

SLIDE 1. The Chief End of a Follower of Jesus

Teaching: *To Glorify God or to Make Disciples?*

Sunday October 1, 2023

Some time ago...

We hosted an *Athletes in Action* Multi-Sport Camp for children.

SLIDE 2. PRO. PRES. BUNDLE #1

It was a Day Camp. It ran from 9 am. – 3 p.m. Monday – Friday. It was SOLD OUT!

Campers and parents alike - asked us if we would run it again!

Athletes in Action provided 3 coaching staff who trained our church volunteers, who ran the games, who provided t-shirts for each camper, and who organized the MORE THAN A GAME teaching times every midday – when campers were introduced to Jesus or encouraged in their relationship with Him.

South Langley Church provided the indoor, weather-independent, air-conditioned space to run and play and learn together, we supplied a daily bottle of Gatorade to top-up everyone's electrolytes, we provided the necessary support staff to run a good and safe camp, and we provided snacks of various kinds to those staff and volunteers.

90% of the campers who came to our camp had never been to an Athletes in Action sports camp before.

Lots of our campers – 75% of them – had been to church before or were active in a community of faith.

But - 25% of the campers who came to our camp had never been *in* a church before.

And – this is pretty cool - 30% of the campers either chose to start a relationship with Jesus Christ that week or expressed an interest in knowing more.

Because we are a full-disclosure kind of community – we sent a follow-up letter home at the end of the week with each camper – which had an overview of what we talked about during our MORE THAN A GAME time.

We also sent a follow-up letter to our follow-up letter – the first week of September – to each camper – to remind them again of what we talked about, to invite them to contact us if they had any further questions, and to invite them to our FAMILY FAIR last Sunday.

It was fantastic to see a # of our campers at the Fair last weekend.

None of this would have been possible if we – *South Langley Church* - weren't willing to take down our stage and make room for our community.

Some time ago...

We organized and ran a Pickleball Camp.

SLIDE 3. PRO. PRES. BUNDLE #2

It was an evening camp. It ran from 7-8:30. Warm up. Skills and drills. And games. Broken up in the middle – again – by the gulping of Gatorade!

A friend of mine from Chilliwack came to teach us the game. That it is called a paddle – not a racket. That the rules of the game are kind of goofy. That scoring the game is tricky. That the third shot is the shot that sets points up. That the game is won and lost at the net. That it is all about practice and consistency.

None of which was news to our *South Langley Church* pickleball-playing volunteers – who helped campers as needed and encouraged them along the way.

We had campers who had never played pickleball before.

We had campers who were learning the game.

We had campers who were teenagers – and we had campers who were retired.

We had campers from *South Langley Church* – and we had campers from the community.

We ended the week with a round-robin tournament – including prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place finishers.

We made and we built friendships.

Since we ran the camp – we've had a sizable increase in numbers of players connecting here on campus on Monday nights, and Tuesday and Friday afternoons.

None of this would have been possible if we – *South Langley Church* - weren't willing to take down our stage and make room for our community.

We are doing what we set out to do: to use this building which God gave to us as a gift – as a gift in service of our community.

For ministry. And for rentals.

We have been blessed to connect with a # of community organizations in the past who have rented space here – including Coppersea Dog Training and the Girl Guides of Canada.

And, I believe, God has (and will continue) to bring new people our way – including Canadian filmmakers (every now and again), a local teenage girls, competitive basketball club (on Wednesday nights), and a Ukrainian School (on Saturdays).

Speaking of which...

We saw a # of Ukrainian School families at the Fun Fair last Sunday.

Speaking of which...

This was the second time we kicked-off our ministry year with our *Fall Family Fun Fair!*

SLIDE 4. PRO. PRES. BUNDLE #3

It was – again – a fantastic opportunity for us – *South Langley Church* – to partner with *Sonshine St. Preschool and Daycare*.

It was – again – a fantastic day!

Carnival games and prizes. Big and small bouncy castles. An open playground. Candy floss and popcorn. Chicken wraps, hamburgers, and hot dogs.

A ton of volunteers!

At least 305 kids with their families.

2 dogs. 1 goose.

And way too many wasps.

We broke from food-prep. and setting up outside to meet in the Community Room at 10:30 – to remind ourselves why we do a Fun Fair – and to pray.

We do a Fun Fair to have fun.

We do a Fun Fair to connect with our community.

We do a Fun Fair to glorify and honor the name of God.

You see – the bible says that all the good we have in this life is given to us by God (Jas. 1:17).

When we offer up the gift of our campus in service of others – we glorify the name of God in the act of giving.

When we give our energy and time to do things well – as if working for the Lord (Col. 3:17, 23) – we honor the name of the Lord.

When we show-up and help-out – when we greet people warmly and speak to them with respect – when we cheer kids on – as they collect their 50th prize ticket – we build relationships with our community.

And – in all this play and work – we manage to have fun.

We are doing what we set out to do: to use this building which God gave to us as a gift – as a gift in service of our community.

Because we are trying to build bridges in our community at a time when the evangelical church in Canada has burnt a lot of bridges.

Because we are trying to be generous and gracious with our space.

Because we are trying to be generous and gracious people.

Because we are hoping that – in hanging out with us – we might get a chance to hear the stories of others and – maybe – to tell a bit of our own – of how we came to know Jesus and what He means to us and how knowing Him impacts our lives.

Imagine...

An Athletes in Action Thursday Night Basketball Club in the new year: 8 sessions of skills and drills and games – for students in grades 1-5. T-shirts, basketballs, training. We just need a head coach and some helpers (though our help might even come from our Wednesday rental!).

Imagine...

Family Night Connections – the last Fridays of October and November – a Classic Movie Night – on Oct. 27 (for which you had an invitation card on your seat to share with another family) – and a Game Night – on Nov. 24 (which will feature some big group games and a call back to some of our carnival games).

Imagine...

A Christmas Eve service that we intentionally design for families – lots of singing – a little bit of snacking – and a simple telling of the Christmas story.

Imagine...

That all of this leads to offering the Alpha program to our community in the new year – when we would invite people to dinner, watch the series together, and talk about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit and the Church.

Imagine...

Imagine yourself being a part of this movement – this movement to connect with our community and to talk about Jesus.

Imagine how you might participate: maybe a coach or an assistant coach or a greeter or someone who checks students in, maybe someone who invites neighbors to family nights, maybe someone who pops popcorn or manages the concession, maybe someone who invites someone to our Christmas Eve service, maybe someone who is a table leader for Alpha or someone who brings a friend.

Imagine...

SLIDE 5. "What is the chief end of a follower of Jesus?"

Is it to glorify God?

Or is it to make disciples?

Or – perhaps - to put it in the context of what we've said so far...

Is it to be busy for God?

Or is it to trust and to enjoy Him?

Well – if I could model my answer on the kind of answer Jesus once gave when He was asked "What is the greatest commandment?" and then answered by giving 2 commandments...

I would say - I think the chief end of a follower of Jesus is both: to glorify God and to make disciples – and I think – in that order – because – maybe – one leads to the other.

To glorify God...

To express faith in God. To believe in Him – for who He is and for what He has done for all humanity.

To worship God. To set our minds and hearts on Him and His word – and to respond to Him in joy and prayer and song.

To obey his commands. To align our will and choices and actions with the wisdom of God so that it would lead us to a persevering and even - flourishing life.

One command of which is this: to make disciples (Mt. 28:18).

To know God.

To have a growing relationship with God rooted in the bible and a bible-believing community.

To be a disciple who makes disciples.

Not one or the other – I don't think. I'd say – both.

So – let's continue to *invest* in our neighbors – to care for them – to help them – to love them – as best we can when we can – and to *invite* them to Day Camps and Night Camps, Fun Fairs and Family Nights, Worship gatherings and Alpha.

But first and always in the context of trusting, enjoying, and glorifying God.

Because – we don't have all the answers – but we do have a Savior. His name is Jesus!

The One who saves. A friend of sinners. The author and perfecter of our faith.

In whose name we pray.

SLIDE 6. The bible says...

... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Ro. 3:23).

That ... *the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus...* (Ro. 6:23).

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro. 5:8).

So ... *if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Ro. 10:9).*

And... *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"* (Ro. 10:13).

So that for those who do...

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Ro. 8:1).

And – nothing - nothing ... *will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ro. 8:39).*

So – we celebrate Jesus!

We come to these tables – which have bread and juice on them – representing the broken body and shed blood of Jesus for our sakes. Emblems. Symbols.

We are invited – as one liturgy puts it – “not because we are strong, but because we are weak – not because any goodness or our own gives us a right to come, but because we need mercy and help. We come - because he loved us and gave himself for us” (Baptist Union of Great Britain).

SLIDE 7. The apostle Paul instructed followers of Jesus...

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

With this – then – Jesus established a new way of being restored in right relationship with God – not through animal sacrifices – but through his once and for all sacrifice of Himself – the God-man who bridged the gap between a holy God and sinful mankind.

Let's take a moment – then – to prepare ourselves for communion – to ask God to search us and to reveal to us any sinful ways within us – so that we would confess our sin – and turn to Him to be forgiven – and remember that we are forgiven.

Then – when you are ready – and if you are a follower of Jesus – feel free to go to one of the tables and take the elements with you back to your seat.

If you aren't a follower of Jesus yet – then feel free to take this time to think on the things we've said and the Scriptures we just read.

When I see that everyone has gotten the bread and the juice and is sitting – we'll take them together.

Sharing the bread: Jesus said, "This is my body which is for you; do this in memory of me."

Sharing the juice: In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: "this cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me."

From that same liturgy – I'll pray...

Your death, O Lord, we commemorate. Your resurrection we confess. Your final coming we await. Glory be to you, O Christ. Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

Heavenly Father, on this weekend of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, we come before you to present the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada. We grieve and lament and honour the memory of the victims who suffered abuse and loss over many generations. We come with humility and respect to gather under the banner of your love and forgiveness.

Lord Jesus, as you have reconciled each of your children with the Father, we ask you to make us agents of peace and healing to one another. We pray today that you will heal and repair the irreparable as we move forward as a nation. We keep our eyes fixed on you for healing. We also implore you to guide our leaders so that they may hear your voice and lead us on the path of forgiveness and unity. Lord, we pray that your kindness and mercy will be renewed each day and that your Spirit be poured out upon our nation from sea to sea to sea. In Jesus' name, Amen!