



rhythmsoffaith.com



**RHYTHMS
OF FAITH**

**PARENT
SURVEY
REPORT**

Aggregate Report



**WHEATON
COLLEGE**
For Christ & His Kingdom



HONEYROCK
Center for Leadership Development



**SACRED
PLAYGROUNDS**





Introduction

The Rhythms of Faith Project seeks to empower parents and caregivers in family faith formation by leveraging the power of camp experiences. The project is a 5-year, nationwide, cross-denominational initiative coordinated by Wheaton College’s Center for Leadership Development (HoneyRock) in partnership with Sacred Playgrounds, and generously funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.

The project seeks faith formation through partnership: partnership among parents/caregivers; partnership among camps, congregations, and the home; partnership among practitioners and the academy; partnership among different Christian traditions. We bring together scholars and practitioners from Lutheran, United Methodist, and Evangelical traditions, drawing experience from camp, clergy, and academia.

As part of phase 1, the research team conducted a survey of parents to gather information about their current faith practices; their perceptions about the impact of camp on them, their children, and their families faith; and their core beliefs about faith, church, and camp. The strategy was to survey parents whose campers attended the previous summer in order to measure their perceptions of ongoing impacts of the camp experiences. The data, therefore, represent perceptions from summer 2023 and the intervening months prior to the start of summer 2024. In total, 1233 parents responded from 11 different camps across the three partner organizations (LOM, UMCRCM, and CCCA). This report contains the results of respondents from all 11 camps. Each camp also received an individualized report with their specific data. The report begins with an overview of the demographics of the respondents, and then presents the results of some of the primary metrics explored in the survey.

Follow the project for updated findings at rhythmsoffaith.com.

In This Report

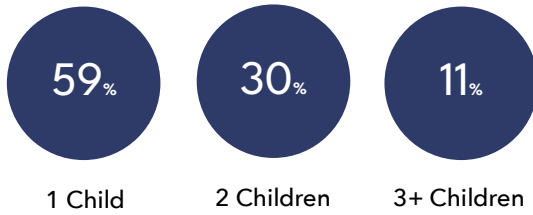
Respondent Summary	3
Family Faith Practices	5
Camper Experience	7
Parent Philosophy of Camp	8
Perceived Impacts of Camp on Family Faith	10
General Findings and Reflections	11



Parent & Family Insights

Total Responses: 1233

of Family Children Attending This Camp

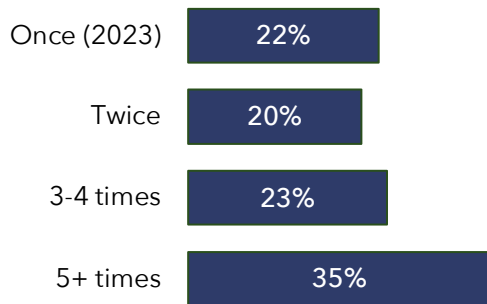


Relationship to Campers

84%

of survey respondents were mothers of campers
13% fathers, 2% grandparents

Years a Child from Household Attended



DENOMINATION / CHRISTIAN TRADITION	%
Non-denominational	21%
Presbyterian	5%
Methodist	14%
Evangelical Free	15%
Episcopalian	2%
Catholic	5%
Baptist	8%
Lutheran	25%

DISTANCE FROM CAMP	%
Less than 2 hours	57%
2-3 hours	13%
3-5 hours	17%
More than 5 hours	13%



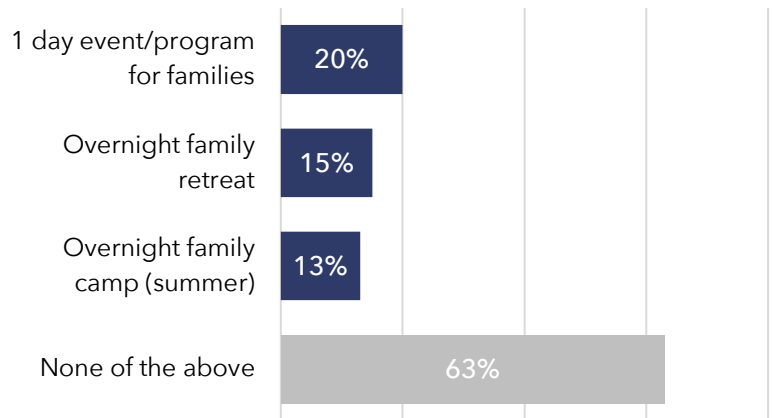
Parent & Family Insights

CONTINUED

CAMPER AGE	%
10 and under	36%
11-13	49%
14 and up	15%

Median Camper Age: 11

Have you attended any of the following events together as a family?



Parent Camp Experiences

WORKED ON CAMP STAFF	%
Same camp as camper	11%
Other camp	15%

ATTENDED CAMP AS A CHILD	%
Same camp as camper	20%
Other camp	50%

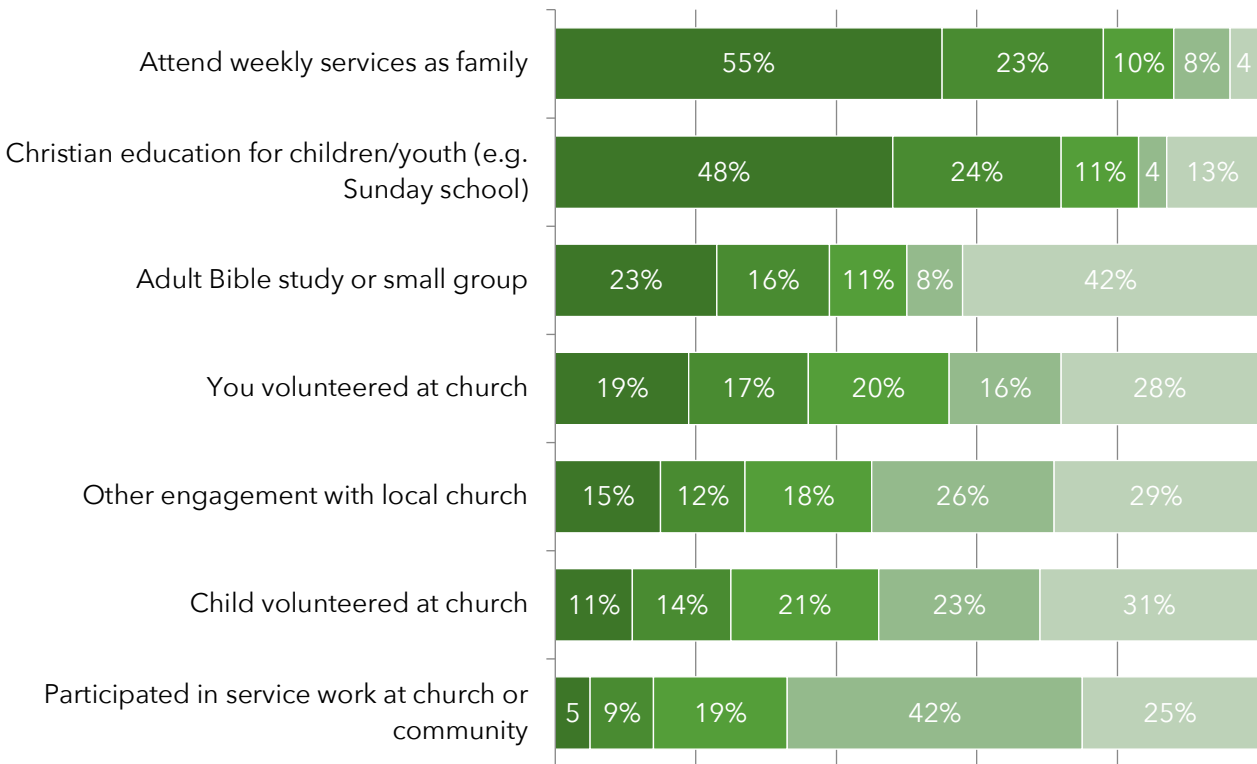


Family Faith Practices

Involvement in Church (past 6 months):

FIGURE 1

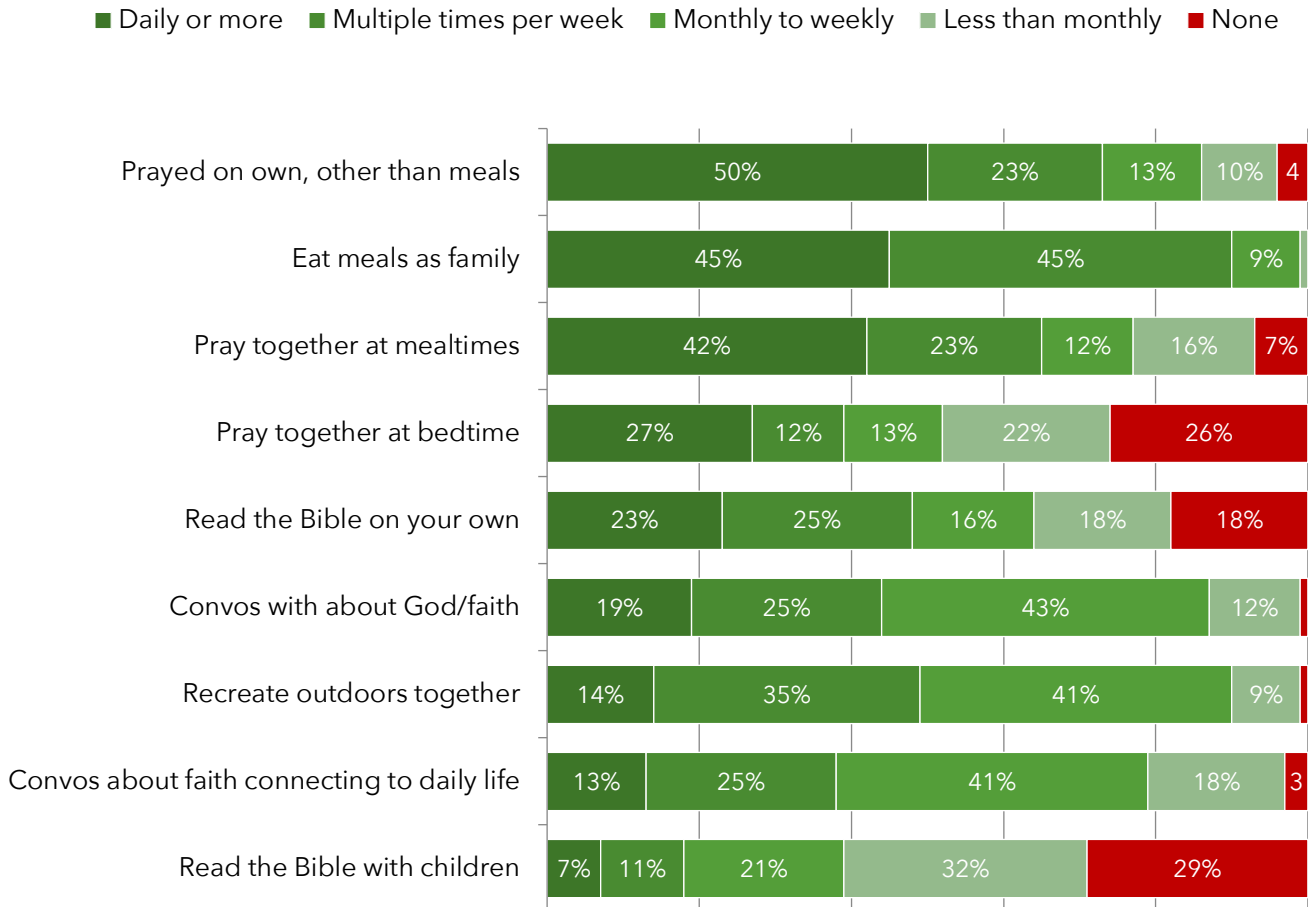
■ Weekly or more ■ Multiple times per month ■ A few times to monthly ■ Once or twice ■ None





Faith Practices in the Home

FIGURE 2



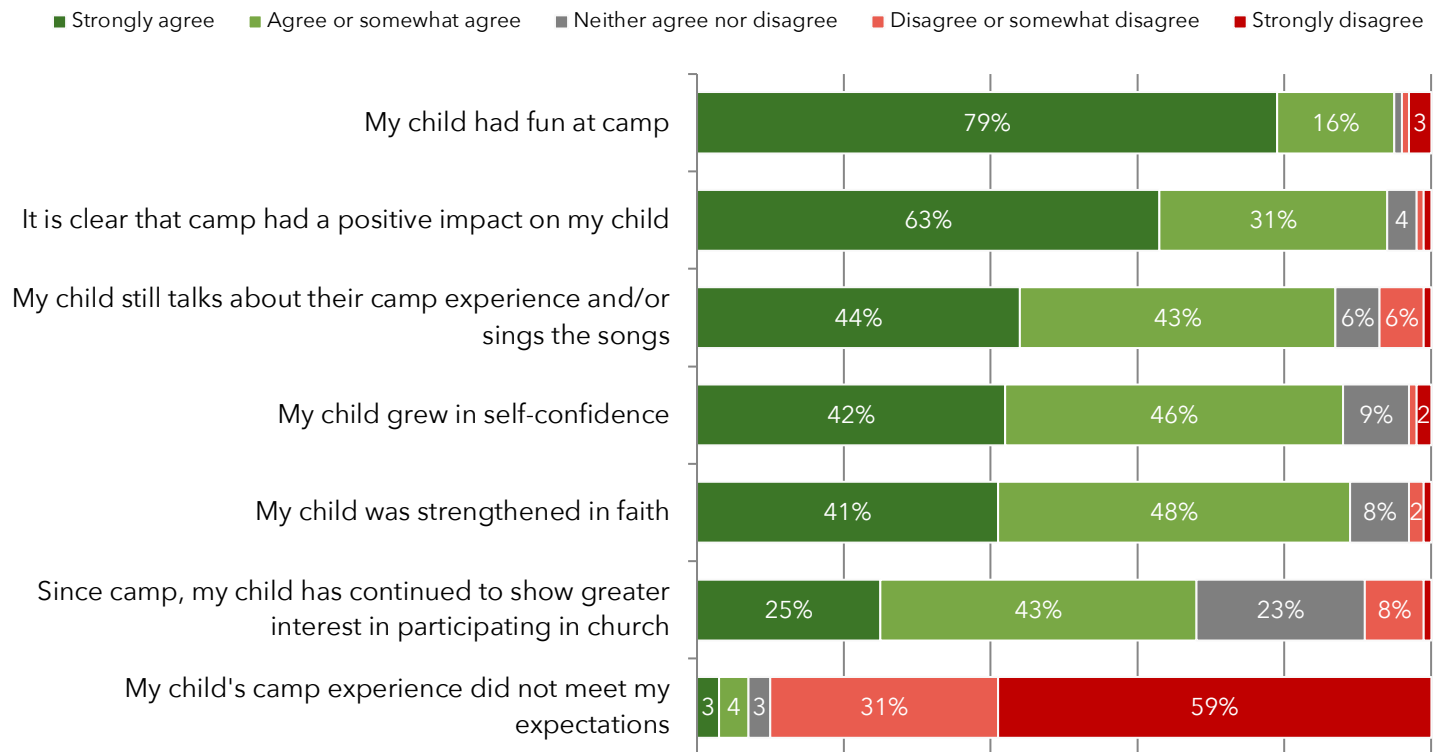
In general, the sample was comprised of practicing Christians that were attending local churches and engaging in those churches at least to some extent. Additionally, the sample predominantly represented Christian families that were already engaging some basic Christian faith practices, such as praying at meals, reading the Bible, and praying before bed. There was some variation in congregational involvement across the three denominational partners, with CCCA camps tending to have the highest rates of congregational involvement and family faith practice engagement. It was notable that involvement in local congregations and frequency of faith practices were all higher for respondents who had attended camp as a child themselves, indicating a longitudinal connection between Christian summer camp experiences and ongoing engagement in faith practices.



Parent Perceptions of Individual Children's Camp Experiences

FIGURE 3 · (n=1925)

This section of the survey asked parent perceptions of the camp experience for each individual child that attended. The number of responses corresponds to the total number of children.

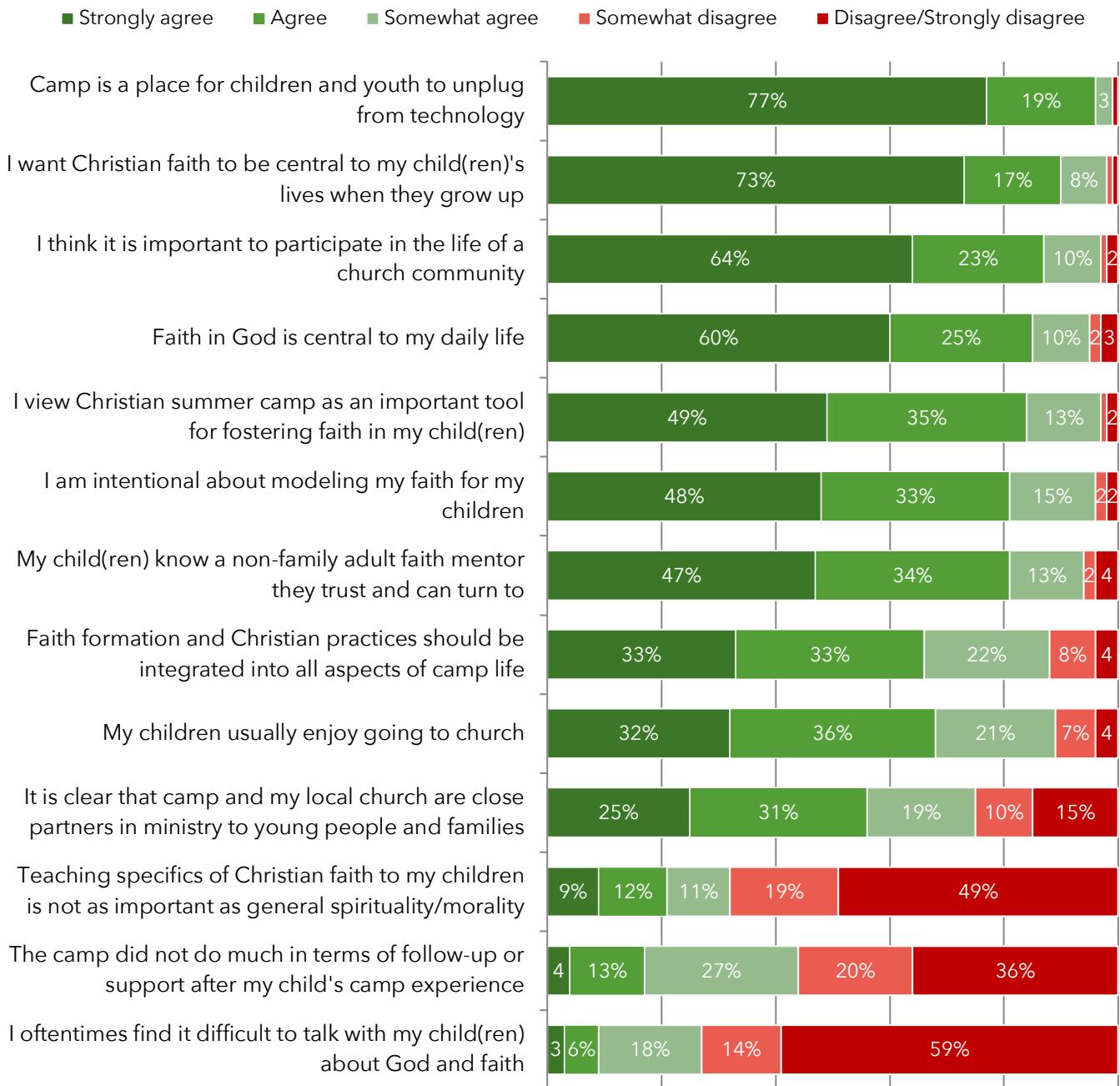


Parent perceptions of the camp experience varied considerably from camp to camp, and they also varied by individual camper. Total parent agreement that their child had fun was consistently high among individual camps, from a low of 94% agreement to a high of 100%. However, the degree of agreement varied more widely. At one camp, 100% strongly agreed with the statement, while another had only 56% that strongly agreed. Many of those disagreeing that their child had fun at camp had another child for whom they agreed with the statement. This indicates a complex picture of camp experiences that not only vary by camp program but also by individual campers present at camp the same session.



Parent Beliefs & Impressions on Faith, Parenting, and Camp

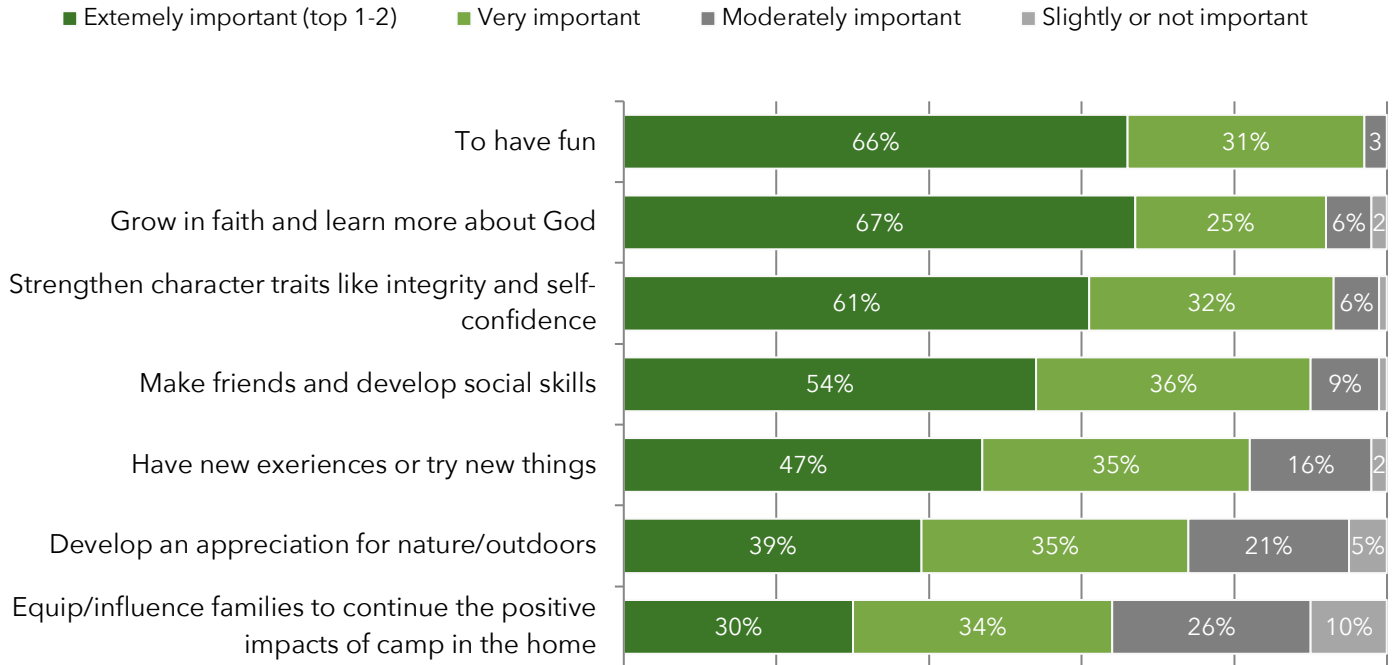
FIGURE 4





Parent Philosophy on Goals of Camp Ranked by Average Importance

FIGURE 5



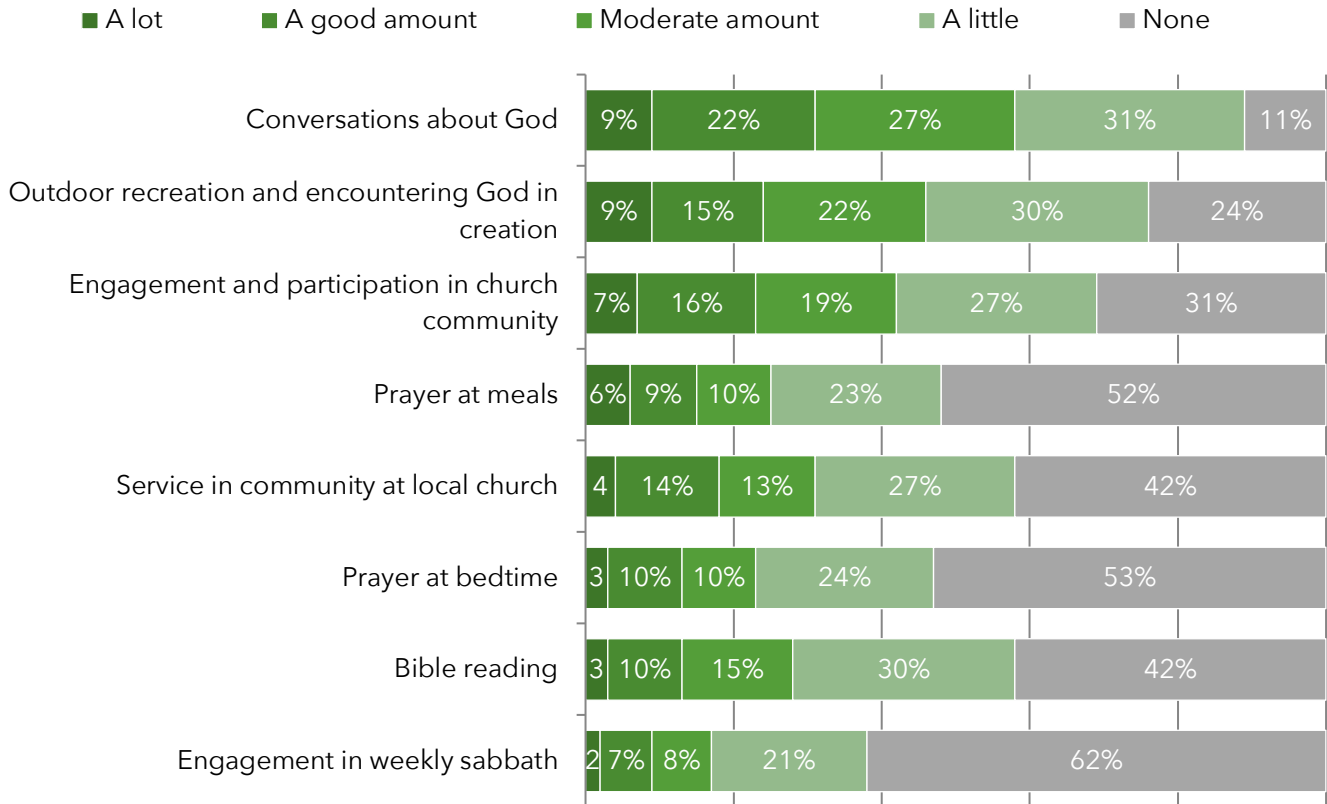
The top three goals listed in Figure 5 are not surprising - previous research has suggested that the primary motivations for attendance of Christian summer camps are fun, character formation, and faith formation. The focus of the Rhythms of Faith Project is on strengthening the role that camp plays in equipping families to fulfill their central role in faith transmission, which ranked lowest overall on respondents list of goals for camp. However, 97% of respondents agreed with the statement that "Camp is an important tool for faith formation" (Figure 4). In other words, although respondents viewed camp as a tool for faith formation, they did not necessarily view it as a tool for equipping families in faith formation. This could indicate that the language of "Equipping families" is unfamiliar, and/or that there is room for camps to improve in their efforts to communicate the possible impact that camp can have not just on individual participants but on entire family systems. This speaks to the need for this project and provides a great baseline for exploring the impact of the project going forward.

Notably, the order of average importance varied by the three partner organizations. For CCCA respondents, faith was the most important, on average, followed by fun and character. For LOM respondents, the top three were fun, character, and friends/social skills, followed by faith. For UMC CRM, the order was fun, friends/social skills, character, and try new things, with faith fifth in average importance.



Perceived Impacts of Camp on Family Faith Practices

FIGURE 6



Overall, **45%** of parents identified “a good amount” or “a lot” of impact on at least one of the eight faith practices listed above and 71% identified at least one with “a moderate amount” of impact. Thus, there is evidence both that camp is having an influence on faith practices and that there is room to grow in terms of the impact of camp on family faith practices. The practice that camp appears to have the most impact on is conversations about God, followed by outdoor recreation and engagement in a church community. This finding is confirmed by qualitative data from the survey, where parents affirmed the opportunity that camp provides to engage in conversations about God and faith after the camp session ends. Keeping in mind that respondents from CCCA camps tended to have higher levels of existing congregational involvement and faith practices, respondents from LOM and UMCRM camps tended to report higher levels of impact of camp on family faith practices, with the exception of Bible reading. This also suggests that in families with high levels of existing faith, camp may play more of a supportive role, while in families with lower levels of faith, it plays a more central and transformative role. Additionally, it was notable that respondents that had participated in a non-summer family event at camp (see page 4), scored higher on each of the metrics, suggesting that continued engagement with camp throughout the year can extend the impact of camp on family faith practices.



General Findings & Reflections

This list is not exhaustive, but it is meant to highlight some of the key findings from the parent survey when considering respondents from all camps and comparing their perceptions/experiences.

- **Responding parents reported generally high levels of personal faith and family faith practices.** These were predominantly Christian families with moderate to moderately high levels of faith commitment that were sending their children to Christian camps. See Figures 1 and 2. Notably, personal faith practices were much more frequent than family faith practices. While 73% of responding parents indicating praying on their own multiple times or daily, 65% said the same about praying together as a family at mealtimes, and only 39% said the same about praying as a family at bedtime. With Bible reading, nearly half (48%) indicated personal Bible reading more than weekly, compared with only 18% who said they read the Bible with their family more than weekly.
- **Responding parents overwhelmingly agreed that camp should have an important role in the faith development of their children.** 96% agreed, “I view Christian summer camp as an important tool for fostering faith in my child(ren)” and 88% agreed, “Faith formation and Christian practices should be integrated into all aspects of camp life.” 92% indicated that “Grow in faith and learn more about God” should be a “very” or “extremely important” goal of camp, and 64% indicated the same about “Equipping/influencing families to continue the positive impacts of camp in the home.”
- **Responding parents indicated very positive experiences at camp, along with frequent impacts.** 95% agreed that their child had fun, 88% that their child grew in self-confidence, 94% that it is clear camp had a positive impact on their child, 89% that their child was strengthened in faith, and 68% that their child showed greater interest in attending church.
- **Parents generally identified moderate impacts that camp had on specific family faith practices.** Considering camp’s impact on 8 family practices, less than half (45%) of responding parents indicated that their child’s camp experience had “a good amount” or “a lot” of impact on at least one of these practices, though 71% indicated having at least “a moderate amount” of impact on at least one. Camp had the most consistent impacts on “conversations about God.”
- **Parents who saw camp as an important tool for family faith formation were more likely to report impacts.** Respondents who reported that equipping families was a very or extremely important goal of camp were 1.5 times more likely to report that the camp experience had impacted at least 1 of the 8 practices measured, while respondents that strongly agreed that camp was an important tool in faith formation were 2.5 times more likely to report that the camp experience had impacted at least 1 practice.
- **Increased camp dosage was associated with more reported impacts.** Repeat experiences, having multiple children attend camp, and participating in a supplemental program (e.g. family camp) were all factors associated with an increase in reported impacts of camp on family faith. Parents who attended camp as a child also tended to attribute greater impacts on family faith to camp. In addition, these parents with increased camp dosage reported significantly higher agreement with the statement, “Christian summer camp is an important tool in faith formation.” Those with multiple children attending (compared with only one) and those who had at least one supplemental camp experience were 1.33 times more likely to report that camp impacted at least one practice.



General Findings & Reflections

- **Home and church were generally considered more important than camp experiences for influencing family faith practices.** Responding parents generally perceived camp as important in influencing their family's Christian faith practices: 63% indicated that experiences at camp during the summer were "very" or "extremely important" factors in influencing their family's Christian faith practices, and an additional 25% indicated they were "moderately important." However, this was less than the proportion indicating the same for the importance of their own faith commitment (85% very or extremely important), their child's faith commitment (78%), and support of their local church (73%). For families with the lowest levels of faith commitment (in terms of church attendance, prayer at mealtimes, and conversations about God), camp was identified, on average, as the most important factor in influencing their family faith, indicating that faith commitment was lower when camp had the primary role over church and home.
- **There was substantial variation across different camps and the different affiliations (LOM, UMCRM, and CCCA) in the perceived goals of camp, respondent faith commitment/practices, and reported impacts of camp on family faith.**
 - In general, CCCA parents reported higher faith commitment and practices compared with LOM and UMCRM parents. CCCA parents reported significantly more frequent church attendance, conversations about God with their children, prayer practices, and Bible reading. They also tended to prioritize the faith aspects of camp much more than LOM or UMCRM parents. For example, 72% of CCCA respondents agreed or strongly agreed that faith formation and Christian practices should be integrated into all aspects of camp life, compared with 58% of UMCRM and 53% of LOM respondents. Similarly, 92% of CCCA respondents agreed or strongly agreed, "Faith in God is central to my daily life," compared with 80% of UMCRM and 70% of LOM respondents.
 - LOM and UMCRM respondents tended to attribute greater impacts to the camp experience on family faith practices, with 67% of LOM and 69% of UMCRM respondents indicating camp was a "very" or "extremely important" factor in their family faith formation, compared with 59% of CCCA respondents. More than half of LOM (53.3%) and UMCRM (50.4%) respondents indicated camp had "a good amount" or "a lot" of impact on at least 1 of the 8 family faith practices, compared with 39.4% of CCCA respondents. This may be the case because CCCA respondents had a higher overall faith commitment, on average, leaving less growth attributable to camp. The one family faith practice that CCCA respondents attributed higher impact to camp than LOM or UMCRM respondents was Bible reading, suggesting that the emphasis on this practice was much lower at LOM and UMCRM camps.
 - LOM and UMCRM parents indicated greater connection between camp and church, and they also reported higher impacts on faith outcomes related to church engagement. 74% of UMCRM respondents and 87% of LOM respondents agreed "It is clear that the camp and my local church are close partners in ministry to young people and their families," compared with 69% of CCCA respondents. 26% of UMCRM respondents and 29% of LOM respondents indicated that camp had "a good amount" or "a lot" of impact on "engagement and participation in church community," compared with 18% of CCCA respondents.



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