

Camp Lessons About Leading a Safe Trek

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I write this just back from Camp Davy Crockett, our area's fine Boy Scouts of America (BSA) camp. A few souvenirs of my time at camp include shot out targets from riflery , a string burn from archery, a bear claw necklace (relax, its plastic), a book on tying knots, a trunk load of stories by Mr. Fischer and, of course, dirty laundry - hi honey, I'm home.

Along with memories of some fun times with my sons, I also have some helpful notes from a Round Table class for leaders. If you care to know about "Leave no Trace," let me know. It is a sensible and solid approach to take care of the areas in which one camps or hikes.

Being the good example for the boys that I am, I teasingly call Leave No Trace "destroy all evidence". That may cost me a rank or two. My apologies to our incredible Scoutmaster Charles Hasbrouck.

Program Director Wesley Miller, who taught our class, also lead us through the BSA's "Trek Safely" philosophy. These are great guidelines for leaders to follow to help them competently and safely lead a group on an outing. Before leading little ones on a trek, one would do well to adhere to this time tested advice for leadership.

As I dutifully - like a good Scout - jotted down these seven points of a safe hike, I realized what fine advice it also was for any who seek to lead others in their trek through life. Whether parents, teachers, Sunday School leaders, parents, or youth workers of any stripe, we all need to lead others the best we can.

With a crisp three-fingered salute to the BSA, here is my pastorally revised version (P.R.V.) of how to insure you can lead others to Trek Safely.

1. Qualified Supervision. Just like boys or girls need good leaders to get them successfully back from an outing, so too do those we seek to impact for the Lord. Willingness is admirable, but not enough to qualify one to lead others in their walk with the Lord.

Make no mistake, perfection is not the issue. Maturity and ongoing spiritual growth are the concern here. Are you growing in your walk or trek with Jesus? Have you matured beyond elemental matters? Are you growing up in the Lord?

2. Keep Fit. Director Miller recalled being a Scout and having to worry about the leader making it back from a rigorous outing. So too, spiritual sloppiness does not render one ready to lead.

The Apostle Paul wrote Timothy that he should discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. While physical fitness is of some worth, spiritual fitness is profitable in all matters (1 Tim. 4:8). Being spiritually buff is far more crucial than killer abs.

3. Plan Ahead. A seemingly simple trip has hidden details that have to be worked out head of time. Meals, permits, campsite locations, maps, water and emergencies exits are among some of the matters that are best thought through before one hits the trail.

In guiding others, one who has been down the trail can best plan and anticipate needs that your disciples will encounter. Will they be prepared? Will you help them pre think through critical matters? Will they have learned how to solve problems, strategize, and avoid dangers ahead of time?

4. Gear Up. Some hikers take as little as possible. Others have a "one of everything" approach. Regardless of your style, you should have all that you need to face whatever may come your way and of those whom you lead.

Obviously, one cannot anticipate everything that may come down life's path. However, there are certain things one must have along for the trip. The Armor of the Lord is essential trail gear (Eph. 6). There is always room for the Fruit of the Spirit in one's pack (Gal. 5). And above all, love must be put in and on all that we carry down the trail (1 Corin. 13; Col. 3).

5. Communicate. Just as Scouts want and need to know a few basics for their trek, so too those we seek to influence for Jesus. Where are we going? When do we expect to arrive? What difficulties might we encounter? What do we hope to accomplish? Do you think I can make it? Is it worth the effort? Why do we not take the easier path?

6. Monitor Conditions. One should be aware of the weather, trail conditions and one's group member's state - both physical and emotional. Campers get home sick, fatigued, dehydrated and scared.

Good leaders watch over the condition of their flocks. Are they healthy, hydrated, safe, feeling accepted? Are you teaching them to watch after each other? Are you keeping an eye on the sky.

7. Discipline. To head down the trail with insufficient control over one's group is dangerous. This is not about being domineering, but having proper control with clear expectations and consequences. To take along an out of control hiker can imperil or infuriate the whole troop.

Jesus let people know what He expected. Not everyone did - or does - fall in line behind Him. His path lead to the cross. He called His followers also to deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Him, where ever He went.

Well, it is back to camp for me for the last day of this week's session. I have boys to transport and a sagging cot to return to. I also have an article to take to Director Miller, with my thanks.

Until we cross trails again, let us all be on our honor to do our best, for God and our country. And it would not hurt anything for all of us to be prepared and a do a good turn daily.