

This is Our Story

Back Home Group Devotional Guide

Montreat Youth Conference 2015

Welcome to Montreat! Thank you for taking the time to join and lead your young people in a week of Christ centered fellowship, worship and recreation. This Devotional Guide is designed so that youth and adult leaders alike can facilitate an end of the day wrap-up and time for prayer and closure. We believe that the bulk of the content for each evening's gathering will come from your group's experience of MYC 2015 and hope that the material we have provided in this guide simply helps to deepen your debriefing and reflecting process.

Back home devotions are the perfect time to digest what has been said, heard and experienced throughout the day and is also the time to help youth wrestle with and process any emotions that get stirred-up.

When leading/facilitating your back home devotional time, please take note and consider the following:

- Use your awareness of your group's energy level to help determine how long devotions should run.
- As much as your space permits, a circular arrangement is the most effective for creating quality group discussion and prayer.
- Try not to let just one or two people in your group dominate the discussion time, particularly if it is an adult.
- Encourage respectful, active listening and empathy and discourage sarcasm, judgement of others' questions, thoughts and/or feelings.
- Confidentiality is a priority, as group members may be led to share very personal thoughts, reactions, or ideas.

SUNDAY

Gather your group and explain that evening devotions are an intentional time set aside for your back home group to meet and debrief at the end of each day, to share highlights and celebrations, to ask any questions and to end each day in prayer together.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A general reminder about self-care: try to get sufficient rest in order to get the most out of your time at Montreat.
- Eat well so that you have enough energy to stay focused, stay hydrated, etc.



ALL GROUP CHECK-IN

- Share one thing that surprised you today.
- Share one thing you are excited about and one thing you are a little unsure about this week.



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Scripture focus: **John 1: 1-14**

Have one (or multiple) group member(s) read John 1: 1-14 aloud.

- What do these words of “poetry” from John tell us about who Jesus is and what we have received through him?
- How are our stories as followers of Jesus Christ shaped and formed by this passage?



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Close in a circle prayer, giving everyone the opportunity to share a prayer joy/concern or to “pass” if that is preferable. Feel free to use the following to conclude your circle prayer:

Creator God, we are grateful to be here in Montreat. Open our eyes, our hearts, our minds and our ears so that we may continue to grow as your disciples and learn more about the common story we all share in You.

MONDAY



ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Remind your group again to take care of themselves by getting good rest, eating well, etc.



ALL GROUP CHECK-IN

- Ask each person in your group to share one highlight from Small Group today.
- Ask if anyone has any questions about what was said in Keynote or worship today or was brought up in Small Group.



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Today we have talked about what it means that God has given each of us a unique story to tell.

- What can make telling our stories feel difficult when we get back home? Why does it feel easier to talk about who we are and what we believe when we're here at Montreat?
- How can we better support one another in our journeys of faith and in telling "Our Story" when we get back home?



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Close in a circle prayer, giving everyone the opportunity to share a prayer joy/concern or to "pass" if that is preferable. Feel free to use the following to conclude your circle prayer:

Thank you, God, for collecting and bringing our group here to Montreat this week. Help us to grow as your disciples so that we can go back home to live and tell your story of love, peace, justice and grace in our homes, in our schools, at our churches and among everyone we meet. Be with us as we continue to grow here and open our minds and our hearts to receive what You need us to hear. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

TUESDAY



ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Any special announcements/instructions you have about FREE AFTERNOON tomorrow.



ALL GROUP CHECK-IN

- Where / when have you experienced God's presence today?
- What are you feeling grateful for today?



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Today we talked about how sometimes the stories of our lives and the stories of those who lived during Biblical times get messy and complicated.

- As you think back to Small Group and what you heard during Keynote and Worship this evening, what good news did you hear?
- In the story of the Woman at the Well (John 4: 5-39), Jesus offers the woman "living water." When have you experienced a time when you felt like Christ was offering you living water?



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Invite one of your youth close in prayer or to read the following if they prefer:

Tonight, we are so thankful, Lord, that you chose to love us so much that you created us to be your sons and daughters. Even when we mess up and disappoint you, we know that you are the ever-loving parent who never stops loving us, no matter what, and always welcomes us back home. Be with all your children this night, especially those who are facing hard times and are not getting to experience You in the ways that we are here at Montreat. Help us to be the sons and daughters you created us to be. Amen.

WEDNESDAY



ANNOUNCEMENTS

General announcements you have for your group.



ALL GROUP CHECK-IN

- What was your favorite part of free afternoon?
- What was the most challenging thing you heard today, or what was one thing you were encouraged to think about in a new way?



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

- Where do you see modern-day examples of the story of ‘Hagar and Ishmael being sent away’ happening in our world, in our communities, etc.?
- How might we reach out to those who have been left out with greater intention?
- What makes this so hard to do?



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Close with a popcorn prayer, encouraging each person in your group to pray for a person or situation in need of God’s presence and healing. Begin your popcorn prayer by saying:

We know that you are here with us, God, in this beautiful, supportive and loving place, but we also know that there are many who are not here and who need to experience the grace, love, healing and joy that only You can bring. Be with... (begin popcorn prayer.)

End by saying, ***We lift these, and all the prayers which remain on our hearts to You, knowing that you love and care for all your children and that we all belong to You.***

THURSDAY



ANNOUNCEMENTS

General announcements specific to your group.



ALL GROUP CHECK-IN

- Share one highlight from Small Group today.
- Share one way in which you have sensed God calling you to move outside your comfort zone while here at Montreat.



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

- Today we have talked about how God often shows up in surprising and unsuspecting ways . . . like when Jesus appeared in the upper room among his friends. Share with the group a time when you experienced God showing up in your story in a way that felt very surprising to you.
- When we do feel lonely, left out or left behind, how can our faith and what we have experienced here at Montreat help to restore our confidence and trust that God is always with us?



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Invite one of your youth close in prayer or to read the following:

Be with us, Lord, every time we want to run away from your call and toward the call of others who do not know us in the ways that You do. Remind us through the voices of friends, through the love of our family and through the support we receive from your church that you love us and that we are never, ever left alone. Amen.

FRIDAY



GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Specifics about clean-up and departure logistics for tomorrow.



ALL GROUP CHECK-IN

- What is one thing you have learned about yourself this week at Montreat?
- What is one hope that you have for your back home group as you return home tomorrow?



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Theme of the day: **Rooted in God's love, we are called to reach out.**

Leader says, ***“Throughout the week we have heard stories from scripture about the many ways we are rooted in God's love...”***

- In what ways do you feel newly inspired to “reach out” in the name of Christ to your friends at school, to your family or to others in your community when you go back home?
- What are some ways you can share what you've learned and what's been transformative for you this week with those who haven't shared your Montreat experience?
- Given all that you have heard, seen and discussed this week, what are some specific ways our back home group can reach out to our hurting world/nation/city and make a difference?



CLOSE IN PRAYER

This will be a prayer in 3-rounds, meaning we will go around the circle 3 times, starting with the person to the Leader's right.

- **ROUND 1:** Each person says one word or a phrase that expresses what s/he is **most grateful to have experienced** this week.
- **ROUND 2:** Each person says one thing s/he would **like the group to hold in prayer** as your group heads home.
- **ROUND 3:** Each person says one thing s/he hopes **your youth group will do or be after having experienced MYC 2015!**

Leader closes in prayer with the following or a prayer of his/her own.

Lord, we are so thankful for the opportunities we've had this week to be challenged, refreshed, changed and motivated. Give us the courage to go home and make a difference in your world, as you call us to reach out and serve in love. Amen.