

# Explorers of the Invisible: World Scout Bureau "Tool Box"

by Ian Mitchell

**D**uty to God; we all know it is one of the principles that guide our organization. We also know that it is one of the areas of programming that gives leaders/advisors the most headaches when trying to include spirituality appropriate to the age of their members.

In researching the web, I came across a series of handouts developed by the World Bureau appropriately named "Tool Box," which provided many insights and activities pertaining to all areas of programming. And yes, there was a very interesting handout focused on the area of spirituality and how it can be planned for and implemented into weekly activities (TB 014).

I offer you here a small part of that handout; a part that I believe you will find useful in your company. The entire article, along with many other insightful articles, can be found at: [www.scout.org/wsrc/toolbox/tbox.shtml](http://www.scout.org/wsrc/toolbox/tbox.shtml).

## Role of the Scout Leader

"Religion can only be 'caught,' not 'taught'. It is not a dressing donned from outside, put on for Sunday wear. It is a true part of character, a development of soul, and not a veneer that may peel off."

– Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*

The role of the Scout leader is to use the kind of experiences offered by Scouting to help young people discover a spiritual reality and incorporate it into their own lives. In fact, Scouting proposes a five step approach to spiritual development.

### i. Enable young people to experience spirituality through Scout activities

In many cultures, the term "God" designates, on the one hand, the Creator or source of everything and, on the other hand, absolute goodness or a principle of salvation which pervades the history of humanity. There are thus two possible ways of discovering

God: by exploring the wonders of creation and nature; by experiencing life within a human community. Traditional Scout activities do indeed permit these types of experiences:

- Hiking, exploring, camping and actions to preserve the environment all enable young people to discover and admire the wonders of nature and life itself.
- Welcoming, learning to listen, building relationships with other people, however poor or destitute, showing compassion, sharing; co-operating within a team, sharing responsibilities, serving others, etc. All these are activities that aim at discovering and developing a human community.

### ii. Make time for young people to discover and express the meaning of life

A Scout leader also needs to propose opportunities for evaluating and celebrating experiences, in other words, to provide activities which enable young people to analyze their own experiences in the light of the Scout Law and Promise, in order to discover their meaning and value. It is through these kinds of activities, which include moments of silence, meditation and expression that young people can experience the need to pray and worship.

### iii. Help each individual to identify with his or her spiritual and religious heritage

A major concern is how to help each young person make links between the experiences gained within Scouting and the spiritual and religious heritage which has been transmitted to him or her by the family and local community. With the onset of adolescence, it is normal for a young person to challenge this heritage, question its relevance and have doubts. It is necessary to pass through this stage in order to truly adopt this heritage and develop an adult approach to spirituality, religion and faith.

### iv. Encourage internalization and personal commitment

Spiritual development is meaningful only if it becomes internalized and leads to personal commitment. This is why one of the essential criteria for

progression is the application of acquired spiritual and religious values in daily life.

### v. Develop open and respectful attitudes

One of the fundamental convictions of the Scout Movement is that spiritual development should bring people together in fellowship, instead of separating them or bringing them into conflict. Since modern societies are those which thrive on communication and exchange and comprise a multiplicity of cultures and faiths, it is essential to prepare young people for such diversity. They need to overcome prejudices and develop open-mindedness and respect for faiths which are different from their own, whilst being able to express their personal convictions without aggressiveness.

The article goes on to suggest that there are five types of activities which can lead to spiritual development. These 5 "Ws" are:

- *Welcome*: listening, being receptive to others, showing compassion.
- *Wonder*: being sensitive to the wonders of nature and life; recognizing a spiritual reality in it.
- *Work*: playing an active role in one's community; sharing responsibilities; co-operating with others to bring about improvements.
- *Wisdom*: developing responsibility towards oneself; being able to exercise self-discipline.
- *Worship*: recognizing the meaning of past experience, being able to express it and celebrate it.

It all seems simple to me now. There is no need to inject so-called spiritual activities into programs but rather use the traditional Scouting activities to explore spirituality in many broad ways.

Interested in more? Go ahead and read the handout (TB 014 - [www.scout.org/wsrc/toolbox/tbox.shtml](http://www.scout.org/wsrc/toolbox/tbox.shtml)). I think it will impress upon you the essence of Baden-Powell's principle, "Duty to God".m

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