

# ON THIS ROCK



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**2019 SUMMER YOUTH WEEKS**

## **PARENT'S CAMP CONNECTION**

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**"AND I TELL YOU, YOU ARE PETER, AND ON  
THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH..."**

**MATTHEW 16:18-19**

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## **PARENT'S CAMP CONNECTION**

In David Kinnaman's and Gabe Lyons' book *UnChristian*, it states that four out of five Americans say they are sure God exists and identify themselves with a faith group. But less than half of them ever attend church.

The truth is, church attendance is shrinking. The Barna Group reports that while 40 percent of Americans say they attend church every week, the actual number is more around 20 percent.

Some say church has lost its relevance. Others say they like the fact that Sunday is a time for no schedule and family time. For those who attend church, many say they're not sure why they do because it's just a lecture with very little interaction.

For me church so much more. It is a community of believers that come together to learn and grow in their Christian walk. The church serves the community with outreach events. It walks alongside parents and families to reinforce Biblical teaching in the home, and the church prays together.

We love the church. It is God's idea, people and church! Moreover, it's not going away. Although, if we are honest the American church is becoming something easy to ignore. It is becoming something fewer and fewer people want to be a part of.

We have a choice. We can stay the same and get the same results, or we can choose to take a closer look at how the church was formed and how God intended it to function. What made it grow from a small place in the Middle East to all over the world?

In the summer of 2019, we are going to study the church at camp. Funny isn't it? It is a church camp after all. Groups that come have to come as a church group with chaperones and adult leaders. It's easy to think that we everyone understands what the church is and its role in culture. However, many only think of church when we are in crisis or if there isn't anything better to do. Somewhere along the line, we forgot why God created the church.

Our 2019 BeDoTell camp theme is On This Rock.

### **Looking closer at our theme verse:**

Our theme verse is found in Matthew 16:18, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Jesus told Peter He was building the church and nothing – not even the enemy could overcome it.

For some, this verse is a bit confusing concerning Peter and his role in the church. Some believe this verse is saying that God is going to build His church on Peter, which is not the true meaning. Ultimately God used Peter in a huge way in the early church. It was Peter who first proclaimed the gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47). Peter was also the first to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48). In a sense, Peter was the rock "foundation" of the church.

The other interpretation of the rock is that Jesus was referring not to Peter, but to Peter's confession of faith in verse 16: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." You need to know that up until this time Jesus had never taught Peter and the other disciples the fullness of His identity. Jesus realized that only God could have revealed who He really was to Peter.

In Matthew 16:16-18, we see the whole context of Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Messiah. "1Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'"

Peter's confession of Christ as Messiah came from His heart as he revealed his personal faith in Jesus. Those who have placed their faith in Christ, as Peter did, are the church. In 1 Peter 2:4, Peter acknowledges this trust in Jesus Christ as the Messiah further when he speaks to other believers, who are now all around the world. 1 Peter 2:4-5 says, "As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

The word for "Peter," Petros, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus used a play on words here with petra ("on this rock") which means a foundation boulder, as in Matthew 7:24-25.

The church is built of numerous small petros "living stones" who, like Peter, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and those confessions of faith are the foundation of the church.

As referenced in 1 Peter 2:6-7, Christ Himself is called the "chief cornerstone." The chief cornerstone of any building was that on which the building was anchored. As followers of Christ, we are anchored on what Jesus did for us.

After Jesus arose, the Holy Spirit came to be our guide and comforter. Without the work of God's Spirit, we would have no understanding of spiritual things. We need the Spirit to open our eyes to know when God first rescued us from sin and then to show us how to believe in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and to put our trust in Jesus.

As a parent, you are the biggest influencer in your teen's life. Oftentimes they will adopt the same belief system you have. Have you made that decision to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and does it still have meaning to you today?

If so, write down how you came to know Jesus.

Who helped you in this process?

We continue to need the Spirit, day-by-day as we read God's Word and seek to live a life of worship in Christ. The Spirit helps us every time we pray, every time we read and try to understand the Bible, and every time we share our faith with those in need of Jesus. God gives us power and grace that only He can give.

We must be a people dependent upon God.

### **Parents Want a Lasting Faith for Their Children**

More than nine out of 10 active Christian parents (those who identify as Christian, regularly attend church and have orthodox beliefs) say it is important that their child "is equipped to explain the Christian faith" and is "engaged in service."

Of parents polled 59 percent agree that they are primarily responsible in sharing Christ with their child, and another 36 percent agreed that while it mostly their responsibility to share Christ with their child, they also trust their local church to help grow and equip their children in their walk with God. Parents approach this in a variety of ways with 89 percent saying that they attend church together, 59 percent saying that they pray together, 45 percent saying that they read and discuss the Bible together, and another 44 percent saying they volunteer and serve in ministry together.

In a recent poll of Christian teens, 79 percent agree with the statement that, "I can share my honest questions, struggles and doubts with my parents." According to a majority of parents, these conversations include Biblical perspectives on current events such as sexuality and marriage. Fewer than 50 percent, however, have ever discussed (among other topics) healthy media consumption or the relationship between science and the Bible — two subjects that are certainly a daily issue in teens' lives.

Additionally, less than 25 percent of engaged parents have talked about integrating faith and career. These are areas of utmost concern to many teenagers, especially older teens who are thinking about their future. Understanding how their plans fit with God's purpose is a big part of keeping a faith that lasts.

However, not all parents feel comfortable having conversations about difficult topics. Surprisingly, one in five parents report that they do not feel prepared to address "tough" questions about Christianity, God or the Bible.

One of the most significant factors affecting teens' experience of youth group is actually their parents' faith engagement (or lack thereof). The most common struggle they name is "parents not prioritizing their teen's spiritual growth" (Barna, Gen Z).

The family unit is the **primary place** where a child should be discipled. Christian parents should not outsource all discipleship to church youth leaders and Sunday school teachers. Instead, parents should be in partnership with the church. The church is the people of God —God's family. Together this makes up the community of believers.

There are 100 uses of "one another" in the New Testament. These are commands given to the church family about how we are to live together. If you are looking for themes about what they are largely about, then *loving* each other, and the importance of unity in the church rank pretty high.

Here are some examples:

*Be devoted to one another in love (Romans 12:10).*  
*Regard one another as more important than yourselves (Philippians 2:3).*  
*Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).*  
*Speak truth to one another (Ephesians 4:25).*  
*Encourage and build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).*  
*Be hospitable to one another (1 Peter 4:9).*  
*Be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving to one another (Ephesians 4:32).*

In the early church, here is how this happened:

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42; 46-47)*

The community of believers in Acts were hanging out together, reading the Bible together, praying together and eating together.

*Every day.*

Assuming that the church community is a place for children and assuming that God's plan for His church is the regular fellowship of Christians, what does it look like for our children to be loved, encouraged, served and accepted by the church?

As this happens, children have the opportunity to witness Christian community in action and to experience the "one another's" taking place.

We know from research at Chapel Hill that it takes five adults being involved in a child's or teen's life to help them stay away from risky behavior.

They crave relationships.

How could you do this with people at your church?

Be intentional to chat with the children. Don't just settle for children socializing with children, and adults with adults. Talk with the children and teenagers in your church. Try to really start to know them. For instance, find out what is important to them. Find out what they hope for, what they fear and what is going on in their lives. Understand them. Feel free to share age-appropriate things about your life — transparency is key! In addition, as you go, speak the truth of the gospel into the situations they face. Speak both the joys and the struggles of it. Show them how the gospel is affecting the way you go about life and the way you respond to situations. Pray with them.

### **The Apologetics of Love**

In John 13:35, Jesus is addressing His disciples for one of the last times before He goes to the cross. What He says here is significant. He says, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

What's He saying there? He's saying that one of the primary ways that onlookers will see that we love and follow Jesus is by witnessing Christian community in practice. They will see Him by seeing us loving one another.

Children don't need to be solely farmed out to children-specific church programs (though they have their place). Creating an intergenerational network of relationships in the church — where children can witness living out the "one another's." We want the youth to see us self-sacrificially serve and love one another, just like Jesus did. We want them to witness our church family speaking truth about how the gospel impacts every area of life.

We want them to see that when we have a fall out we respond in a godly way as we extend grace and forgive one another, just like Jesus did.

And when they become believers, they grow and are disciplined in Christian community at church and in the home. They develop a robust, deep and broad view of how the gospel shapes every area of life. The family unit is the primary place for the discipleship of our children. However, the church can and should play an exciting and important part in displaying and proclaiming the gospel to our children. We need to raise them to be those who love Jesus and see how His kindness and grace wonderfully impacts everything.

### **Questions to ask your teens after returning from camp:**

Tell me what you learned about the church?

In Acts 2, we see the areas of the church mentioned based on how the early church functioned. Do you remember any of those areas? (worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and missions)

What happened in church group devotions?

(Hopefully they will share about creating their own stained glass window made of pieces from everyone in the youth group, symbolizing how God uses us all — even our broken pieces — to make something new.)

Was there a song you really enjoyed singing? Let them know that you would like to hear it and even look at the lyrics together as they share what it meant to them.

Any funny stories from camp you want to share?

Any new friends?

What was the most impactful thing about camp?

Here are the daily themes and Scriptures if you want to look over them to understand what they learned. The complete teaching guide for small group is available online at [bedotell.com/summer-youth-weeks](http://bedotell.com/summer-youth-weeks).

### **Monday Night – Worship (not just the songs)**

Theme verse — Matt. 16:18

Worship is not just something you practice at church, but we worship all day. We will explore Romans 12:1-2 and ask, "What is worship?" When we accept Jesus the Holy Spirit comes into our life. Worship is a reaction of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives.

### **Tuesday – Discipleship**

Tuesday morning large group – How did Jesus do discipleship?

Small group – What are the marks of discipleship? Review Acts 2:42-47. Personal quiet time, Bible Study with other believers, prayer and church as an accountability group. \

Tuesday night — How did the church start? Review Acts 8. Simon the Sorcerer wanted money and fame – who to follow? Outside influences. Following Jesus instead of the world.

**Wednesday - Evangelism**

Wednesday morning large group — Accounts of evangelism in Scripture

Small group — Three circles

Wednesday night — Review Philip in Acts 8. What is an altar call?

**Thursday - Missions**

Thursday morning large group — Great Commission

Small group — Shaped for Missions, Shape inventory

Thursday night — Review Acts 10. Peter's vision and Cornelius' house.

**Friday - Fellowship**

Friday morning large group — Fellowship with God and the importance of the two ordinances in the church: Lord's Supper and baptism.

Small group - Koinonia

Friday night — Acts 4:32 — one heart and mind; Acts 14 — return to Antioch. After doing all these things, they came back together to strengthen each other.

Study the scriptures from each day so you know what God's Word has to say about the subject. Pray for your child each day that what they are learning is not only heard but also clearly comprehended by your teen. If you know your child has not made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior, pray that God leads them in that decision this week.

Many of you wish you had taken time during your teen years to really look at your actions and what path you were headed down before you made some decisions that affect your lives today. Take time to ask for forgiveness if that is still between you and the Lord — or even between you and someone else. Then pray for your teen to understand the gift of being intentional with their lives. Pray they learn to make their decisions count for God — in living their lives in leading their friends to the Lord. Surveys tell us that over 90 percent of those who make a decision to follow God and believe He has a plan for them through his gift of Jesus, are made before the age of 19. They may never see the people in their school again after graduation but knowing they helped someone encounter Jesus as their Lord and Savior — that is priceless — and they will see them again in heaven.

A great strategy for you and your family to use in reaching out is [blesseveryhome.com](http://blesseveryhome.com). This website provides the names of your neighbors and a prayer strategy for reaching them.

Faith is a relationship with God. Faith does not happen in a straight line but in the ups and downs of life. It includes knowledge of God's Word but it also includes faithful people walking alongside to explain answers to questions, to discuss the hard issues that we are facing in our culture. Church provides the community of believers to grow with, do life with, and find answers. As parents, we have to take the extra time to continue these conversations at home.

Remember, no matter what excuse we hear about the decline in church attendance, the church and the family are still the two structures God ordained to carry on His message of salvation and hope.

Remember Jesus says:

You are welcome just as you are.

Your thoughts are welcome; your doubts are welcome.

We're all in this together.

We must figure out a way that turns regular people's objections into affirmations and believe that at church and even in our families — God is here, ready to connect in a fresh way.