



FAMILY HOUSE PARTY

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KIDS' EDITION

# CAMP COMMUNITY



## **What is Camp Community?**

When you think of summer, what comes to your mind? Thoughts of a beach vacation or lazy days at the pool? What about lemonade stands and family cookouts and 4th of July fireworks? All of these thoughts conjure up amazing memories, but let's be honest—summer wouldn't be summer without CAMP!

Do you remember that first time you went away to camp? Do you remember the thrill of packing up and the anxiety of saying goodbye to your family? That anxiety quickly faded with the activity and excitement of the week! Before you could blink, it was time for the big return home to share experiences, funny stories, and the lessons God taught you. However, the memories you made with new friends and the connections you shared fueled your excitement for the next summer's camp!

A somewhat new trend on the church camp scene is family camp. Packed with many of the same elements and fun of a regular camp, family camp provides a chance to get away and experience camp as a family.

Whether you have been to church camp, family camp, or any other camp, you would probably agree that the long-lasting value stems from the connections you create. Those connections allow you to be part of a community and give you a feeling of belonging.

We want to equip you to build and foster connections in your community. Your neighbors, friends, and team parents might not sign up for a week-long church or family camp, but they would probably join you for a campout at your house! That's right! We want to help you bring the connection and fun of camp to your backyard—for one night only! We are excited to introduce "Camp Community."

## **What is Camp Community?**

"Camp Community" is a family-style backyard event that your family hosts for other families. It is more than a cookout and different than traveling with family friends to a local campground. Camp Community is like a cookout-sleepover-VBS-block party-outreach in your backyard!

## **Why Camp Community?**

Reaching out to your neighbors and other non-church families can be hard and even awkward. You have probably spent some time chatting across the fence to a neighbor about the weather, or you may sit side-by-side at the soccer game every weekend, cheering on the kids. These are opportunities for connection, but you need a way to move past polite, friendly exchanges toward a chance to share your faith and build real community.

This toolbox resource will provide everything you need to make your Camp Community a success! It includes a printable invitation, suggested schedule, shopping list, set-up ideas, activities, and the details to lead a faith-focused campfire time.

## **Where does Camp Community Happen?**

Your backyard is the ideal location for your Camp Community event! Not only is it free, but it provides an opportunity for more families to come—and others to just drop-in when they see the activity! Mow the grass, and clear out the area and you have an instant "campsite."

## **When is the best time for Camp Community?**

The best time to host Camp Community depends on your schedule and availability. However, the obvious suggestion would be to plan it during a warm, dry night in early summer or fall. You could host a beach-themed event for flip-flop clad families under the stars or create a cozy night for flannel hoodies over a cup of hot chocolate!

## **How Do I Make Camp Community a Success?**

### **PREPARATION**

- **Guest List:** Take some time as a family to discuss who you want to invite. Think beyond your family's usual friend circle and include new families in your neighborhood, school, or sports teams. Ask your kids about new students at school or church.
- **Invitations:** Use the provided invitation to make your event "official." Customize the details or handwrite the time and place for a personal feel. Consider using the blank space on the back to write a note or provide additional instructions or details. Spend some time in prayer over each invitation and family as you go. If possible, hand-deliver the invitations. That way, you can add a personal encouragement!

**SAMPLE SCHEDULE:** The event will run more smoothly (and you will feel more relaxed) if you prepare a general schedule in advance. You can be flexible and adjust as needed, but it will give you confidence and peace of mind to know you have plenty of activities planned.

Feel free to use (or adapt) this simple sample schedule:

- 4:00-6:00 pm: Preparation and Set-Up
- 6:00 pm: Arrivals/Welcome
- 6:30 pm: Dinner "Campfire"
- 7:30 pm: Family Games
- 8:30 pm: Campsite Set-Up/Tents
- 9:00 pm: S'more "Campfire"
- 9:30 pm: Campfire Stories
- 10:00 pm: Kids Bedtime
- 10:30 pm: Adult Campfire
- 11:30 pm: Lights Out?
- 6:00 am: Breakfast "Campfire"
- 6:30am: Clean Up/Teardown
- 7:00 am: Goodbyes

**SHOPPING LIST:** The intent of this event is for families to show up with only their tent, toiletries, and sleeping bags. Your family should provide the rest: food, fun, and faith. Make the menu simple, the games silly, and the faith shared.

### **SUGGESTED FOOD LIST:**

Dinner: Hotdogs, Chips, and Drinks

Snack: S'mores

Breakfast: Cereal, Juice, Milk.

**FOOD SHOPPING LIST:** Hotdogs, Buns, Condiments, Bags of Chips, Soda, Drink Boxes, Plates

(Dinner and Snack Size), Bowls, Spoons, Napkins, Cups, Roasting Sticks, Chocolate Bars, Marshmallows, Graham Crackers, Cereal (Several varieties or small individual boxes), milk, juice

### **CAMP FIRE SUPPLIES:**

- Fire Pit/Fire Ring
- Matches/Lighter
- Small Fire Extinguisher/Bucket of Water on Hand
- Bug Spray

### **GAMES/ACTIVITIES SHOPPING LIST:**

- **Camp-Out themed supplies and dollar store finds**
- Banners and Balloons
- Kids Fishing Vest
- **Glow Bracelets**
- **4 Pack of Projector Flashlights**
- **Backyard Bingo**
- **Kids Party Pack of 76 Party Favors**

### **Set Up**

Before everyone arrives, make sure the yard is mowed and cleared of any rocks/tripping hazards. Create a welcoming and open space, leaving plenty of room for kids to run and play. Decorate and prepare the firepit area, and include plenty of chairs and blankets for seating. Prepare and unpackage any needed game supplies and provide plenty of garbage cans/trash receptacles. Remember to wait to set up the tents so there is plenty of space to play games.

### **SUGGESTED PLAYLIST: “Veggietales Campfire Songs”**

### **COMMUNITY GAME IDEAS:**

Games for Purchase:

- **“Spot It: Camping Edition”**
- **“Bears”**
- **“Camp Talk”**
- **“Go Find It: Nature Scavenger Hunt”**
- **“Fishing Camp”**
- **“Toasted or Roasted”**

Games Using Available Supplies:

- **“MARSHMALLOW MONUMENTS:”** Distribute a bag of marshmallows and a box of toothpicks to each family. Together, they will create a “Marshmallow Monument” that represents their family. Once completed, every family can share their creation and what it means for their family.
- **“HOT DOG TOSS:”** One parent and one child from each family will play this partner game. Each team will receive 8 hotdogs, 4 buns, and a plate. The child must toss the hot dog to the parent-partner, who will attempt to catch the hotdog in a bun and then “plate it.” The team that gets 4 hot dogs “bunned” and “plated” wins.
- **“PAPER PLATE POLKA PANDEMONIUM:”** This backyard musical chairs style game is a sure-fire

way to get everyone laughing. Place paper plates around the yard. Cue up some fun dance music for everyone to “polka” as they wait for the music to stop. When the music stops, everyone must find a paper plate on which to sit. Anyone without a plate is out of the game. Re-start the music, remove one plate, and keep going until you have a winner.

- “PICKLES PTOOIE:” This classic and slightly gross game is a big hit. Create a game line using tape or a wooden pole and set up a hula hoop a few feet away. Each player receives three small gherkin-size pickles. The objective is to spit the pickle into the hoop.

### **CAMPFIRES:**

The evening will include three “campfire” moments to build community and faith. Take the time during each one to say a thank you prayer. You can also ask a family member to pray.

- DINNER CAMPFIRE: Allow each family to introduce themselves and share something funny or interesting about their family. Be the last family to share so you can welcome everyone, explain the purpose and schedule for the evening, and pray for the food.
- S'MORE CAMPFIRE: Make this your “story time” campfire. Ask each family to share a funny family story. Go around the circle again and allow each person to share a favorite memory or serious story about their family. Wrap up the time by sharing a faith story from your family’s experience, being careful not to preach or apply pressure. Once again, explain your purpose for the evening and how you value community and friendship.
- BREAKFAST CAMPFIRE: Using a family or church devotional book, read a short devotion. Pray for breakfast and thank everyone for coming.

### **RAIN PLANS:**

Despite your best efforts, it might rain. Rather than canceling the event, consider moving some (or all) of the activities inside. Utilize the same decorations and food and adjust your games and activities. Depending on your space and guest list, you may be able to have a sleepover component. Either way, make it a family bonding moment of fun!

### **OTHER OPTIONS**

- Make it a Church-Wide Event: The purpose of the Camp Community is to build community within your sphere of influence. You can also expand your vision and encourage others to host a Camp Community on the same night! Make it a churchwide outreach with multiple family events across the town.
- Think About Others: Think beyond your kids and your friend circle, and invite others in your neighborhood and community to focus on a need or issue in the city. Would you like to bring awareness to the homeless in your town? Host the Camp Community in a local park or city center and give the event a mission focus.
- Themes: Consider using a theme to take your camp-out to the next level. Brainstorm as a family or use one of these themes:
  - Beach Camp: Hawaiian Luau, Surfing
  - Camping out on the Moon: Space Camp, Star Wars
  - Home, Home on the Range: Wild West, Country Night