



# Group Blessing Ideas

What's the big deal about a blessing?

We have come to understand that what every young heart longs for is to be truly known and affirmed. This powerful thought has become so important that we ask each group leader to thoughtfully plan a special blessing for their group members at the end of the week.

During the last journey group meeting during breakfast on Friday, your group will be given time to share in a time of blessing. During this time, we want each member of your group to feel special, to be recognized as a precious child of God, and to be affirmed in their faith and spiritual character in a way that flows out of the thoughts and ideas we have shared together throughout the week.

Each group is different and each team of group leaders is different, so there are various blessing experiences. There are many great ways to create a positive blessing for your group; the only "wrong" way is to do nothing and miss the opportunity to reinforce that God is at work to develop the hearts and minds of the campers with whom you have shared your week.

In the following pages, we have provided some ideas, though not an exhaustive list, to help you prepare for the Friday morning journey group experience. Please feel free to ask Leland Sawyer or other experienced journey group leaders for help. Also, please be sure you gather all the supplies needed for your blessing before camp.

While blessings differ from person to person, each blessing shares some similar qualities:

**1. Spoken message of genuine love and acceptance**

The power of the spoken word is often underestimated. (That's why we ask you to read the blessings out loud.) There is something special about hearing words of affirmation spoken aloud, especially in front of peers. A message that expresses heartfelt love and acceptance frees the person being blessed.

**2. Meaningful touch**

Physical touch was a part of every Hebrew blessing. The communication of appropriate affection includes a physical connection...the holding of hands, hugs, etc.

**3. Attachment of high value**

Beyond affirmation is the idea of attaching high value to the person being blessed. Remember God's blessing of Jesus, "This is my son, in whom I am well pleased." Express the value attached to this person in your blessing.

**4. The picturing of a special future for the child**

Every child has hopes and dreams. The blessing is a powerful means of communicating that the person being blessed can and will achieve a special future. It is an opportunity to validate special qualities and how those qualities will contribute to a special future.

**5. An active commitment by the "blessing giver" to see this future come to pass**

Once a blessing is given, the blessing giver has a significant role...remaining a constant source of encouragement and continued blessing. It is appropriate to express this active commitment to fulfilling this blessing.

## **A Few Recommended Blessing Ideas**

These are some blessing ideas that have been meaningful experiences for a group or individual. As you read through the ideas, think about how you might adapt an idea to reflect your group's special qualities.

1. Have all the campers sit in a circle with one chair/space empty. Read the creation account, or the story of when Jacob tricked his father to receive his blessing (significant because when Esau came seeking it, it could not be given again even though it was only words). These stories are to illustrate the power of words: God spoke the world into existence, and words of blessing could not be taken back. This really helps the campers to focus and take seriously the rest of the blessing process. Next have each student come one at a time to the empty chair/space and receive a blessing from the rest of the group (it is usually best to set a time limit). Then after all the campers finish talking, have a group leader say a final blessing over the student. At the end of the blessing, have a group leader read the "Lord bless you and keep you" passage to the entire group reminding them of the power of a blessing.
2. Group leaders could write each camper a letter. Present it to the camper after you read it aloud in front of the group. You can also involve the group in affirming each camper by having them say something about the camper after the leader has read the letter.
3. Make index cards for each person in the group. On the index card write a new Biblical name that you pick for them and the verse the name is picked from. Then go around to each camper in the group and share the new name and the characteristics that the camper displayed that were similar to the Biblical person. After sharing your blessing with the camper, you can allow anyone else in the group to talk about the camper. When the group is done sharing, have everyone gather around the person, place hands on him/her and pray for him/her.
4. Have a few poster boards available with markers for everyone to write individual prayers. During this prayer time, play some soft, Christian music in the background. Some campers may write short prayers, others might write long prayers; some prayers may be general while other prayers may be very personal. Once everyone is done, read the prayers out loud together and pray over the group.
5. Ask the campers to write down where they want to be or who they want to be when they grow up. (For example: I want to be doctor, a great mom and active in a church that loves the Lord.) Then have the camper write what they need to do right now to help work toward their goals. (For example: in order to be a great mom I need to start treating my mom better and learn to love her better.) Have each camper share with the group his/her goals and how they plan to work toward them right now. Then one of the group leaders prays over each camper and asks the Lord to help work with them toward their goals.
6. You can give each camper a scripture that will help him/her throughout the year. And with each scripture, write a personal message of encouragement. Share the scriptures about each camper with the group and say a prayer over each camper.

7. The group leaders can go around and wash the feet of the campers. You can play soft, Christian music in the background. As you are washing the camper's feet, share with them encouragement of how you see God working in their lives. You can also have group members encourage each camper during the time you are washing their feet.

8. Give note cards to each camper, enough for all the members of the group. Have the campers spread out and write personal encouragement notes to their fellow group members. Have Bibles available for them to use to include scripture in the notes. You can play soft, Christian music in the background. If there is time, you can have group members share some verbal encouragement about different members. (Be sure everyone is encouraged at least once.)

9. Earlier in the week, ask the campers to name things in their life that would cause them to lose their faith. Make sure you keep track of what each camper said and then have the group leaders write a blessing to each camper encouraging them in their certain area of struggle. You can also include encouraging scriptures. You can either read these blessings out loud to the whole group, or allow the campers to encourage each other and pass out the letters at the end of your time together.

10. At the beginning of the week, have each camper decorate a paper bag with their name on it. Have these bags available during all journey group times. Throughout the week, encourage the campers to write each other notes and put them in the bags. Group leaders should write a note to each camper as well. Then during the blessing time, divide the group between the two leaders to bless and say something special about each camper. You can also have a piece of paper with the camper's name on top of it and a personal scripture to pass around for the other campers to write encouraging comments while the leader is giving the individual blessing. At the end of the blessing time, have everyone come together to get their bags and pray over the group.

11. Have the group sit in a circle and have a ball of yarn ready to toss. You'll start the group by holding the end of the ball of yarn and passing it to a camper and saying something encouraging about that camper. That camper then holds onto their end of the ball of yarn and passes it to another camper and says something encouraging about that camper. This continues until every camper has been encouraged. If you have time, you can continue passing the ball around the circle to encourage different campers. At the end, talk about how you are all connected by your week's experience and should continue to lift each other in prayer throughout the year.

