us to accomplish. (*John 7:38, 39; John 14:16; 17:15; 1 Cor. 12-14*).
5. Man was created innocent and fell in the Garden of Eden. Natural man is spiritually dead. Man can be saved by God's grace only by believing that Jesus Christ was the only sacrifice for our sins. Man is saved by faith alone, not by any works, for our redemption is accomplished solely by the blood of Jesus. A Christian cannot lose his salvation for it was accomplished through Christ's work, which never fails, not man's work, and is sealed by the Holy Spirit (*John 5:24; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 1:13; 2:4; 8:9; Philipians 1:6*).
6. We believe that all human life has value because all were created by God and for God. This includes pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps 139).

7. We believe that God makes no mistakes and therefore believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen 1:26-27.)
8. Marriage is exclusively for one man and one woman and is the only accepted sexual relationship (*Gen. 2:18-25; Eph. 5:22-33*).
9. A Christian is to be separated from the world in his life “walking after the Spirit, not after the flesh” (*Romans 8:12, 13; 13:14; Galatians 5:16-25; Col. 3:1-10*).
10. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation (*1 Cor.15; Revelation 20*).
11. We believe in the imminent return of Christ, tribulation and literal reign of 1,000 years with the saints after which the eternal state will be unfolded.

Our philosophy is three-fold. First of all, we wish to deal with every camper on an individual basis concerning his salvation. Secondly, the Bible is the center of all activity. Lastly, we want to have the campers experience God’s wonderful outdoors in a new and exciting way (waterfront, athletics, horsemanship, rafting, hiking, skiing, etc.).

The objective of this manual is to train leaders so that they might become well-equipped. This manual is only the first step in becoming a well-equipped counselor. Every time you counsel, you will add you effectiveness and gain a new understanding. We pray that this will be the start of a life-long process that will continue to make your service to the Kingdom more fruitful.

## Chapter 2

### Who...Me, A Counselor?

***“Then I heard the Lord say, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?’ I answered, ‘I will go! Send me!’ Isaiah 6:8***

#### A counselor is...

What is a counselor? A counselor is a very special person. He is a friend, a person who shows love, and one who has patience. She has an example of Christian behavior in the Canteen, at the beach, at a meal, and at every facet of camping. He has a sense of humor and should be able to laugh at himself. When she fails, she admits her shortcomings to improve. He knows his limitations, and concentrates on the camping fundamentals.

A good counselor is reliable and able to adapt to any circumstance. Above all, the counselor is accountable to God for his actions. Christian leaders are responsible for how they act and what they teach (Hebrew 13:7, 17, James 3, 1 Peter 5: 1-4).

These passages are not to frighten, but they show the importance of our testimonies.

A good counselor understands how the tool of Christian camping works. Christian camping is a powerful tool because it incorporates the following distinctive:

1. Group Experience – When campers arrive they are placed into a cabin; the group experience begins. There are no loners at camp. Everyone belongs. This is the beginning of a powerful experience.
2. Extended Time – More can happen in a week of a camp than often occurs in a year’s worth of youth programming in the church setting. Being with our campers 24/7 intensifies their experience and provides for a deep level of bonding.
3. Outdoor Setting – “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge” (Psalm 19:1-2 NIV). One of the goals as a counselor is to help your camper engage creation by observing it and playing in it. Being

in the pristine setting of Silver Birch Ranch, it begs these questions: “Who created all of this?” “Who created me?”

4. Trained Leadership – That’s you! As you know how to use this tool we call Christian camping effectively, you maximize its potential for life change in campers.
5. Spiritual Objectives – The camp motto is this: “To Know Christ and to Make Him Known.” This is what distinguishes us from a Boy Scout and a Girl Scout camp, for example. Our reason for existing is to encourage every camper to evaluate his/her relationship with Christ. Everything is secondary. Everything else must support this objective.

### Qualifications

The role of counselor is demanding. It is a role great responsibility. The following qualifications may seem like we are expecting perfection. We don’t. We do want you to consider these qualifications and grow in your ability to demonstrate them.

1. Love Christ First – Your application spoke of your personal relationship with Christ and your desire share that love for Christ with campers. This is a non-negotiable qualification.
2. Love for Campers – Your campers will figure out quickly if you are here for them or if you have another agenda. Make sure that they know they are your priority-that you are here for them and to help them have the week of a lifetime.
3. Flexible – Stuff happens at camp! You never know when the power is going to go out or a thunderstorm is going to roll in. Plans often have to change. It is essential that you are able to go with the flow and support the program team with the changes that are necessary.
4. Enthusiastic – You are the primary motivator for your campers. We are counting on you to generate enthusiasm for every aspect of the program. Every game/event is “the best ever”! Remember, the campers will follow your lead and reflect on your attitude.
5. Team Player – It is very important that the program teams know that you are working with them to accomplish the goals for the week – not your own agenda.
6. Dependable – We are investing incredible trust in you to speak/act appropriately with the campers in your cabin. Your ability to act “as Christ would” is essential.
7. Keep a Confidence – We hope that your campers will feel so comfortable and safe with you that they will share things from their lives with you, and that they will share *sensitive* things from their lives with you. It is so important that you keep that information confidential. The only exception to that rule is if they speak to you about any kind of abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional). If so, you are mandated to report that information to the Counselor Director.
8. Firm – The first night of camp the campers will hear the “Camp Rules.” You are expected to uphold the rules, even if it makes you look like the bad guy. Counselors who make being liked by their campers as the number one priority over the rules only set up divisions among the other counselors with the good counselor/bad counselor syndrome. We all need to be on the same page – a united front.
9. Humor – Feel free to allow your unique sense of humor to shine at camp. The individual personalities of the counselors makes every week of camp unique and exciting. Be yourself!!
10. Sensitive – Watch out for the camper who withdraws from the rest- the loner. Take the time to get to know him/her and connect him/her with others in the cabin. Make sure that new campers know how to use the sign-up system and fully engage in the program.
11. Patient – Counseling will try your patience! Sometimes the best thing to do is to step aside and regain your composure. Never “vent” on a camper. Never give consequences to behavior that you can’t enforce or that you don’t have the authority to give, and never strike a camper. In addition to this type of patience, there is another that is very important, too: spiritual patience. Don’t rush/push a camper to make a spiritual decision. Let the Holy Spirit do His convicting work. Be ready to help a camper spiritually when he/she is ready.
12. Maintain Your Spiritual Life – Your personal time with the Lord is essential as you counsel, yet it is so difficult to do with the demanding schedule you keep. Make time to be with the Lord daily to pray for your campers and the day ahead. Don’t make service for God more important than being with God.

Again, we don't expect you to be perfect, just aware and growing in your ability to be effective. The bottom line is this: if you sincerely love the Lord and desire to please and love kids, you are well on your way to being a great counselor.

So, let's summarize. An effective counselor:

1. Enjoys his/her campers.
2. Surrenders self-interest – the week is not about you.
3. Accepts personal responsibility.

Responsibility – A Day in the Life of a Camp Counselor at Silver Birch Ranch

6:30 a.m.	<u>Awake-Dress-Clean-up</u> – Quiet time- spend some time with God getting focused for the day
7-7:50	<u>Cabin and Personal Cleanup</u> – This is an important time for a counselor to be present. Campers should be encouraged to clean-up and change their clothing. The counselor should be aware of the cabin's condition and should ensure that the cabin is not abused in any way.
8:00	<u>Flag Raising</u> – Counselors and campers report to the flagpole area and pay honor to their country. These times around the flag are also times for the whole camp to check-up and see that no one is missing.
8:05	<u>T.A.G. Time</u> – This is a time that is set aside, first of all, to teach campers about quiet time, but secondly to develop the time within each camper. Counselors should spend time with one or more campers during this time and encourage an environment that is conducive to a quality time spent with the Lord.
8:30	<u>Breakfast</u> – Counselors at this time eat as does everyone else. Their duty is to keep order and ensure that the campers eat properly. Assist the Program Team by getting your table quiet for announcements. If you notice that a camper is not eating after a couple of meals, talk with your Counselor Director.
9:15 or 9:30	<u>Morning Jam</u> – Counselors meet in the Chapel for a time of worship. Help get your campers involved by making sure you are fully participating.
9:45 or 10:00	<u>Bible Hour / Seminars</u> – Encourage your campers to bring a pencil, Bible, and Bible study booklet.
11-Noon	<u>Morning Games</u> – Counselors are assigned to a team for games. They are to act as an organizer, encourager, and rule enforcer. This time is to be a highlight of the camper's day; counselors should be sure all of his/her campers are present. Remember the "Best Game" theory.
Noon	<u>Lunch</u> – same as breakfast
1:00 p.m.	<u>Rest Time</u> – Counselors are to ensure that campers are in their cabins, in their bunks, and quiet at this time. Counselors are to encourage campers to plan their free time, memorize extra credit verses, write letters, or sleep.
1:30-4:30	<u>Free Time</u> – Counselors are encouraged to use this time to build relationships with campers. Hang out with them, so activities with them, and just be. This time is designed for to provide spontaneous times of sharing Christ. The key is to maximize the times spent with your campers.
4:30	<u>Counselor's Meeting</u> – Counselors are to attend these meeting unless otherwise excused. The time spent here may be used to discuss activities, problems and needs, as well as to pray together for God's working. This is the one time a day that a formal meeting for the counselors is planned to communicate. It is extremely important.
5:25	<u>Cabin Line-Up</u> – Make sure your cabin is all present and accounted for on the basketball court.
5:30	<u>Supper</u> – same as breakfast
6:30	<u>Evening Game</u> – same a morning game
7:15	<u>Free Swim</u> – Go with your campers to the beach (whether you plan on swimming or not). Your eyes are needed to assist the lifeguards. Report any problems that you see.
8:00	<u>Flag Lowering</u> – Counselors and campers report to the flagpole to show respect to their country – similar to the morning raising.

- 8:05 Evening Chapel – Counselors are to sit with all their campers during chapel. They should also ensure that all of their campers are present. Material from the message should be used for evening devotions. The goal of devotions is to clarify questions and focus on application.
- 9:00 Canteen – This is a great time to connect with your campers on an informal basis. Sit with them or use this time to engage in the 4-square, foosball, etc. Make sure that all the campers are staying in the well-lit areas of the Canteen and are not wandering off into the woods.
- 10:00 Back to Cabin for Evening Devotions – All campers are sent to their cabins to get ready for bed, and then to have cabin devotions. Counselors should go immediately to their cabins and be present while campers get ready for bed. When all the campers are ready, the counselor should conduct a 15-20 minute devotional, prayer and share time. When this is completed, the counselor should turn off all the lights, and instruct campers to be quiet and dwell on the devotion time thought. Quiet after lights out should be enforced.
- 10:30 Lights Out – Counselors should remain in their cabins and are advised to get adequate sleep.

**Note:** This schedule is tentative and may vary during any given week. Also, there will be an emergency drill within the first 24 hours of camp. You will find all the emergency information for your cabin on a poster just inside your cabin door. Make sure you are familiar with its contents.

## **Chapter 3**

### Counselor/Camper Relationship

***“Take the teachings that you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, and entrust them to reliable people, who will be able to teach others also.” 2 Timothy 2:2***

#### Building Relationship

Camp is for the camper. Come to minister, not to be ministered unto. What actually is ministering? It’s much more than one first thinks it is. It’s bonding with a rancher, walking to the Chapel together, sharing stories at the Canteen, or swimming together on a hot day. It’s being a friend. It’s being honest and admitting when you’ve made a mistake. Failure shows the rancher your humanity. It’s being friendly. Being friendly is contagious, just as bitterness and anger are contagious and far reaching. While at camp you’re mother, father, friend, teacher, pastor, and an example to the rancher. This is often times tiring, yet one’s reward will be great.

#### Cabin Life

As we said, one of the distinctive of Christian camping is the “group experience” – i.e. Cabin Life! One of your major roles is to create positive cabin life by incorporating the following ideas:

1. Become part of your cabin group early – Learn the names of your campers, find out their interests and favorite activities at camp, etc. Let them know how excited you are that they are here and that it is your goal to help them have the week of their lives.
2. Develop a sense of belonging – Make sure everyone is included in the cabin discussions, activities, etc. No one is left behind! Help campers be responsible for each other – looking out for the needs of each other. No cliques – unite the groups by planning activities together.
3. Create Identity – Make your cabin unique – it could be wearing your clothes in a similar way, making bandanas alike and wearing them, a chant/rap/cheer, a special handshake, etc.
4. Identify the natural leaders – Look for the camper/campers who usually takes charge of an activity or that other campers follow or look to for direction. Get them on your side by giving them responsibility in the cabin. Make them a part of your team. This will make your life so much easier.
5. Set the rules – On the first night, set the cabin rules. The simpler the better. For example – your cabin rules could include the following: don’t take anything that does not belong to you without permission, no swearing or other disrespectful language, respect each other’s privacy, no one is the butt of a joke.

This will set the tone for the cabin and the week. Get everyone to “buy in” and then hold them accountable.

### Cabin Devotions

This is one of the most important times of the day – don’t waste it by being unprepared! This is not another lesson/talk. This is a time for discussion and application of the main point of the evening message. Prepare a couple of questions that will give each camper an opportunity to share. Use your notes from the evening message to do this.

After this discussion, close the time with prayer. Encourage everyone to pray, but don’t force anyone. As the week goes on, take prayer requests from the campers. Nothing binds a group together faster than praying for each other.

Tips to facilitate devotions:

1. Have the campers ready for bed **before** devotions start.
2. Seat the campers in a circle so they can see each other.
3. Make this a “family” time.

### Appropriate Conversations

Be sensitive to the content of conversations that take place in your cabin. Never allow a camper to be ridiculed because of his/her personal habits, looks, clothes, family life, or beliefs. Your role as a counselor is to model a Christ-like life for your campers and to answer their questions based on what the Bible says, not on your personal opinions. Make sure that the topics of conversation are appropriate for the age group of your cabin, realizing that you may have a range of ages represented. When in doubt, it’s best to tell a camper that you will talk with them privately to address a sensitive issue, rather than in front of a cabin group. Never divulge your private personal information with a camper.

### Special Problems

Every counselor experiences problems. Many of them are common ones, yet some are unique and quite different to overcome. If you are unfamiliar or inexperienced in any situation, notify your Counselor Director. He/she will work with you or appoint someone to help you get a taste of what may occur during the camp period and how to deal with each.

Un-involvement of campers is an extra burden for you, and probably a sign to you that the camper has a bad self-image, or that he doesn’t know how to plan free time. A good rule of thumb is to go over each camper’s plans for the afternoon during rest time. This will insure a busy, well-developed, and happy camper. This will also help you give constructive guidance.

Bed-wetting is a touchy situation which only you and the camper work on. Under no circumstances do you allow other campers knowledge of this problem. Things that help include the following: monitor liquids before and after supper, and make sure camper goes to the bathroom before going to bed. Some campers will come with pull-ups. Work out a plan to help them put these on in privacy. Even taking these precautions does not guarantee that the problem is solved. Bed wetting is often a physical development issue that will go away in time. Remember, your camper is not doing this to make it more difficult for you. They desperately want this to stop. When it happens, discreetly remove the sleeping bag and any soiled clothes and take them to the Dining Hall laundry room. Tell your Counselor Director so he/she is aware of the problem. The housekeeping crew will wash the items and give them to your Counselor Director. This is the same procedure for any soiled items with bodily fluids.

Homesickness seems to always hit several times during a camp session. This is highly contagious, so we want to work out this problem quickly. Usually the parents don’t have to make a long trip if we work out the

homesickness plan. First of all, homesickness is an outward reaction to a camper's need. A camper's most basic needs are probably the feeling of being wanted and the feeling of being secure. When these are threatened, homesickness usually develops. The sickness usually sets in during quiet times, unscheduled events, or at meals. Try to be present at these times. Don't let the camper call home. The best thing you could do is to introduce him to many friends and make sure he's busy. It is wise to show this camper a bit more attention during this period.

Child Abuse (physical) is often recognized by changes; changes in behavior, eating, sleeping and school performance. Since you, as a counselor, don't have the context to discern these types of changes, you may be at a disadvantage in recognizing physical abuse. But there are other signs of abuse that you should pay attention to. These signs include: unexplained (or inadequately explained) burns or bruises in the shape of objects; behaviors that are age inappropriate like thumb sucking, fear of the dark or of strangers. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive and may express a fear or apprehension of returning home. As you develop a relationship with your campers, some may tell you of abuse they have endured (see "confidence" p. 3).

If you are told of or if you suspect abuse, keep calm and reassure your camper that you believe them and will do whatever is necessary to make sure that they are safe. Report any abuse to your Counselor Director immediately.

Sexual Abuse is defined as, "any contact or interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or another person."

To guard against the possibility of being accused of this as a counselor, make sure to give your campers privacy when changing, using the bathroom and showering; never shower or change your clothes in front of a camper; and maintain the **rule of three** – never be alone in the cabin, or any other private area, with a camper.

Watch for the signs that may indicate that one of your campers has been sexually assaulted. The physical signs may include: difficulty walking or sitting; torn, stained or bloody underclothing; pain or itching in the genital area; or bruises, bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas. Behavioral indicators may include: unwillingness to change clothes (not just normal modesty); withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior; bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge, or your camper reports an assault to you (see "confidence" p. 3).

If you suspect sexual abuse, report it to your counselor director immediately.

Sickness – A nurse is available at the Fix-It 24/7. For routine concerns that are not an emergency, limit your visit to the nurse to the times right after a meal and before bed. For an emergency, the nurse is always available either in the Fix-It or by radio.

#### Behavior and Discipline Guidelines

Children's behavior may have many roots. It is not expected that one week at summer camp will cure all behavioral problems; it will give you clues on how to deal with it.

#### Two things to keep in mind:

1. Your campers are not mini-adults. Expect them to want to have fun and be active.
2. Expect your campers to test their limits; they still, however, want and need limits.

#### Common reasons for surface behavior problems:

1. A desire for recognition/attention – it may be better to be infamous than unknown.
2. Frustration – unsatisfied needs or desires often cause children to "lash out."



3. Homesickness – being scared and nervous often causes frustration.
4. Illness/exhaustion – no one is at their best when they are sick or tired.
5. Conflict with other camper/staff member-this often causes people to be defensive.
6. Outside conflicts – problems with family, friends, etc. can follow campers to camp.
7. Establishment behavior patterns-lessons learned at home won't be forgotten at camp.

Some ways to provide structure without having to become a drill sergeant:

1. Establish clear expectations right away.
2. Balance structure with a reasonable amount of freedom.
3. Reinforce and encourage desirable behaviors.

Things to do about rule violations or refusal to cooperate:

1. Give a camper one warning; make it clear that they have done wrong.
2. Give your camper a chance to explain; they may have a good reason.
3. Be consistent and impartial.
4. Stay cool and calm; keep strong emotion in check.
5. Avoid lecturing or embarrassing the camper; discipline in private if possible.
6. Stress that the behavior is the problem, not the camper's personality. Help the camper to identify acceptable alternatives to the problem behavior.
7. Once the disciplinary time is over, accept the camper as a part of the group again.
8. Follow the camp behavior-management policies for continuing discipline problems.

Time-Tested Strategies

1. Be the kind of person you want your campers to become. Obey the rules yourself!
2. Know as many campers as possible by name. Know something about them. Build relationships.
3. Be friendly. Always show interest in what an individual camper is doing and their progress.
4. Remember that "one pat on the back is worth two slaps in the face." Praise good qualities and actions.
5. Be sure that a sense of humor is extremely valuable. Use it frequently.
6. Maintain poise at all times. Don't let campers "get to you."
7. Never take misbehavior personally. It is a choice the camper is making.
8. Always remember that every child has his need. His behavior will give you clues as to what those needs are.
9. Keep in mind that misbehavior is seldom willful. Try to find a cause.
10. Try to see the camper's side of the situation. Discuss it with them until you understand.
11. Distract, distract, distract! One of the best methods to control behavior is to keep them busy!
12. Show your disapproval of behavior through your speech, facial expression, and action.
13. Being close when you note a potential problem can keep it from actually occurring.
14. Enlist other leaders (peers or staff) to provide role models.
15. Allow natural consequences to occur if the results are NOT too severe.
16. Withholding privileges or taking away something a camper likes is usually effective.
17. Sending a child to "time out" allows time to cool down to think about behavior change.
18. Have a group meeting to discuss and resolve generalized problems.
19. Remain with your campers during meals and free time.
20. Avoid getting campers over tired, keyed-up, or tense.
21. Be willing to admit when you're wrong and ask for forgiveness.

Sometimes it is best to simply ignore behaviors, rather than reward or punish, to solve the problem. Giving the child some form of responsibility, or encouragement of a special interest or talent, may result in improvement behavior. Ignoring behaviors usually works best for campers who seek attention by clowning around.

Sometimes, giving the child attention or affection, which has been lacking, may solve the problem. Giving the child some form of responsibility, or encouraging a special interest or talent may result in improved behavior. Often the activity, if it is at his/her own physical, emotional, and intellectual level, is enough to correct the situation.

### Bullying

Bullying involves an individual or a group repeatedly harming another person—physically (e.g. punching or pushing), verbally (e.g. teasing or name-calling), or socially (e.g. ostracizing or spreading hurtful rumors). Sometimes these harmful actions are plainly visible, but other times, such as when gossip and rumors are used to ostracize the target, the actions are covert. Bullying behavior might include assault, tripping, intimidation, rumor spreading and isolation, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, destruction of another's work, and name-calling.

In addition to watching for inappropriate/aggressive behavior among your campers, listen carefully to conversations that could be a form of bullying. Make sure that you are not joining in with the bully unintentionally by ignoring the situation, denying it, or laughing along with him or her.

When you witness bullying behaviors, take the bully aside and explain why their behavior is unacceptable. Remind him/her of the cabin expectations for treatment of fellow campers. Have him/her apologize. If the bullying continues, report the situation immediately to the Counselor Director.

After you've dealt with the bully, privately talk with the bullied. Say something like, "I'm sorry that happened to you, do you want to tell me about it?" Don't tell them what they should have done or what you would have done. Listen and help them think through how to address the problem effectively.

Encourage them to report any bullying behavior to you, another counselor, any staff member, or area supervisor immediately. Make sure they understand that it is completely unacceptable and they should not tolerate it.

### The Bully or Show-Off

To deal with these children, you first need the child's confidence in you as a leader. To do this, you should not be dominating, overly critical, or too demanding on the child's confidence, and praise good behavior – instead of only criticizing. Discuss with the child the rights or others and courtesies due them. Let him/her know that others will be more accepting if this behavior is turned more positive.

In a group activity make a special effort to place this child in a competition with others of equal or greater strength and ability. Essentially, the bully or the show-off requires understanding and patience combined with placement of the child in groups lending to his/her development of leadership traits in honest competition with other children.

### Fighting

Serious fighting often evolves from what starts out as just "fooling around." Keep a close eye in such horseplay to keep it from getting out hand. When a fight breaks out, separate the combatants AT ONCE! Let your voice show calm, mature authority. Attempt to give them time to cool down. Watch facial expressions to indicate less tension. Disallow any angry verbal exchanges, and remove any physical combatants to a "safe distance" from each other if necessary.

Fights that involve serious contact (hitting, kicking, biting, and punching) require both combatants to visit the nurse, who will check for bruising and internal bleeding. An incident report should be completed. Once combatants have regained composure, try one or more of the following:

1. Calmly discuss the situation separately with each individual. Emphasize resolving the problem, not placing blame. Aim for a mutual "shake hands and make-up" plan.

2. Hold a face-to-face hearing where each participant describes his/her version without interruption from each other. Attempt to help each other see the other side, then reconcile differences, make-up, and forgive.
3. Allow the individuals to discuss the situation between them privately, if you are sure the anger has dissipated. You can help mediate if they wish.
4. Invoke logical consequences if clear provocation can be established or if this is a repeat offense. (See the Camp Behavior Management Policy.)

### Stealing

Prevent stealing by establishing an atmosphere of trust within all members of the group. Discuss openly the need to respect each other's property. Establish group rules as campers feel a need to protect individual property, and define sanctions for rule infractions. Always discourage campers from leaving valuables out in the open unnecessarily. If stealing still occurs:

1. Give the offender opportunity to return the article anonymously, without punishment.
2. Be sure that you may need to play detective if the item is not returned and the offender is still not identified. Be cautious in seeking group cooperation in order to avoid the offender being ostracized.
3. If you have evidence to identify an offender, deal with the camper privately. Give him/her a chance to make restitution and make a plan together to avoid bad behaviors.
4. If evidence is lacking as to the offender's identity, try handing out sheets of paper to each member of the group. Have them write out either "I did not take it," or "I did take it and I'm sorry," and sign their name. Give them the opportunity to secretly place the papers in your custody. Deal with each offender privately at a later time.
5. If the problem persists, follow camp procedures and inform the Program Director.

### Behavior Management Policy

Silver Birch Ranch advocates a positive guidance and discipline policy with an emphasis on positive reinforcement, redirection, prevention, and the development of self-discipline. Remind campers that camp rules are established for safety and to ensure that we have a common standard of behavior. As staff members, we need to show the campers that we see the need for following the rules ourselves. Please do not contradict the established guideline!

Corrective discipline must be a creative, caring effort on the part of the counselor, and it must be seen as such by the camper. Always suggest positive alternatives to unacceptable behavior before it gets out of control.

1. Discuss rules with campers and identify out-of-bounds areas.
2. Discuss the possible consequences of breaking any rule:
  - Quiet time
  - Restriction from activity
  - Restriction to adult supervision
  - Conference with director
  - Conference with parent/director
  - Removal from camp
3. Enforce all the rules at all times, without malice, and be consistent in application.
4. Inform the Program Director of all disciplinary measures.
5. **Never** allow the discipline to include depriving a camper of sleep, food, or restroom privileges, placing a camper alone without supervision, or subjecting a camper to ridicule, shaming, threat, corporal punishment (striking, biting, kicking, squeezing), washing out the mouth, or physical exercise or restraint.
6. Conduct a periodic evaluation of the program/staff/camper groups to ensure that the camp environment is not contributing to behavior problem.

At Silver Birch Ranch we would like to employ a 4 COUNT discipline procedure. The first count is warning the camper and showing the camper what was wrong and why it was wrong. Usually there is a motive. If a counselor can find out the camper's motive, the counselor usually can deal with the situation. After the first offense, the camper is then notified that he goes to the Program Director next. The Program Director will deal with the situation along with the counselor. If the camper continues, he then goes to the Executive Director for the third offense. The three of you work out a plan for the camper. Finally, (which rarely occurs) if the rancher is too much to handle, we will send him home. This hurts because this camper is in the greatest need of camp.

#### Principles to Remember

1. Know the characteristics of the age that you'll be working with. These may be obtained from resource books. This will help you be a better minister.
2. Don't have favorites. It destroys your relationships with others.
3. Don't neglect your faithful kids (veteran campers, church kids). They need love, caring and **attention** just like the others.
4. Keep a positive attitude. This helps morale and spreads through the Ranch like **wildfire**.
5. Be familiar with the camp program.
6. Set apart personal goals for each rancher. For example: Joan – salvation, Jane – bad temper, Sue – moody, Cindy – application of truth, etc. By having a goal before you, it helps direct you in a concrete way as you work with your campers.
7. A busy camper usually is happy one. Remember, it is a SIN to bore a kid when we have Christ and our facilities.

#### After the Week Is Over – Camper Follow-Up

You've worked hard to develop healthy, long-lasting relationships with your campers during camp, and it is our desire that you continue investing in those relationships after your campers go home. We seek to do this in a manner that allows our campers to experience the love of Christ in a healthy and safe way. Here are the policies that will allow you to have healthy communication with your campers – after the week is over.

#### General Expectations

1. All personal communication with campers must have parent involvement and/or approval.
2. Ensure that all communication and in-person contact is appropriate, spiritual, and encouraging for all individuals.
3. Consider what you say and do and how it will be perceived.
4. If parents do not want you to personally communicate with their child, you must honor their request.
5. Be a positive "role-model".
6. Communication must be to same gender.

#### Phone Calls/Texts

1. All personal phone calls/texts must have parent involvement and/or approval.
2. Only call/text the camper's cell phone if you have approval from parents.
3. Only call during appropriate hours.
4. Calls should be limited in duration and frequency.

#### Written Communication (Postcards/Letters)

1. Be encouraging to the camper, honoring to parents, and edifying to the Lord.
2. All personal written communication must have parent approval or be done in a transparent way.
3. Use postcards so that parents can see what is being sent to their child. If you use a letter, address it to the parents.

#### Electronic Communication (Facebook/emails)

1. Private electronic messages must have parent involvement and/or approval. (Examples: send to parent, cc parent, or get parent's approval)
2. Be careful what "friends" are posting on your site.

3. Constantly monitor your profiles for appropriate material.

#### Visiting a Camper in His/Her Home

1. Must have parent invitation and/or permission. Never show up unannounced.
2. Don't disrupt the flow of the household.
3. If invited to stay the night, be respectful of family/camper privacy.
4. Never spend the night in a room with the camper.
5. Do not shower/change clothes in front of a camper.
6. Go to bed when the family goes to bed.
7. Be polite and helpful.
8. Leave living area better than you found it.
9. No private one-on-one situations anytime.

#### Counseling/Sensitive Subjects

1. Professional counseling should be left to the professionals.
2. Personal counseling should be encouraging, uplifting, and Christ-centered. Avoid personal experiences if possible.
3. No private one-on-one situations. When necessary, have a third person.
4. Parents need to initiate and be involved. Encourage parental involvement.
5. Please choose appropriate place and setting for conversations.

## **Chapter 4** To Make Him Known

***“Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.” Psalm 114:105***

#### The Gospel

We as counselors have one of the biggest thrills and privileges in the world. That is to live and give a message of hope which totally redirects a person's life, and which will result in a more fulfilling and abundant life for that person. We should live the way God intended us to live. This means that we must be familiar with and use our basic tool...the Bible. The more familiar we are with the Bible, and the more real the Word is to us, the more it will have direct bearing upon our success as counselors. Many times the Bible sessions are the boring sessions for a camper. This should not be the case. The good news is that Christ died, freed us from sin's power, which enables us to live life to its fullest. This Gospel is beautiful and should never be presented in a boring manner. Its message should be interesting, relevant, exciting, challenging, and stretching. The Word should be taught and applied to every age group, but not in the same fashion. When given the privilege to speak, make it live. For most speakers, 20 minutes is a good rule of thumb. It's long enough to get your point across and short enough to hold their interest. Very few kids sit through an application (even if you do, their minds are usually not with you) after a beautiful, exciting story that has lasted 25 minutes. Some might have a gift to hold audiences, but most don't. Another good point to keep in mind is that of limiting the message to only one point. Your message should be able to be put into one sentence. Kids can remember one point if it's emphasized, illustrated, and applied and more importantly, if it's useful for them to remember. Your time quickly passes if you can focus on your point from all angles.

Remember we can't short-change the Gospel. Its message should be presented so it is:

- Interesting
- Relevant
- Challenging
- Stretching

### Salvation and Assurance

Every counselor should know how to deal with a camper concerning his/her salvation. Here are a few steps we'd like you to follow. First of all, you must recognize the camper's problem. The camper might not be saved or they are not sure of it. If the latter applies, then proceed with the stories and Scriptures to assure them to salvation. We recommend that you compare the relationship of human family and God's family. Use John 1:12, John 3:16, John 10:28-29, 1 John 5:11-13 with the camper. Reassure that he doesn't lose his salvation when he sins-only his fellowship. Go over 1 John 1:9 with the camper. After this session QUESTION the camper and challenge him to TELL someone of his assurance. This is a tremendous reinforcement. We also deal with campers who are unsaved, but searching, in a different manner. Guide the camper to an understanding that he is a sinner (Romans 3:23) and that the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Christ paid the penalty because He loves us. If we only believe (John 3:16, 36; Romans 5:8) and take Christ as payment or gift (Ephesians 2:8-9) by faith we will be saved (John 1:12). Once saved, we have the power to live life through Christ, because we are part of the family of God. If the camper, without pressure or guilt, decides to take God's gift, let him pray or help him pray. Then deal a bit with the camper's assurance. After all this is completed, QUESTION the camper about what he did and ask him to TELL someone what he did. Again, this helps reinforce his decision. One doesn't have to present salvation or assurance in this fashion, (it is only a guide or a help), but we would like you to employ the questions and the telling at the end of the session for the camper's benefit. Once you've dealt personally with a camper, fill out a decision card that is available for the Program Team to give a copy to the Program Director. This information will be used when the counselor fills out each camper's personal record at the end of the ranch session.

### The Goal

Our goal is to personally engage each camper in a way so that he can respond both to a challenge to live the Christian life in an un-coerced way. The program, songs, and everything else is preparing the camper for the preaching of the Word. This is first and foremost in the Director's mind during his planning, and should be remembered by the counselor. We expect the counselor at all meetings to be a friend, to keep order, and to be prepared to deal with kids in a spiritual manner. Campfires are a special time, but a time of real need for the counselor to keep order. Don't look the other way when you see a problem. Remember, your goals are not only for the camper, but for the counselor also. We want this experience to be a growing one for you. Don't deprive yourself of your communication with God (prayer, the Bible) because of a busy schedule. Pray often for yourself, the kids, the directors, and that God will receive all the glory through the ministry of Silver Birch Ranch.

## Chapter 5

### Persevering to the End

***"But I reckon my own life to be worth nothing to me in order that I may complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do, which is declare the good news of the grace of God." Acts 20:24***

### Keep Goals in Mind

To be as lively, as enthusiastic, and patient at the end of your counseling time as you were in the beginning would mean that you're a super-person. The days are long, you're tired, and you need to rest. We urge you to keep plugging. Remember, your Counselor Director is here to assist you all along the way. Remember our goal at SBR, and these will help you persevere until the end.

### What about the Future?

Many counselors, after seeing and experiencing the tremendous ministry of Silver Birch Ranch, wonder what else they can do (besides being a counselor) to help the Ranch. There are a few ways the Ranch could utilize your help your help. First, you can recruit campers. A full camp helps pays bills, as was mentioned previously. Secondly, you might volunteer to work a day, week, month, etc., at the Ranch. The ministry is hopping up North,

so help is appreciated at anytime during the year. Our full-time staff loves the Lord and would love to share with you the many opportunities available through Silver Birch Ranch. Lastly, you can support the Ranch financially and verbally. Any money donated is tax deductible and would go directly to the ministry of reaching people with Gospel and helping them grow in their spiritual lives. I trust if God places this burden in your heart, you will respond and become part of the Shareholder program.

Remember, Silver Birch Ranch is a year-round ministry with a full-time staff dedicated to serving our Lord and His church in a mighty way. It offers educational opportunities for college-age students through Nicolet Bible Institute, while serving local churches with fantastic retreat and out-camping facilities. Perhaps you might be interested in becoming part of the ministry or using some of its facilities. Feel free to inquire in the camp office at any time. We truly appreciate all those who have served before and look forward to God continuing to use Silver Birch Ranch in a mighty way.