



## They're Ruining Our Week!

“I could tell that Frank and Hal were scared. Coming from inner-city Akron and attending camp for the first time, they formed an alliance within the first ten minutes, despite not knowing each other prior to camp. They stared and muttered under their breath as the veteran Wanake campers joyfully talked about camp.”

“The battle lines were drawn and despite our efforts as counselors, we had three days of battle. Frank and Hal called the rest of the group names that would give a movie an “R” rating. We used every tool we had to build understanding, cooperation, and community. We led Bible study about Jesus accepting all people. We set firm limits for Frank and Hal’s behavior and policed their name-calling and vulgarity. We sat down and talked about disputes.”

“Despite these efforts, everything fell apart on Wednesday. From the dock I heard Kathy shouting from her canoe to Frank and Hal, ‘Leave us alone! Stop that!’ The boys were using their paddles to splash lake water on the girls and refused to stop. Soon all four were calling each other names. Kathy and Lisa paddled for the dock, reaching it just as my co-counselor joined me.”

“Why do we have to put up with this?” Kathy sobbed. “We’ve tried to be nice to them all week, and they’ve only been mean to us. They’re ruining our week. Can’t you just send them home? We shouldn’t have to put up with this!”

“Frank and Hal’s canoe pulled up to the dock. The two had been close enough to hear every word.”

“My co-counselor sat down on the dock and through her tears told them, ‘I need to tell you what this week means to me. When I was your age, I came to Wanake on a scholarship because my family could not afford camp. That week I promised Jesus that I would not let people who couldn’t pay be kept from camp. I promised Him that I would help others the way His people at Wanake had helped me. There’s enough hate in this world. Wanake is a place where we try to live by love.’”

“Everyone was quiet. There were tears on Frank’s cheeks. We helped the campers pull their canoes out of the water.”

“Thursday morning we had planned to build a mud oven and that evening we had hoped to have a serious Pow-Wow. I was dreading both, foreseeing angry mud fights in the morning and sullen, hostile campers seated at the campfire in the evening.”

“But on Thursday our group was a new creation. Frank, Hal, Kathy, and Lisa wallowed in the mud hole. They laughed and slapped mud around to accompany their joy.”

“At the Pow-Wow campfire Hal said, ‘I want to tell you I’m sorry for all the names I called people this week and for the other things I did to hurt others. At school others don’t treat me like you do here. I didn’t know what it was like to know Jesus’ people. I’ve never had people be nice to me and accept me like you have.’”

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