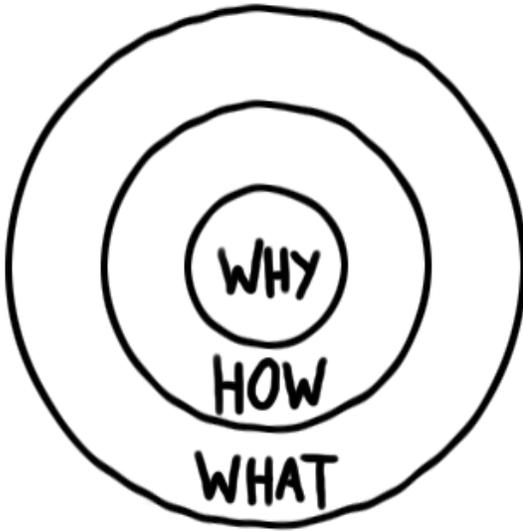


# Camp Bethel Summer Camps: WHY, HOW, WHAT



## Camp Bethel's **WHY** = RELATIONSHIPS.

*"To foster and build RELATIONSHIPS with God, each other, and Creation.*

## Camp Bethel's **HOW** = TOGETHER.

*Small Group Camping" philosophy based on 1 Corinthians 12, the group as "the Body of Christ."*

## Camp Bethel's **WHAT** = Everything else.

*Bible curriculum and Bible studies, worship and music, activities, meals, experiences, adventures, crafts, etc.*

## **WHY** = RELATIONSHIPS

**Together with God, with each other, with creation. Building RELATIONSHIPS is WHY** we do what we do: with God, with each other, and with creation. When we live together in intentional Christian community, even for only one week, we gain person-to-person relationship skills to benefit our families, schools, churches, communities, nation, and world.

Camp Bethel is the outdoor ministry of the Virginia District Church of the Brethren that exists **to foster and build relationships with God, with each other, and all creation.** We live our mission through our summer camps, and facilities and services available to everyone. We welcome the participation of children and youth of all faiths, traditions, races, and nationalities.

## **HOW** = SMALL GROUP CAMPING STYLE

**Ministry of Relationship:** *A culmination of 93 years of ministry at Camp Bethel and over 63 years of small-group camping philosophy.* The small-group philosophy centers on what it means to be a part of the Body of Christ as described in **1 Corinthians 12.**

**1. Small Group Emphasis:** 10-12 campers + 2-4 counselors combine to make a Unit. Campers develop significant relationships with mature Christian counselors and with one another. The Unit does "everything" together all week, and there is no unsupervised free time. This high supervision guarantees camper safety with a very low rate of accidents. Counselors lead cooperative team-building games rather than competitive games, and counselors use language and plan activities that intentionally facilitate group building.

**2. Sanctity of the Small Group:** Each unit (group) plans their week together on the Program Board, and units are not disturbed in their "body-building" process. Units only interact with other units at appropriate times and places such as meals, worship, pool, and all-camp events.

**3. Experiential Christian Education:** More time is spent living and doing things together as Christians than is spent listening to lecture. Christian truths are learned through the relationships that form during a week of activities together, supported by Bible study and worship. Christian camping's role in the total life of each camper is INTRODUCTION to Christian living, not indoctrination or conversion. *"Show them a light so lovely that they wish to know the source."* *"The Gospel is learned best, not by force, but by fascination."*

**4. The Small Group's Dynamics and Make-up: *The process of Relationship:***

The foundation of the summer camp is the group. Throughout the summer, in addition to the attention we give to the individual camper, our focus is continually on the "Unit" living as the Body of Christ. Behavioral Psychologist, Dr. Bruce Tuckman, describes five stages in the progression of small group development:

**Forming:** individuals become a group (1<sup>st</sup> night and 1<sup>st</sup> few days).

**Norming:** group interactions take on patterns, styles, codes and "norms."

**Storming:** Not necessarily conflict so much as exposure and openness. Any group difficulties eventually come out into the open; needed for true relationship.

**Performing:** problems are confronted; group realizes their potential; functions as Body of Christ.

**Reforming/Adjourning:** preparations/discussions before returning to the "real" world.

**5. Progression of Programs:** Each age level offers a new activities and more exciting programs; age-group efficacy and target marketing. Adventure camps, skills camps, and trip camps encourage future participation in the Camp Bethel community. (*No trust = no beginning. No fun = no return. No challenge = no continuation.*)

**6. Emphasis on stewardship of God's creative Earth:** We hold camp in "a place apart" (instead of a city street) because immersion into a "wilderness" setting invites openness to risk and self-examination. This, in turn, creates a rich atmosphere for new relationships (with God, with others, with creation). Both nature study and Bible study are forms of God's revelation of love. We do things at camp you CAN'T do in other settings. We have 470 acres of forests, fields, ponds, creeks, trails, and hills... and we use them! Counselors facilitate unstructured play time interacting with God's creative Earth, and as often as possible, activities are held out-of-doors and immersed in nature.

**7. Family-Style Meals and Cook-Out Program:** Meals aren't just a "get-'em-in, feed 'em, get-'em-out" time; meals are a major part of the Experiential Christian Education for each camper. Christ is the head of each round table in the Dining Hall. Counselors teach family style meal manners, values, and expectations, plus how to set tables and host meals.

**8. Camping (to camp) implies action:** We believe there should be EFFORT required at camp to provide for one's daily needs, (food, shelter, clean bathrooms, set tables, etc.). When we work together providing for others, a deeper sense of our own creativity emerges. We experience the closeness of living with and caring for ourselves and others, analogous to the community of early Christians described in Acts 2 and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12.

**WHAT = EVERYTHING ELSE!**

Learn more at [www.CampBethelVirginia.org/camps](http://www.CampBethelVirginia.org/camps)