

Spiritual Emphasis In Teambuilding

September 2002

A Grown Man's Tale...

I stood on top of a 20-foot-tall telephone pole, looking out at a trapeze that seemed a million miles away (instead of the eight feet that the Facilitator said). All my mind could focus on was the large amount of empty space between the oh-so-solid ground and me. I double-checked my safety gear to make sure that everything was in place. They say those wires above me hold thousands of pounds, but to me they look as thin as piano wire.

What was I doing here? Why was I attached to a thin piece of rope and preparing to leap out for a trapeze? I am a middle-aged man! I have children! I sit at a desk on a daily basis! The last time I did something adventurous was picking out the color of my new couch! There was no way that skinny kid standing at the other end of my rope could hold onto my weight, no matter how many pieces of aluminum were connected to him!

I took a deep breath. "One..." My voice was no more than a quavering whisper. My knees were shaking and I suddenly discovered that my hands were not going to let go of the rope, no matter what my brain told them. I can hear my teammates below, cheering me on. (It is an easy for them to do, since they are standing firmly on the ground.) "Two..." My voice was a little stronger, my focus narrowing down to the goal in front of me. There was no way I was going to miss that trapeze! "THREE!"

I leapt off the platform, my body extended, reaching out for the trapeze. My hands, which had surprised me by letting go of the rope, informed me that if I so much as touched that cold metal, they would find a way to cling to it. Time had slowed to a mere crawl. Closer to the trapeze... Closer...

I did it! Ohmigosh! I did it! My feet were dangling below me, as I smiled at the ground. Letting go, I yelled in triumph (and, I admit, a little fear) before being lowered safely to the ground.

I have confronted my fears, I have tested my faith and I am still alive to tell about it.

- James

Theology 101

To better understand how religion and teambuilding tie together, we need to establish some ground rules about what type of beliefs we are talking about. There is a large diversity of religions in the world, ranging from Christianity in all of its forms to atheism (which is a theology of no theology), worship of nature, ancestors, a cosmic force, humans or even the antithesis of God (in the Christian faith, this would be Satan).

Within each religion, there are countless interpretations of the basic beliefs. Even written texts, such as the Bible, Koran, Talmud, etc., have different meanings to different people in different places in different eras. These interpretations range from literal (everything is as the text says) to allegorical (everything stands for something else) to historical (the text is applicable only within the reference of the society in which it is written).

To further complicate this confusion, there is also the intent of the reader in the process of the translation. To realize how this can impact meaning, let us look at John 1:1

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- John 1:1 (NIV)**

The word translated as “Word” above is “logos”. The Greek word “logos”, however, from which we derive the suffix -ology, can mean “science of”, “study of”, “breath”, “wind”, “word”, etc. Therefore, the translator is left with the choice to decide the focus of their translation. Although the languages themselves and the context wherein the word is found can provide clues, it is still up to the interpreter to best decide what word fits the phrase.

My favorite example of how translation is affected by the translator is in the case of the word “pure”. It can have numerous interpretations, one of which is “white.” In a debate I witnessed, one theologian took the interpretation of “white” to mean that the chosen race of God is Caucasian, and that the call was for racial purity. Anyone who was non-white was, therefore, not chosen and because of this, was incapable of salvation. You can see how the translator can abuse translations...

For our purposes, we are going to delve very little into the more profound and mystifying segments of theology. Our goal is to stay in the shallow section of the belief pool; it’s easier to swim there and it’s less likely to get us in over our heads.

Theology is, quite literally, the “science of God.” As with all things, there are numerous theologies, most of which do not have any relevance to what we are going to discuss. Our goal is to define the basic existence of Christian belief and how it applies to the teambuilding process. This will enable us to avoid lengthy debates over minor points (like how many angels can dance on the head of a pin) and will be, for the most part, universally applicable to all Christian groups, no matter what their background and their particular creed.



Basic Tenets of Faith

1. There is a God

The basic tenet of Christian faith is that there is a God. This God has made Himself known through Creation and through the words of the Bible. He has spoken to us through the prophets and the Bible records these commands.

2. God created the world.

Most Christians do not deny that God created the world, rather than is a created part of it. The method of the creation is open to some debate, whether to accept the literal seven days or not, but the fact that He did create is, in most mainstream denominations, not questioned.

3. God created us.

Again, most denominations have no problem with the fact that we are not an accident. God has created us and knows us. The Psalms mentions, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...”

4. We have sinned.

There is much debate in today’s churches as to what is a sin. Although the Bible defines sin and types of sins fairly explicitly, most denominations no longer can come to a consensus on a list of behaviors that are universally regarded as sin. Sin, by definition, is anything that displeases God.

5. We cannot get rid of our own sins.

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

6. Jesus died for our sins.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

7. If we believe in Jesus, He will forgive us our sins.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

This is the Plan of Salvation broken down to a very simple level. While it is not accepted by all denominations, it does represent a basic understanding of all of the theology upon which most Christians base their faith in God and their understanding of salvation by grace.



Theological Terms Defined

Before we go on, however, I feel we should define some key terms so that we can utilize these later when we process the teambuilding experience. They are:

Faith: Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)

Grace: (God's riches at Christ's expense) Grace in being given something you do not deserve.

Justice: Punishment for the violation of the law.

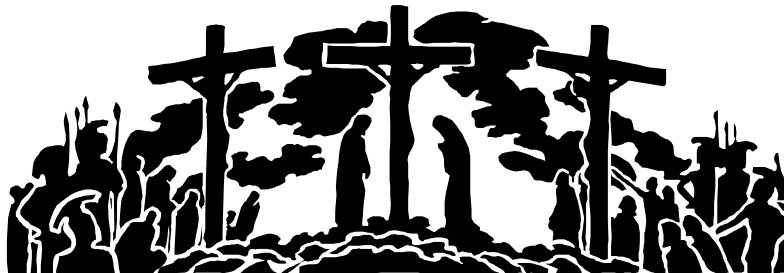


Justification: The sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner while still in a sinful condition.

Mercy: Withholding the punishment that is deserved.

Righteousness: Someone who perfectly obeys God's law. (Can't be done... Only Jesus lived a perfect life and never sinned.)

Unconditional Love: There is nothing you can ever do that can cause God to love you any more and there is nothing you can do that will cause God to love you any less.



General Themes That Apply to Faith and Teambuilding

God is a team-builder...

We are created to have a relationship with God. Unfortunately, we are separated from God through the sin in our lives. How does sin interfere with our relationships with each other? (Envy, jealousy, lack of trust, etc.)

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Jesus was a team player...

When Jesus began His ministry on earth, the first thing He did was to assemble a team. As He chose His team, he gave them a taste of His vision. How does Jesus' leadership of the Disciples reflect the way a team should operate? Did Jesus choose people who were opposed to Him or those who would support Him?

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means teacher), "where are you staying?"

"Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent the day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter").

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked,

Jesus answered, “I say you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi you are the son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.” He then added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (John 1:37-51)

Faith is belief put into action...

It does not matter how much you know that the equipment will hold you, until you are actually hanging from it and depending on it, it means nothing; knowledge alone does not hold us up. In the same way, many people know that Jesus can save us, but until we ask Jesus for forgiveness and be the leader in our life, there is no change; knowledge alone does not save us.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days. (Hebrews 11:30)

Every member of a team is important...

The Bible speaks many times of the need for people of different skills. There are different roles within the church, different roles played by the Disciples and different gifts given to each. Is any part more important than the other? Why or why not?

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged that parts in the body, every one to them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” and the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to have parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (1 Corinthians 12:12-26)

**Spiritual Emphasis In
Low Ropes Obstacles**

All Aboard

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Story

You are the Body of Christ. As a body, you cannot kick parts out; you cannot tell body parts that they are unwanted. So, we need to practice first forming into limbs. We have two hands (small platforms), two legs (large platforms) and one head (medium platform).

Now that you can handle being parts of one body, lets link together and form one body. This is going to take some teamwork, so we will take it slow and start merging the individual body parts into one complete whole.

Processing Questions

- When looking at the size of the platforms, did you think you would be able to complete the task? Why or why not? As you continued to merge into one body in Christ, how hard was it to work together?
- Ultimately, what led to your success as a body? More importantly, how does this relate to your role within the Body of Christ? Does it always seem like the fellowship of believers functions as one body? Why or why not?
- Was there a particular leader at the beginning of the activity? How about the end?

Blind Maze

As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

“Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.”

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. (Matthew 20:29-34)

Story

What must it have been like to be blind in Jesus’ day? Think about it. You could not work, there was little choice of occupation save for that beggar. As a beggar in that society, you were totally dependent upon the assistance of friends to get you to and from your home to the place you sat at to beg (usually by the city gates). In addition, you needed to rely upon the generosity of strangers to make your living. If people didn’t give you money, you didn’t eat. Today, let us experience the life of a blind person.

Notes

Adjust the Blind Maze so that there is no actual way out. Tell the group that they are working as individuals and that they must find their way through to the end of the maze. If a participant becomes completely stuck, however, they can stop moving, raise their hand and ask for help. When someone raises their hand, take off the blindfold and lead them quietly out of the maze.

Processing Questions

- How much did you rely on others around you? Why or why not?
- Is it easier to depend on your team or your own abilities? Why?
- How many of you found it difficult to ask for help? Why?
- Imagine what it must have been like for the blind beggars to call out for help. Imagine even more how hard it must have been to continue to call out, especially with the crowds telling you to be quiet. What motivated them to call out to Jesus? What motivates us to call out to Jesus today?



Corporate Maze

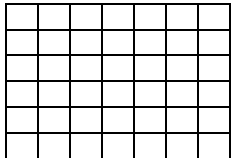
“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14:1-7)

Story

Jesus has called us to follow Him, but often times, like the Disciples, we don’t know the way. We can feel like we’re trapped in a maze, unsure where our next step should be. But, we can take comfort in the fact that we are not alone. Others have walked this path before us. We are not required to fumble through darkness alone, we can follow in the steps of those who have gone before us and learn from their mistakes.

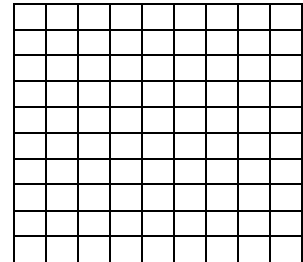
Processing Questions:

- How many times did you repeat the same mistake? Why did this happen? Do people sometimes fall into the same sin over and over again? Why?
- Was it difficult to remember the path through the maze? Why or why not?
- In what way is our spiritual life similar to this maze? Who are the people who have “gone before”? What can we learn from them?
- In the Christian faith, what is our “road map” for finding our way?



Main Camp (6X7)

North Property (9x10)



Corporate T

“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 13:19-20)

Story

The Bible says where two people come together, God is there with them. Well, there are times when it is difficult to bring even two people together. For example, in the former Soviet Union, Christianity was outlawed. To form a church, to come together, two people would have to start from their own places, make their way on their own, through many different hardships. When they got together, the challenges weren't over. However, they would face them together as a team...

Processing Questions

- How did individual movements affect the partners attempting the obstacle?
- How did spotters play a role in this activity?
- In the Soviet Union, how did people become Christians?
- If you had individual Christians, how did they come together to form a church?
- What were the challenges to survival for those churches?
- Do we face the same challenges in America? Why or why not?



Energy Circle / Combination Lock

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

Story

How strong is one person alone? How strong could that one person be when he is joined by believers of the same strength? The key to this obstacle is the strength of the group, allowing you to keep steady on the small poles.

Processing Questions

- How did individual movements affect the whole group?
- How did the combination lock person/people affect the movements of the group?
- How does working with others here reflect upon your life outside of the camp?
- How many of you were saved by the strength of the group?
- Sometimes it is difficult to be a single Christian bringing the Word to the world. At times, we don't have the largest platform to speak from, but we do so knowing our message is important. How much easier is it to band together with other Christians to spread the Word? Why?



Mohawk Walk

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. (1 John 1)

Story

We are called to walk the Christian walk, although sometimes it seems more like we are on a tightrope than a path. Sin is like a dark chasm beneath you, waiting to engulf you if you stray. And hey! What a wonderful metaphor for this next challenge...

Processing Questions

- Who had the least problems? Who had the most? Why is there a difference?
- Who helped out the most? Could the group have made it without them?
- At times, everyone sins. It's a part of our nature. Thankfully, at these times, we can rely on fellow Christians for support. How many times did you have to rely on your teammates to support you? What would have happened had they not been there? What does that say for our Christian walk, especially if we are trying to do it alone?
- Did your team blame you for your failure? Does the church sometimes blame those who sin? What is the proper response, as Christians, toward people who sin?

Multivine Traverse

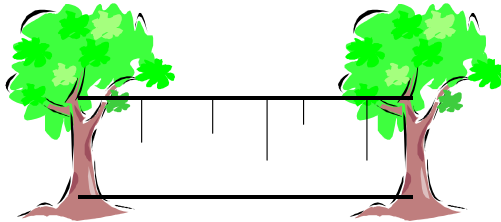
God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. “For in him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.” (Acts 17:27-28)

Story

To be honest, this activity only really fits these verses if you are doing this blindfolded. There are a lot of parallels to reaching out blindly for something you know is there and reaching out to God. It is when we find Him and the stability He provides in this wondrous and wild thing we call “life”, that we are able to move forward with confidence...

Processing Questions

- How easy was it to do the obstacle alone? Did it help or hinder you to have a partner?
- What did it feel like to not be able to see? How did it affect your balance? Did it make a difference when you were clinging tightly to a safety line? Why or why not?



Nitro Crossing / Prouty's Landing

Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” (Deuteronomy 1:29-31)

Story One:

Ever have one of those days where the ground seems to drop out from under you and everything tumbles out of control? Well, here it is: solid ground on both sides, but the area drops down into eternity. Nestled safely on a ledge, however, is your solution. Each of you and the solution has to make it over the abyss and onto the opposite bank. The only tool you have is your own strength and this rope.

Processing Questions

- When people are faced with a dilemma or problem, they tend to try and solve the problems on their own. They forget to ask God for help. God tells us not to be afraid and not to worry; he will take care of us. How hard is it to let God take the burden of our problems?
- How much strength of faith does it take to cling to the belief that God will see us through?
- How easy is it, when we are safely back on shore, to forget to ask God for help? Or, even to thank Him?



Porthole

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.”

“Which ones?” the man inquired.

Jesus replied, “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:16-26)

Story

Have you ever wondered about this passage? I have always envisioned trying to pass a camel through the eye of a needle. I always figured if you had a big enough needle, it wouldn't be that tough. So, here we are, standing in front of an enormous needle. (Well at least there is the eye of a needle, the rest of it is up to your imagination...) So, now we just need to move your herd (bunch, group, falafel(?)) of camels through.

Variation

The middle hula-hoop can be removed to provide a large hole, just in case you have some larger people in your group...

Processing Questions

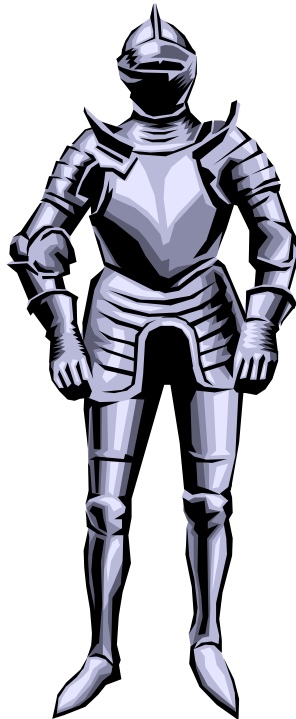
- How difficult was it to come up with a plan? Did you have to modify the plan as you went along? Why or why not?
- How safe did you feel with your teammates spotting you? What did they do well? What could they have done better?
- Why is it hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God? (Because they are serving two masters: money and God.) What other masters do people choose to serve? Why is it hard to make the choice between God and the world?

Pyramid

But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:8-11)

Processing Questions

- How did you have to work together to make it across the bridge?
- Was it hard to get from one side to the other?
- What made it difficult?
- Step back and picture one side as sin, the other as God, and the Pyramid as the bridge Jesus creates to bring us to God. We can leave sin behind only by receiving salvation through Jesus Christ. How do we do that? We simply ask. Consider the amount of maneuvering, twisting, reaching and pulling you had to do to reach the other side of this obstacle. Now, consider how simple it is to ask for salvation!
- God also commands us to encourage one another and build each other up. How did that happen in this obstacle?
- How can we encourage and support one another in the Christian walk?



Spider Web

...May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay. May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away; may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them. Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me, may ruin overtake them by surprise--may the net they hid entangle them, may they fall into the pit, to their ruin. Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in his salvation. My whole being will exclaim, "Who is like you, O LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them."

Story

You get up, get ready for the exciting day and go out for an exciting day of teambuilding. However, someone is plotting against you! They have hidden a net to entangle you, trap you and to take your life. You must get through this web without getting ensnared...

Rules

1. Everyone must go through the web, not around it, under, over, etc.
2. Each hole can be used once; larger groups can use the upper holes twice.
3. People going through the bottom holes may go under their own power. However, do not allow jumping, diving or rolling through the web!
4. There must be two people on each side before you can pass someone through! Everyone must help life or spot; if not, stop the activity! When passing a person, they must go through the web feet-first, their head never going below their waist. On the other side, lower their feet so that they are able to stand.
5. If someone touches the web, the group starts over. If they are passing someone at the time, they are to put that participant down safely before starting over.

Processing Questions

- How supported did you feel throughout this activity?
- What other "webs" will this group face? How will you support each other in the future?
- Ironically, in our society, there is a lot of talk of "tolerance" and "acceptance." Unfortunately, those words do not always apply to Christians. We are called to take a stand, but the media turns a stand into a mockery. Churches preach abstinence and are called "old-fashioned," they preach about sin and are called "intolerant," they preach about salvation and are called "superstitious." These are all "snares" that are laid before us. We have the choice to take a stand and risk looking foolish or to accept the ways of the world and be untrue to our faith. The one thing that can help us through these times is the support of our friends as we face these challenges.



Tire Pole / Giant's Finger

Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them..." So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman...[The royal secretaries] wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jew--young and old, women and little children--on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. (Esther 3:3-13)

Story

During the times of the Bible, if a king wanted to make a decree that would be binding, they would sign the document and seal it with their ring. At this point, it was law and could not be revoked. As you can see from the story above, Haman wants to kill the Jews.

But God had other plans for his people. Esther, the wife of King Xerxes, was a Jew and God used her to save her people. All she had to do to save her people was to get the King's ring and write another law. This decree, while not able to counteract the first law, could be used to protect the Jews... You must retrieve the King's ring to be able to save the people.

Wrap-Up

King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring--for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked..." Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children; and to plunder the property of their enemies... (Esther 8:7-11)

Processing Questions

- Is there a "best" way to solve this puzzle? Why or why not? Was the way that Esther and Mordecai resolved the situation with the Jews the best way? Why or why not? What other options did they have?
- If the group lifted someone, how much courage did it take to implement their plan? How much courage do you suppose it took for Esther to stand up to the King?

TP Shuffle / Birthday Log

The LORD spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. He said: “Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. (Numbers 1:1-2)

Story

Well, it’s time for another census. It seems that in the Bible, everyone spent their time counting things. The book of Numbers deals with counting just about everything that the Jewish people had; there is a Roman census that causes Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem (where Jesus is born), etc.

But this time things are a little more interesting. You are standing out in the Sinai Desert and it is boiling hot out here! You decided that the best way to do this is to have one person stand in the sun, and the rest of you are hiding in that person’s shadow to keep cool.

Unfortunately, the people counting you need you to line up by alphabetical order. Now, this being a desert and since we’re talking about counting an entire nation, this could take a while and become a very toasty experience. Obviously you don’t want to get exposed to anymore heat than you have to, so you decide that the best thing to do is to stay in a straight line as you move.

If people stray out of line (off the log), they are exposed to vast amounts of heat and may get dizzy from heat stroke. This will cause them to get in line in the wrong place and cause the entire census to start over.

Processing Questions

- How hard was it to get everyone lined up in order when we were only dealing with a small number of people? Can you picture trying to do this with a nation?
- Why do you suppose it was important to conduct a census? More importantly, why do it by name? You are talking about a lot of people of count!



Trust Dive

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Story

All of us have heard that the narrow path is the better path. Here we are presenting you with a very narrow path. You will be asked to trust your teammates to catch you as you dive off a platform and into their arms, a narrow swath of safety.

Processing Questions

- Does seeing the path make it easier when deciding to make the leap?
- How many times in life do you see the choices and paths in front of you, and taking the plunge into the narrows seems too intimidating?
- Can you find an example in your Christian life to illustrate the wide and narrow road metaphor?
- This is a great test for “Trust Fall.” If the group can handle this, they can handle “Trust Fall.” If not, wrap up your day and go home.



Trust Fall

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Story

In our Christian walk, faith is sometimes the hardest thing to understand. We are asked to put our faith in that which we cannot see, touch or prove. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation; it is a gift of God. For our society, it is difficult to accept such a gift, we want to try to find a way to “repay” God, not simply believe in Him.

In this activity, it is important to listen to and understand the message of Ephesians 2:8-9. As you fall from the platform, you must have faith in your team. If you make the attempt to save yourself during this activity, if you bend, if you throw your arms out or if you try anything to save yourself, you will jeopardize the ability of the group to catch you safely. Your works cannot save you, your faith can. This is an exercise in faith.

Processing Questions

- If your group has gotten this far, praise them! They have done very well! Even if you must remove them for someone talking about dropping someone, they still had to be very impressive to even reach the obstacle, so congratulate them!
- Praise team members for going and for not going. It is a choice that is acceptable for them, and so they should be proud for making that choice.
- “Trust is the toughest thing to earn in a group and is the quickest thing to lose.” Are there times you have trusted someone with a secret only to find they told others? Did you go right back to that person when you had another secret? Why or why not? If we had dropped the first person, the ambulance had come, resuscitated them and took them away, how many of you would *not* have done this activity? Why or why not? Remember to keep the trust people place in you!
- How hard is it for you to trust in something you cannot see? Is it easy to trust your team in this activity? Why or why not?
- If it is hard for some people to trust the team, even though they know the team is there and can catch them, how does that relate to faith in God, when you can’t see Him?



Whale Watch / Four Way

...I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark--you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them. Noah did everything just as God commanded him... (Genesis 6:17-22)

Story

Welcome to Noah's ark! The Flood is on its way, and it's time to get you bunch of animals on the boat so that you can be safe. (Okay, maybe calling you "animals" is a judgment call, but really is nothing personal...)

Rules

1. As with the ark, you animals need to get on two by two.
2. You must not tip the ark! It is balanced carefully on its keel (that's the bottom of the boat for all of you non-nautical people) and if it rocks to one side, the hull (that's the sides of the boat) will be damaged and ship won't float!
3. If, as animals get on, the boat tips, you must all get off so that Noah can patch the boat. (In other words, you all start over.)
4. You must balance the platform for 10 seconds, that's the amount of time it will take for the rain to cover the ground and float the boat.
5. You cannot put hands on the platform to steady it. You cannot put feet underneath the platform to steady it.
6. Exiting the platform can only be done on the end touching the ground. No jumping off, "accidentally" falling off or "horsing around."

Variations

Oh no! Noah's sons were not paying attention and they just threw all of the animals onto the ark! You have carnivores with herbivores, lions with lambs, mass chaos and pandemonium! The group must split itself evenly and move to their appropriate sides. When they arrive there, tell them that there was another mistake and that the carnivores need to switch sides with the herbivores.

Processing Questions

- How well did your team work together?
- What ideas were successful? Was it hard to communicate ideas? Why or why not?