

I never slept in a camper. There. I said it. I know that many of my readers are devoted campers. I have a daughter and son in law who love to go "up north" to their cabin. We have some good friends who have invited us "up north" for as many years as we have known them and, for some odd reason, we are always busy that weekend. I grew up camping, though. My family would all cram into the family station wagon, full of supplies for a week at Long Lake, the car weighed down by the tent on top. I wish I could tell you I had fond memories of our weeks sleeping on the ground. But, sadly, I don't. Where could I have gone wrong?

I told you last week that one of my favorite stories in the Bible is Jesus' reconciliation with Peter over the campfire Jesus had built on the shore. I do like campfires. We have a fire "pit" device in our backyard, and, yes, I do enjoy sitting around it with friends. It would be much nicer though if I could figure out how to get a fire started in the thing! Earlier this summer we went to see some friends who were camping. It was a safe trip because I knew there was no place for us to stay as their camper was full of family members, so there would be no invitation to stay the night. We spent some good time around their real campfire. It was a cool evening, so the fire's warmth was welcome. The campfire was very inviting. Chairs set in a circle around the fire. A favorite beverage in hand. Talking about nothing in particular and life in general. It was good. Really!

So, I accept that this one part of the camping/cabin life is something I can relate to. I can see how it is fun. I can see how it is community/family building time. I can see why Jesus picked a campfire as a place to have his "heart to heart" with Peter. It's a safe place, despite the fact you are near a fire. I won't be able to go camping this week, so no campfires for me. But, I can try to create the same effect, perhaps. What would it take for you and your family or friends to reproduce the joys of sitting around the campfire, even if there is no fire to sit around?

I suppose it would start by making the effort to be together. It would mean taking the time to devote to "being there." It would mean investing yourself in the event and the people on more than a superficial level. It would mean being together, really, just sharing life with no goal or purpose in mind other than being together. Maybe you won't be camping this week either. But that doesn't mean you can't have a campfire experience. Invite your friends and family to meet with you. Start the "fire" which will create the relaxed and inviting atmosphere you need. And then just "be together."

So, let's go camping! But, remember, I won't be sleeping in a camper!

Shalom,
Bill

P.S. If you have a favorite camping story, feel free to email it to me, or tell me in person. If I get enough good stories, I'll do a little camping series...and maybe I will come to understand the mysterious attraction of the camping life. Peace.