

Prepare Your Cubs, Scouts and Venturers for Easter:

A Spiritual Journal

by Colin Wallace

We're attaining the Scouting goal of spiritual development by attending occasional Scouts' Owns," said the wizened leader. "Sometimes we even recite a prayer or sing a song with a spiritual twist. That's all we have to do. That's enough."

Is this what you believe? Yes? Well, it's not really true.

I've got an idea for improving your group's spiritual development during this Easter period by using a log book or journal. It's perfect for a weekend camp.

Yes, I know what you're thinking: "Log books are only dull historical records of past events." Well, here's a bit of a twist on an old idea. Get your sixes, patrols or company members working on spiritual journals.

Intrigued?

A spiritual journal can be a useful tool for personal examination and growth. It can help you develop spiritual awareness and analyze life's problems or important questions. It can help you marshal your resources in times of difficulty, and it can help you to understand your feelings a bit better.

The journal itself need be only a few pages of lined paper stapled together with a backing sheet of cardboard as a pad – nothing elaborate or expensive. (Cubs and Scouts

would enjoy decorating the cover with scenes from recent camping trips.)

When your group goes to camp, assign the responsibility for journal entries to volunteer authors who have 30 minutes to write down their thoughts about the spiritual dimensions of the camp activities. Re-assign the role of journal author every half hour.

If you don't want to impose time limits, you can encourage journal authors to write about one page of text each before they pass the journal on to a new author. You can also



Photo: Rick Bramm

maintain the privacy of the authors by having everyone write their own personal journal.

Let the authors work on the journal when they want, and to the depth they want. Don't force the pace. It's more important that everyone become comfortable with the process. Then they can focus on the content.

In any case, be sure to give the journal authors enough time for reflection and analysis. Don't be too quick to move the journal on to the next author just because the current author expresses some initial reluctance like: "I don't know what to write about" or "I'm not very good at writing." Make it clear that the journal's purpose is to capture ideas and speculations, not to examine spelling and grammar.

Avoiding Writer's Block

What will the authors write about? To help them get over "writer's block", invite them to answer the following questions from a spiritual perspective:

- F What did I learn today that I didn't know before? (Did you gain any insights into who you are and your approach to life? What should you change as a result of what you learned?)
- F How can you use what you learned today? (Can you apply what you learned? Will it be easy to apply what you learned? How can you make it easier? Who can help?)

Ask them to examine both sides of recent decisions the group has made that might have a moral or ethical implication. Organize and sort through the spiritual responses to particular situations.

You can add other prompting questions, but keep them simple and clear. If a question is too long or complicated, its point will be lost. When a question requires a lengthy explanation, break it up into a series of shorter questions.

Authors can include their thoughts about the spiritual aspects of whatever activities your group is engaged in. They can write their responses to prior entries so that, over time, the journal becomes an ongoing, but silent, dialogue between the authors. Writers can also add any other thoughts of a spiritual nature or any prayers they've composed.

The entries can be anonymous and should not identify anyone else in the text. Include cartoons, drawings



We're helping to clean up this lake. That's what I'm going to write in our journal.

and sketches. (Kids will love this.) Pictorial entries can be the subjects of discussions at meal times or around the campfire later.

Stay Focused

To encourage your young writers to focus on spirituality, you can display a thought-provoking question on a card posted on the camp notice board or some other conspicuous place. Change the card every hour on the hour or, better yet, keep adding new ones and leave the others on display as a kind of expanding totem. You can try a similar activity during your meetings; have your group develop a collage of sketches and drawings with comments and captions that describe everyone's spiritual responses to the meeting's events.

Keep reminding – but don't nag – everyone that even when they're not currently the journal author, they should always stay on the lookout for topics that would make interesting journal entries so they are prepared when their turn comes around again.

Read your journals aloud to the group at your evening campfire or Scouts' Own, or at your morning flag break ceremony, or at an appropriate moment in your program. Thank the authors. You might even want to burn the journals with respect, but without ceremony, at your closing campfire. (Make sure to ask the youth members' opinion first before doing this.)

Sometimes we're so busy with all the activities of camp life that we don't take time to consider why we're engaged in the activities at all. We become so engrossed in participating in events that we miss valuable lessons generated by them.

Your group may need a few practice runs before everyone is entirely at ease with the idea of a spiritual journal. Stay with it. In time, a journal can help you appreciate how the spiritual facet of your life is an essential and integral part of your balanced development. ^

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Looking for Easter Party Activities?

The *Leader's March* issue featured some Easter party activities for Beavers and Cubs. Check it out. Your members will enjoy everything from an action story and instructions how to make an Easter egg tree, to egg rolling contest and tasty snacks.

Don't forget to check out the Spring JUMPSTART package for Beavers.

It has many more Easter ideas.