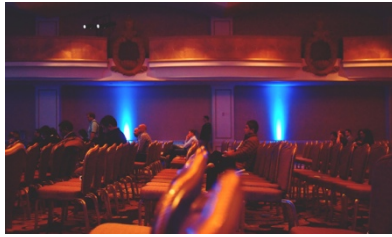


## Now that Camp, or the Retreat, or the Conference, is Over

Steve Burchett

There is a spiritual “high” that is often experienced toward the end of a church camp, retreat, or conference. A few days of solid Bible teaching, intentional fellowship, and extended personal time with the Lord has a way of making a believer’s heart full. “I wish I felt like this all of the time!” the Christian might even say.



But you won’t. You’re soon back home experiencing life as it was before you left. Work. House maintenance. Parenting. Appointments. Bills. Difficult decisions. It’s “back to reality.” And that’s actually the way it should be. It’s impossible to replicate, day after day, the camp/retreat/conference high. However, you didn’t have that experience for no reason. Those few days were meant to encourage you on for the Lord in the months and years ahead. But you’ll have to be intentional or you’ll lose the momentum quickly.

What can you do to make the most of your experience after it’s all over?

### ***Have a thought out answer for, “How was it?”***

You know the drill—you arrive home, and someone says, “How was the conference?” It was “good” you say. And that’s it. That’s it? No! Tell the person more. Encourage the person’s heart with how God worked in your heart. This will not only encourage the one asking, but it will help you as you relive the experience. Talking about our experiences with the Lord has a way of maintaining and even sometimes enflaming zeal.

So perhaps on the final day, or on the car ride home, think about how you will respond to the “How was it?” question. Did the Lord do something in your life? Was there a message that was particularly moving? Did you see God do something powerful in someone else’s life? These are the kinds of things we should talk about once home.

### ***Talk to your leaders about what the Lord did.***

Pastors want to know how their sheep are doing so that they can more carefully and helpfully watch over their souls (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17). So if something significant transpired in your life, or among the group, tell them! Perhaps you were converted (how wonderful!). Maybe you are now thinking about a major change to your life in light of something you learned. It could be that you now believe the Lord wants you to serve in a new area of the church, or even the world. Take advantage of the pastor (or

pastors) the Lord has given you. They will be delighted to talk and pray with you about these matters.

### ***Beware of distractions.***

I’ll only mention the most obvious “distraction” that most of us carry around in our pockets—a smartphone. I’m not about to tell you to get a flip phone, though maybe that would be an immeasurable blessing for some of us. I’m more concerned with what we do with our smartphone.

We are a culture engrossed in irrelevant pictures, posts, conversations, and stories on our multiple screens. It’s hard to imagine a better way for Satan to get your mind off of spiritual glories burning in your heart than by wooing you back to that world of trivialities. Isn’t it worth quitting something that, for you, is basically worthless and deadening? The devil hates what happened to you at camp. He despises the great teaching you heard at the conference. He’s on the prowl, seeking to devour you before that experience with God at the retreat turns into a lifelong pattern of grace-fueled obedience. And he might just be using that social media platform to destroy you. Get out before it’s too late, and fill in the time you’ll gain with life-giving habits like meditating on and memorizing Scripture.

### ***Listen to a message again.***

Was one of the sessions of teaching especially helpful for you? If it was recorded, go back and listen to it again. Better yet, listen with someone else (spouse? sibling? friend? someone who was there?). If you took notes, pull them out and follow along. Maybe just listen this time. Beforehand, ask the Lord to solidify the truth in your thinking. Afterwards, pray similarly, and if listening with someone else, talk about what you learned and what was most inspiring and clarifying.

### ***Right away, come out strong for Jesus.***

Perhaps this is the overarching idea that all of the previous strategies fall under. I actually heard something like this recently from a camp speaker in his final message to over 200 youth. He was urging them not to delay when they got home from camp. Did you come to Christ? Then follow him right away by being baptized and joining the church. Did you recommit yourself to a particular spiritual discipline? Then don’t hesitate—pray for God’s help, and get going immediately.

When we ponder God’s love for us in his Son, how foolish and illogical it would be to delay coming out strong for Jesus, whether we are feeling a spiritual “high” or not.