



# COMPASS CHECK

Helping you turn your spiritual compass toward God

## PREPARE TO FIGHT

You Are What You Listen To

Your First Time  
at Teen Camp

Becoming Godly,  
Masculine Men

Are You Ready  
to Give an Answer?

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## COMPASS CHECK

*Compass Check* is a biblically based magazine for young people of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA). Our name, *Compass Check*, refers to pointing your spiritual compass toward God. Our goal is to inspire readers to respond to the gospel message.

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## COMPASS CORNER

*Dear Compass Checkers,*

As I write this note, the day here in Charlotte is unfolding to be a rather pleasant one, with lots of sun and temperatures in the low 70s. While that's a little unusual even for us here in the sunny South, hints of spring are starting to appear.

Along with the warmer weather, spring also brings something very exciting to both you as a teen and me as a, well . . . *not* a teen anymore. And that of course is UYC's summer camps—thinking about them and submitting applications. Never been to camp before? There's an article in this issue that will tell you exactly what to expect.

Speaking of expectations, what do you do when someone asks you a question about your faith you weren't quite expecting? We'll take a look at what you can do to be prepared to give an answer. Sometimes it can be a bit of a fight (mentally speaking), which is something you can prepare for with a little planning.

Our goal at *Compass Check* is to provide you with helpful information as you navigate through life. If there are any articles or ideas you'd like to see discussed or have questions about, please feel free to reach out at [compasscheck@ucg.org](mailto:compasscheck@ucg.org).



*Dan Preston*

*Editor of Compass Check magazine*



# YOU ARE WHAT YOU

## *Listen To*

*by Emma Cortelyou*

**M**usic is constantly around us. It wakes us up in the morning, follows us into the local coffee shop, and lives in our earbuds. Music can greatly affect our mood; it can fuel us for a positive, productive day or bring us down and make us dwell deeply on our sorrows and hardships. Music is part of God's incredible creation. As children of God, we must be mindful of the music we listen to because not all of it is acceptable in God's eyes. In this article, let's explore how we can learn to discern the kind of music that is acceptable to God.

The Bible is full of music. It references music, singing and

instruments more than 221 times. Most of the music in the Bible was used to praise God. Many of David's psalms were set to music, and the Israelites played music for God on many occasions. One such example was when David and Israel brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. As they brought the Ark back, they articulated their rejoicing and praise toward God by playing music for Him: "Then David and all Israel played music before God with

**THE LYRICS WE CHOOSE  
TO HEAR AND THE LYRICS  
WE SING SHOULD REFLECT  
THE CHRISTIAN VALUES  
WE'RE DEVELOPING.**



all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets” (1 Chronicles 13:8). Music is a powerful way to express emotions and to exalt God. Because of the power contained in music, however, it can also be harnessed and used for ungodly behavior, showing disregard for God and His laws.

It is imperative that our listening habits reflect God’s standards for us as His children. This means the lyrics we choose to hear and the lyrics we sing should reflect the Christian values we’re developing. Have you ever dismissed a sketchy lyric because it’s “just music” and “not the way I would normally speak?” I have. But it’s important to realize that just because something inappropriate or questionable is set to music, that does not make it acceptable. We have to examine what we listen to because we’re held to the same godly standards in music. Remember, “. . . whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Let’s think about some ways we can adjust our listening habits and strive to reflect godly attributes.

### **LISTEN CLOSELY**

It’s easy to fall into the trap of listening to a song because it’s catchy or popular. You might not even understand the lyrics, but God does. The first step toward adjusting your listening habits is to truly start listening. Look up the lyrics. As you listen closely to the lyrics, consider whether the subject matter or the words would please

or disappoint God. If you wouldn’t be comfortable saying those things to your parents or friends, ask yourself why you’re listening to them. I’ve recently started purging a lot of songs from my playlists. It’s not easy work. There will be some songs you hesitate to give up because the beat is catchy, or you’ve grown up with it. However, as Christians, we must be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2), which involves giving up things that don’t please God. Take the time to listen and be willing to remove some songs from your playlists.

### **DISCERN WISELY**

Once you’ve begun critically listening to lyrics, it’s important to discern what kinds of things you should avoid. Discerning between good and evil is an essential skill that Christians must develop. We develop discernment by practicing it. The writer of Hebrews speaks of Christians skilled in the word of righteousness, “. . . those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14). Practicing discernment through music is beneficial not only because it makes us more aware of the things we listen to, but it also develops our discernment in other areas of our Christian life.

Music discernment will often be obvious. If it contains curse words, depicts the breaking of one (or several) of the Ten Commandments, or glorifies evil, your ears will perk up (hopefully) and tell you to inspect the song more carefully. I recommend focusing on these obvious

characteristics first. It will come in handy as you develop discernment. Ask yourself which songs are out of character for you as a Christian. Would your school friends or coworkers be surprised that you listen to these songs? Only you can decide where to draw the line in your playlists. As you make decisions and set boundaries for yourself, you can shift your attention to the less obvious characteristics of music.

Sometimes it’s not the details of the lyrics themselves that demand attention, but rather the themes and behaviors they encourage. This step in discernment requires a bigger-picture focus and a commitment to studying your listening habits. These not-so-obvious songs might include innuendos, a play on words and turns of phrases that subtly point to inappropriate themes. They commonly use ungodly human emotions such as revenge, lust and negative emotions to deal with difficult situations like a breakup or a cheating partner. Many songs challenge God’s intent for human relationships. If we’re not careful, these songs can influence our experiences, and we may begin relying on songs to deal with *our* emotions. If the songs aren’t promoting godly behavior and love toward others, it is a dangerous road to go down. It’s worth asking yourself if any of the songs in your playlist are encouraging you to think or do things that aren’t in line with God’s way of life.

I’m often a counselor at United Youth Camps. If we’ve been to the same camp, you have probably heard my dorm pass by you as I always have music playing

through my speaker. I carefully filter and inspect my playlist (called “Zone-Approved Songs”) every time the camp season comes around. You might be surprised by how closely I think about the songs I play for my campers. I focus on both the obvious and the not-so-obvious aspects of the music. Of course, I don’t add any songs with curse words or that take God’s name in vain. I don’t even replace them with clean versions because I know how skilled our brains are at filling in the blanks.

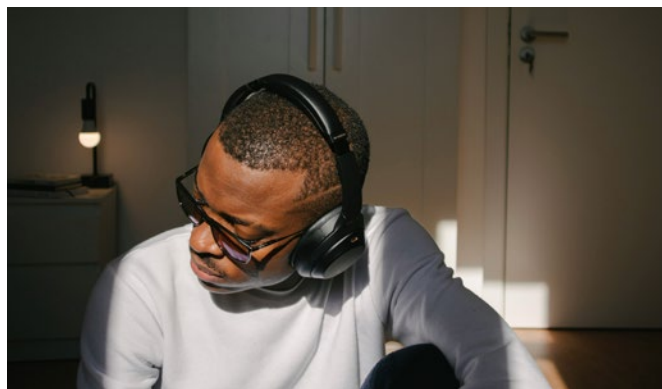
I also set other boundaries for the playlist that are more concerned with the overall themes in the songs. The boundaries are based on the seven elements of the zone. I do my best to add songs that promote positive relationships and a fun environment. Songs about breaking up, obsessing over someone, or negative emotions are not welcome on the playlist.

This is just one example of a specific playlist with a purpose. You may not be as strict as I am with your playlists. What is important is that you have your own boundaries and intentions when you create playlists. It’s easy enough to delete a few songs, but unless you create rules for yourself, you’ll begin making exceptions for other songs that don’t reflect godly characteristics.

## REMEMBER THE SABBATH

When the Sabbath starts, what kind of behavior do you change to observe the Sabbath? Hopefully, the TV goes off, and you limit social media usage on the Sabbath. Do your listening habits change? If you haven’t considered the music you listen to on the Sabbath, now is a good time to start. The Sabbath is a time to avoid doing our own pleasure and even speaking our own words (Isaiah 58:13). Therefore, the use of music should be another aspect

in our behavior that changes on the Sabbath. Consider what kinds of music would help you focus on God and observe the Sabbath as a day of rest. Only you can make that distinction for yourself. I listen to music that doesn’t remind me of worldly things but instead encourages my mind to meditate on God and His way of life. Classical or wordless music are good examples of meditative music. Chopin is



## *On the Sabbath, consider what kinds of music would help you focus on God and observe the Sabbath as a day of rest.*

an artist I particularly enjoy. Find a genre that inspires you and helps center your mind on God.

Christian music is another genre I enjoy, but not without carefully examining the content of the songs. It’s important to note that not all Christian music is biblically based and sometimes takes creative liberties that don’t reflect God’s Word. Christ’s disciples are held to a higher standard, which is why it’s essential that we carefully discern the kind of Christian music we listen to, always asking ourselves if the song is supported by Scripture. For example, if the artist sings about the Holy Spirit, how do they refer to it? Do they speak of it as a third being of a Trinity,

a doctrine we know to be false, or as the essence of God by which He gives us the power to overcome sin? Whatever the artist sings about, you should be able to back it up with Scripture. Use every song as an opportunity to exercise discernment.

## CONCLUSION

Because music is a prevalent part of our lives, we often overlook the lyrics we listen

to or justify them because the actions in the songs seem to exist in a different realm from our Christian life. However, sin is still sin, even if it’s set to music. It’s our job, as Christians, to carefully discern all aspects of our lives to ensure our choices reflect God’s way of life. We do this by listening intently to lyrics and setting boundaries based on God’s laws. We should also consider our listening habits on the Sabbath and make sure the Christian songs we listen to are biblically based. If you want to learn more about music through a Christian framework, I encourage you to listen to the sermon that inspired me to write this article entitled “God’s Gift of

Music” or read the study paper the Church has prepared on music in the Bible.

You are what you listen to. Make sure it’s pleasing to God. **CC**



*Emma Cortelyou spends her time making niche Spotify playlists and daydreaming about the next time she gets to be a counselor at camp.*



## NEXT STEPS

*Scan the code to watch the sermon and read the paper Emma mentions above at [ucg.org/ccspring25](http://ucg.org/ccspring25).*

# Becoming Godly, Masculine Men

**W**hat comes to mind when you think of a man—a true man? Do you instantly think of a bumbling, effeminate incapable fool? Or maybe you picture a gunslinging cowboy, ruthless and powerful?

Believe it or not, neither of the examples given above depicts godly, masculine men.

Mankind is at the center of the plan of God, as He has called man to become a part of His family! Men and women both play unique and special roles in this incredible calling. This family has a structure (Genesis 2:24), and from Ephesians 5:22-24, we can see that men are to lead and care for their families, just as Christ does the Church.

Because of this, Satan has done all he can to destroy the family structure God set up at creation, including attacking the man's role and true masculinity. Too often in the world's current society, masculinity is viewed as being submissive, weak and overly-emotional, or manipulative, evil and predatory.

With many families missing a father, children often lack proper examples of God's definition of "masculinity." On the other hand, some families do have a father figure, but one who shirks his God-given responsibilities and doesn't

fulfill his biblical role the way God intended. Men, just like women and children, have a special part to play in God's plan. Men—we need to be living up to that responsibility! How can we be godly, masculine men? What does that even mean? How does God expect Christian men to act? How does God view real masculinity?

First of all, we have to understand that to reach our full potential as men, we have to build and maintain a strong relationship with God. Proverbs 20:7 says, "The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him." Following God and adhering strictly to the examples we see of godly men will provide a rock-solid foundation for the masculinity God expects to see from us. Once we've firmly established our relationship with God, we should be able to see other secondary, traits of godly masculinity start to take shape in our life.

One mark of a masculine Christian is that he keeps good company. In Proverbs 13:20 it says, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." In Proverbs 27:17 we read, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." We're supposed to surround ourselves with



edifying company and uplifting friends, and every day help build each other up. The Bible is full of verses about friends, reinforcing again and again the importance of a support group to lift up and edify (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Next, godly, masculine men know to take care of their body. Paul speaks to this in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 where he says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit [which] is in you, [which] you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." In fact, you may recall Daniel and his friends (most likely older teens or young men) refusing to eat unclean, unhealthy food, and instead asking for healthy food and water. They understood the importance of taking care of themselves, especially at a young age (Daniel

1:5-16). Our bodies are intricately and masterfully designed by God (Psalm 139:14).

Proverbs 20:29 says, “The glory of young men is their strength . . .” In the New Testament we have the example of Jesus Christ, who worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). This is a physical trade, and would have required that Jesus be fit—moving timbers and stones all the time. Unfortunately, in the present day, debilitating illnesses or injuries have become more and more prevalent. These are just another tactic Satan has to discourage and hinder us, so we need to understand the importance of maintaining, to the best of our abilities, the incredible systems God built into our bodies, that are such a testament to His craftsmanship and power.

A godly, masculine man is, perhaps surprisingly, emotional. This is another misconception about men. Men should be emotional, yet be in control of their emotions at the same time. In Ecclesiastes 3:4-5, Solomon points out that there is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.” Demonstrating self-control—especially of our emotions—is actually the result of a godly man allowing himself to be led by God’s Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)! However, showing emotion is appropriate in some situations, and it’s important to strike a good balance in our lives.

There are many places where we find Jesus showing emotion. One of these is in Matthew 21:12-13. Jesus was forgiving in many cases, but in this instance, He was furious at the desecration of God’s house, and He acted in righteous anger. God created us with emotions, but what determines whether or not we are godly, masculine men is how we control our emotions and use them.

A godly, masculine man is a respectful leader. Men were designed to be the head of the family, but that



*A godly, masculine man is always looking to improve. No matter how reverent, fit, in control of our emotions or respectful we are, we cannot be perfect.*

comes with responsibility. Once we’re in that position, we must lead in a godly way. This includes respecting everyone, whether fellow man, woman or child. We’re to be the main example for our family and we need to live up to this responsibility. In Luke 6:31, Jesus said: “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” Paul built on that in Philippians 2:3, saying: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” We lead through humility and service. Being masculine means you aren’t lazy, effeminate or wimpy, but it’s also not about seeing how small you can make others around you feel. A godly, masculine man serves, leads by example and respects everyone.

Finally, a godly, masculine man is always looking to improve. No matter how reverent, fit, in control of our emotions or respectful we are, we cannot be perfect. We need to always exercise humility and look to do better. Paul reminded the Church of God in Philippi of the importance of this in Philippians 3:12-14, when he wrote, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

In a world where Satan continues to twist and pervert mankind’s perspective—especially in view of and against men—we need to remember that we define ourselves by the standards in God’s Word, not by the standards of society. With the foundation of a strong relationship with God, we should be able to exhibit important traits of godly, masculine men, such as taking care of our bodies and minds, leading by example in a godly fashion, keeping good company, and understanding that there are always more steps we can take on the path to maturity and perfection as sons of God. **CC**



*David Terry is a teen from the Orlando, Florida area. He works at Publix. Whenever he’s free, you can find him playing sports, his guitar, or spending time with his four siblings.*

A full-page background image showing a person climbing a steep, layered rock face in a canyon. The scene is backlit by a bright sun, creating a strong silhouette of the climber and a warm, golden glow across the rock surfaces. The climber is positioned on the right side of the frame, near the bottom, reaching up. The rock formations are rugged and vertical, with distinct horizontal layers. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

# PREPARE TO FIGHT

*by Robert Berendt*

# I GREW UP IN THE MOUNTAINS

and one of the best training exercises we had was climbing high hills. We would get very tired, but quitting was not in our vocabulary—we would rest and then start climbing again. We learned not to fear a huge challenge but to conserve our strength as we continued to overcome the challenges that lay before us.

Some years ago, I enjoyed taking a group of nearly 20 teens with packs on a long hike in the Canadian Rockies. The hike began on fairly level ground, but at the end, there was a mountain pass we needed to scale. I was usually the last person to the top because I stayed behind to encourage those who were so tired that they wanted to quit. We would take 20 steps and then rest, get up and go again.

On one trip, as we neared the top, I saw three teenage girls sitting with their arms around one another, crying. I thought I was in trouble, but when I approached, they said they had never seen anything so beautiful in all their lives. That was the view at the top of the climb—the reward for their effort. I also saw the change that came over several teenage boys whom I had encouraged to keep going. They were the last ones up the mountain, but that gave them confidence and taught them a valuable lesson. These teens were the first to sign up the next summer.

## A DIFFERENT TYPE OF FIGHT

One of life's important lessons is the principle of knowing how to fight. That does not always mean boxing or martial arts or spiritual warfare. The kind of fighting that is needed and beneficial in our lives is the kind that reflects

courage, determination, a never-quit attitude and perseverance. It requires the understanding of knowing when to fight and when to flee. Certainly, those qualities are needed in everyone who is in a struggle or a battle.

Life is filled with troubles, small and great. We're reminded of this in Job 14:1, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." We all realize that troubles can come in waves, and they are ongoing our entire life. The Bible tells us "... to count it all joy when you fall into various trials..." (James 1:2-6). However, if we have never learned to fight—that is, if we have not learned to be courageous, brave and smart, we could drown in a sea of troubles that leave us discouraged. Life can be wonderful, adventurous, and joyful if we learn to face all that comes our way. If we have never prepared to face the rough seas that life will throw at us—then we can come to hate trials and slip into a thought pattern of sorrow and sadness, and feel that life is unfair and unbearable. A mindset of helplessness, defeat or hopelessness can lead to depression and/or thoughts of self-harm.

Our Creator knew how to give us the best chance to be fighters right from our creation. Babies are born struggling and facing situations from the start. They loudly proclaim their needs of hunger, discomfort, or pain. They learn to walk by falling repeatedly, but they get up to try again. That is a quality that needs to be encouraged.



Too often, doting parents will want to lift the baby up or make sure he does not hurt himself, but this is a good start for learning to be a fighter. Babies may rest for a time after a fall, but after they rest, they will try to walk again and again—until they master the problem. Loving parents will encourage their children to resist their inner desire to quit or to rest too often.

## THE VALUE OF THE FIGHT

Lessons of childhood lay the foundation for developing persistence, patience, determination and qualities that help us face challenges the rest of our lives. Experience helps us develop tools that we can use over and over again, such as learning to take the time to think when faced with a problem. Many parents don't realize that their character and successes in life were formed by facing hardships. Not recognizing this truth, these parents will try to do everything in their power to remove difficulties from their children's lives. Children need challenges and the experience that comes from facing troubles. Parents can encourage, give guidance and be there to help when needed, but also to let the child develop strength and skill that is vital to living life with gusto and joy.

With time and experience, guided by those who have gone before, we can learn to

negotiate the troubles life brings. Almighty God is our parent—our Father. He is deeply concerned about teaching us to become fighters. We are to face the adversary of God, which is Satan, and all the evil and wicked ways Satan hurts mankind. Peter wrote that we are to develop the divine nature of God by diligently practicing virtue,

*Though we may be grieved with various trials as we are going through the process of developing a godly nature, we are expected to persevere and endure and never quit or give up.*



knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love so we will never stumble (2 Peter 1:4-8). These qualities are not learned overnight; they are developed with the guidance of God's Word in our lives.

Peter also wrote, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7). Though we may be grieved with various trials as we are going through the process of developing a godly nature, we are expected to persevere and endure and never quit or give up. God expects those

qualities in His children. He also explained that we would be tested as we travel toward the end of our faith—the salvation of our souls.

### **A BATTLE WORTH FIGHTING**

Within the human race, there are great differences in abilities. We may differ in mental ability or talents or traits due to culture and habits we have learned or circumstances that have trained us in various ways. We all need to change; but for some, that is not easy.

It is a blessing when a child has parents who understand the need to help them grow up to be a man or woman of quality. Parents who value that which God values, as pointed out in the Bible, are able to train up their children to be able to face their own challenges and also to be of help to others. Ask your parents, trusted adults in your congregation or your pastor about the battles they have faced. Learn from their experiences about this important quality of character—that of having the "never quit" nature of a warrior.

Being a fighter takes effort, practice, and training. It takes a teacher who can point out the areas of weakness that we need to correct. There is no doubt that our heavenly Father and Elder Brother are warriors (Revelation 19:11-16). They hate evil and have faced Satan from the beginning (Proverbs 8:13). Paul tells us, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). If we are to be like Them, then we, too, must learn to fight. **CC**



*Robert Berendt is a retired Canadian pastor, who has pastored churches in Canada and Germany since 1970. He also served on the Council of Elders for two terms.*

# Your First Time at



# Teen Camp

*by Heidi Braun*

**I**t was Wednesday morning at Camp Buckeye, and the G4 girls awoke to their last day of activities. They were in for a surprise, because the team of counselors, of which I was one, had changed the décor overnight. From the outset of camp, the dorm theme (and décor) had been caterpillars, but all the caterpillars had been exchanged for butterflies, symbolizing the girls' graduation from the preteen camp program!

This summer, many of you will be attending teen camp for the first time. Whether you're just old enough to attend, or whether you're a bit older and this is your first time, camp is an exciting week unlike anything you've experienced before!

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Whether it's your first time at a United Youth Camp (UYC), or whether you've been to camp before, I recommend brushing up on the elements of "the Zone." They are: structure, inclusiveness, positive relationships, support, fun, challenge and success. "The Zone" is an environment we all help to create so



that we can share the best camp experience possible. In the simplest terms, it is God's principles for living put into action.

If it's your first time attending camp, you might consider asking others about their camp experiences. If you know someone who went to that particular camp last year, they might be able to give you feedback on what to expect. For instance, camp provides UYC shirts for campers to wear, but different camps have slightly different policies on when and how often to wear other shirts. You might also consider planning ahead for a special activity that is unique to that camp.

Remember, there will be others at camp for whom this is the first time, and while it might seem embarrassing to admit you don't know something, it's better to ask and be prepared!



Proverbs 19:20 instructs us to “listen to counsel and receive instruction,” so going into an experience armed with wisdom from others is a smart approach.

## LIFE AT CAMP

Campers at United Youth Camps are divided into dorms—groups who stay in the same cabin/lodge/campground, etc., and do activities together. The number of dorms and campers in each dorm varies by camp. Sometimes they’re selected by age, with B1 being the youngest guys’ dorm, and B4 the oldest. Other times, camps mix ages and create more of a team than an age group, such as giving each group a few 12-13, 14-15 and 16-18-year-olds.

Camp runs on a busy schedule. Although your counselors will help with this, it’s good to be aware of the scheduled activities for your dorm from day to day, so you wake up early enough to be ready for the day and pack the items you will need for the day’s activity in your backpack.

If you’re new to UYC, it might surprise you to learn that campers must turn in their smartphones and other electronic devices at check-in. The intent is that teens will be able to spend more time immersed in “the Zone,” without the distraction of outside influences. It’s easier to focus on daily Compass Check (a Christian living class that covers a portion of the camp’s theme) and participate wholeheartedly in new activities and building friendships when you can give them your full attention. Christ warned about how the “cares of this world” and “desires for other things” can choke out our spiritual growth if we’re not careful (Mark 4:19).

Camp is a great opportunity to align our priorities toward God.

## GROUP DYNAMICS

Within each dorm exist many personalities. Teens come from differing backgrounds and may interact in various ways with the group as a whole. Here are a few examples:

### Natural Leaders

Some teens are confident in social settings and possess natural leadership skills, which place them easily at the cen-

*When you come to camp, remember why you’re here. You help create “the Zone” with your contributions to the group.*

ter of their social circles. It can truly be a gift to be in this position, as you have tremendous capacity for being a good influence—but one must also be aware of how, when misused, this social gift can be a negative influence or cause a rift within the dorm dynamic.

If you’re a natural leader, remember to listen to the voices of others in your dorm. Many of the quieter individuals might be hesitant to voice their opinions or needs, especially if the majority is leaning toward a more popular decision. Stay attentive to who is doing most of the talking, and who consistently remains silent. Try to ask your quieter friends about their ideas or opinions when making a choice that affects the dorm as a whole.

Remember to respect the structure of camp. Your talent in setting the tone for your friend group can be used to set an example—of listening to your counselors,

following instructions at activities and encouraging others to maintain a positive attitude. Sometimes you won’t agree with your counselors’ decisions, but they still deserve your respect. Instead of announcing to everyone in a dorm meeting that a counselor is wrong about something, it’s better to find a moment to talk to them privately, such as during an activity break (Matthew 18:15). Be sure to approach topics in a respectful manner.

### Team Players

Many teens get along easily with others,



though they prefer to provide support within the group rather than direction. Team players are often gifted at social interactions and getting along with others, but even these agreeable individuals can meet with issues when they don’t use discernment regarding the direction of the group.

Although we’d love to say that United Youth Camps are free of negative peer pressure, we have to remember that all people are human. “The Zone” is an environment we strive to create, not a force field that effectively blocks all problems from entering. Camp is full of opportunities to make decisions, and you have an

opportunity to set a good example! Even if you think your voice will be drowned out by the majority, you still have a responsibility to speak up when you know something is wrong. (Read Ezekiel 33:3-9 for an example of our responsibility to warn others when we see something wrong.) Similarly, you don't have to be the loudest voice in the room to show support for something good.

If you're adept at interacting in a group, make an effort to look outside the group and find ways to draw others in. Some campers tend to sit by themselves or don't

opportunity to share your God-given gifts with your dorm.

When you come to camp, remember why you're here. You help create "the Zone" with your contributions to the group. If you find the constant social interaction overwhelming, look for ways to serve and contribute, rather than simply withdrawing. For instance, you could go the extra mile to help with dorm inspection or bring a craft item to share with others during downtime.

Keep in mind that camp only lasts for a week, and sometimes it's good for us to stretch our comfort zones so that we can grow. When you reach outside yourself, even if it's a little bit uncomfortable, you gain valuable experiences, and even if you end up not liking an activity, you can use that experience to move forward. For instance, even if you don't like a field sport, challenge yourself to learn a new aspect of it next time, such as switching between defense/offense or being the goal-keeper. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).



interact with a lot of people. Try sitting next to them during lunch and engaging them in conversation. Or, if you see someone sitting by themselves during the dance, encourage them to join you in a line dance, helping them learn the steps if needed. Team players are valuable members of a group and can help set the pace for how it functions.

### "Solo" Campers

Although camp is not a solo adventure, each dorm tends to have one or two campers who more or less keep to themselves, sometimes standing on the outskirts of the group circle, or sitting quietly by themselves while others are socializing. If this describes you, you're not alone! The challenge is if you keep to yourself during camp, you may miss out on the

## INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS

No matter where you fall in the social dynamic at camp, I encourage you to invest in friendships. There are several types of friends you'll want to make at camp—so take this opportunity to get to know them!

## RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

It goes without saying that you should put your relationship with God first (Mark 12:30)! Camp is busy, and it's hard to find spare time between camp and social activities, but make time to talk to God and meditate on His Word. Maybe you can't pray a long prayer each day as you might at home, but you can still find opportunities to talk to God throughout your day. Similarly, look for moments when you

can review a scripture you covered in Compass Check. God loves to hear from and talk to His children, so keep the lines of communication open!

## FRIENDSHIPS WITHIN YOUR DORM

Forming friendships with those in your dorm isn't too difficult, since you're around them nearly 24/7. But, I want to encourage you to look beyond your initial impression and give friendship a chance, even with those you don't immediately connect with. Remember, we have a God who sees our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7), and He knows what each of us is dealing with long before we show up at camp.

Nearly every year I went to camp, there were a handful of girls in my dorm who didn't seem particularly interested in being my friend. However, as the years went by, I often learned that the reason was nothing personal. One girl I met at preteen camp (who is now among my close friends) admitted that she was shy about meeting new people that year because she was self-conscious about her appearance. Another time, someone got me and another camper confused. At the time, I thought she was annoyed to be mistaken for me, but years later, I got to know her at a young adult event and realized that she is actually a very sweet and friendly person. In fact, she didn't mind that people still got the two of us mixed up from time to time! Don't let your fears and potential misunderstandings prevent you from connecting with others—be ready to give friendship a chance!





*Don't let your fears and potential misunderstandings prevent you from connecting with others—be ready to give friendship a chance!*

## FRIENDSHIPS WITH COUNSELORS

It's easy to overlook building friendships with your counselors, but remember that many of them are not that much older than you. They can provide a valuable older brother/sister perspective that enhances what you learn from your other mentors, such as your parents and teachers. They've gone through similar experiences to the ones you face, and those experiences are still fresh in their minds.

The first year I went to teen camp, I remember getting to know a counselor who shared several of my interests. Though we didn't see much of one another after camp, the connection we built turned out to be the foundation for excellent teamwork when, several years down the road, we served together as counselors at Camp Cotubic!

## FRIENDSHIPS WITH THE OPPOSITE GENDER

You've probably heard plenty of people mention how they met their spouse at camp. That's great! But consider that a week isn't a very long time to get to know

someone. I'm not saying that the cute guy or girl you meet at camp isn't someone you might wind up dating, just that now is not the best time to make a long-term decision.

When you come to camp, view campers of the opposite gender as friends. A healthy relationship is also a friendship, so start there, and let God lead you toward the right person when the time is right. For now, in the week that is camp, focus on sharing an enjoyable time with this person in a group, making multiple friends, and connecting with many brothers and sisters in Christ. "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10, English Standard Version).



activities, and provided older siblings with insight into the group they would be serving when they returned later as staff.

Some camps also allow teens to switch tables for meals. If yours does, take this opportunity to meet people who are not in your dorm! If it seems overwhelming to leave the familiarity of your established friendships, try taking a friend with you and sharing the challenge!

## CONNECTIONS ACROSS CAMP


Camp dorms work well for organizing activities with a manageable-sized group, but when it comes to making friends, don't limit yourself to your dorm. Several years ago, one teen camp implemented a brother/sister-type system where older campers were paired with younger campers. This encouraged them to look out for one another because, beyond simply gaining a mentor, younger "siblings" brought a new perspective on familiar

## IN SUMMARY

As camp comes to a close and you find you are no longer a new camper, prepare to be the camper who welcomes others next year, especially if you're going to more than one camp, or to Winter Camp later in the year. Either way, always remember your experiences, so that you will be better equipped to help others. It's a big part of what camp is all about! See you at camp! **CC**



*Heidi Braun is the Associate Editor of Internal Publications for United Church of God. Heidi is a self-published author and enjoys reading, writing, performing music, traveling and spending time outdoors.*



# ARE YOU READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER?

*by Denise McClean*

*Editor's note: You might notice some of the phrasing and style of this article are a little different than what many of you are used to reading. That's because it's written by Denise McClean—a member from the British Isles! As you read the article and note the differences between British and American vernacular, it's a great reminder that there are teens like you reading Compass Check all over the globe.*

**F**rom the rejection of pagan symbols such as the Easter bunny to friends wondering why we refuse to eat certain foods, we are likely to be faced with awkward questions as to why we do not follow particular traditions commonly accepted by mainstream Christianity. How prepared are you to be quizzed about the biblical festivals you *do* keep, or why you observe the Saturday Sabbath? Can you offer an answer in a constructive way that offers wisdom and shows respect?

While we can sometimes distance ourselves from situations where we might be unexpectedly cornered about our beliefs, that tactic doesn't always work, nor is it necessarily the best strategy. In December just gone, that ploy failed quite spectacularly for me when out of the blue, my 10-year-old pupil blurted out excitedly as the lesson came to an end, "I'm really looking forward to Christmas. Are you?"

I had to answer. I wasn't ready.

## **ANSWERS CAN LEAD TO MORE QUESTIONS**

It seemed the answer I gave her—that I don't celebrate Christmas and the reasons why—wasn't enough since it elicited even more questions on her part, one after the other. "So are you Jewish? You don't believe in Jesus then? But the story of Jesus' birth is in the Bible so why aren't you celebrating it?"

The full-time nanny who was preparing dinner and

who'd been listening to the whole exchange then asked what else I followed in the Bible after I'd explained I was a Bible-believing Christian. We got onto the subject of clean and unclean meats, although I thought, probably not quite the right time to start quoting Leviticus verbatim about hooves, cud chewing and fins, so I just stuck to the food law basics.

I describe this scenario to highlight how easy it is to be caught off guard. Anyone of any age can question us at any time about our fundamental beliefs and why we don't follow the same practices as those of the world. Why don't you put up a tree with tinsel and sing "Jingle Bells?" Why don't you believe in Santa Claus? Why don't you buy Easter eggs? How about the food laws by which you abide or why you wait until marriage to move in with someone of the opposite sex? Why, why, why?

## PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME

If your classmates or friends happen to ask you these questions, or similar, are you ready to give an answer as to what you believe, how you live your life and why, explaining the reason for the hope that lies within you? Paul instructs us that we must be able to do so! "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

To help you do so, you may like to consider in advance how you might sharpen your existing knowledge to deal more competently with certain scenarios that could arise, rather than find yourself totally unprepared. Here are a few suggestions:

- Remember that all of our answers should be given in love, with respect (Ephesians 4:15). This can be difficult if we feel we are being scrutinized, but if we look prayerfully to the Almighty for courage and the right words at the right time, we can be both kind and bold, saying what needs to be said without fear (Ephesians 6:19).
- Become familiar with the essence of our Fundamental Beliefs to enhance

confidence during conversations. These can be found in succinct form at [UCG.org](http://UCG.org). Moreover, bear in mind that Matthew 10:32-33 warns we should neither fear nor be ashamed of being respectfully open and honest in our expression to others as to why we submit to God in this life using His Ten Commandments as our guide.

- Consider practicing role play during Q&A scenarios with Church friends or family at home or even after services with experienced Church members. This could manifest itself in fun ways using word cards placed face down with each Holy Day printed on the back to pick at random with a view to explaining what it's all about and the reason you observe it.
- Prepare mini presentations with other teens to present to brethren to encourage public speaking and help you remember what the specific Holy Day entails. Ask your pastor about this idea, and perhaps use the *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* study aid as your guide.
- When asked why you're unable to play a baseball or football game on

Sabbath, be ready to relay a clear explanation to your school friends citing the Fourth Commandment and seventh-day Sabbath you observe. Don't be tempted to make up excuses. It is better to be upfront and honest the first time so you're hopefully not faced with the same question over and over again. Keep an electronic copy of the Bible on your phone that's easily accessible for reference. The *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* study aid is also a great resource that can be downloaded.

- Certain foods are an abomination to our Lord in terms of human consumption. Are you aware of what they all are? Get together in groups to devise a PowerPoint quiz to test just how much you know about the subject ready for when somebody outside the Church probes you if invited to or attending a non-Church event. The likelihood is that you will be asked to explain further if there are many culinary delights on the menu that you cannot eat at all. The study aid *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats* will be helpful here.
- Be aware that none of us know



whom God might be calling at any given time into His Kingdom. You could find yourself playing a key role in becoming a light along someone's path, someone who is perhaps seeking to pursue a more God-centered life. Think about the ways in which you could harness that budding interest. Become a trusted friend and demonstrate by your actions and speech that you are practicing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

- Try to make time to learn one or two pertinent Bible verses per week so as to help cement answers to tricky questions into your mind to aid easier recall. You will soon build up an impressive repertoire of biblical references ready to use at a moment's notice.

## DON'T BE AFRAID

It's true nobody likes to stick out like a sore thumb, and being bold in expressing what we believe to the world can often feel isolating, even daunting, but we should always remember that we are serving God not man. What does this mean?

Often, fear of appearing different amidst our friendship groups, especially in these days of so-called "cancel culture," can encourage a watered-down Christianity at odds with God's desire for complete submission to Him and His way of life, not those of our classmates. In fact, the Bible carries a stark warning for those who choose to please their friends and family over our Creator (Matthew 10:37-39).

Furthermore, we are not to shy away from the fact that we are Bible-believing Christians who reject mainstream, erroneous Christian mores (customs). Failing to acknowledge to a wider world why we choose to live our lives His way and actively do so in this present age will neither go unnoticed nor unpunished (Matthew 7: 21-23).

Canceled or not, our priorities and devotions must not be channeled towards any mortal—irrespective of who the individual may be—lest we be rejected by Christ at His return.

## BETTER PREPARED FOR THE NEXT TIME

Back to my pupil. How does the story end? Well, I usually keep a copy of the *Holy Days or Holidays* booklet for times such as these, especially when the Feast of Tabernacles is

**ANYONE OF ANY AGE CAN  
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AS TO WHAT YOU BELIEVE?**



upon us. Just recently, when I said I'd be away, I was asked where I was going on holiday. I know it's not a holiday, and I never pretend it is. I always say I'm going away with my Church and if pressed further will give a brief explanation of the significance of the festival describing the paradisiacal surroundings, irrespective of where one is observing it in the world and why this is so, i.e., the depiction of the glorious future that lies ahead for mankind.

After having pondered events, given the child's age, the following week I ended up handing the booklet to her nanny, inviting her to explain to the parents what had transpired the week prior since she'd been party to the whole affair. I said the booklet would hopefully help answer the questions the little girl had been asking me. Nobody's said anything since, and I won't be following up unless questioned further.

The next time I was there, something interesting happened as I was leaving. "Merry..." exclaimed my pupil as she quickly put her hand over her mouth to stop herself from completing her sentence. The nanny simply stated knowingly: "Have a good rest," and off I went.

So, the next time someone asks you about your festival observances, will you be caught off guard, or will you be ready with an answer? **CC**



*Denise McClean works in the UCG British Isles office in England and has been a member of the Bricket Wood congregation in Hertfordshire for 13 years. She is an aficionado of modern languages and loves to travel, learning about nationals from foreign lands.*



## NEXT STEPS

Scan the code to find the resources Denise mentions above at [ucg.org/ccspring25](http://ucg.org/ccspring25).

# Notes On The Way



## **CHRISTINE HENDRICKSON, CNP, MSN**

*Family practice nurse practitioner currently working per diem for Optum walk-in clinic in Everett Washington.*

### **How were you called into the Way?**

Well, I came into the Church in 1975 [as a child] with my parents and my grandparents. And you know at first, it's their journey, and then it becomes your journey. As a kid, I didn't really get it. I loved it. I loved my friends, I loved the Feast, but I didn't really get it until I started digging in and making it my own. And I probably started making it my own a little bit in '89, when I started with the correspondence course, and then all the booklets, and then reached out after I was married, and really kind of coming back. So, very happy to be here. It's a blessing.

### **What is your line of work? Can you explain a little bit more about what being a nurse practitioner means?**

So, it's an advanced practice. As a nurse practitioner, I actually see patients. I'm what they call a provider. A provider sees patients. I write prescriptions, I write medications. I can order your lab tests and your CAT scans and send you off and refer you.

I, as a nurse practitioner in California, could have opened my own practice and seen patients, and had my own family practice. All I legally had to do was be able to have a physician on call, as a backup. But I'm pretty capable of almost everything a doc does.

It's a great job. I'm very, very thankful

that I'm able to do what I am able to do.

### **What drew you to being a nurse practitioner?**

It started with my mom, who was a nurse. When I was a teenager, she would be in there on Sundays, doing paperwork [as a manager], and I would go in with her because they had a patient who was a child, a baby. And there weren't enough nurses, so I would go in on Sundays and after school to help them with this baby, and feed and play, because the baby had no family.

So, it melted in my heart and I kind of thought, 'You know what? I could be a nurse. I could do this.' And so, I went from there.

### **What sort of education did you get to prepare for your career? What has been your career path?**

I was very fortunate in my high school program, that they had the Southern California Occupational Center, and I went to a tech school during my high school years. And I got my nursing assistant and my front office (administrative work) / back office (medical assistant) during high school.

I was planning on continuing school and being a nurse. Well, I had a side-track in high school. I made some poor choices, and I ended up getting married a couple weeks after graduating high

school. I was still working, but I didn't get back to school until '89, and then I started with my nursing when I had three kids.

I went back to school and I actually have two associates. I have an associate in science, because you have to take the anatomy and the physio, all of the chemistries, etc. And then you have a 2-year nursing program. So, it wasn't until '95 when I finally graduated with my associate degree in nursing.

I did 2 years of critical care classes just to get myself better prepared for the ER and then I ended up as an ER charge nurse. And I went through the paramedic program, so I would be the one that the paramedics would call.

I got my master's [two years], and then it was another year and a half of a certificate nurse practitioner program, where you kind of did a residency like the docs do. I graduated in 2005.

I was never expecting to go that far. But, it was fabulous. Yeah, it's been a great career. It's been almost 19 years.

### **Would you recommend being a nurse first before going for the nurse practitioner?**

Most definitely because it gives you that sixth sense, right? God gives me that sense that there's something wrong. That this isn't right. And then to do that one more test, or that one more thing.

*Interviews showcasing a diverse range of experiences and career stories, with helpful notes on the way of life as a Christian.*



There's not a day I don't get up and get on my knees before I would go out the door, and say, "God, please, give me the sense to know the difference," and I think if you're young, and don't have any experience, it's hard to have that sense that something is really wrong and to do the right thing.

**What are the elements of your job that you enjoy the most?**

The people. I really love the one-on-one, and with the family. It's funny, because even my docs and my nurses now and my other providers, they'll say I'm a cheerleader, and they need to be more of a cheerleader, because sometimes it's just going in and listening and telling somebody "you can do this," "you're doing a great job."

**What are some of the elements that you find more challenging about your job?**

Probably people. We've come into a society that's different. It's changed since I started. You know it's very hard to deal with the gender issues, and the people who walk in the door and they're angry, and trying to get past all that anger to what's really going on. I think there's just a lot of anger out there now.

Sometimes it gets complicated when you can't get the treatments right away that you want to get done.

At the clinic that I work at up here in Washington now, we used to have

ultrasound, MRI, and CT seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Now we're lucky if I have it Monday through Friday until five o'clock, and some days I don't even have x-ray at certain sites because they might not have an x-ray tech that day. It's just kind of hard because there are no techs.

**In the workplace, have you personally encountered any moral dilemmas? And if so, can you describe how you handled that situation?**

Well, I do have patients that are trying to change their genders. That's always challenging. Trying to go in and treat them as human, and treat them with kindness and loving them, not disrespecting them. But also I don't use any pronouns because the pronouns are very confusing.

And I've explained that to them. If you want to be called a "they" and you're "Jerry," I can't use a "they," I need to just use your name, because I need to know how many people are sick.

So, there's certain things that I try to explain to my patients. It's not that I'm trying to be disrespectful to you, but in my world I need to know what your background is, or what your genealogy is, and your genes, so that my medication will work properly, so I can treat you properly. So we don't miss something important. That's very tricky in this new world.

[Another issue is that] some people are just angry. It doesn't matter how I handle it. They want to be mad. They want to be angry. I'm [like], "Okay, sorry, but you know I'm trying to do the best I can for you."

So those are the challenges. The challenges are this new day and age of trying to do the right thing for each person, without missing something, and without making them feel like you're not treating them the way they want to be treated.

There's always challenges in every job, right? People are people, right? That's God teaching us how to deal lovingly and kindly with people.

**Was there ever a time where you stopped and thought, "Oh, I wish I was doing something else, or maybe I should make a change and do something in a different field"?**

No, I really believe that God kind of puts us all where [we need to be]. And I really like what I do. I think this is where I'm supposed to be.

**Is there any advice that you would give someone in high school, or even junior high, about pursuing a career that is personally fulfilling?**

I would tell them that I would really encourage you to go job shadow if you could find somebody that's doing the job that you think you want to do.

And then, I think my second advice would be, like me, no matter what it takes, no matter how many years it takes, just keep going, even if you're doing one class a semester to keep your foot in that door. And keep going. Just keep going because it will pay off someday. You know it really will.

**Would there be any additional advice that you would give to someone who wants to do the same kind of work that you do?**

If there were somebody who lived close to me who wanted to job shadow, I would be more than welcoming. But I think job shadowing would really tell you whether or not this was something that you thought you could do.

I think what you really want to do is be a nurse first, and go through the different departments [to figure out what you like]. Because I knew that labor and delivery wasn't my thing. Medical-surgical wasn't my thing.

So, job training, and maybe job shadowing and no matter what, keep going. God's got it. God definitely got me through all those years.

*Thanks so much for your time Christine!*

# COMPASS CHECK

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