

WHATEVER!?!?

Rocky Mountain Sr. High Youth Gathering
November 19-21, 2010 YMCA Estes Park, CO

Resource for Home and Congregation

During the 2010 Rocky Mountain Synod Youth Gathering in Estes Park participants will be reflecting upon several passages from Paul's Letter to the Philippians. To help them prepare, we offer the following resources to be used before arriving at the Gathering. These may also be used by the members of the congregation and members of their household who are not able to join in the fun at Estes Park.

The Devotions Team

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Bible Background

St. Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians while in prison, awaiting sentencing. He was uncertain if he would be set free, held indefinitely or perhaps face a death sentence. Even with this uncertainty, Paul wrote a letter that shines with confidence, trust and hope. He rejoices and encourages the reader to do the same, in any and all circumstances.

Paul had received a gift from the Christians at Philippi, a city in Macedonia that was situated on a major east-west travel route for the Roman Empire. The Christian community there was the first established in Europe by Paul in his earlier travels. Paul held great fondness toward this community and expresses his gratitude for them, and their gift which was delivered to Paul in his imprisonment by Epaphroditus and was not the first time this congregation supported Paul (Phil 4:15ff). In response Paul shares this letter and words of encouragement.

Paul reminds the Philippians that he has much for which to be thankful, all of course centered in our Lord Jesus Christ. In Chapter 2 Paul shares an early Christian hymn that sings of the humility and servant nature of Jesus, who "emptied himself... became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil 2:7-8) This hymn is one of the passages that we will spend some time with during the Gathering.

Whatever the circumstance, whatever the challenges, whatever the decisions we face, Christ Jesus is with us and we have reason to rejoice in this promised presence.

Our Theme, in Four Parts

During our time away we will look at four passages from Paul's letter to the Philippians, one passage from each of the four chapters.

On Friday, as youth and adults travel to Estes Park, we will ask you to look at our first selection, **Philippians 1:1-5** and the theme of *Whatever... Together*.

Saturday morning's theme will be *Whatever... Like Christ*. The passage from which this theme is drawn is **Philippians 2: 4-11**.

Later on Saturday we look into **Philippians 3:17-21** and the theme, *Whatever... Forever* and learn about the lasting promises of God.

We conclude on Sunday morning gathering in joyous worship built around the theme, *Whatever... Keep on Rejoicing!* The key passage for this celebration is **Philippians 4:4-9**.

Friday, Devos on the way

Philippians 1:1-5 "Whatever... Together"

Share with the group the background information on Paul's letter to the Philippians. You may find additional helps in the introductory materials in your Bible (such as the Lutheran Study Bible by Augsburg Fortress).

Have someone in the car or van read the opening verses, **Philippians, 1:1-5**. What words stick out in the listeners' minds?

Read the passage again, perhaps a bit more slowly. Paul thanks God for the saints in Philippi for sharing in the Gospel (vs. 5) Paul was not alone in this work, he and the Christians at Philippi were partners together. Notice also that Paul isn't writing this letter by himself, he has Timothy with him. And he is writing to a group of people who will gather together to hear it read.

Who are some of the people who are together with you in your life, at home, school, church, work or play?

What are some of the positive things about being together with others who share your same interests?

What about when things aren't going well, maybe even going badly, who do you want to get together with then?

Recall a time when being together with others help you get through a challenge (such as on a high ropes course at camp, or when experiencing grief).

Friday Night

Just before Lights Out

A bedtime blessing: Gather your group around the candle given to each group. Select someone to begin and simply go around your circle with each person saying a blessing of thanks to God for something the person next to you did that day that you noticed was positive or helped you or your group or someone else. Remember where you stand in this circle.

Saturday Morning

First Light

Before heading off to breakfast, gather with your group for a quick prayer, use the popcorn form of prayer, with each person sharing in a word or two something for which they give thanks. Then ask your group to watch throughout the day for how people at the Gathering show our themes *Together; Like Christ; Forever* as they participate in the Gathering.

Saturday Night

Congregation/group Time

Gather around your candle and have someone open with prayer. Give everyone in your group an opportunity to check-in (highs and lows). Then have people share what they noticed that day of how someone showed the themes in their actions or words. Discuss the events of the days and how the theme *Whatever!?! Has been developed through the events of the gathering thus far.*

End this congregation time with a bedtime blessing as last night but reverse the order so the blessings can be returned in kind.

2010 SHYG Pre-Gathering Blessing

Congregations are encouraged to use this litany in worship on Sunday, November 14 as a way of recognizing the youth and adults attending the 2010 Rocky Mountain Synod Gathering and giving support and a blessing. Do this before the Blessing and Sending at the end of worship.

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Youth and Caring Adults attending the 2010 SHYG, please come forward.

Leader: I hear you are going to the Synod Youth Gathering in Estes Park next weekend.

Participants: Yeah, Whatever!?!

Leader: You will be representing this family of faith.

Participants: Yeah, Whatever!?!

Leader: You will be meeting new friends, you will worship with them, learn and play games with them. Do you know the theme for the weekend?

Participants: Yeah, Whatever!?!

Leader: You will study portions of Paul's letter to the Philippians and talk about being together with others in faith, learn that you are like Christ, hear promises of life ahead and end up rejoicing in Christ.

Participants: Whatever happens we will be together in Christ, living, serving, and rejoicing.

Leader: People of God, will you pray for these young people and adults leaders: for safe travel, for Christ-like friendships, for growing together in faith, for great rejoicing.

Congregation: Yeah, Whatever!?!

Leader: Have a blessed time away and come home refreshed in your faith.

The Leader addresses all who are assembled with the benediction and dismissal.