

Camp 2009: Day 1

Days -2, -1, and 0 were getting ready days of course. Day one however is where it begins. Past years have had a check-in time of 10:00AM. Not so this year. With a brand new 8:00AM check-in time I dragged myself out of bed early and got a ride over to the bank lot across from the church. While I didn't really care much for the early call time, it did give us a couple extra hours once we got to camp. The chaos of checking in seemed less this year for whatever reason. I know numbers were down due to the you-know-what, but even considering it seemed pretty tame. Parents checked in the kids, picked up tags, saw the nurse, carried the bags to the appropriate bus, waited for departure. During this time I had the chance to say hi to three of the kids in my cabin and their parents. Another one I found out would meet us at camp while the fifth I didn't know at all, leaving it a total surprise when I finally did. Around the final prayer and departure time, I finally met him as he was pointing to some bags that hadn't yet been loaded on. I looked at the tag and saw the bags were for someone in my cabin. I turned to him and saw he was the fifth boy- Diego. I later found out that the bags were for his stepfather who was coming with him. This was no ordinary boy either- he was in two leg casts (to straighten his legs- they weren't broken) and was... small. Ever watch [Little People, Big World](#)? Yes, he has that condition. After a prayer with the parents and campers we hopped onto the buses and we were off. We gave them about a half-hour of chat time and then the first movie went in. All the movies were Disney of course- rated G animated features. Ratatouille was first and it engaged at least 95% of the kids. Wall-E followed. Too bad the bus DVD player had no remote as Wall-E had a couple of nice shorts in the extras. Halfway through the bus ride we stopped at a rest-stop so the drivers could take a quick pit-stop. Yeah, leaders too. ☐ () Kids were stuck on the bus, but the movie was kept playing so most didn't mind I'm

sure. Having forgotten my lunch (it's always something, right?) I scrambled here to get overprice vending machine offerings while still trying to pick up something extra for the kids in the same boat as me. Other leaders chipped in too.

So 3½ hours later, or 4½ when you take the time change from CDT to EDT into consideration, we arrived- about ten minutes after Wall-E ended. We got to the usual drop off point- and kept going. Yes! No walking a half-mile to the camp, partly down a 40° incline (or back up that same incline at the end of the week for that matter!). We were greeted with large welcome signs from the staff, waiting for us on the game field. While the bus was unloaded and the luggage carried to the cabins we were given an introduction speech. The week at camp was officially underway! We split for the cabins so the kids could get ready for their swim tests, then headed for the swim front. For one of only two times during the week the gate was swung open so we could enter without checking in. At all other times the kids were required to check in to the swim front to keep track of who was there in case something happened. I had told Diego's stepdad that we would start out with a sandcastle/fort competition when others were doing their swim tests, two cabins at a time. Wrong! Just because we had the previous four years didn't mean this would be year five- oops. Instead, we played a friendly game of nuke 'em, a volleyball variation where instead of hitting the ball it is thrown up in the air. If it isn't caught by the other team, the person on that team who last touched the ball trying to catch it, or the one who it fell closest to otherwise is out. The game is over when one team is out. At the end of our swim test during this time, three of my kids had red bracelets for non-swimmers. Diego was one of course as he did not even take the test because of his casts. This was definitely different for me with more than half my cabin wearing red bands; in the past I have always had only one or two.

So with that done, we changed out of the swimming gear, went to the court on top of the hill by the girls' cabins for more instructions for the week, then hit the lodge for dinner. It looked like this year they turned the tables 90 degrees from previous years, but other than that it was the same as previous years. Following dinner was the first lesson. This week's theme was Code Blue: Having a Heart for God, so all the lessons were based on this theme. The main passage of scripture was the parable of the seeds and the soils they landed on or in. We broke out for small group, and what was another first we never broke into smaller groups. In the past I have had 7-10 kids in my cabin so the kids could be split into two groups since every cabin had at least two leaders, but with only five kids we just stayed together with all three of us leaders taking turns leading discussion. My five kids this year all had been raised in strong Christian homes, and they all had stories to tell of accepting Jesus. I have had others in the past that had not and have even been able to lead such kids to Christ, but this year it was all about living the Christian life with all these kids which I will be the first to say is a struggle.

As the last part of the night the kids had some "free time" which for this age group is staying in one area free to play whatever games they wished in that area. This was their first opportunity to visit the canteen, a short bus painted like a bee where they could buy candy and pop (Gatorade and water as well). This first night was also where I received my first scars which still populate my arms to an extent of mosquito bites as I was eaten alive. After this I would remember to put on bug spray...

The students were given a choice on whether or not to take a shower- the only night I gave that option since they didn't do much activity that day- and then we prayed, turned out the lights, and this post finally ended. □