

summer
2024

the **power** of camp.
STUDY

Camper Insights Report

prepared by



SACRED
PLAYGROUNDS

sacredplaygrounds.com





Introduction

This report contains data from a three-part survey of summer campers. They were surveyed on the first day of camp and the last day of camp. A third survey was sent via e-mail or text two months after their camp experience. This series of surveys was designed to gather camper impressions of their camp experience and also measure growth over time. The surveys measured various camper outcomes, including enjoyment, happiness, and self-confidence, though the strongest emphasis was on growth in faith commitment. All campers who participated had parental permission.

Measurements are based on the findings of the Effective Camp Research Project, which originally studied a group of six Lutheran camps in Wisconsin during the summers of 2015 and 2016. The findings of this initial study can be found at effectivecamp.com and were peer-reviewed. This study demonstrated that the Christian summer camp model has 5 fundamental characteristics: faith-centered, relational, participatory, safe space, and unplugged from home. These characteristics interact dynamically to give rise to the Christian summer camp experience. When all 5 characteristics are present, the experience has positive and recognizable impacts that extend beyond the week of camp, impacting family devotional practices, church participation, personal well-being, and faith commitment.

The study is ongoing. The surveys are designed to assess the 5 fundamental characteristics at individual camps, measure camper growth, and identify areas for improvement. As of 2024, the study includes data from over 24,000 campers at 95 camps in multiple Christian traditions. This report contains data from the 13 participating camps that were members of the Christian Camp and Conference Association (CCCA). Under the auspices of CCCA, the study is known as the Power of Camp Study.

The response goal was 200-250 campers participating in the first day and last day surveys. 10 of the 13 camps met this goal, with the other 3 receiving between 150-200 responses. Two of the participating camps chose an optional increase in camper data, providing more than 400 matched camper surveys to get more robust individualized data. Among the 13 camps, there were 3,621 matched responses. Of camper respondents, fewer than half (47%) provided a cell number or email address for a follow-up survey, which yielded 469 responses (22% response rate). Older campers were much more likely to provide contact information and respond to the follow-up survey, biasing the follow-up.

How to Read This Report

The table/figure numbers in this report reflect their page number so that they can be easily referenced.

The report contains standardized data tables and charts. Consider what stands out to you, surprises you, or intrigues you. Consider what numbers you can use to better tell the camp story to constituents, identify and target areas for improvement, and maximize your people (staff, board, volunteers, etc.).

Page 3: Summary reflections

Page 4: Demographic summary and Camper Background

Page 6: Pre-camp Impressions: First day survey

Page 10: The Camp Experience: Last day survey

Page 17: Post-camp Impressions: Follow-up survey

Page 22: Assessing the 5 Fundamentals of Christian Camp

Page 29: Going Deeper (model deficiencies and family faith)

Page 33: Camper Word Cloud



General Reflections

- With 13 camps and more than 3,600 matched surveys, this was the largest year of participation in the Power of Camp Study. The large number of campers provides more reliable results and conclusions than previous years. The 13 camps were part of a convenience sample, so the data should not be considered representative of CCCA camping, in general. However, they reliably offer results based on camper background and camp experience.
- Participating camps varied widely in their location and clientele. Six were Evangelical Covenant Camps participating as part of a denominational cohort, so their programs and priorities strongly influenced the dataset. Others had large proportions of campers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Three served majority minority camper populations, while 5 others were 85% or more white. Much of the variability in this report is attributable to variability in the participating camps, each of which received their own data in an individualized report.

Strengths and Celebrations

- A large majority of participating campers reported very positive camp experiences. 95% agreed that they enjoyed their cabin counselor, 94% that they had a lot of fun, 92% that they learned more about God, 90% that they tried something new, and 88% often or always felt supported and happy at camp.
- Campers showed statistically significant and lasting growth in multiple camp outcomes, including belief in basic Christian tenets, understanding that faith matters in their lives, self-confidence, and personal faith practices (prayer and Bible study). Three quarters (73%) of campers showed measurable growth from the first day to the last day in at least one of the three growth indices (page 16), and respondents showed statistically significant growth in 16 of the 18 items measured on the first day and the last day of camp (Figure 15). This growth generally lasted through the follow-up survey, and campers looking back also reported growth (Figure 18). The items with the most significant growth during camp were “I am good at making friends,” “I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things,” and “I have a personal relationship with Jesus.”
- Assessments of the 5 fundamental characteristics of Christian camp were largely robust among participating campers (Figures 23-27), with the most consistently positive experiences in the participatory, relational, and unplugged from home characteristics.
- Campers generally reported more positive experiences at camp when it came to being picked on or having to hide their true selves compared with home and school (Figure 12). The most significant difference between home and camp was the perceptions of absence from technology, with very few campers reporting that it was hard to be without their technology or without their phone at camp.

Potential Growing Areas

- High percentages of campers had marginal or deficient experiences in the 5 fundamentals (according to our measurements), and this had clear consequences for camper outcomes (Figure 29). This highlights the importance of attending to the fundamentals of the camp model. There was clear variation based on the support campers had at home and school. Those with unsure support were more likely to have deficient experiences, especially when they were with fellow campers who also came from challenging home lives. There is a need to explore ways to better serve campers from varying backgrounds, especially those with challenging home lives.
- Campers showed no overall growth in measurements of communal faith practices, including family prayer and conversations with family about God/faith. This is a clear area of improvement and explored on pages 31-32.



Demographic Summary

Figure 4A: Respondent Summary

First day responses:	4,204
Last day responses:	3,933
Matched (first and last)	3,621
Follow-up responses	469

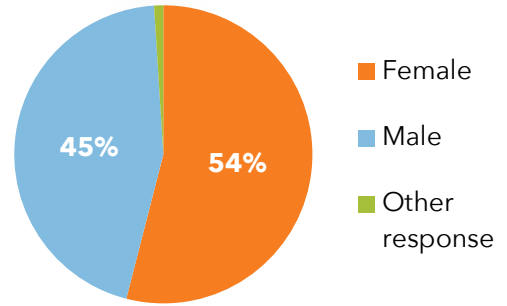
4B: # Campers from each session

	#	% of total
June 2	248	6%
June 9	272	6%
June 16	354	8%
June 23	440	10%
June 30	209	5%
July 7	621	14%
July 14	643	14%
July 21	780	17%
July 28	804	18%
August 4	97	2%

4C: Denomination

Just Christian	37%
Evangelical Covenant	17%
Non-denominational	13%
Catholic	9%
Baptist	3%
Lutheran	3%
Other Christian denomination	9%
Not Christian	8%

4D: Gender



4E: Age

10 and under	8%
11	13%
12	24%
13	20%
14	15%
15	10%
16	7%
17+	3%

MEDIAN CAMPER AGE: 13

4F: Race

White/Caucasian	73%
Mixed race	9%
Black/African American	7%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	7%
Asian	3%
Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Alaska Native	1%



Camper Background

FIRST DAY SURVEY

Returning / First-time Campers

FIGURE 5A

First time at this camp	23%
Second time at this camp	15%
2-3 previous experiences	23%
4-6 previous experiences	22%
7+ experiences	17%

HAD PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED



A DIFFERENT CAMP

FIRST CAMP EXPERIENCE

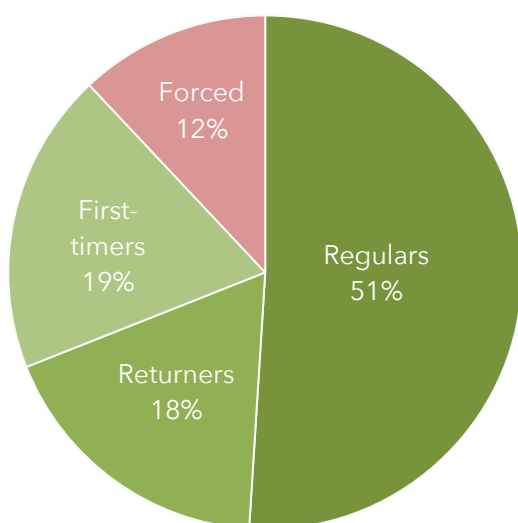


AT ANY CAMP



Camper Type

FIGURE 5B



4 Camper Types

Regulars: Been to camp multiple times and plan to return; camp is part of their yearly rhythm

Returners: Been to camp once or twice before, may not be sure about returning

First-timers: First time at camp, and not forced to come

Forced: Felt forced or compelled to come, by parents or with a church or social work program

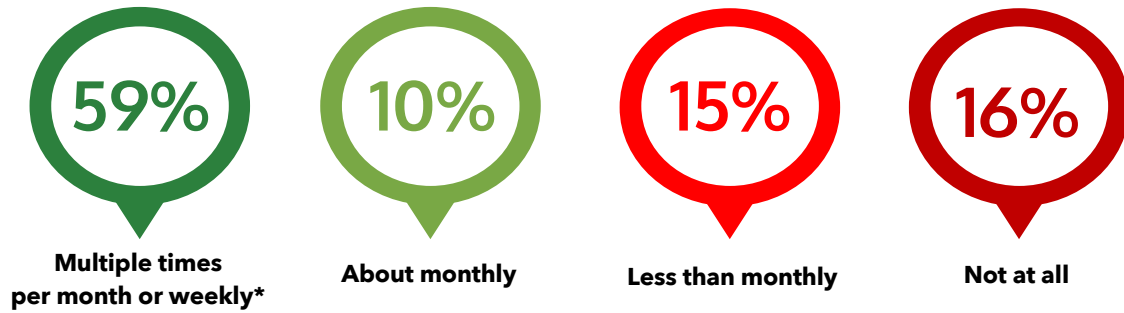


Faith Engagement Before Camp



Church attendance (in person or online) in 2024

FIGURE 6A (n=3,869)

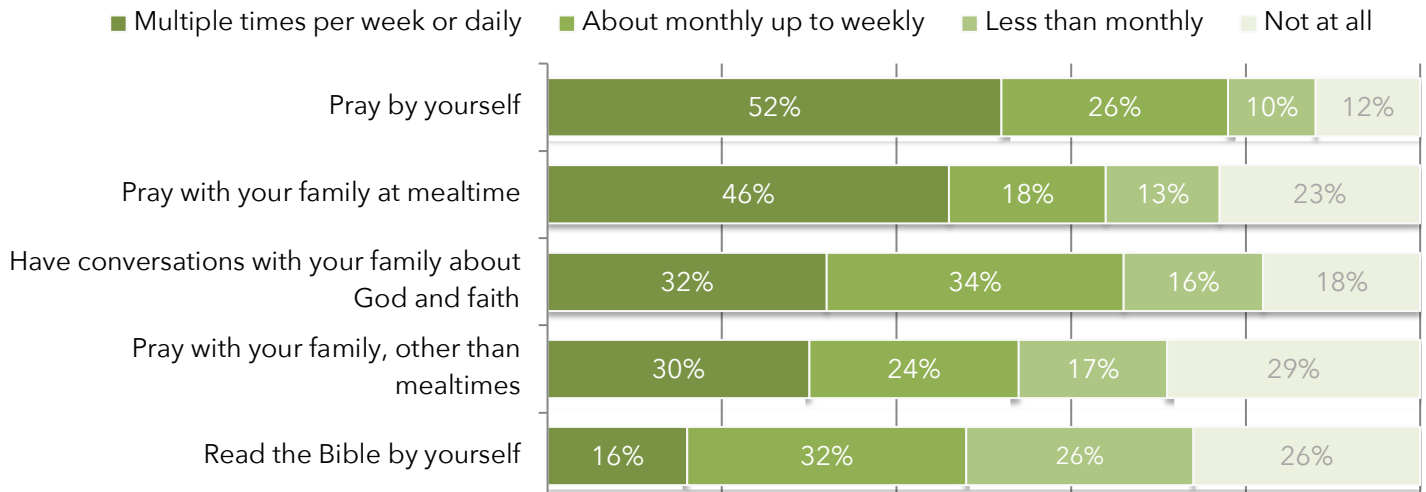


*Including 41% who indicated "weekly or more"



Frequency of Faith Practices this Year

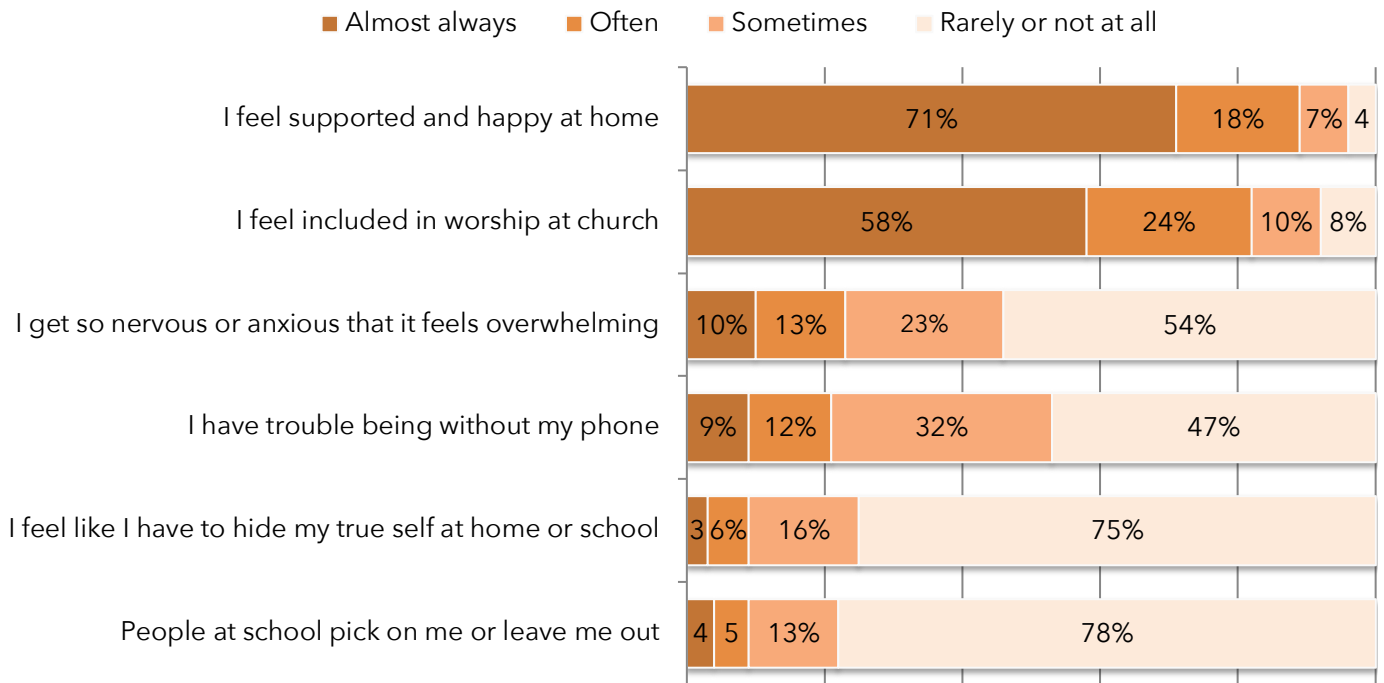
FIGURE 6B (n=3,932)





Camper Experiences at Home, Church, and School

FIGURE 7A



Frequency of Unplugging, by Camper Age

FIGURE 7B

Daily Tech Use

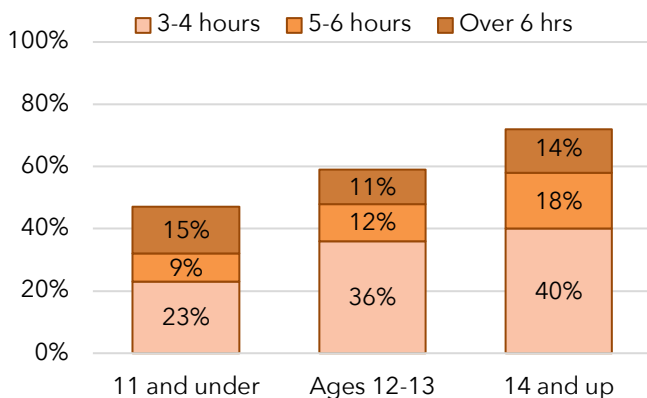
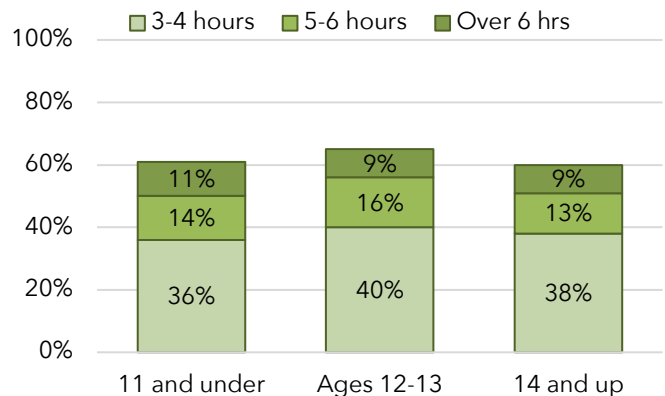


FIGURE 7C

Daily Time Outside





Partnerships and Faith Ecology

The findings of the Effective Camp Research Project (ECRP) make clear that camp does not function on its own, but rather as part of a larger ecology of faith formation. This ecology is different for each camper and includes their home life, online presence, school, extra-curricular groups, and church community. Strengthening these partnerships is of utmost importance for your camping ministry and the long-term impacts associated with the camp experience. The 3 figures on this page use multiple questions from the first day survey to summarize camper impressions.

Feelings of Support at Home and School

FIGURE 8A



Feeling secure and supported in the home and school environments is essential for positive youth development. This is also the dimension of the campers' lives on which camps have the *least* amount of direct impact. For various reasons, young people may feel unhappy or unsupported in these environments. *This does NOT indicate that they are unsafe or in immediate danger, since questions assessing these concerns were not included in the camper survey.* Those who were unsure about support generally have lower levels of self-confidence, are more likely to feel homesick at camp, less likely to get along with their cabin group and enjoy fellow campers, and much more likely to feel picked on or left out at camp. The "secure and supported" category varied among camps from a high of 75% to a low of 40%.

Church Engagement

FIGURE 8B



Camps and congregations are typically close partners in ministry. The camper survey examines this partnership from the campers' perspectives by measuring not only how frequently they attend worship services but how *engaged* they feel in the life of their home congregation. The ECRP has demonstrated that camp experiences help increase this engagement. Camp experiences are most effective for faith formation when they are combined with worship attendance and feelings of belonging in a home congregation. Campers who are "active and engaged" attend church at least monthly, do not agree that worship services are usually boring, feel included in worship services, and agree that regular worship attendance is important for their faith. Camps varied from a high of 67% to a low of 19%

Faith in the Home

FIGURE 8C



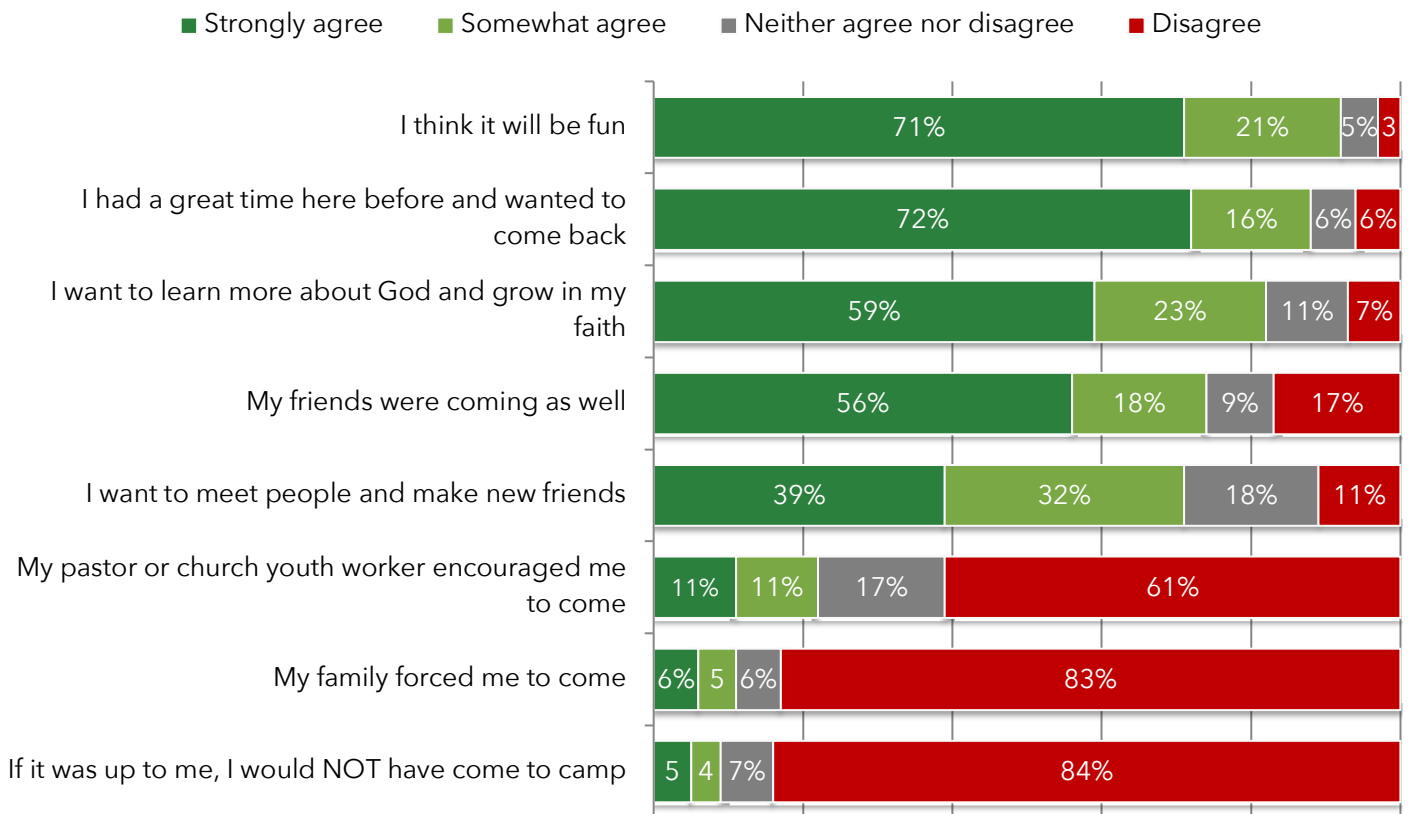
No other measurement better predicts camper faith measurements than faith in the home. This is the external characteristic on which camp can have the *greatest* effect. Some campers come to the immersive faith experience of camp with very little faith support in the home ("unsupported" above). They return to these home environments with the potential to influence them through family prayer, family devotions, and conversations about God and faith. The "strong and supported" category varied among camps from a high of 58% to a low of 17%.



Motivation for Attending Camp, Ranked

FIGURE 9

The below figure shows the results from the very first bank of questions on the first day camper survey, asking the campers, "I decided to attend this camp because:" The figure lists the responses in descending order, based on average agreement level (considering the 5-point agreement scale).





The Camp Experience

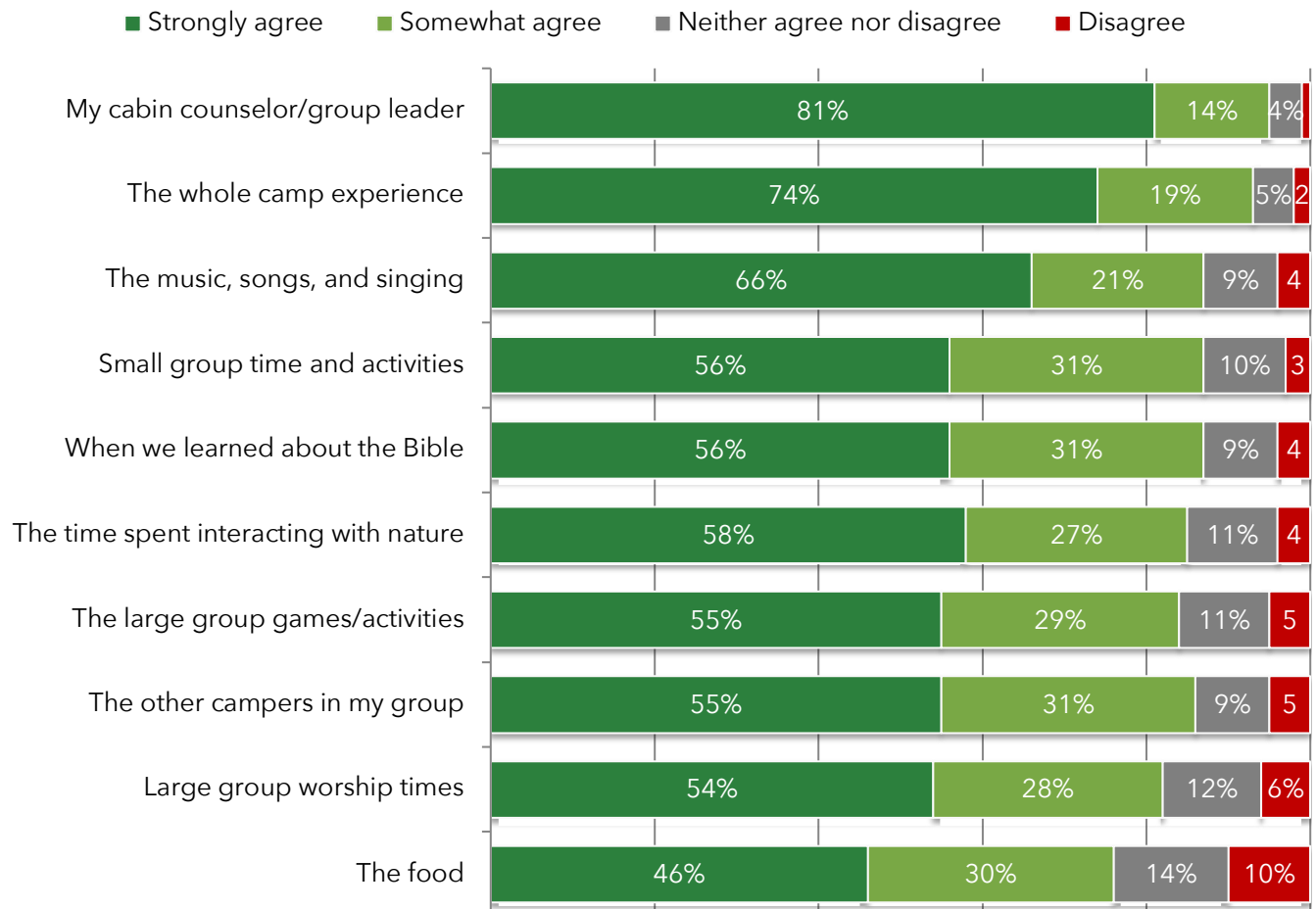
LAST DAY SURVEY



Campers “liked or enjoyed” the following aspects of camp

FIGURE 10

On the last day of camp, campers were asked to reflect on enjoyment of the various elements of camp. These are ranked in order of average agreement.

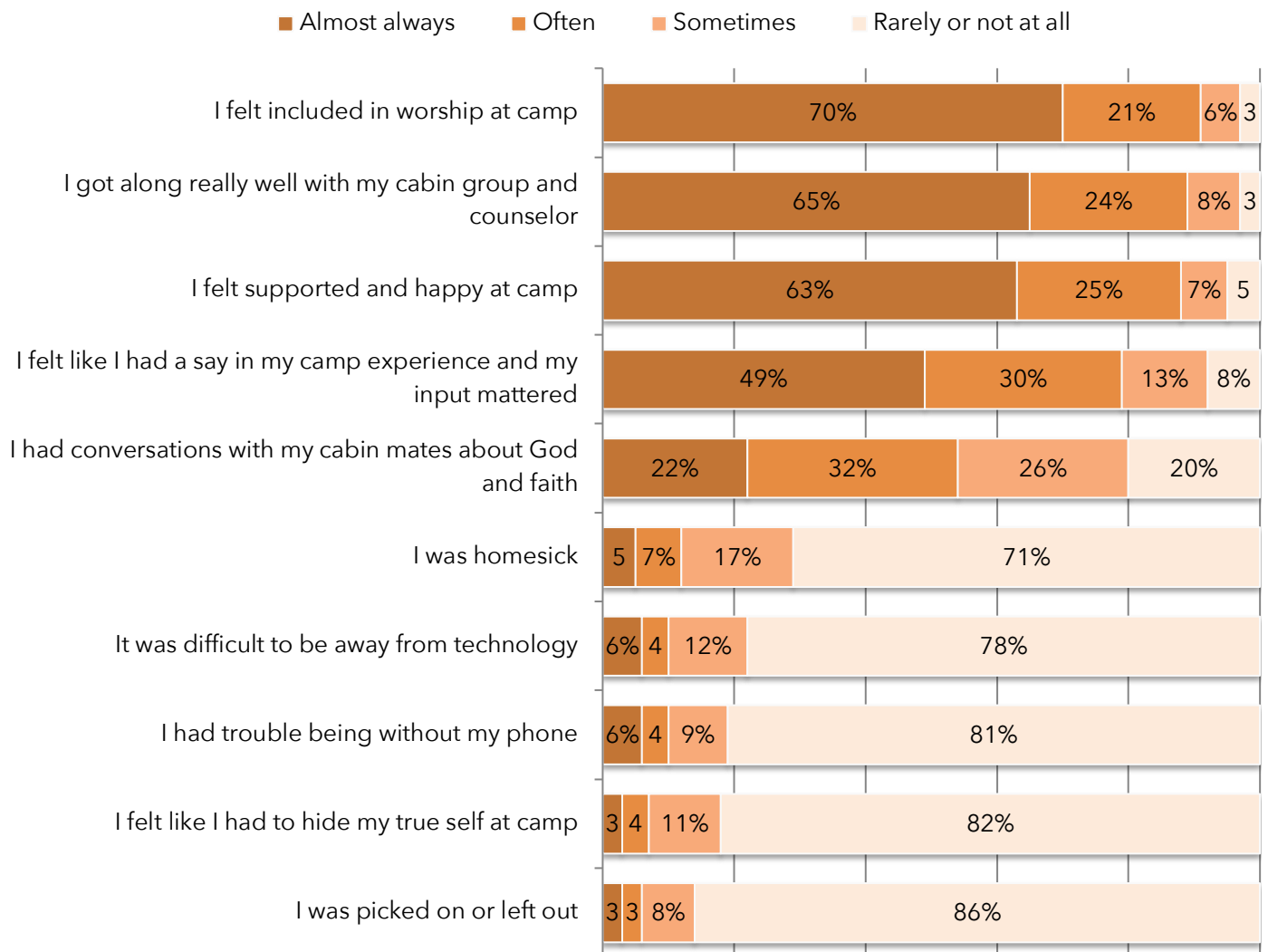




Camper Experiences at Camp

FIGURE 11

Instead of agreement level, this bank of questions asked about frequency. The prompt for campers was, "How often were the follow true?" This adds nuance to the camper experience by going beyond simple agreement with whether something happened (e.g. feeling picked on or left out) to determine whether things were a pattern (often or always), occasional (sometimes), or isolated experiences at camp (rarely or not at all). These responses were key to determining measurements of the five fundamental characteristics of camp. Take time to look at the individual items in this figure and consider what each says about the camper experience.

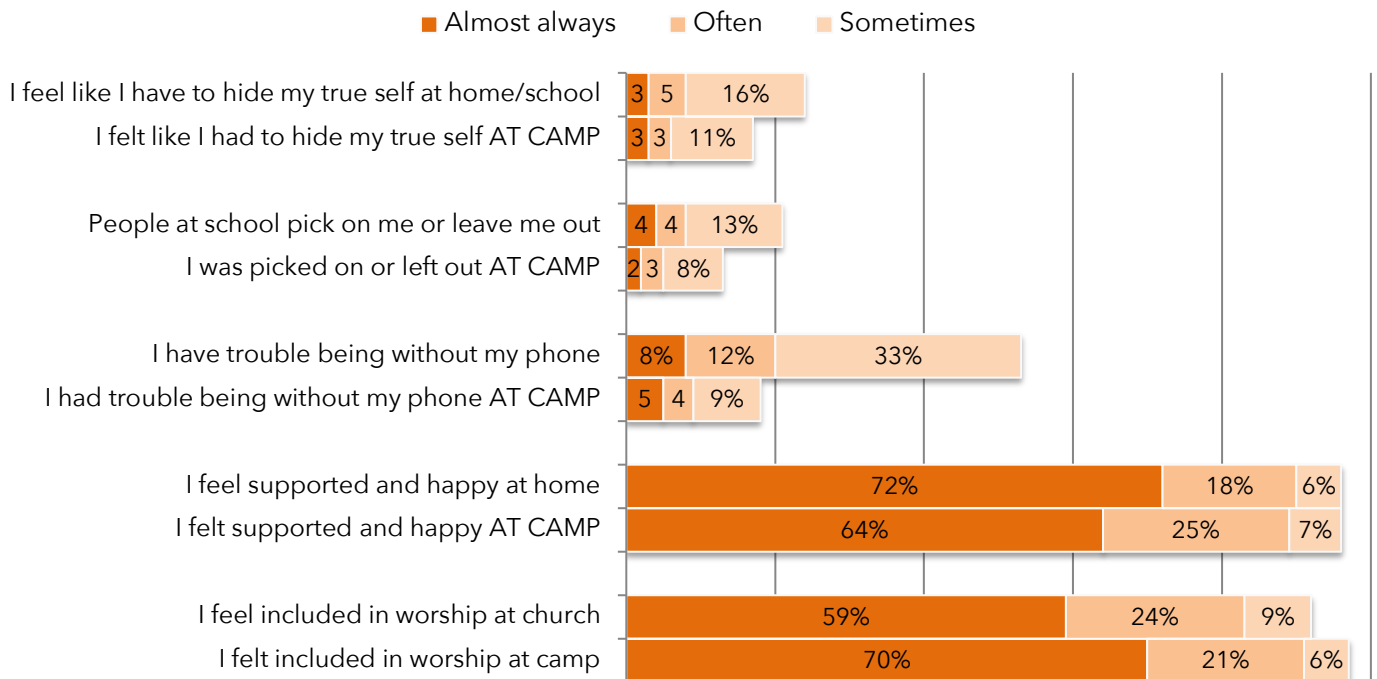




Camper Impressions of Home (First Day) Compared with Camp (Last Day)

FIGURE 12

This figure compares first day camper responses (first in each item pair) with last day responses (second in each item pair) on items measuring home experiences and camp experiences. The surveys were designed to be directly comparable, since the experiences campers bring with them from home, school, and church impact their camp experience. Those who are frequently picked on, left out, or feel like they have to hide their true self at home or school are much more likely than their peers to feel the same way at camp. This means that camps with high percentages of campers from unstable home lives or challenging schools/communities will likely have higher percentages of campers indicating that they felt picked on, left out, or unsupported at camp. The below figure offers a more complete picture of the camp experience by factoring in the experiences of home, church, and school. Hopefully, your campers have less frequent experiences of being picked on and having to hide their true selves in comparison with their home lives, along with more frequent (or equal) experiences of feeling supported, included, and having conversations about God/faith. The below figure only includes campers with matching surveys, so percentages may vary slightly from those reported above.

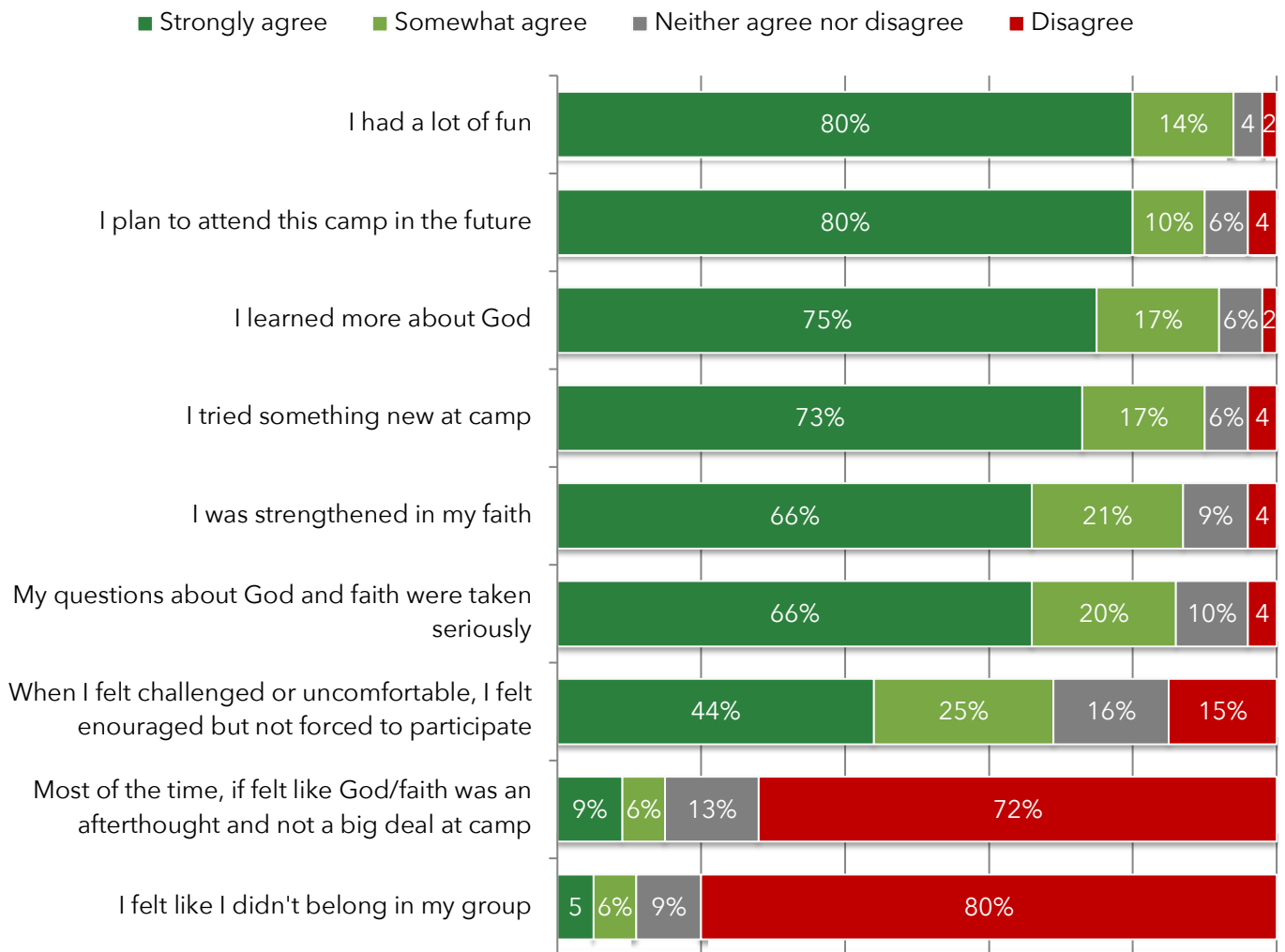




Last Day Impressions of Camp Experience

FIGURE 13

These questions used a simple agreement scale to assess overall impressions of the camp experience on the last day of camp. Along with the frequency section, these responses were key to determining measurements of the five fundamental characteristics of camp. Note that the percentages for “strongly agree” can be added to “somewhat agree” to get the total percentage of agreement, which can help summarize the findings when reporting to stakeholders. For example, you may report that 94% of campers agreed that they had a lot of fun at camp (strongly agree + somewhat agree).



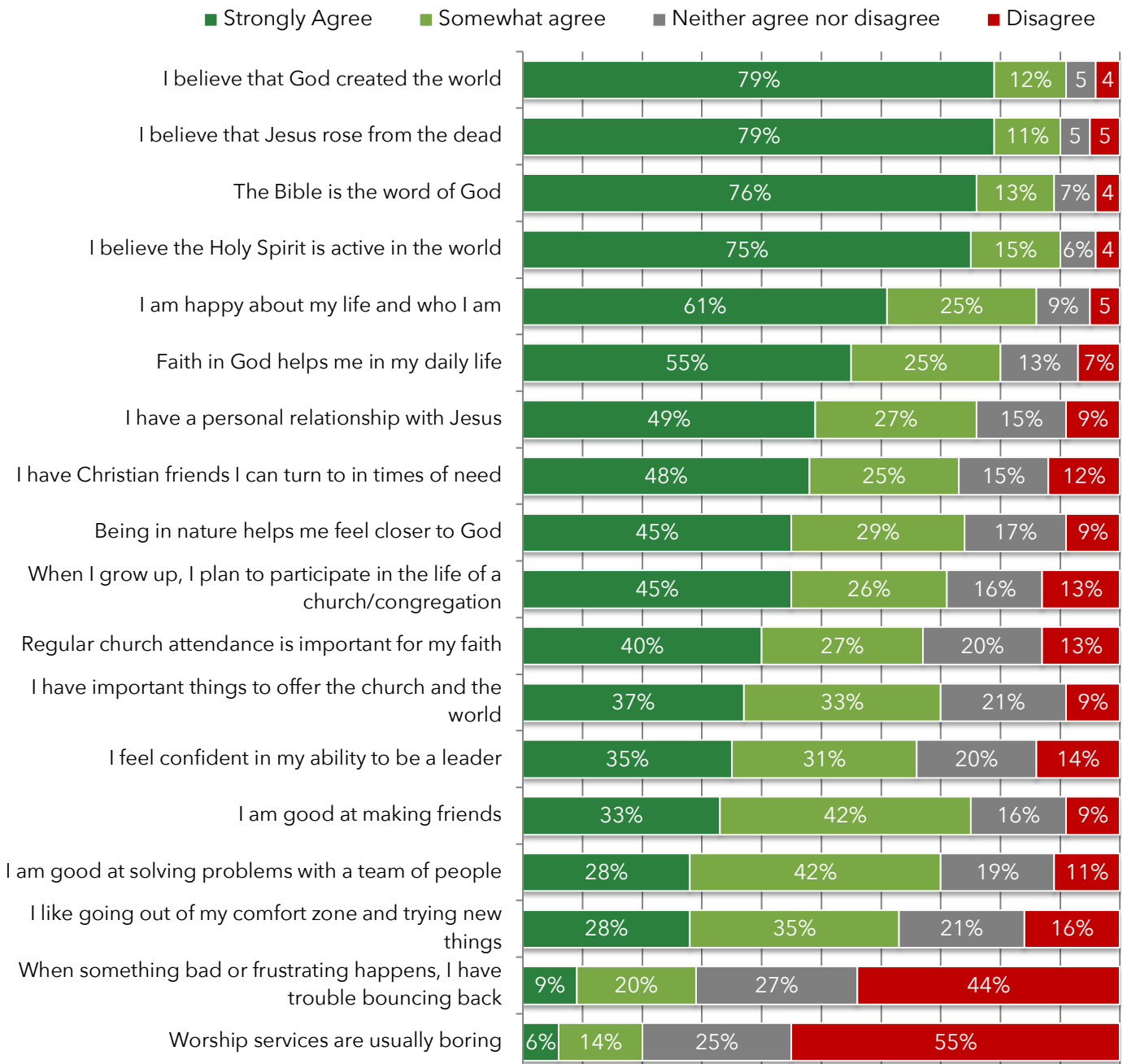


Measuring Camper Growth

Figure 14 shows responses from 18 items on the first-day camper questionnaire. These same items were included on the last day and follow-up questionnaires, allowing us to compare camper impressions over time. These comparisons are our major source for understanding camper growth. Figure 14 allows us to see the starting values (first day). We then compare these with last day responses in Figure 15.

First Day Responses to 18 Measurement Items

FIGURE 14



Measuring Growth During the Camp Experience

FIGURE 15

The following table lists the 18 items that were included in all three questionnaires. The second column indicates the number of campers that responded to the survey item on both the first and last day surveys. The decimal numbers represent the average level of agreement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The right-hand column indicates whether or not the observed change was statistically significant. Strong evidence for change ($p < .001$) is signified by **STR**, moderate ($p < .01$) with MOD, and weak ($p < .05$) with Weak. None signifies that the observed change was not statistically significant. Arrows indicate whether campers grew (↑) or declined (↓) in the measurement.

Question	#	First Day Agreement	Last Day Agreement	Significant Change?
I believe that God created the world.	3341	4.67	4.71	STR ↑
I am good at making friends.	3362	3.97	4.15	STR ↑
Worship services are usually boring.	3088	2.39	2.33	MOD ↓
I am good at solving problems with a team of people.	3267	3.86	3.92	STR ↑
I believe that the Holy Spirit is active in the world	3220	4.62	4.69	STR ↑
Regular worship attendance is important for my faith.	3012	3.93	3.96	Weak ↑
I have important things to offer the church and the world.	2883	3.99	4.09	STR ↑
Faith in God helps me in my daily life.	3158	4.28	4.38	STR ↑
I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things.	3339	3.70	3.91	STR ↑
I feel confident in my ability to be a leader.	3219	3.86	4.00	STR ↑
When something bad or frustrating happens, I have trouble bouncing back	3200	2.78	2.66	STR ↓
I believe that Jesus rose from the dead.	3183	4.66	4.70	STR ↑
Being in nature helps me feel closer to God.	3089	4.11	4.24	STR ↑
The Bible is the word of God.	3170	4.63	4.69	STR ↑
I have Christian friends I can turn to in times of need.	3128	4.08	4.08	None
When I grow up, I plan to participate in the life of a church/congregation.	2830	4.03	4.02	None
I am happy about my life and who I am.	3333	4.44	4.47	MOD ↑
I have a personal relationship with Jesus	3035	4.15	4.29	STR ↑

Power of Camp participants, as a group, showed evidence for significant positive growth in 16 of the 18 items listed in the above table, with 13 showing strong evidence for growth. The items with the most significant growth during camp were "I am good at making friends" (increase from 75% agreement to 81%), "I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things" (increase from 63% agreement to 71%), "I have a personal relationship with Jesus" (increase from 76% agreement to 81%), "I feel confident in my ability to be a leader" (increase from 67% agreement to 72%), and "Being in nature helps me feel closer to God" (increase from 74% agreement to 78%).



Going Deeper into Camper Growth

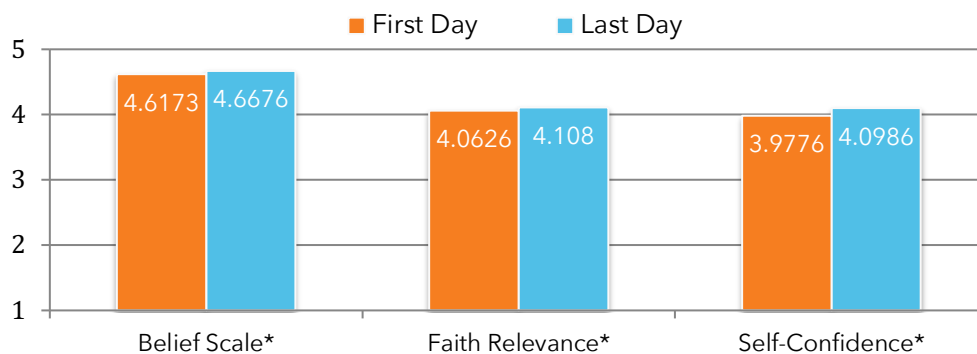
Figure 15 shows change in individual survey items. Considering multiple items together can offer a more complete picture of camper growth. The Sacred Playgrounds team used exploratory factor analysis to extract 3 indices based on multiple survey items. These indices offer more complete pictures of camper belief, self-confidence, and their perception of faith relevance. Each index included 4 survey items, which were weighted equally and combined into a single 5-point scale using the average of all 4 for each camper.

1. **Belief Scale** (or *vertical faith*): "I believe that Jesus rose from the dead," "I believe the Holy Spirit is active in the world," "God created the world," and "The Bible is the word of God."
2. **Faith Relevance Scale** (or *horizontal faith*): "Faith in God helps me in my daily life," "I have important things to offer the church and the world," "When I grow up, I plan to participate in the life of a church/congregation," and "I have Christian friends I could turn to in times of need."
3. **Self-confidence Scale**: "I know that I can make friends," "I am good at solving problems with a team of people," "I am happy about my life and who I am," and "I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things."

The typical growth pattern was significant positive growth in all three of these indices from the first day to the last day of camp. The aggregate of all 13 CCCA camps from the first day to the last day is shown below.

Assessing Growth in the 3 Indices

FIGURE 16 ($n = 3481$)



*Asterisk indicates significant growth from first day to last day of camp in paired samples t-test, all at the level $p < .001$

Belief scale: Campers showed *significant positive change* in this measurement. More than half of incoming campers (53%) had the highest possible score (average of 5) in this measurement on the first day of camp, leaving no room for growth. Among those without the highest score, 60% showed evidence for growth in this index, with the remainder showing no change or a decline.

Faith relevance scale: Campers showed *significant positive change*. 13% of respondents had the max score on the first day of camp. 48% of other campers showed evidence for growth in this index.

Self-confidence scale: Campers showed *significant positive change*. Only 8% of incoming campers had the max score, leaving ample room for growth. Among campers without the max incoming score, 53% showed evidence for growth in this index.

Considering all 3 scales together, 73% of responding campers showed evidence for growth in at least one of the indices.



Post Camp Impressions

FOLLOW UP SURVEY

Sacred Playgrounds distributed a follow-up survey to campers electronically 8 weeks after they returned home from camp, either by email or text message (or both, in the cases where both were provided). Reminders went out in each of the following 3 weeks. This resulted in a response window of 2-3 months after the camp experience. Only campers who provided an email address or cell phone number on the written surveys had the opportunity to receive the follow-up. This included less than half (47%) of CCCA campers. This yielded 469 follow-up surveys (22% response rate), including 440 campers with all 3 surveys matched (about 10% of all participating campers).

FIGURE 17

Follow-up Respondents Compared with On-Camp Respondents

	Follow-up Respondents	On-Camp Respondents
% Female	70%*	54%
Average age	13.99*	12.91
% white	85%*	73%
% "Camp Regulars"	67%*	51%
Agreed: "I enjoyed the whole camp experience"	97%*	93%
Agreed: "I enjoyed when we learned about the Bible"	94%*	87%
Agreed: "I had a lot of fun"	97%*	94%
Agreed: "I plan to attend this camp in the future"	95%*	90%
Agreed: "I was strengthened in my faith"	95%*	87%

**Asterisks indicate significant differences between on-camp and follow-up respondents*

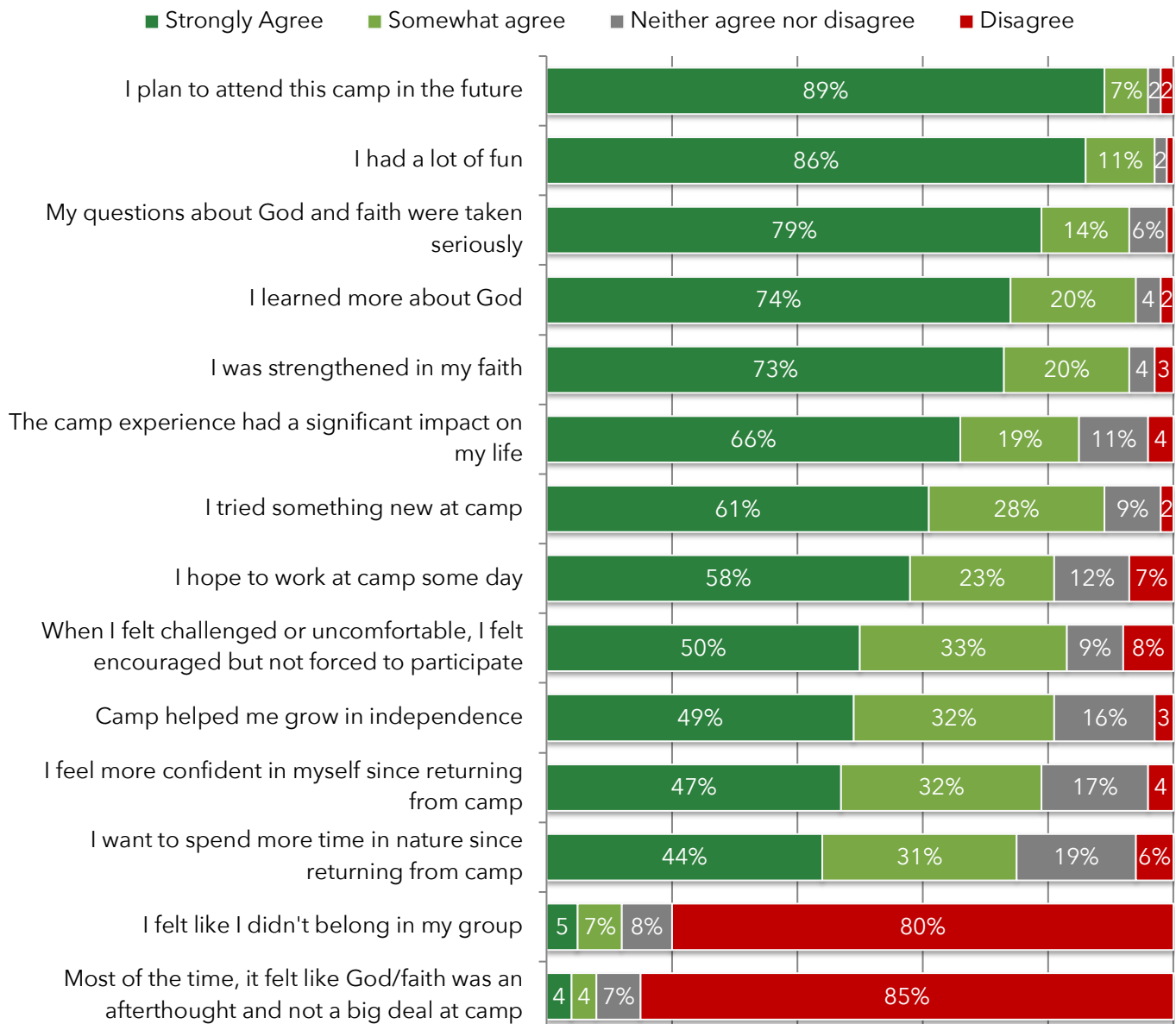
Follow-up respondents were older on average, more likely to be female, more likely to be white, more likely to be "Camp Regulars," and reported consistently more positive experiences compared with those who did not respond to the follow-up survey. This reveals some significant biases in the follow-up responses. Female campers were more than twice as likely as male campers to have a follow-up response, and white campers were more than twice as likely to have a follow-up response compared with campers of color. Age was the most significant factor in the follow-up, with only 10% of campers aged 10 and under providing contact information, compared with 59% of those 14 and up. Among those 14 and up who provided contact information, the response rate for the follow-up survey was a robust 40%, compared with only 7% for those 11 and under.



Follow up Impressions of the Camp Experience

FIGURE 18 · (n = 469)

The follow-up survey assessed campers' perceptions of their camp experience looking back 2-3 months later. By this time, any "camp high" had faded. They were asked to assess the camp experience and reflect on how that experience had impacted them in the time since camp ended. With the benefit of time, they were better able to assess the impact of camp on things like their self-confidence, faith, sense of independence, and affinity with nature.





Faith Engagement After Camp



Church attendance in Weeks Since Camp Ended

FIGURE 19A (n=380)

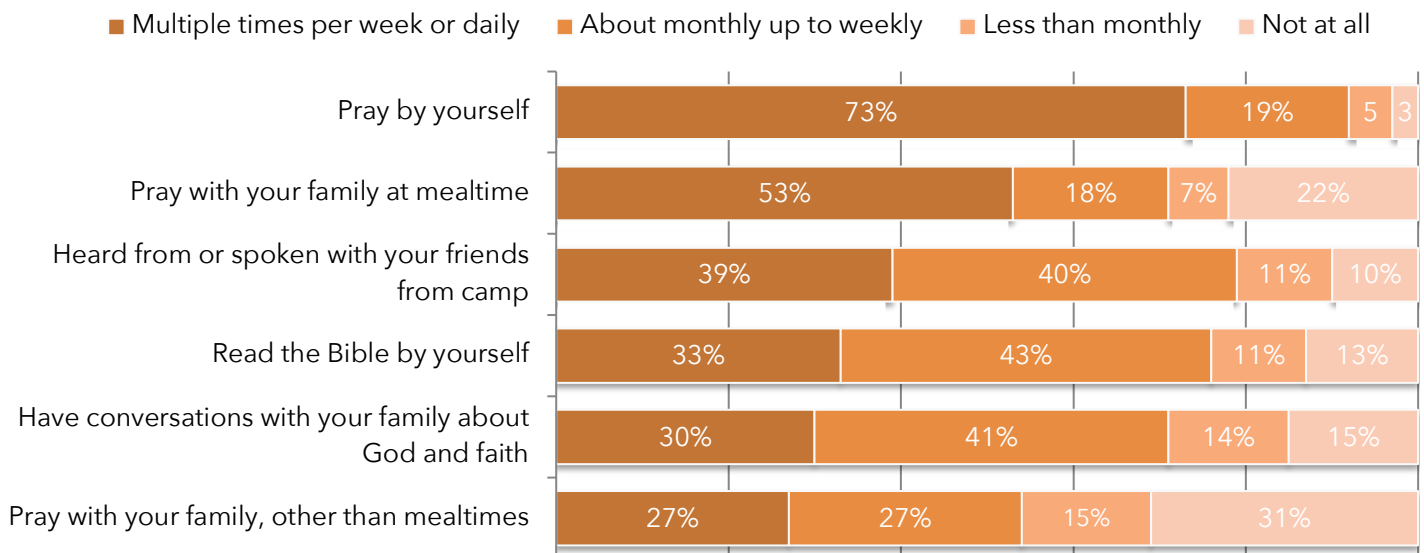


*Including 52% who indicated "weekly or more"



Frequency of Faith Practices in Weeks Following Camp

FIGURE 19B (n=397)

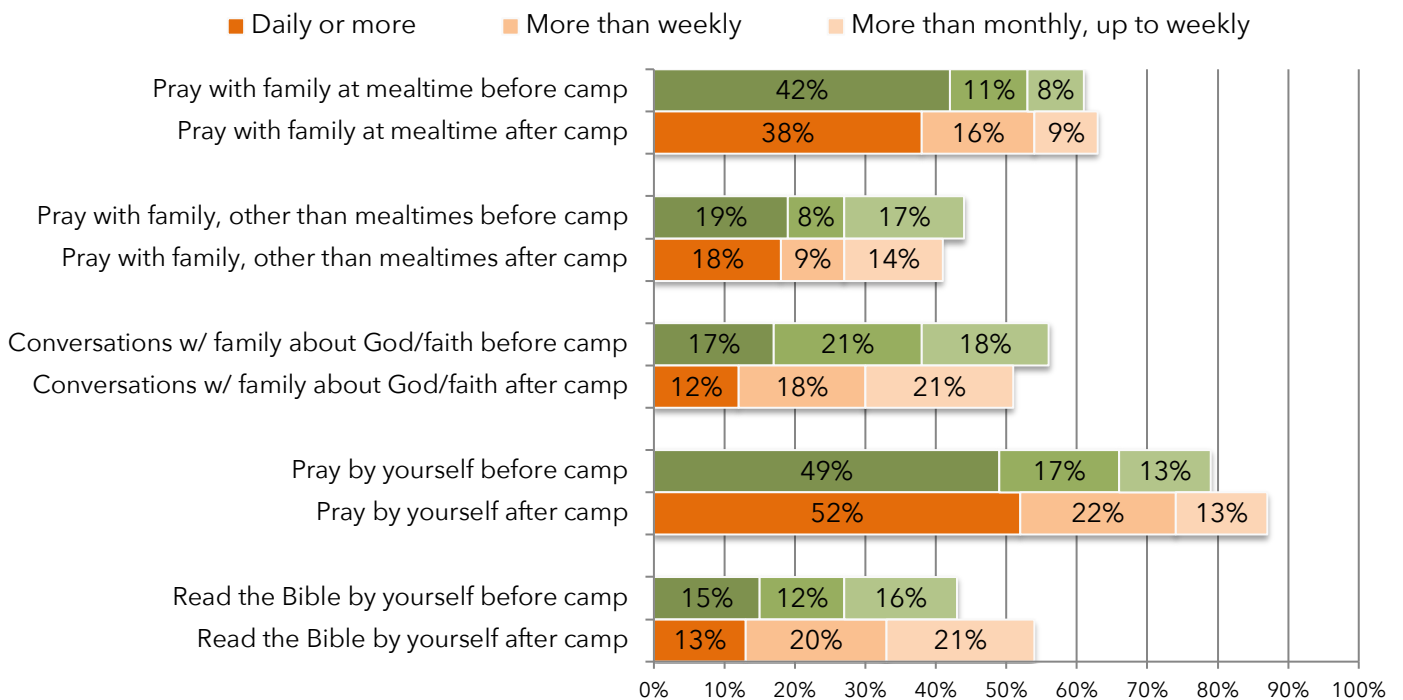




Measuring Change in Faith Practices

FIGURE 20A

Six Christian faith practices were measured on the first-day camper survey and again on the follow-up survey 2-3 months after camp. For those who completed both of these surveys, we can measure whether there was any change in faith practices from the months before camp to the months after camp. The figures below only include campers who responded to each of the questions on both surveys.

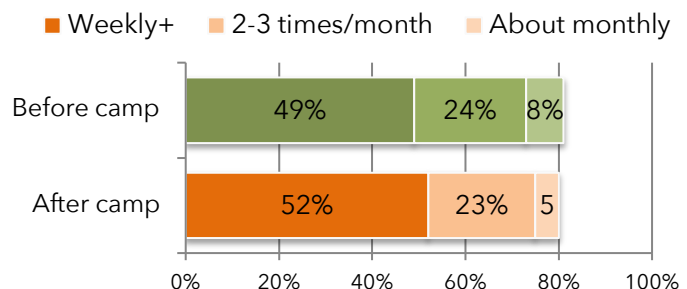


Power of Camp participants had no significant changes in any of the three family faith practices. In fact, the frequency of conversations with family about God/faith decreased. However, they showed statistically significant growth in both personal Bible reading and personal prayer in the months following camp. There was no change evident in church attendance post-camp.

Of those attending church **monthly or less** prior to camp, 34% reported attending more than monthly in the weeks following camp, including 17% attending weekly or more. However, there were also some that declined in church attendance. Together, this amounts to no general increase or decrease in church attendance in the months following camp, a finding at odds with previous study years.

Church Attendance

FIGURE 20B

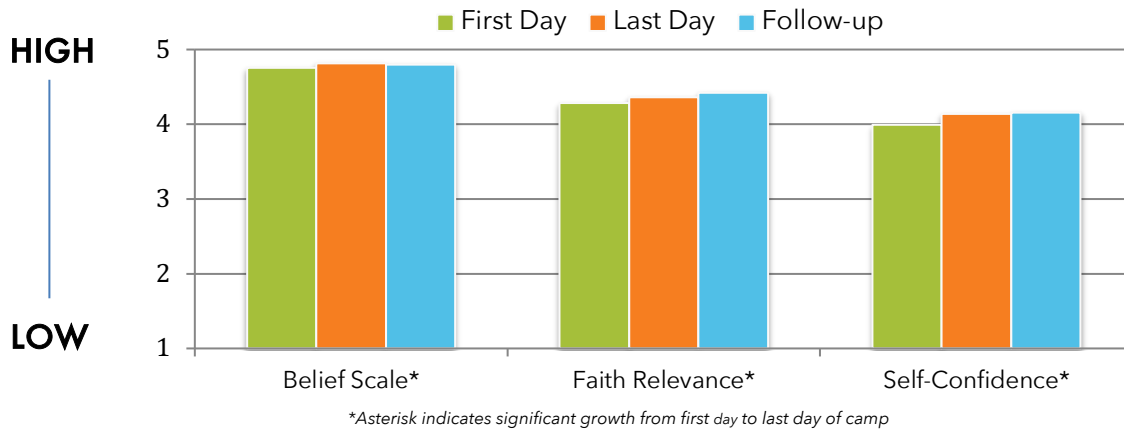




Measuring Lasting Growth (All 3 surveys)

FIGURE 21A · (n=381)

Figure 18 above offers the campers’ impressions about the camp experience 2-3 months after returning home. They also answered the 18 measurement questions again. This allowed us to compare the averages of each of the 3 growth indices over time. Only those who responded to all three surveys are included in this figure.



The growth pattern among 2024 Power of Camp participants showed a semi-normal pattern from the Effective Camp Project. All three indices showed significant positive growth from the first day to the last day of camp (confirmed above when considering just the first day and last day respondents). The belief scale showed the oft seen regression to near pre-camp levels, while both the faith relevance and self-confidence scales showed lasting change. The anomaly was uneven growth from post-camp to the follow-up survey in the faith relevance scale, which is generally indicative of a group of campers having negative experiences at camp (see page 29).

Lasting Growth in Selected Items

FIGURE 21B

The table below shows matched responses to individual survey items from all three surveys. The items included are those that showed the most significant positive growth from the first to last day of camp. In five out of six of these items, responding campers showed evidence for positive growth that lasted through the follow-up survey.

Question	#	First Day Average	Last Day Average	Follow-up Average
I am good at making friends	376	3.97	4.16***	4.15***
I like going out of my comfort zone and trying new things	367	3.66	3.92***	3.94***
I have a personal relationship with Jesus	351	4.37	4.55***	4.56***
I feel confident in my ability to be a leader	364	3.91	4.13***	4.23***
Being in nature helps me feel closer to God	364	4.30	4.40*	4.34
Faith in God helps me in my daily life	361	4.46	4.60***	4.63***

Asterisks indicate the difference with first day responses was significant at the level $p < .05$ (*), $p < .01$ (**), or $p < .001$ (***).



The Christian Camp Model



The Effective Camp Research Project (ECRP) has demonstrated that there are 5 fundamental characteristics that, when present, give rise to a Christian camp experience that is demonstrably impactful in the weeks immediately following camp. The findings also show that when one characteristic breaks down, the entire model breaks down. This has real consequences for the quality of the experience, the types of impacts, and the desire to return to camp. The last day camper survey is designed to measure each of the five fundamental characteristics, combining multiple survey items to determine whether the camper had a robust, marginal, or deficient experience in each characteristic. Assessments for each characteristic are presented in this section of the report.

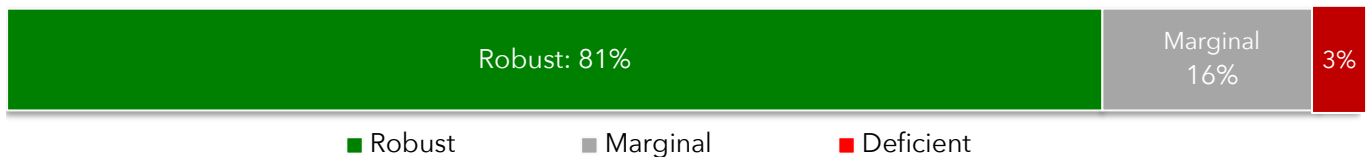


Characteristic 1: Unplugged from Home

Camp exists in a set-apart location that provides physical and emotional distance from environments that participants consider normal, allowing them to see the world and their place in it differently. When this experience is robust for campers, they contentedly unplug from technology (especially their mobile devices) and interact with the natural world in novel or immersive ways. Robust experiences also provide opportunities for campers to try new things or do things that they normally do not get to do at home. While campers may experience homesickness, these feelings are not overwhelming. In fact, campers with robustly positive experiences oftentimes refer to camp as a place of comfort, safety, and a home away from home. When this experience is marginal or deficient, campers may severely miss home, long for refuge in their mobile devices, or regard the camp experience as a waste of time that could be better spent at home.

Four survey items combined to form a measurement for this characteristic, each on a 5-point scale. As general benchmarks, camps should hope to see 80% or more of their campers in the “robust” category, 5% or fewer in the “deficient” category, and an overall average higher than 4.25. Higher than 4.40 is considered excellent (8 camps), and lower than 4.00 is considered poor (1 camp).

Figure 23A: Unplugged from Home Summary, by individual camper



Items from survey considered in this measurement:

- Enjoyment of time spent interacting with nature
- I was homesick
- It was difficult to be away from technology
- I tried something new at camp

Overall Average



GOOD

Unplugged from Home

23B: Comparing Averages

Male campers	4.37	Camp regulars	4.49
Female campers	4.38	Returners	4.32
Ages 11 and under	4.20	First timers	4.35
Ages 12-13	4.40	Forced to come	3.96
Ages 14 and up	4.42	Secure and supported at home	4.46
White campers	4.44	Mixed results for home support	4.33
People of color	4.23	Support unsure at home/school	4.11

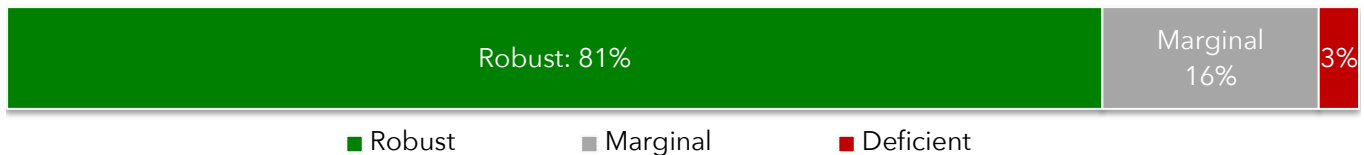


Characteristic 2: Participatory

The camp environment emphasizes experience and agency. Participants learn and grow through active, kinesthetic activities that engage their body, mind, and soul. When this experience is robust for campers, they are consistently engaged in and enjoy the activities, both in large group and small group settings. They also feel encouraged to offer input and feel like they have agency in their experience through choice, opportunities to take a leadership role, and active participation. When this experience is marginal or deficient, campers tend to feel like they were not included, that their voice did not matter, or that they were bored.

Four survey items combined to form a measurement for this characteristic, each on a 5-point scale. As general benchmarks, camps should hope to see 80% or more of their campers in the "robust" category, 5% or fewer in the "deficient" category, and an overall average higher than 4.25. Higher than 4.40 is considered excellent (6 camps), and lower than 4.00 is considered poor (1 camp).

Figure 24A: Participatory Summary, by individual camper



Items from survey considered in this measurement:

- Enjoyment of the large group games/activities
- Enjoyment of small group time/activities
- I felt like I had a say in my camp experience and my input mattered
- I felt included in worship at camp

Overall Average



GOOD

Participatory

24B: Comparing Averages

Male campers	4.30	Camp regulars	4.44
Female campers	4.40	Returners	4.33
Ages 11 and under	4.25	First timers	4.35
Ages 12-13	4.34	Forced to come	4.09
Ages 14 and up	4.40	Secure and supported at home	4.45
White campers	4.41	Mixed results for home support	4.28
People of color	4.23	Support unsure at home/school	4.10

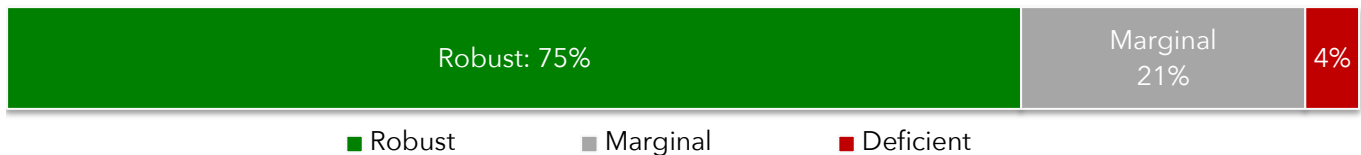


Characteristic 3: Faith Centered

Faith teachings and practices are not peripheral or intermittent aspects of the camp experience, but rather are experienced as incorporated into all other characteristics of camp. When this experience is robust for campers, they enjoy traditional faith centered programming (such as worship and Bible study) as much as other aspects of camp and feel like faith is part of the entire experience. Conversations about God and faith occur regularly throughout the camp experience, rather than simply during set-aside times of the day, and campers feel comfortable asking questions or expressing doubts about God and faith. When this experience is marginal or deficient, campers tend to feel a separation (or compartmentalization) between the fun and engaging aspects of camp and the programming related to faith.

Four survey items combined to form a measurement for this characteristic, each on a 5-point scale. As general benchmarks, camps should hope to see 80% or more of their campers in the "robust" category, 5% or fewer in the "deficient" category, and an overall average higher than 4.25. Higher than 4.40 is considered excellent (5 camps), and lower than 4.00 is considered poor (3 camps).

Figure 25A: Faith-Centered Summary, by individual camper



Items from survey considered in this measurement:

- Enjoyment of studying/learning about the Bible
- Freq. of conversations with fellow campers about God and faith
- My questions about God and faith were taken seriously
- Most of the time, it felt like God/faith was an afterthought and not a big deal at camp

Overall Average



MARGINAL

Faith-Centered

25B: Comparing Averages

Male campers	4.17	Camp regulars	4.36
Female campers	4.32	Returners	4.19
Ages 11 and under	4.07	First timers	4.24
Ages 12-13	4.23	Forced to come	3.90
Ages 14 and up	4.36	Strong/supported faith at home	4.50
White campers	4.32	Inconsistent faith at home	4.28
People of color	4.15	Unsupported faith at home	3.91



Characteristic 4: Safe Space

The strong sense of safety at camp includes physical, emotional, social, and spiritual safety. Participants frequently describe camp as a place where they can be themselves without fear of judgment. Camp offers the safe space to explore identity and faith concepts. When this experience is robust for campers, they venture outside their comfort zones through physical challenges, social interactions, and expressing thoughts/opinions, including those related to faith. When this experience is marginal or deficient, campers tend to feel unsupported or insecure about sharing, for fear of what others might think or say, and they might feel forced to do something they that would rather not do or are unsure about. They may also interpret the words and actions of others as bullying, judging, or putting them down.

Four survey items combined to form a measurement for this characteristic, each on a 5-point scale. As general benchmarks, camps should hope to see 80% or more of their campers in the “robust” category, 5% or fewer in the “deficient” category, and an overall average higher than 4.25. Higher than 4.40 is considered excellent (1 camp), and lower than 4.00 is considered poor (3 camps).

Figure 26A: Safe Space Summary, by individual camper



Items from survey considered in this measurement:

- I felt like I had to hide my true self at camp
- I was picked on or left out
- I felt supported and happy at camp
- When I felt challenged/uncomfortable, I felt encouraged, but not forced to participate

Overall Average



GOOD

Safe Space

26B: Comparing Averages

Male campers	4.22	Camp regulars	4.36
Female campers	4.31	Returners	4.27
Ages 11 and under	4.12	First timers	4.27
Ages 12-13	4.26	Forced to come	3.94
Ages 14 and up	4.34	Secure and supported at home	4.45
White campers	4.35	Mixed results for home support	4.15
People of color	4.12	Support unsure at home/school	3.76

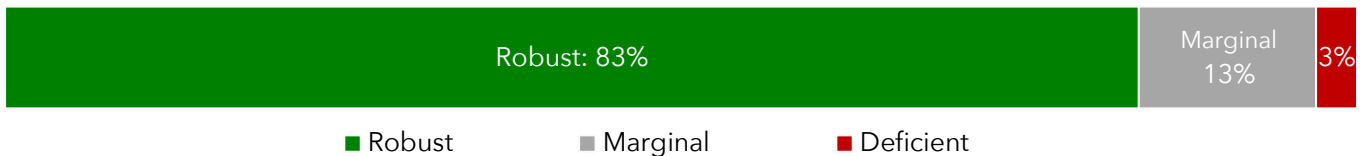


Characteristic 5: Relational

The camp experience is framed in a relational environment that includes living together, meeting new people, practicing reconciliation, and encountering the other in face-to-face interaction. The foundation of the relational community is the small group, facilitated by one or more caring adults (or counselors). When this experience is robust for campers, they enjoy spending time with their counselor and fellow campers, and they feel a close affinity to them. They also feel a sense of belonging in the camp community. When this experience is marginal or deficient, campers tend to feel emotional or social distance from their fellow campers or that they do not belong or fit in. They may also frustration with or lack of trust in their counselor or other camp staff/volunteers.

Four survey items combined to form a measurement for this characteristic, each on a 5-point scale. As general benchmarks, camps should hope to see 80% or more of their campers in the "robust" category, 5% or fewer in the "deficient" category, and an overall average higher than 4.25. Higher than 4.40 is considered excellent (9 camps), and lower than 4.00 is considered poor (1 camp).

Figure 27A: Relational Summary, by individual camper



Items from survey considered in this measurement:

- Enjoyment of my cabin counselor/group leader
- Enjoyment of the other campers in my group
- I got along really well with my cabin group and counselor
- I always felt like I belonged in my group

Overall Average



EXCELLENT!

Relational

27B: Comparing Averages

Male campers	4.42	Camp regulars	4.54
Female campers	4.50	Returners	4.44
Ages 11 and under	4.33	First timers	4.51
Ages 12-13	4.46	Forced to come	4.18
Ages 14 and up	4.52	Secure and supported at home	4.59
White campers	4.55	Mixed results for home support	4.37
People of color	4.30	Support unsure at home/school	4.14

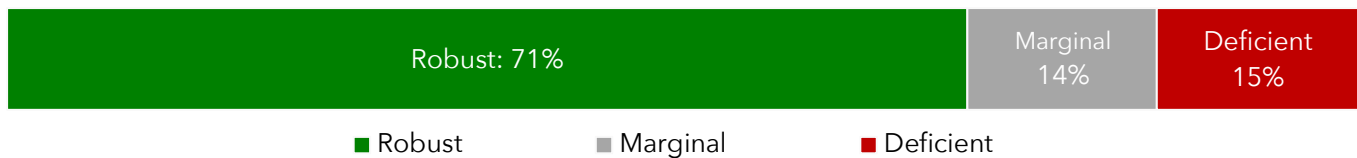


Combined Camp Model

Combining all 5 of the fundamental characteristics provides an overview of the camp experience for each camper. Those who had a measured deficiency in 2 or more characteristics or were measured as marginal in 3 or more characteristics were categorized as having a deficient experience overall. Those categorized as marginal in 2 characteristics or deficient in 1 were categorized with a marginal experience overall. Those with robust experiences in 4 or 5 characteristics were categorized as having a robust overall experience.

The 5-point scales for each characteristic were also averaged to provide an overall camp model score on a 5-point scale. As general benchmarks, camps should hope to see 75% or more of their campers in the "robust" category, 10% or fewer in the "deficient" category, and an overall average higher than 4.25.

Figure 28A: Camp Model Summary, by individual camper



Overall Average



GOOD

Combined Model

28B: COMPARING CAMP AVERAGES

Measurement	Range	# Camps
EXCELLENT!	4.41+	6
GOOD	4.26-4.40	3
MARGINAL	4.00-4.25	3
POOR	under 4.00	1

Items considered in this measurement:

- Unplugged from Home scale
- Participatory scale
- Faith Centered scale
- Safe Space scale
- Relational scale

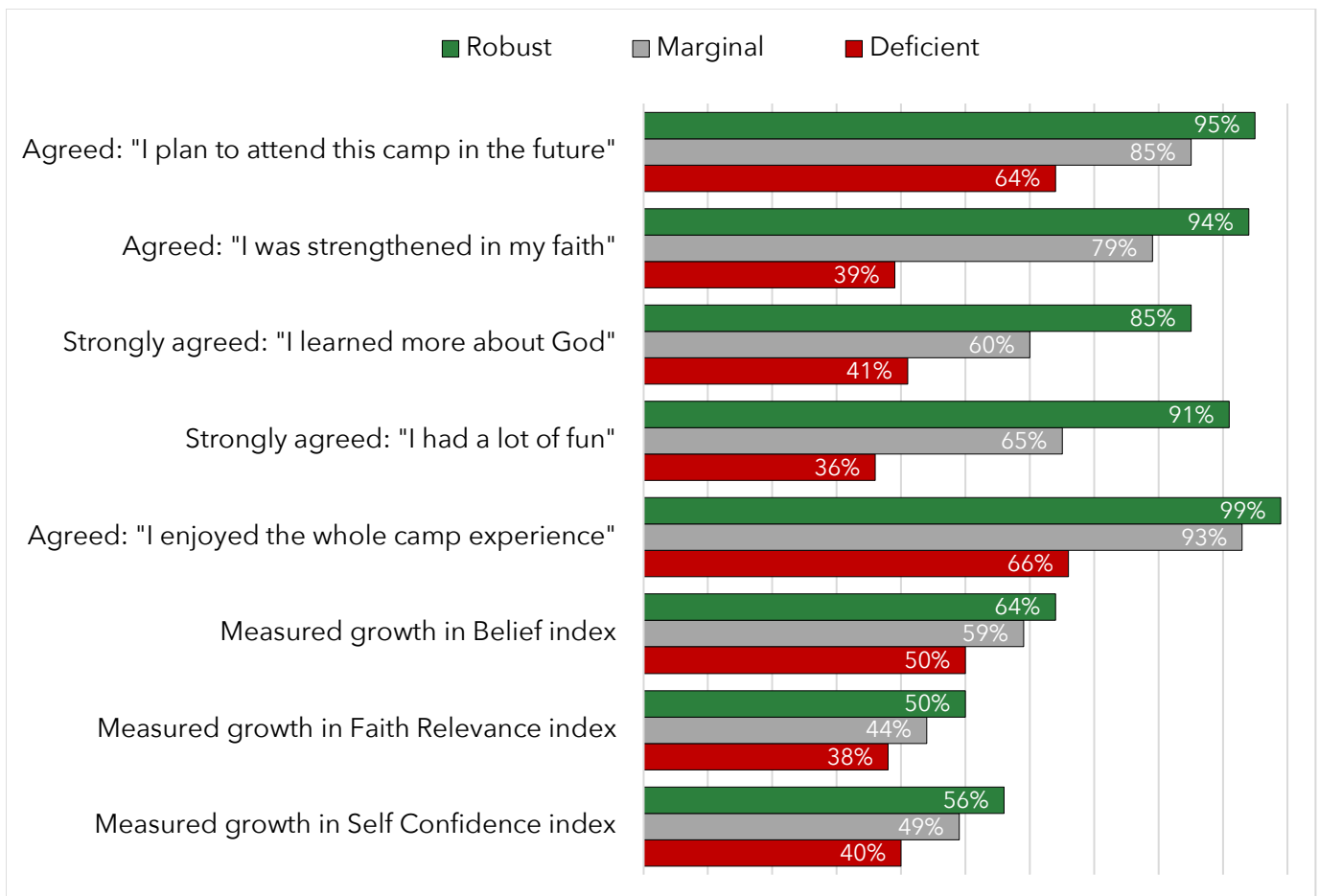


Going Deeper: Deficiencies in the Camp Experience

There were large variations in the camp experience among study participants, with 15% of respondents categorized as having a “deficient” overall experience (3 or more of the 5 fundamental characteristics categorized as marginal or at least two categorized as deficient). These experiences had large impacts on their overall enjoyment of the experience and the outcomes of the experience. They were significantly lower on all measurements compared with other campers. As expected, those categorized as having marginal experiences (14% of campers in the study) had more consistent outcomes and overall enjoyment than those with deficient experiences, while those categorized with robust experiences had by far the most consistent outcomes, enjoyment, and desire to return in future years. The differences among these three groups are shown below. Note that all participating camps had campers in each of these three categories, though some camps had higher percentages of campers with deficient experiences.

Differences in Experience and Outcomes Based on Camp Model Summary

FIGURE 29





Factors Related to Deficiencies in the Camp Experience

Major factor: Camp variation

Four camps had more than 20% of their campers categorized as deficient in the camp model as a whole, accounting for 55% of all campers categorized in this way. 5 other camps had more than 80% of their campers categorized as “robust” in the camp model as a whole. The four camps with the high numbers of campers in the deficient category had much higher percentages of non-white campers and younger campers than the other camps. The experiences at these 4 camps account for almost all the variation in camper experience based on race and age shown in Figures 23B-27B. It is not that people of color had generally worse experiences at camp in comparison to white campers. Rather, people of color attended the camps with more frequent deficient experiences in higher numbers.

Major factor: Support at home and school

When controlling for the different camps, the factor that most clearly predicted a deficient experience at camp was “feelings of support at home and school” (Figure 8A). Those categorized as “support unsure” on the first day of camp were over 5 times more likely to be categorized as “deficient” in the camp model on the last day survey in comparison with those categorized as “secure and supported” on the first day. In other words, those with more challenging lives at home and school were much more likely to have challenging or deficient camp experiences than their peers.

Contributing factor: Fellow camper home life (support at home and school)

The four camps with the highest number of campers categorized as “deficient” in the camp model all had more than 20% of their campers categorized as “support unsure” on the first day of camp, with the remaining 9 camps all having less than 15% of their campers categorized this way. Comparing these campers’ experiences is instructive. At the four camps with the higher percentages of campers with “support unsure,” nearly half of them (46%) were categorized as having deficient camp experiences. At the other nine camps, among incoming campers categorized as “support unsure,” a much lower 21% were categorized as having deficient camp experiences. All campers, particularly those with challenging lives at home/school, reported overall more positive camp experiences when the majority of their fellow campers came from homes and schools where they felt secure and supported.



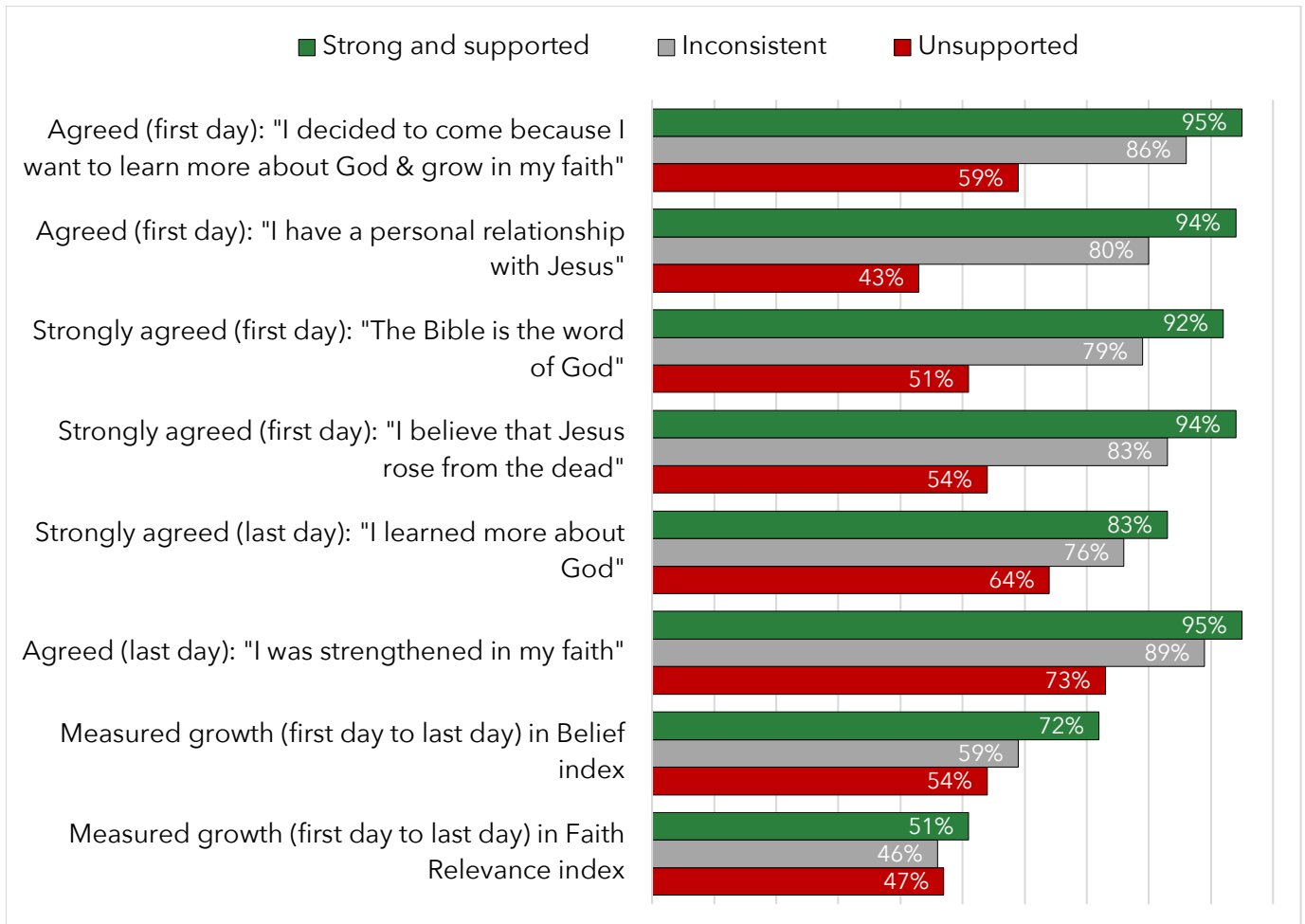
Going Deeper: Family Faith

Family Faith Support Predicts Faith Commitment

Faith support in the home was a clear predictor of a camper's faith commitment. Those categorized as having strong and supported faith in the home had significantly higher measurements of belief and faith relevance than those who had inconsistent or unsupported faith in the home. They also agreed significantly more that they came to camp to grow in their faith and, at the end of camp, that they learned more about God and were strengthened in their faith. The figure below compares camper responses based on the family faith commitment categories shown in Figure 8C, based on frequency of conversations with family about God/faith, family prayer practices, and personal faith practices (prayer and Bible study).

Differences in Faith Measurements and Outcomes Based on Family Faith

FIGURE 31





Exploring the Lack of Growth in Family Faith

Low Family Faith

Family faith practices were noticeably low for a camper population that had high levels of belief in God and was motivated to attend to grow in their faith. The measurements of personal belief were remarkably high. The four belief statements had the highest levels of average agreement in the survey, while measurements of communal faith were much lower (Figure 14). For example, 90% of campers on the first day of camp agreed that Jesus rose from the dead, but only 73% agreed that they had Christian friends they could turn to in times of need and 67% that regular church attendance was important for their faith. Interestingly, faith practices lagged far behind, especially those related to family faith (prayer at mealtimes, prayer with family at other times, and conversations with family members about God and faith). Overall, only 35% of campers were categorized as having strong and supported faith in the home (Figure 8C) and only 45% as active and engaged in a local church community (8B). This is especially notable because the family faith measurement was strongly related to individual faith measurements, motivation, and outcomes, as shown in Figure 31.

There were some differences in faith practices by age group. Younger campers reported generally higher frequencies of prayer with their family at times other than mealtime, while older campers reported higher frequencies of conversations with their family about God/faith and personal faith practices (prayer and Bible reading). Interestingly, there was no difference by age in frequency of mealtime prayer.

Lack of Growth

The generally low frequencies of faith practices and other measurements of communal faith meant that there was ample room for growth in these survey measurements. However, these were the measurements that showed little or no growth. From the first day to the last day of camp, all measurements related to individual faith showed significant growth. Only 2 of 18 items showed no average growth, and they were both related to communal faith: "I have Christian friends I can turn to in times of need" and "When I grow up, I plan to participate in the life of a church/congregation" (Figure 15). Two additional items related to communal faith showed only moderate growth ("Regular church attendance is important for my faith" and "Worship services are usually boring"). While personal faith practices (prayer and Bible reading) showed significant growth from pre-camp to post-camp, none of the three family faith practices measured showed any growth (Figure 20A), and church attendance was stagnant (20B). In fact, frequency of conversations with family about God and faith actually *declined* post-camp.

None of the 13 participating camps showed overall and consistent growth in the family faith measurements and no single aspect of the camper experience consistently predicted growth in these measurements. This suggests that this is a growth area among all participating camps.

Prayer with family and conversations with family about God/faith have shown non-significant growth throughout the years of the Power of Camp Study. These measurements were refined in 2024 to better assess this lack of growth, and the findings have confirmed that this is a major area of growth for CCCA camps. Further research is needed in this area.



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