

Bay Area Family Church YAM Camping Trip to Lassen Volcanic National Park

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What an adventurous weekend as Young Adults camping at Lassen Volcanic National Park from Friday, Oct 9th morning to Sunday, October 11th afternoon. It was a full weekend filled with mental and physical challenges, personal reflection time, and bonding together through fellowship. The trip's theme was centered on: Authentic Relationship with God. Young adults were given opportunities to reflect each day and discuss with their peers important aspects of deepening their relationship with God. We completed several hikes exploring the national park and visiting the Hydrothermal Area of the active volcano.



Friday morning consisted of traveling by van to our designated camping site. Once all teams arrived safely, young adults began assembling their tents in teams with an exciting twist of having everyone except one person being blindfolded and given directions to put the tent together as a team. This encouraged young adults to work in unity and trust their peers. Afterwards, we went on our first hike: Bumpass Hell Trail. The first hike gave people a glimpse of the beauty of the national park and opened opportunities for people to engage in conversations.

Later that evening, after dinner, young adults gathered around a ring of trees for an intentional evening activity that would educate people what spiritual style they relate to connect to God. Due to the California Fires campfires are prohibited so we created our own circle surrounded by trees and lanterns for the

evening. Gerlyn Quilates opened the evening with guiding people to write their intention for the trip and sharing it in small groups. The young adults got the opportunity to take the: Nine Sacred Pathways survey and find out their top 3 strengths and weaknesses that help them either naturally connect to God or learn ways that they can improve on. We are not only different on the outside, but also spiritually gifted in the ways that we connect to God in many different ways. We closed the evening with sharing highlights from the day and going over any important announcements for the next day.



Early Saturday morning, we hiked up Lassen Peak, the highest point of the national park which consists of a strenuous 5 mile round trip hike. It was a cold crisp morning as we gathered at the bottom of the hike. Everyone was bundled up in what felt like 5+ layers. Gerlyn shared a short inspirational Hoon Dok Hae from Father mentioning the obstacles of a true loving relationship. Although we were physically hiking up a mountain and challenging our bodies, internally the hike represents the greater efforts that are needed to be taken in life. As we began the hike, the sun was rising right by our side as if God was protecting us the entire way. The higher we climbed, the clearer we could see the colors of the sky transforming seamlessly into one another and could watch the clouds swim through the distant mountains before our eyes.

The higher we began to hike, the wind began to increase. Sometimes it would be incredibly brutal that it would push us along the side of the mountain as if it was asking you for a challenge in whether you can continue giving your best, while other times the wind would ascend you forward as if it was an encouraging push on the back. Although the intensity of the hike led people to hike on their own, words of encouragement were shared with one another despite the freezing cold and intense wind. As we reached the top of the mountain, celebration took place for our accomplishment and we were gifted with a beautiful view as the clouds would momentarily clear away. It felt as though god was giving us a glimpse of his creation as we worked hard to reach the top.

That afternoon, we spent quality time at the campsite playing games, reconnecting with new and old peers, and reflecting out in the beautiful nature. During our solo reflection, we took time to dig deep within our relationship with God and True Parents. Gabriela Von Euw guided us to ask ourselves questions that helped us be honest, cultivate a healthy relationship, and also recognize our own thoughts and feelings. It was refreshing to finally spend time with God alone as many of us have been busy with focusing on school, working vigorously, and learning how to balance life.

Going in the evening, we were faced with another challenge. The weather. It began to slowly drizzle as we began to start cooking dinner. We had teams of brothers and sisters help set up a trust easy-up and quickly think of a make-shift canopy made up of various sized tarps and limited string. Despite the circumstances, everyone was optimistic about creating a sturdy canopy and spending the rest of the evening with damp chairs and clothes. The unpredictable challenges were a unique opportunity for the young adults to work together in unity and bond together as a collective. People learned how to think quickly, communicate their ideas, all the while empowering and recognizing great teamwork. The weather definitely left a memorable experience for everyone.

Sunday morning began with a healing stretching and meditation session led by Julia Chai. Young adults loosened their body and participated in a mindful meditation where they were invited to go back and mentally retrieve the intention they made from the first day of the trip. The group then read a Hoon Dok Hae touching upon the creation's lament and true stewardship for nature. The Hoon Dok Hae shared that

earth is our second mother and God's purpose for creating all of nature was to see the ideal world based on His true love. The morning Hoon Dok Hae concluded with a pair share where people could think and discuss about moments when they experience God through nature.



The late morning consisted of eating and cooking breakfast, packing lunches, cleaning supplies, and packing our belongings into the van. Before leaving the national park, we went on our final hike that showcased a stunning waterfall at the end. The hike allowed for young adults to share, connect, create new bonds, and rediscover any last things before the trip came to an end. At the bottom of the hike, young adults were given their last reflection time to plan their action steps for after the trip. Making useful action steps helps you actually move forward and take steps of small growth. You can have a goal but being able to break it down to measurable actions steps can help you see and reach progress. After the reflection, people shared in pairs over lunch then reconvened at the waterfall for a final group photo.

The camping trip was created with the intention to provide both solo reflection and bonding time with brothers and sisters to reconnect, reignite, and rejuvenate our souls all the while centering on God. While being surrounded around God's creation, we were able to humble ourselves and find time for the smaller things in life that we take for granted. As life gets busy, there are times when we unknowingly push God off to the side. It is important to create intentional time and space for connection with God to help us deepen our relationship with Him.

Testimonies:

William:

"I gained gratitude for what I have at home and realized how precious time is."

Young Joo Scharf:

"Being in nature for a couple days was a very much needed break. I felt I could connect more clearly to my original mind and refresh my spirit for the coming back to school, work, and carp activities. The message I felt from God was that I need to go back to the basics. Back to what is important to me and making that a priority in my life."

Ayami Tateno:

"I initially wanted to attend the YAM camping trip as a sort of mini-vacation, because I love camping and the outdoors and I wanted to find ways to be involved with community events. I wasn't expecting the reflection opportunities or the intention-setting activity, but both really helped me to get exactly what I needed from this trip. In my career I'm trying to find out how I can best be useful for God, but it's a little difficult for me to feel God when I'm out in nature. I mainly feel God's love from people, who I can talk to, and you can't really talk to a tree in the same way you can talk to your friends or siblings. I love nature, and I'm devoting my life to save and serve it, but when I'm in it, I feel at peace, and I feel at home, and I feel purified, but I don't feel God's love. I guess one thing I realized was just how much nature brings out the best in me, and other people."



While driving around the national park, I was amazed to realize that a long time ago, this place was a single volcano. It must have erupted many times, covering the land in ash and leaving it a barren rock. But right now, I can see how the land healed and became beautiful all over again -- it's covered in forests, and lakes and creeks, and it has a night sky to make you stare in wonder. It fills me with hope, and a determination to extend that kind of beauty and wonder to all other places in the world, to my brothers and sisters who don't get to feel that kind of joy. A single tree or a single star can make me want to give everything for its sake. I guess, in this way, when I'm in nature, I don't feel God's presence because I'm becoming more God-like. There's this one lyric, that the single thread doesn't understand the greater tapestry it lends its shape and color to. I think in much the same way, I'm like that thread, trying hard to comprehend where I fit into the bigger picture.

On the last day, I was reflecting by a creek and I noticed how the sunlight, when it hits the treetops or the algae in the water or the grasses, turns the otherwise green plants gold. Just like the sunlight coaxes the gold out of the green, so too does it coax the gold out of me."

