

Camp Agape in Boone, Iowa: Know God's Heroes, Be God's Heroes

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This year's Camp Agape was held in Boone, Iowa from July 17-23. Our main theme for camp this year was "Know God's Heroes, Be God's Heroes," with the fundamental purpose to inspire hope in our younger brothers and sisters by discovering how much past "heroes" like Jesus, for instance, have already fought for so many good things that we have in our lives now. Then, we wanted to encourage campers to be heroes in their own lives by giving hope to themselves and to others.

For sure, the week-long activity "Jars of Hope" was the highlight of camp this year. Each participant painted their own jar. Then we encouraged everyone to write to each other about how that person is a hero or about what heroic act they saw this person do and to deposit their notes into one another's jars. So many of the kids took this activity seriously and went above and beyond our expectations. By the end of camp, each jar was stuffed to the top with little notes.

One participant after camp was sharing with me how she was experiencing post-camp blues. But when she read through her jar, she said she really cried and felt the support of her camp friends again.

Another activity we as staff felt was extremely powerful was the activity "Radar." It was highly recommended after one of our staff members did it at Camp One Heart. Not only did this activity help campers break through relational barriers by creating an atmosphere of sharing one's personal struggles with each other, but it also created a deep sense of acceptance between one another. It helped create one of the most raw and healing Brother/Sister Nights—a program in which we split up by gender to have some quality brotherhood and sisterhood time—that we've ever had.

Overall, I would say this year's main success was creating a feeling of "we're in this together." We could definitely sense the strengthening of everyone's bonds by the end.



Some of the camp staff and participants shared the following takeaways:

"That I don't have to be famous to be God's hero. I can do small acts of kindness that'll make someone happy."

"I learned that we are all facing struggles of our own and that I am not alone, and I gained hope that things can always get better if I put effort into it."

"We might fall but it doesn't mean we can't get back up."

