



SAFEZONE

Promoting Healthy Boundaries
in Christian Camps





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How to Use SafeZone – Note to Facilitators & Readers

1. *SafeZone is intended as a conversation starter for youth and young adults on sexual boundaries and is best used under the supervision of a qualified facilitator.*
2. *When used within the context of a camp environment, this material is intended to complement existing policies and training protocols already in place.*
3. *It is the responsibility of the persons using this material to educate themselves about the laws regarding consent and sexual abuse within their country and region.*
4. *This material is not intended as a resource on receiving or reporting the disclosure of sexual abuse experienced by a minor. It is the obligation of any organization using this material to understand the legal requirements for reporting suspected child abuse in their jurisdiction and to ensure that staff are competently trained in this area.*

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Crossing The Line

Madison's Story

Madison couldn't wait to get to camp! This was her fourth year going back to Happy Trails Bible Ranch. Her favourite part was horseback riding, and now that she was 13 she qualified to sign up for the four day out-trip. She hoped she would be assigned her favourite horse, "Jenny."

When she arrived she was delighted that the staff remembered her name. She blushed when Tyler, the horse wrangler said, "You've grown up a lot this year, Maddy!"

The first day was orientation. She was disappointed that Jenny was given to a different camper. Tyler gave her a new horse. "I know Midnight is a bit frisky, but I think you can handle him." Madison felt nervous, and she had a hard time getting her foot in the stirrup because this horse was a lot bigger, and he kept moving. Tyler came and helped. Shielded by the horse from everyone else, Tyler whispered encouraging words. She was shocked when his hand went all the way up between her legs as he helped her into the saddle. She looked at Tyler but he just looked normal; she figured it was just an accident.



Madison should ride in front of him, so he could keep an eye on Midnight.

She was shocked when his hand went all the way up between her legs as he helped her into the saddle.

The next day they set out single file down the trail. Her counsellors led the line. Tyler was the last one. He told the counsellors that Madison should ride in front of him, so he could keep an eye on Midnight. All day he laughed and joked with Madison, telling her camp stories. That night as they struck camp he watched to make sure the horses were being groomed properly. He took Madison's hand to show her the correct way to do it. Standing behind her, he pressed his body against hers. She squirmed away and glanced at his face. He just smiled. Madison looked away, confused.

The rest of the trail ride was a blur for Madison. All she remembered was trying to stay away from Tyler, and Tyler always finding her. Once on the trail he startled her horse on purpose so it ran away. He went after her. When they were out of the sight of the others, he rode in close, taking the reins. As Midnight slowed to a walk, Tyler leaned over and ran his hand under Madison's t-shirt and touched her breast. She was trapped on the horse but tried to lean out of reach. Tyler laughed, and told her she was pretty when she was mad. Madison was so relieved when she heard her counsellor galloping up to see if she was OK.

After they finished the trail ride, they were putting the horses into their stalls. Tyler told Madison to bring her saddle into the workshop, he wanted to fix a broken buckle. He was facing the wall when she walked in. He looked to see who it was, then he turned. She saw that he had unzipped his pants and exposed himself. She dropped the saddle and ran.

"How was camp?" her parents asked when they picked her up. "It was boring," she mumbled. "I don't ever want to come back, I don't really like horses." They were puzzled at this change of heart, but chalked it up to the changes that come with being a teenager.

Two years later Madison still hadn't told anyone. She never went back to camp; in fact whenever she thought about camp she felt sick to her stomach. Then Julia, her youth pastor, led a session about boundaries, and sexual abuse. Madison wondered, "Should I tell Julia what happened?"

Faith Perspective: Crossing into the Abuse Zone

Jesus has very strong words for those who hurt little ones. He says, “It would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Camp staff are trained about boundaries. They are taught that as they interact with campers and leaders in training, it is their job to make sure no sexual boundaries get crossed. Tyler crossed sexual boundaries numerous times with Madison. He gave her a difficult horse so that he would have an excuse to be around her. He manipulated her so that she could be abused without anyone seeing. Madison was trapped.

Abuse is a Crime

In this story, two years have passed and no one at the camp knows that Tyler abused Madison. What will happen if Madison tells Julia, her youth pastor?

Julia has been trained about boundary crossings, and when she hears this story she knows that Madison is sharing a story of abuse. She listens quietly, and tells Madison, “I believe you. I am sorry this happened to you. He was wrong to do that.”

Julia tells Madison that it would be best to tell her parents what happened. She offers to go with Madison as she does that. Madison’s parents are shocked when they hear. Julia counsels them to call Child and Family Services or the police. What happened was a crime. Tyler needs to be stopped. Are there other victims?

After that camp experience, Madison started always wearing layers of clothes and loose baggy sweaters even on hot days. She was careful where she went, and always tried to avoid being alone. She started having recurring nightmares where her horse was running away and Tyler was chasing them. She would always wake up just as she was deciding to jump off the running horse onto the rocks.

Camp staff are trained about boundaries. It is their job to make sure no sexual boundaries get crossed.



Who Can Be Abused?

The story doesn't say whether Tyler was 17 or 50; it doesn't matter. Madison was sexually abused and that is a crime.

Abuse also happens when there is an imbalance of power. If Tyler was a full-time staff member in charge of counsellors, and he chose to sexually touch a counsellor instead of Madison the camper, it would still be abuse. If Tyler is in a position of authority over her, a counsellor might worry that if she complains about Tyler's actions she could lose her job.

Camp staff must never cross a sexual boundary with campers or the staff for whom they are responsible.



The story doesn't say whether Tyler was 17 or 50; it doesn't matter.

What Happens in the Abuse Zone?

Abusive behaviour can include:

- touching someone sexually above or under clothing
- exposing your private parts to them
- sexualized language or comments about someone's appearance
- taking or sharing sexual pictures of a minor
- making someone watch a sex act
- sending sexualized messages on social media to a minor
- spying on someone as they get undressed or go to the washroom
- sharing sexually explicit pictures or stories
- contact that a minor initiates or seems to enjoy
- physically holding someone down and touching them in intimate ways
- rape, and forcing someone through manipulation, threats or force to perform a sexual act

What do you think?

1. What does Tyler do to manipulate Madison?
2. What do you think prevented Madison from reaching out for help even as the abuse was happening? Why does Madison keep quiet about this for two years?
3. What are the legal consequences for Tyler once the authorities are called? What other consequences will Tyler face?
4. What do you think will happen at Happy Trails Bible Ranch once they find out that Madison was abused by Tyler, one of their employees?
5. Do you have any ideas how the camp could become a safer zone, where this abuse would be less likely to happen? How can the camp help staff feel safe to report abuse



Falling in Love or Abuse? It's a Power Issue

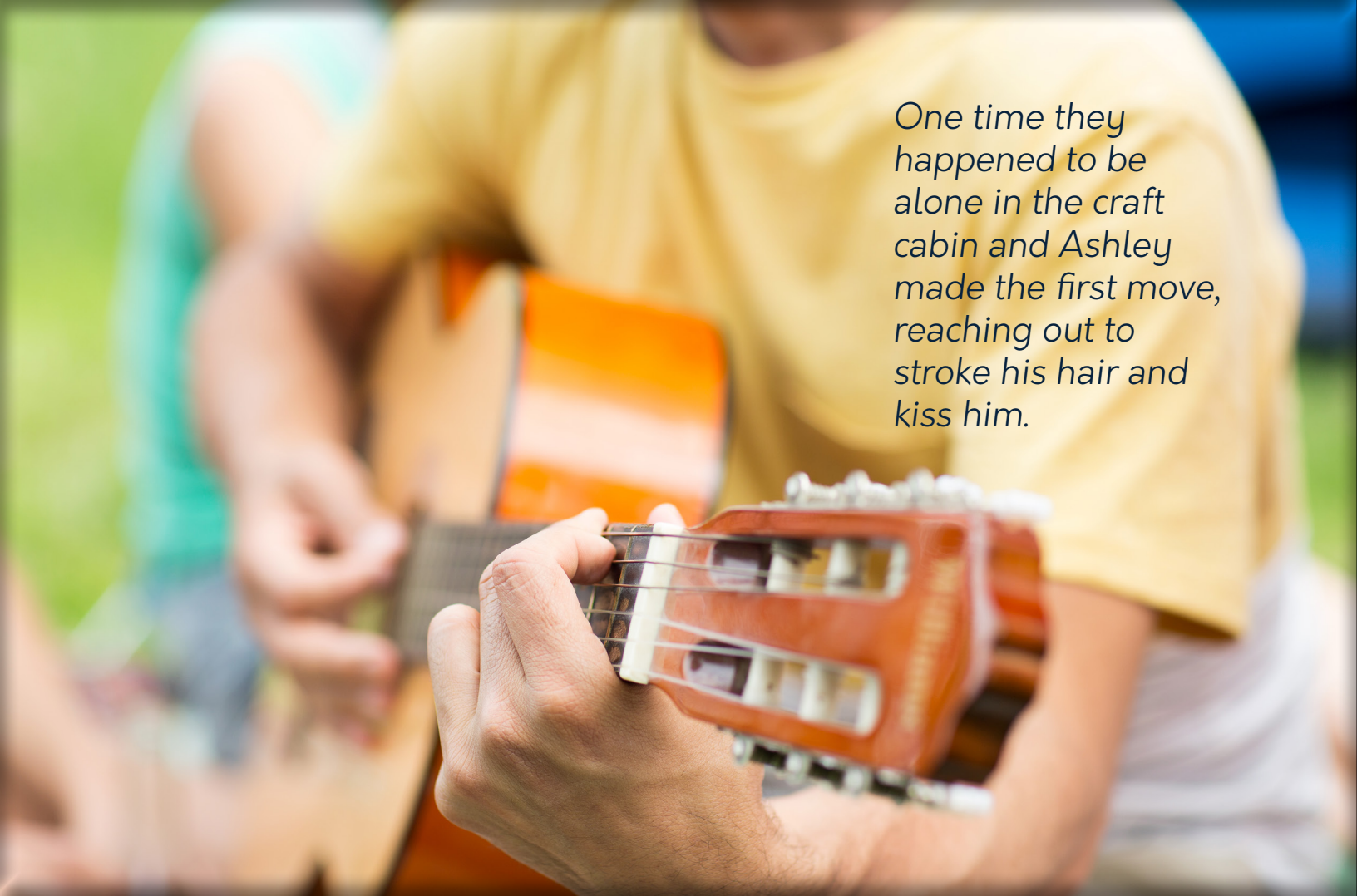
Ashley's Story

Ashley knew that she would be a great camp counsellor. She'd come to Teen Adventure at Camp Maranatha the year before, and this year she was accepted into the leader in training program. She was seventeen years old.

She noticed Brandon at the first campfire. He was a camp counsellor and played guitar during the worship music time. She felt weak at the knees just listening to his voice. She made sure she was in his small discussion group the next day.

At lunch she asked whether she could play his guitar and before too long he was showing her chords. They both loved music and started spending some free time together. There were almost always people around. One time they happened to be alone in the craft cabin and Ashley made the first move, reaching out to stroke his hair and kiss him.

Brandon was flattered by the attention. He really liked Ashley and he was happy to kiss her back. They got closer to each other quite quickly. They tried not to let anyone see they were close; they didn't want to draw attention to their relationship.



One time they happened to be alone in the craft cabin and Ashley made the first move, reaching out to stroke his hair and kiss him.

By the end of July, Ashley was convinced she was in love with Brandon. Brandon meanwhile wasn't so sure. He found Ashley to be annoying at times, even though he was very attracted to her. And he had just met Trina, the new nature instructor who came to camp the first week of August. Ashley soon sensed that Brandon was more distant. She saw how he was looking at Trina.

August 10th was evaluation day for the leader in training program. Decisions had to be made as to who would be given the opportunity to lead a cabin group the last two weeks of August and who would go home. When Ashley's name came up, Brandon spoke against keeping

her on. She had privately told him that she wasn't sure she liked being around little kids so much. He mentioned that comment in the evaluation process. He said, "I'm just not sure Ashley is mature enough to lead a cabin group." He told a story of a time he saw her frustrated with some campers.

When Ashley went for her leader in training interview with the camp directors, Ryan and Leslie, they told her she had not been selected to lead a cabin group. Ashley was devastated. She started crying; she kept saying over and over again, "What did I do wrong?"

While normally they didn't go into detail about specifics, because she

When Ashley's name came up, Brandon spoke against keeping her on.

was so upset Ryan mentioned the time she had been frustrated. Ashley was shocked; there had been no other staff present at the time except Brandon. “Did Brandon mention that?” she asked. Ryan and Leslie looked at each other but didn’t say anything, wanting to maintain confidentiality about their leadership discussions.

That’s when Ashley poured out her story of “falling in love” with Brandon. She sobbed, “He’s only saying that because he wants me to leave camp. He wants to start dating Trina!”

Ryan and Leslie gave Ashley some time, and then they talked to her about what happened when she wasn’t quite so upset. They talked with each other about this situation and called their board chairperson to get some advice. Then they asked Brandon to come in and talk to them.

“He wants me to leave camp. He wants to start dating Trina!”

Faith Perspective: David Crosses a Line

One day when David was the King of Israel, he spied a beautiful woman who was taking a bath out in the open. He found out her name was Bathsheba and the story tells us, “David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her” (2 Samuel 11:4).

At one time, people might have asked, “Why was Bathsheba taking a bath where someone could spy on her?” or “Why did she go to David?” People through history have sometimes blamed Bathsheba for what happened.

David was a king; she was his subject. What would have happened to Bathsheba if she refused? What could have happened to her husband, who was one of the king’s soldiers? She was in the king’s power from beginning to end. She could not refuse and so the sex was not consensual. Today we would call that rape.

As a king, David’s role was to lead and protect his subjects from harm. Instead of protecting Bathsheba from harm, King David misuses his power for his own benefit.



Camp Leadership: Power and Responsibility

Camp staff are given responsibility in their roles. They are called to be responsible for people in their care — campers, as well as leaders in training.

Brandon was shocked when Ryan and Leslie told him he had crossed a sexual boundary. He knew that he and Ashley were not exactly equal. “I only went along with what she wanted to do! I didn’t force her to do anything! It was just a few kisses!”

There was a difference in power between Brandon and Ashley. He had the power to evaluate her and influence whether she would be chosen to lead a cabin group. Ashley herself may have felt at first that she and Brandon were just “falling in love.” But when she found out he had spoken against her, it became very clear to her that their status at camp was unequal.

The directors told Brandon that he had to leave camp and that they were calling Family and Children’s Services to investigate. When he protested again that he had never been the one to make the first move, they told him that it didn’t matter. As camp staff, it was his responsibility to maintain sexual boundaries. They reminded him of the section of the staff training where that had been explained. Brandon had not been paying attention. He thought it was all common sense. He never thought that he could be someone who would abuse power.



The Fallout

Camp organizations hire leaders for their program. It is the responsibility of the camp directors to monitor leaders as they do their work and to receive complaints about that work. If directors hear a complaint that a leader has violated that trust, they have to investigate.

When you go to camp as a camper, leader in training or a staff member, you trust that people will act responsibly

around you. In this story, Brandon totally forgot that he was in a position of trust, and that he was hired by the camp to help develop leadership skills with leaders in training.

When he started to think about Ashley as a “girlfriend” instead of a leader in training, he crossed a boundary. There will be a lot of fallout from his choice.

Brandon totally forgot that he was in a position of trust. When he started thinking of Ashley as a “girlfriend” he crossed a boundary.


What Do You Think?

1. How will this situation affect Ashley? How will her parents react when they are told?
2. What do you think is going to happen to Brandon?
3. What about Ryan and Leslie? Is there something they could have done to prevent this?
4. When Brandon leaves, how could this affect Camp Maranatha and the staff who work there?
5. How do you personally feel about what happened with Brandon and Ashley? Who do you identify with?

Camp staff are given responsibility in their roles. They are called to be responsible for people in their care — campers, as well as leaders in training.







Finding Your Voice:

Why Do Survivors Wait So Long?

Ethan's Story

Ethan took a deep breath as he pressed “Send” on the email. It was an email addressed to the board chairperson of Yellow River Gospel Camp. He had been working on the email for two weeks. As the email appeared in his sent box, he felt a huge wave of emotion flow through him.

The last time Ethan was at Yellow River Gospel Camp was the summer he was 15. That was 20 years ago. He had gone to the camp for five years; it was his home away from home.

The summer he was 15 Ethan had two counsellors, Michael and Jacob. Michael really encouraged his faith in God. Ethan remembered a day they were floating down the river in a canoe. It was a perfect day, and Michael shared about God's presence in his

After that canoe ride, in the middle of the night, Ethan woke up to realize that someone was on top of him, rubbing against him. It was Michael's voice in his ear whispering, "Quiet!" He could hear the sound of Jacob snoring. He wanted to jump up, but he felt like he was frozen. He couldn't move. Could this really be happening to him? Time seemed to slow down, and he had the strangest feeling. He felt like he was outside the cabin looking in at what was happening in his bunk. He saw that his body was responding to Michael even though he didn't want this. He wanted to cry out but what would happen then? What would the guys in his cabin think if they saw this happening? He felt paralyzed. Soon it was over.

The next day Ethan couldn't even look at Michael. He avoided being around him. But Michael found an opportunity to lean in and whisper, "Ethan, what happened last night was wrong. We shouldn't have done that. I'll pray that God can forgive us."

The last night of camp, Ethan woke up to Michael on top of him again. He just buried his head in his pillow and prayed that it would end. All he wanted to do was go home. Before Michael left, he whispered, "You can't tell anyone. If you tell, I'll have to kill myself."

That all happened 20 years ago. Now Ethan was writing a complaint to the camp outlining how Michael had abused him. He wrote how he was so ashamed

he couldn't tell anyone. He never went to camp again. He explained how he became consumed with guilt that he had let it happen. He started having big anger issues. He couldn't believe in God anymore. He started drinking heavily so that he could forget his pain.

Eventually Ethan did find a friend with whom he was able to talk. It was the woman who eventually became his wife. They had a son together, and when his son was old enough to want to go to camp, it all came rushing back for Ethan. He felt incredibly anxious, so that he could hardly work. His wife convinced him to go to see a therapist. It was in therapy that he realized that he could take control by reporting to the camp that he had been raped.

He wanted to jump up, but he felt like he was frozen. He couldn't move. Could this really be happening?

He became consumed with guilt.

He started having anger issues.

He couldn't believe in God anymore.



Ethan didn't say anything because for a long time he felt it was his fault.

Faith Perspective



No More Terrible Secrets

Jesus' harshest words were for the Pharisees. Their job was to lead people to God. Jesus is critical of how they said one thing and did another. Jesus says, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops" (Luke 12:1-3).

There are no secrets in the kingdom of heaven. Everyone will be held accountable for what they have done. Even when it is done in the night, even when it is a secret that has been kept for years. Even the secret of a counsellor abusing a vulnerable young camper.

Time Doesn't Take Away the Pain

Why did it take so long for the truth to come out? Ethan didn't say anything because for a long time he felt it was his fault. His body had responded; did that mean he had participated? He believed Michael when he said that God needed to forgive them both. It was his therapist who helped him understand that our bodies can respond sexually even when we don't want that.

Ethan also felt terrible that he had not cried out for help. He hadn't struggled and run away. The therapist also explained that not everyone has a "fight or flight" response to being attacked. Sometimes people freeze when they are threatened, they become numb and they can't move. It's a coping mechanism that sometimes just happens. Sometimes our bodies just respond with no thinking involved. For example, we may see a bear and know that the best thing to do is to stand still, but somehow our bodies just start running. When we are threatened, sometimes instinct takes over.

For a long time Ethan tried to bury the memory. He tried not to think about it. He thought he was over it. It was in the past. But when he saw the vulnerability of his son, and thought of him going to camp, the pain resurfaced.

One of the most difficult things for Ethan to realize was that the assault changed his whole life. It changed the way he felt and acted. It changed his relationship to God. He gave up on faith for years. He didn't trust anyone for a really long time. It took months of therapy to unpack all the pain Ethan had been carrying since that week at camp.

The assault changed his whole life — the way he felt and acted, and it changed his relationship to God.

Believing Survivors

Camps are serious about responding to reports about violence and abuse. They have policies in place and are clear that anything involving harm to a child (anyone under 18) needs to be reported to Child and Family Services and may involve the police. Yellow River Gospel Camp contacted Ethan immediately after receiving his letter. They told him they believed him and that it took a lot of courage to come forward with his story. They encouraged him to go to the police so that there could be a criminal investigation.

The camp board called a meeting to talk about how they could determine whether there were other victims of abuse during the three summers that Michael was a counsellor. Some members of the board wanted to wait and see what happened with the court case. Others wanted to be more proactive, and to publish a notice in the camp



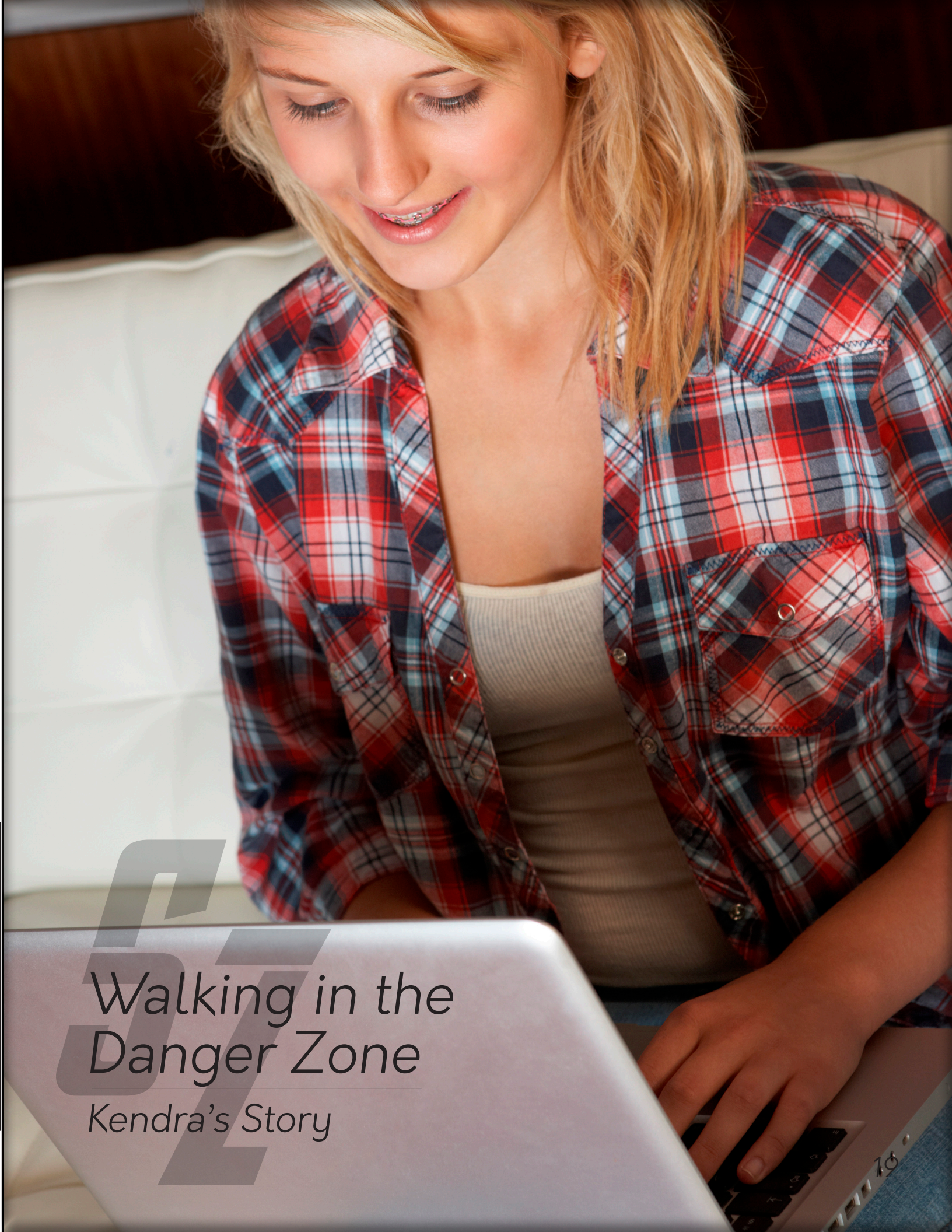
newsletter, saying that the camp had received allegations of sexual abuse from these certain years. As always, anyone who had experienced abuse was encouraged to share their story. The camp wanted to help anyone who was hurt at the camp. Having a transparent approach to abuse was the best way to show people that abuse would not be tolerated.

No one chooses to be a victim of violence and abuse. When survivors of abuse find their voice and share their story, the camp will respond, regardless of how long ago it happened.

Having a transparent approach to abuse was the best way to show people that abuse would not be tolerated.

What Do You Think?

1. Have you heard about the “flight or fight or freeze” response to a threat?
2. Name the ways the assault changed Ethan’s life.
3. How will other camp staff feel when they hear about this story from long ago? (They may never know who the camper was because Ethan may choose to keep his identity confidential, but they may hear if Michael is criminally charged.)
4. What are the implications for Yellow River Gospel Camp?



Walking in the Danger Zone

Kendra's Story

This was Kendra's first year at Lone Pine Camp. She was 15 and was having a hard year because her parents were going through a divorce. She loved being at camp to get away from that whole scene.

The last day of camp was very emotional for her. She was writing down all her friends' contact info so she could Skype with them when she went home. She had connected with Brent, the camp lifeguard, because she spent a lot of time swimming. She asked Brent for his Skype name. He said he couldn't share it with her; this was the policy at camp and he couldn't break that rule.

Kendra's mom was late picking her up from camp, so Kendra was alone for a while waiting

for her in the camp office. She saw a staff email list on the desk, and took the opportunity to copy out Brent's email address.

At the end of September, she sent Brent an email; "Hey, it's me, Kendra!" That started some casual emails, just a few sentences. After a few months some of the emails started to get longer as Kendra talked about what was happening at home and Brent tried to provide support. "Why don't we talk on Skype?" Kendra eventually asked. "It's easier than writing this all down."

That's how they started Skyping. Kendra was very lonely, and she sometimes felt that Brent was the only person who understood her. She secretly thought she was falling in love with him.

That's how they started Skyping. Kendra was very lonely, and she sometimes felt that Brent was the only person who understood her.



She was Skyping with him one evening in her bedroom when her mom walked in. Her mom was shocked to see that Kendra was topless! Kendra had quickly closed Skype but her mom looked at her Skype history and saw Brent's name. She demanded to know who he was.

That's how the police got involved, and how the Lone Pine camp director heard about the situation. Brent found a police officer at his door asking him about his interactions with Kendra. Brent said, "We've just been talking on Skype sometimes. She is going through a lot. I'm just trying to support her."

The police explained the charges of internet luring because Kendra was naked when her mother saw her on the computer with Brent. Brent blurted out, "But I could only ever see her face. I had no idea she had no clothes on!"

"We've just been talking on Skype. I had no idea she had no clothes on!"



Faith Perspective: What to Avoid

When the apostle Paul wrote advice to the church at Thessalonika, he told them to avoid even the appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22). It's not enough to simply avoid doing bad things; you have to avoid even the appearance of doing bad things.

That caution to stay far away from crossing the line is the basis of a lot of Safe Space policies in churches and camps. Abusive things can happen when one person is alone with a more vulnerable person. Abusive things don't necessarily happen then, but if they happen, they often happen without witnesses. It's a danger zone because that's the area where abuse can happen. That's why camps and churches have strict policies trying to avoid those one-on-one alone times. That's why there are windows in doors everywhere. There is less chance of abuse if our spaces are more transparent.

The same goes for social media and on-line platforms. That is an area that is off limits between adults and children, between campers and staff, or for anyone who has responsibility over another (like counsellors over leaders in training).

Brent went into a danger zone when he started corresponding on-line with a camper. He should not have done that. While he was at camp, he remembered the rules; he knew enough not to share his Skype information with Kendra. But once they were away from the camp setting, a few emails seemed innocent enough, and he felt sorry for her because of the break-up of her parents.

When the police showed up, Brent was in a panic. He suddenly realized how vulnerable he was.



Rules for a Reason

Once staff leave camp, they sometimes feel they can relax the strict rules that are put in place around boundaries. How could a few emails hurt anyone?

Brent felt that he was just being a friend to a lonely teenager. He put himself in danger the minute he started Skyping with a minor. He could not control what she did online. It doesn't matter who initiated the sexual part of that call and whether he knew or not. He had willingly walked into a danger zone where he could be charged with a crime.

This could change Brent's life forever.

What Do You Think?

1. Where did Brent go wrong? What do you think will happen to him now?
2. What could the impact be on Kendra's life?
3. We usually think about boundaries being put in place to protect victims. How can boundaries protect staff?
4. What could Lone Pine Camp have done differently to prevent this from happening?

When Something Goes Wrong

Reo and Emily's Story

Bethel Bible Camp had a tradition of one free evening in their programming each week. The campers could just hang out, or go to various centres and do activities. The staff were spread out around the camp keeping an eye on things, running some activities, and reaching out to campers who seemed at loose ends.





The girls pleaded
to be let out,
but the boys just
laughed.

Matt and Josh and Sam were twelve-year-old campers. They decided to head out to the orienteering shack. There was no one there and they got bored. Sam thought it would be funny if they could lock someone in the shack. Sam and Josh ran over to the main hiking trail and waited for someone to pass by. Reo and her friend Emily, from the eleven-year-old cabin, came along. Sam called to them, "Hey, come see! We found a kitten at the orienteering shack. It's so cute!"

The girls went into the shack eager to see the kitten. The boys slammed the door shut behind them and jammed it with a piece of wood. The girls pleaded to be let out, but the boys just laughed. The girls got more and more distraught as they pushed on the door with no result. There was just one high window. All three boys got some logs to stand on so they could look in the window at the girls. This went on for around 15 minutes, the girls pleading, the boys laughing. Then Josh called down to them; "It's simple. One of you just has to lift up your top, and then we'll let you out. Simple!"

Emily had had enough. She started yelling for help. Josh said, "If you keep yelling we're going to tell everyone that you did take off your top for us." That stopped Emily. Emily and Reo sat down, they figured they would wait for help. That was boring for the boys, so Sam started taunting them, "Hey puss, puss, here pussy!" The boys laughed but the girls were quiet.

Meanwhile Carly, the staff person assigned to the orienteering shack, had been talking with her friend at the archery field. She hadn't thought any kids would go out to the orienteering shack as it wasn't a popular activity. She heard voices as she got closer to her post, so she picked up her pace. "How long was I talking at the archery field?" she wondered, suddenly feeling guilty.

The boys ran off as soon as they saw Carly. Emily and Reo dissolved into tears as she let them out. She was relieved to see that they were fine. Carly didn't tell anyone about it, partly because she was embarrassed that she hadn't been supervising the orienteering shack.

When Reo went home that week, she tearfully told her mother what happened. The extremely upset mother called the camp director; "Is this the kind of behaviour you allow at Bethel Bible Camp? This is disgusting and unacceptable. I'm never sending my child to your camp again and I'm going to tell everyone why!"

"It's simple. One of you just has to lift up your top, and then we'll let you out. Simple!"

Faith Perspective: Watch and Wait

“Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent” (Isaiah 62:6).

In biblical times, raiders would attack cities so sentinels would be posted on the city walls all night to watch for signs of danger. It was a boring job because most of the time nothing happened. But it was an important job because in the split second when something happened, the sentinel could sound the alarm in time and save the city from attack.

Being a camp staff person sometimes involves being a sentinel. You are watching for danger. And sometimes it can be a boring job because most of the time there isn't any danger. But like a lifeguard ready to dive into the pool when she sees someone drowning, a staffperson jumps in to intervene in a dangerous situation.

If Carly had been at her post...

If Carly had been at her post, the orienteering shack would not have been empty and no one would have been locked in. If she had come along earlier, she could have seen the boys trapping the girls, told them it was inappropriate and freed them before sexually threatening things were said to them.

Duty to Report

Carly made a mistake talking to her friend so long at the archery field. But she made a bigger mistake when she didn't pay much attention to Emily and Reo's tears. She didn't really want to hear their story because she was responsible for not taking care of her post. She didn't want anything to have happened, so she didn't ask them enough questions.

Another big mistake was that she didn't report this to the camp director. Carly was embarrassed about not reporting for duty promptly. But she also didn't think through what had happened or how traumatic this was to Reo and Emily. Was this “joking around” or was this “forcible confinement”? Was this “teasing” or was this “sexual harassment”? The camp director would have known better, investigated and provided support to the girls and counsel to the boys. She would have called the parents herself to tell them about this incident. Because Carly kept this secret, the director found out about it from a camper's parent.

What Do You Think?

1. What are possible effects of this experience on Reo and Emily?
2. Where is the line between the safe zone of fun and joking, and the zone of harassment and abuse in this story?
3. Were all the boys responsible for what happened? What about Matt, the camper who doesn't say anything in his story: what responsibility does he have for what happened?
4. How do you think Bethel Bible Camp should take responsibility now that they know what happened?





When the Light Dawns

Hannah's Story

Hannah attended the two-week teen session at Canyon Creek Youth Camp for three years running. She loved it! She got to know Pastor Bob, who led the Bible sessions each year; he was such a good speaker, and he really challenged her to be serious about her faith in God.

Hannah was talking with Pastor Bob one day, and found out they lived in the same neighbourhood back in the city. Pastor Bob asked her if she would ever consider dogsitting for him and his wife because their regular dogsitter wasn't available anymore. "Our dog is a five-year-old beagle named Mitzi. You will love her!" Pastor Bob and his wife, Karen, were involved in international ministry and went on frequent mission trips.

That's how Hannah started dogsitting. Seven or eight times a year Bob or Karen would come to her house to drop off and pick up Mitzi. Sometimes Bob would linger on the porch talking to Hannah, asking about her faith and her life.

Hannah started having trouble at home. She had lots of fights with her parents. She shared this with Pastor Bob, a trusted adult. "I'm old enough to move out! Next week I turn 18. I have a job, I just don't have enough saved up for first and last month's rent."

The next time Bob dropped off Mitzi, he gave Hannah an envelope. It was filled with hundred dollar bills! “It’s for your first and last month’s rent. I felt a little voice nudging me to help you. But just make sure your new apartment allows pets, because Mitzi would miss you if you couldn’t dogsit.”

Two months later, Bob dropped off Mitzi at Hannah’s new apartment. As he turned to leave, he held out his arms. “Don’t I deserve a hug?” Hannah felt a bit awkward giving him a hug since they had only exchanged handshakes before.

The hug was a bit longer than she was comfortable with but Pastor Bob was such a good friend.

Over the following months, Bob lingered longer when he dropped off Mitzi. He explained how stressed out he was, and that things at home were not good for him. Hannah listened sympathetically. Next time he came he asked her to give him a little kiss. It didn’t seem right, but she gave him a little kiss on the cheek. He told her, “You don’t know what that means to me, to receive a little affection. I am thinking about leaving

Karen because she is so cold.”


Over the months Hannah sometimes had trouble making ends meet, it cost more than she thought to live on her own. Bob helped her with some cash. He also felt more and more at home at her place. Gradually, they started becoming more sexually intimate. He told her that God wanted them to be together, that he should never have married Karen. Hannah was confused. She thought that what they were doing was wrong but she truly loved Bob, and after he left Karen, he said he would marry her.

Hannah went on a short-term mission trip with her denomination. She met Rosa, a young woman around five years older than her. As they got to know each other better through the week, they realized they had both gone to Canyon Creek Youth Camp, but around five years apart. They shared some camp stories. After a pause, Rosa said, “Was Pastor Bob there when you were there?” Hannah nodded. In a quiet voice, Rosa asked, “Do you know if his wife is still alive?”

Hannah was surprised by the question. “I didn’t know she was ever sick! She was fine last month. I dogsit for them.” Rosa turned and looked at Hannah. “I used to dogsit for them too. He told me his wife was dying of cancer. It got... complicated, so I stopped dogsitting for them.”

Hannah’s stomach lurched as she asked, “What do you mean by ‘complicated’?”

A week later, when they returned from their mission trip, Hannah and Rosa made an appointment to talk to the director of Canyon Creek Youth Camp.



Over the following months, Bob lingered longer when he dropped off Mitzi.

Faith Perspective: Power in Numbers

“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

There is strength in numbers. By sharing their stories, Hannah and Rosa were able to put two and two together. Pastor Bob had tricked Rosa, telling her that he would marry her when Karen died of cancer. Rosa felt guilty falling in love with a married man, but Pastor Bob assured her that he could never get through his grief without her help. It all sounded too familiar to Hannah, she had heard similar things about how important she was to Bob. Bob told them both that God meant for them to be together.

Rosa also shared that she was 16 when she started dogsitting Mitzi. Pastor Bob only started being physical with her after her 18th birthday. That was Hannah’s own story. Suddenly Hannah realized that Bob had helped her get an apartment not because she needed help, but so that he could take advantage of her more easily.

They went together to meet the director of Canyon Creek Youth Camp. The director was horrified to hear their stories. “This should not have happened. It was wrong of Pastor Bob to do this. I worry that there are other young women who have been abused by him too. This needs to be investigated.”

What Do You Think?

1. What are some of the issues Hannah will face as she recovers from this abusive situation?
2. How will knowing Rosa help her in this process?
3. What do you think the director of Canyon Creek Youth Camp will do next?
4. What consequences will Pastor Bob face?

“I used to dogsit for them too. It got... complicated.”

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12).





Trouble in Paradise

Taylor's Story

Things were not going well in cabin five at Eden Glen Camp. The main problem was between two girls - Eva and Taylor. They knew each other from school, and they brought the bad blood between them to camp. It was a big challenge for the two counsellors to intervene and try and get them to talk it out.

Taylor played a prank by putting syrup in Eva's shoes one night. Eva screamed the next morning when she put on her shoes to go to the washroom. The two counsellors woke up to the screaming. They just rolled over. "It's too early in the morning for more drama," they said to each other.

Later that day Eva decided to get even. She wasn't supposed to have her phone at camp, but she had sneaked it inside her toiletry bag. While Taylor was washing her hair in the shower, Eva slipped the shower curtain open just a fraction and took a few pictures.

That night she texted the clearest, most revealing picture to Joe, one of their classmates at home. “Got even with Taylor today!” Eva wrote.

Joe snapchatted the photo to a bunch of his friends. The next day Joe got a call from Ron, a senior in their highschool. He had heard about the picture and asked if he could see it, so Joe texted it to him. Ron was part of a private Facebook group of twenty male students; they used it to post pictures of the girls at their school and rate their appearance. This was the only naked picture they had; Ron was congratulated by his friends for getting it. They all put their numerical vote beside her name. There were a lot of sexually explicit remarks in the comment section.

Two weeks after she got home from camp, Taylor found out that someone had taken naked pictures of her and shared them. A sister of one of the boys in the Facebook group had sneaked onto her brother’s computer and looked at the page that rated girls. She was shocked to see the photo of Taylor. She knew it was wrong, and she thought she better warn Taylor before the first day of school came.

Taylor was devastated. She felt her life was over, there was no way she could face anyone. Taylor told her mom and her mom called the police.

Taking a sexually explicit picture of a minor, and sharing it, is child pornography.

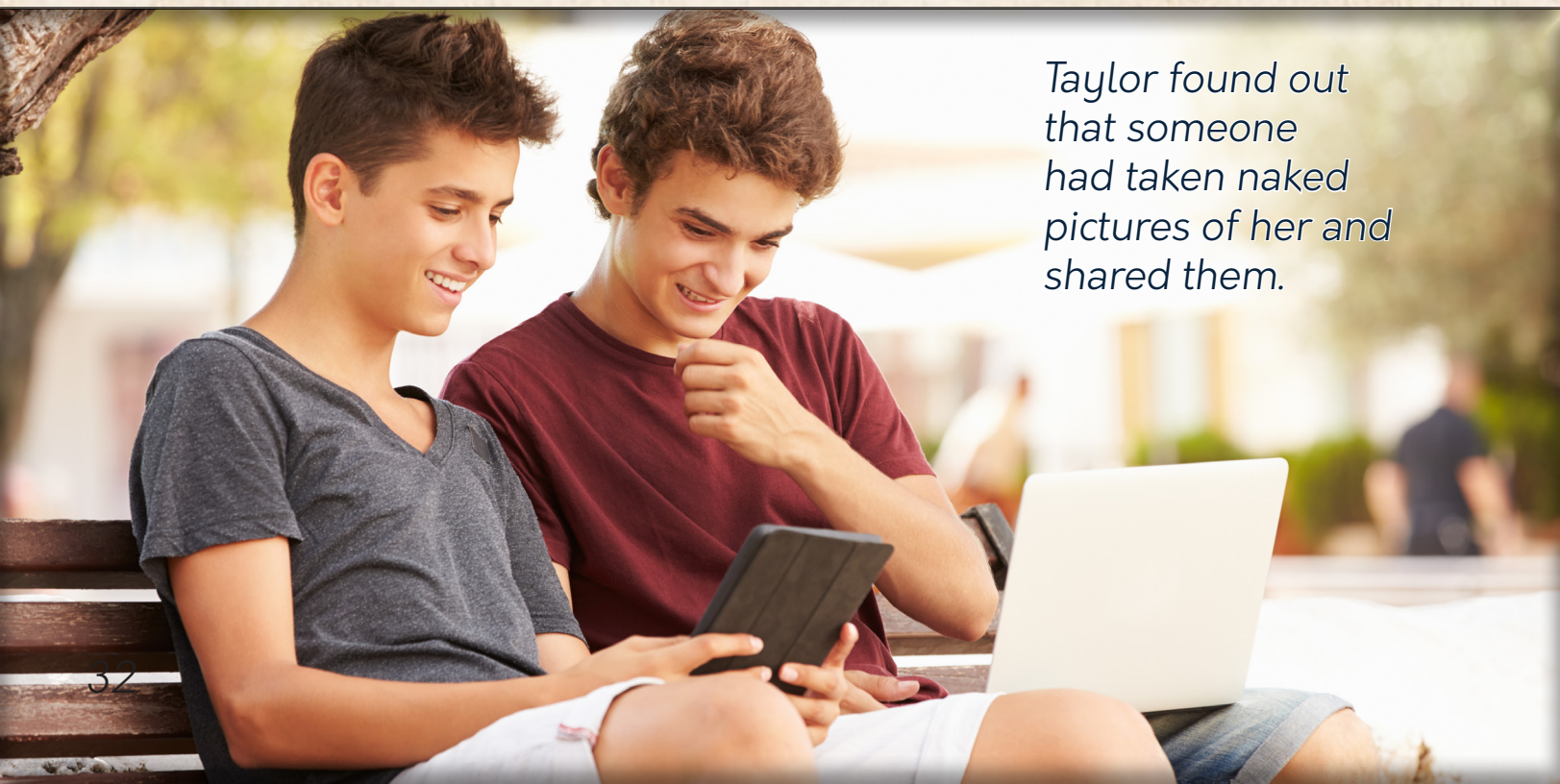
Faith Perspective: King David in Denial

Nathan was a prophet who was called to expose King David’s sin. David had sexually abused a married woman named Bathsheba, and he ordered that her husband be sent to the front lines so that he could be killed by the enemy soldiers.

David was in denial. He wasn’t admitting that he had done anything wrong. He probably had all sorts of rationalizations. He hadn’t “technically” killed anyone, and maybe he even thought Bathsheba wanted to be his partner. But Nathan the Prophet cuts through King David’s denials and exposes his sin, telling David, “You have despised the word of the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:9). David must come clean with God and face the truth of his actions.

God holds us accountable for our actions, and we are also all accountable to the laws in our country.

Taylor found out that someone had taken naked pictures of her and shared them.



Truth and Consequences

Taking a sexually explicit picture of a minor, and sharing it, is child pornography. Having a sexually explicit picture of a minor on your phone or computer is possession of child pornography. Eva was shocked when the police came with a search warrant and took her phone and computer. When she was arrested, she explained to the police that it was just a prank, and that she would say sorry. They told her that sorry was not enough. She was being charged with a crime and would be going to court.

Eva blamed Taylor. Why had Taylor complained? It was just a stupid picture, not a big deal. Now Eva felt her life was ruined. A criminal record would destroy her dream of being a teacher. Eva was mostly worried about herself. She didn't understand how this was affecting Taylor.

The police told her that saying sorry was not enough. She was being charged.

The harassment started the first day back at school. Boys Taylor didn't even know would walk by saying, "Looking good Taylor," or they'd say a number; "9" or "Definitely an 8." In November, when Eva and the other boys were arrested, and word got out why, the harassment really intensified. Somehow her phone number was shared, and people she didn't even know kept texting her pictures of rats. Guys and girls would walk by in the hall, and just say a number. Increasingly, the number was 0.

Taylor started having anxiety attacks; she found it difficult to leave the house. She felt betrayed, and humiliated, and unsafe. She felt that she was the problem. She ended up in the hospital after a suicide attempt.

The Camp Story

After the police were told about the picture, they visited Eden Glen Camp. They wanted to talk to the director and to the counsellors in Taylor's cabin. They wanted to get a list of campers who might have taken the picture. They asked about how the campers were being supervised.

After Taylor's suicide attempt, her parents consulted a lawyer. Eden Glen Camp was served with a million dollar lawsuit for the abuse Taylor suffered at camp and the pain and suffering that it caused her.

What Do You Think?

1. Taylor is violated both by Eva and the boys who shared the picture and harassed her, but at school Taylor ends up being blamed. Have you ever seen a situation where people blamed the victim?
2. What is the responsibility of the camp staff in this story? What could the camp have done differently to prevent this from happening?
3. Many people made bad choices in this story. Who made a good choice?
4. What do you think the consequences will be for Eden Glen Camp?
5. Most of this story happens outside the camp setting, but bullying can happen anywhere. Name some strategies to intervene helpfully if you see someone being bullied or harassed.





Camp Life: The After-Abuse Story

Grassy Knoll's Story

Nick was the camp counsellor everyone liked. Handsome, tall and with a big booming voice, he seemed to be a natural born leader. This was his first year at Grassy Knoll Teen Camp. He was 20 years old, the son of a wealthy businessman who had recently moved into the area. Nick's dad visited the camp and met with Henry, the camp director, telling him, "You can expect a big donation from me at the end of the year. I can see you have a wonderful ministry here." Nick's dad talked about the possibility of a named donation, maybe sponsoring a new swimming pool, or a gymnasium. The camp needed updating because it was 75 years old.

Nick got along well with everyone and was a great counsellor. He often went the extra mile to help a camper who was lonely. He loved to joke around with them and he was excellent at organizing group games.

Halfway through the summer, on one of the free nights where there were no campers, Nick slipped into the woods with a couple of other staff. He brought a couple of bottles of vodka, they had a campfire and got noisy enough to wake up Henry, the camp director. Henry followed the noise and found the party and broke it up. The policy said he should send Nick home for breaking the rules about liquor at camp. Henry remembered about the donation Nick's dad had mentioned, so he just gave Nick and the other staff a stern warning.

One of the weeks in August, the sailing instructor got sick so Nick took over. He was enthusiastic about his new position and often took the kids out on the lake, even in his spare time.

Every week the whole camp went on an overnight campout up on the ridge on the other side of the lake. It was a strenuous hike to get there. Nick drove the camp van up to the ridge on the back roads. It meant they didn't have to carry so much on the hike.

It was a bit chaotic with 100 teens unpacking the van, running around setting up tents in the woods, and making campfires. No one noticed that Nick was gone until the van drove up again at dusk. No one had noticed he had left. He got out of the van with April, one of the campers. Henry was shocked. This was entirely against their policy. No one should be alone in a vehicle with a camper. "Where were you?" Henry demanded.

"April told me she forgot her sleeping bag, so I took her back to camp to get it."

"It's my fault," April said, "I asked him to take me back." She smiled, she seemed fine. Henry told Nick that they would talk about this later. At the next staff meeting, Henry took the opportunity to review the Safe Place Policy with all the staff. He didn't want to see something like this happen again.

No one noticed until Nick got out of the van with April, one of the campers...



It was shortly before Christmas that Henry got the call from the board chairperson. She told him that a parent had called her to say that their daughter April was pregnant. She told her parents that she had sex with a counsellor named Nick. She was fourteen years old.





Faith Perspective: Seeking the Lost

One of the most famous passages in the Bible is Psalm 23; “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil for you are with me.” This was the darkest valley Grassy Knoll Teen Camp had ever faced.

One of their campers had been raped by a counsellor. Even if they seem willing, a fourteen-year-old cannot give consent, so what happened between Nick and April was rape. Nick was arrested by the police for sexual assault of a minor.

The police began an investigation. With information from the camp, the police sent a letter to the parents of all the campers and leaders in training and staff, informing them of the sexual assault charge that Nick faced. They kept April’s identity confidential. They encouraged anyone with other allegations to come forward.

Over the next month, a leader in training admitted that Nick had convinced her to perform a sex act on him, and two other campers said Nick had kissed them. Six male campers said that Nick had told them sexually explicit stories while they were sailing and two said he had masturbated in front of them.

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil for you are with me.
Psalm 23*



What Next?

Grassy Knoll Teen Camp reached out to offer counselling support to the victims and their families. But a number of parents wanted nothing to do with the camp, they were joining together to sue the camp for negligence. How had Nick managed to be alone so often with campers?

The Christian denomination that owned Grassy Knoll Teen Camp audited their own policies and did their own investigation. Henry was let go from his position as camp director. The board felt that he had not followed policy because he failed to dismiss Nick for bringing alcohol on camp property. He also failed to make sure that two staff were always present when the sailboats were used.

The story was written up in the denominational newspaper, as well as in the local newspaper. That year charitable donations failed to come in to Grassy Knoll Teen Camp. By June it was clear that registration was a small fraction of what it should be. Already on a tight budget because there were no donations

coming in, the board made a difficult financial decision to close the camp for that season. All the employees were let go.

Meanwhile, the insurance company was resisting covering the lawsuits because the director and the board had failed to follow their own policies. There was a possibility that the denomination would have to sell the property to start to cover the compensation for the lawsuits. Nick was awaiting trial. He eventually went to prison. As a result of his actions and the failure to follow policies carefully, the 75-year ministry of Grassy Knoll Teen Camp was finished.

As a result of Nick's actions and the failure to follow policies carefully the 75-year ministry was finished.

What Do You Think?

1. What do you think the long term consequences will be for April, and her family? What about the other campers abused by Nick?
2. Are you surprised to hear the power that one person's actions can have on a ministry setting? How might this have been avoided?
3. Do you think it was fair that Henry lost his job?
4. Can you think of ways Grassy Knoll Teen Camp could have done things differently, so this wouldn't have happened?

From The Author

Camp is a wonderful place to have fun, meet friends and connect with nature. When you work at a Christian camp you are part of a ministry to share the love of God.

We need this *SafeZone* resource because, unfortunately, the best places can be the worst places. I've met people whose lives were changed by camp, but not in a good way. They were sexually abused as a camper or as a staff person and their lives have never been the same.

I wrote these stories (which are not factual, but are true to life) to help you think about how people cross the line and harm others. As you read *SafeZone* with your team, ask yourselves how you can contribute to making your camp a safe place.

Camps are safer if we are all educated about boundaries. We want everyone to leave camp with happy memories!



Carol Penner, Author

From The Church

Church camps play a vital role in faith formation and leadership development for youth and young adults. The camp experience provides an opportunity to develop new friendships, explore new skills, engage our experience of God and grow in our capacity as leaders. In order to do all of this well, the camp experience needs to provide a stable, safe and supportive environment in which campers and staff alike can grow and thrive and develop their God-given potential. MCEC has commissioned *SafeZone* as one component of a positive camp experience. The goal of *SafeZone* is to foster relationships in the camp setting that are healthy, wholesome and life-giving. Our hope is that each child and staff person will benefit from a camp experience that draws them deeper into healthy relationships with God and each other.

- David Martin, MCEC Executive Minister

SafeZone was commissioned by MCEC
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SAFEZONE

Promoting Healthy Boundaries
in Christian Camps