

The Beech Tree



More Time to Let God In



When you ask campers who have been to Bluestone for multiple summers why it is that they keep coming back you'll hear a lot of different answers: the pool, the activities, the relationships, the food. One answer that is constant, though, especially among the older campers, is that Bluestone is a place where they feel closest to God.

That has certainly been my experience as well, having been at Bluestone for 16 of the last 18 summers, but it's a little more complicated than that. At Bluestone, it isn't exactly that the Holy Spirit takes over your body for 6 full days and then releases you back to your family on Saturday. Rather, it's that while at camp, those moments where we feel God's presence most fully become much more abundant than they seem when we're off the mountain.

But in 2018, when there are so many other kinds of specialized camps out there, why is it that I still recommend Bluestone to any parent looking for a place to send their child for a week? Can't their child get the same faith experience in Sunday school or at youth group? After all, those are opportunities they can experience every week, instead of just once a year. What makes the Bluestone experience different?

What I've come to see as a big advantage that Bluestone has over other types of faith formation, beyond the excellent staff, beautiful landscape, and long-running tradition, is simply that it's a week long. Between Sunday and Saturday campers just have more time to let God in, more time to let their guard down. Vulnerability is important, not just in making meaningful relationships at camp, but in opening up room for God to speak to us and through us. And while Sunday school and youth group are certainly important, it's hard for young folks to reach that same level of vulnerability in just an hour or two.

By sending their children to Bluestone, parents open up time for God to work through the unexpected—an unexpected connection with a new friend, a spontaneous campfire conversation that deepens faith, a sudden downpour that shows the awesome might of God's creation, an unplanned quiet moment where we feel the Holy Spirit moving in our hearts. Try as we might, it's impossible to plan for these spontaneous interventions, but Bluestone is a place where I, like so many campers through the ages, have continued to experience them year after year.

That's why it's so vital for parents and campers to commit a week to Bluestone, to make that sacrifice of time, with the faith that God will show up too, in the crazy times or the quiet times, to continue to guide us in our journeys of faith. I am eternally grateful to Bluestone for so many important relationships and fond memories, and I would never have found any of them if I hadn't put aside the time for God's unexpected movement in my life. I have faith that there are more yet to come.

Spencer Ayscue