

Our Spiritual Family

Marshall Reid

A couple of Saturdays ago, at 9 AM, Lisa and I registered our children and their cousins for this year's FC Alabama Camp. That was the time that the registration link on the website went live and parents could start registering their children. Those who attend camp are always excited and anxious because it's such a popular camp, and the spots fill up extremely quickly. Parents all across Alabama sit at the computer several minutes in advance, constantly refreshing the page, waiting for 9 AM and for the link to go live, trying to get their children registered before all the spaces are filled. This year, all the girls' slots were gone in 24 minutes! The boys' slots were filled up within a couple of hours.

What makes this summer camp so popular and so special? Why do hundreds of kids (and adults) talk about camp all year long and count down the days until camp begins? Why do hundreds of kids (and adults) cry on the last day of camp and start the countdown all over again?

Is it because of all the great activities that they're able to participate in each year such as riding on jet skis, going tubing on the lake, canoeing, and swimming? Or is it playing basketball, volleyball, ultimate Frisbee, dodgeball, and other sports each day? Maybe it's performing in the talent show, making crafts, and making a tie-dye T-shirt. Or is it competing for their society and hoping to win the society championship at the end of the week?

I'm sure all of that plays a part. But children can participate in many of those activities at other times throughout the summer. And yet, the week of camp is much more special. Why is that?

Considering I spent 10 years as a camper at the FC Camp on the campus of Florida College, and considering I've spent 6 years as a counselor at the FC Alabama Camp, I do feel a little bit qualified to answer the above question. And I'll tell you that all the above activities do certainly serve to make the week the best week of the year.

But what makes camp week so special is that we're with the best people on earth! We're with other Christians 24/7 for an entire week! Each day is not only filled with the activities listed above, but we have Bible classes each day. The entire camp assembles twice a day to sing and pray. We hear a lesson from God's word presented to us every day. Spiritual conversations happen on a regular basis each day. There are special nights where we just sing for an hour. Kids (and adults) are taught and edified and encouraged. It truly is a spiritual high and can set you on fire for the Lord!

You may be wondering why I'm writing about FC Alabama Camp in the bulletin. This is not an apologetic for the camp. This is not to promote FC. Rather, it's to make the point that there is something special about our spiritual family. There is a bond and friendship and love that exists between brethren that you can't get anywhere else. There is an innate desire in each of us to be around people with the same goals, dreams, and values, and what better people to be around than those who have the same spiritual ideals?

The week of camp gives us a brief respite from the world and all its evil. For an entire week, we don't have to worry about the bombardment of iniquity that we see all around us each day. Instead, we're lifted up by and with our brethren as we set our minds on things above. The week at camp is but a small foretaste of what, one day, we will be able to enjoy for an eternity!

No, there won't be dodgeball or basketball or volleyball in heaven. No horseback riding, rock wall climbing, or zip lining. But there will be singing. And giving of thanks and praise. And fellowship with our spiritual family – God our Father, Jesus our elder brother, and all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hopefully, you'll be there too.

We have many other opportunities to spend time with our spiritual family. There are the worship services and Bible classes on Sundays and Wednesdays. There are additional men's and women's classes during the week. And we can and should gather with our family at other times just for fun and encouragement. God knew we needed our spiritual family. Why would you want to miss out on these opportunities?

I love every moment with my North Gardendale family. And FC Alabama Camp is referred to by many as the best week of the year. But it can't compare with what we'll experience for an eternity in heaven! As Dee Bowman is famous for saying, if you miss heaven, you've missed all there is. Whatever you do, don't miss out!

FC Alabama Camp is referred to by many as the best week of the year. But it can't compare with what we'll experience for an eternity in heaven! As Dee Bowman is famous for saying, if you miss heaven, you've missed all there is. Whatever you do, don't miss out!