

SPEAKER NOTES: Unbound | Stand Up - Stand Out

Thank you so much for being willing to come and teach as an important part of our Mission Adventures program. As you probably know, our program has special times set aside for training and teaching for our participants as an important part of their missions trip. Every year we have a different theme in order to try and emphasize the message we feel God has given us for the year.

Each program director finds unique ways to reinforce this theme through the training sessions with the participants, and your teaching plays a key role in these times. These notes are designed for you in order to help you better communicate the theme for our program this year, "*Unbound: Stand up, Stand out*".

Every year, the Mission Adventures Network Theme Team meets together for several days of intercession, prayer, brainstorming and fun in order to seek God. The goal is to determine what He is saying to us for our participants in the coming year of Mission Adventures. This year's theme verse came loud and clear, as we felt prompted to look at a few different scriptural references:

Daniel 3 - The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was one of the scriptures. It was clear that their boldness to stand when all others bowed to the idol is to be a significant piece of this year's theme.

1 Kings 18:19 - The story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal was another reference that we strongly felt will play a role in this theme. One of the highlights from this story is the idea of dealing with idols we set up that take the place of Lordship in our lives instead of God.

There is so much you can glean from these passages, and we trust you too will be seeking God for the particular emphasis and message He wants to communicate to the participants to whom you'll be speaking. These notes are meant to let you in on what some of our thoughts were as we tried to interpret what God was saying to us into a cohesive message.

Ultimately, we were encouraged that "*Unbound: Stand up, Stand out*", is a message of knowing our **identity** in Christ, freedom to confront the **idolatry** in our lives, and a challenge to respond in **bravery**, standing boldly when others won't. It is a message that matters, and is relevant and available to the young people and leaders who'll be a part of Mission Adventures this year.

In addition to giving you background on the theme, here are a few suggestions as you prepare to share.

- Take some time to ask your program director about our Mission Adventures Theology policy. We emphasize as much as we can the shared values and beliefs of all followers of Jesus, and try to stay away from the touchier theological topics that could prove distracting during such a short time with our participants.

- Take some time to find out a little about the group(s) you'll be speaking to. The director of the MA program you are speaking to will probably provide you with this information anyway, but it's always a good idea to try and find out the size and make-up of the group, including age range, denomination, and even any relevant history or spiritual maturity level that could be applicable. (For example, are they mostly new believers, or a newly formed group, or have they been together since kindergarten? How long has their leader been with them? Have there been any recent church or community upheavals?) It can also be helpful to consider the interaction between multiple groups should you be speaking to more than one church team or group at a time. All these things can be helpful in forming the way you choose to offer your presentation.
- Try and think of ways that you could involve the participants in the teaching other than just listening to you talk. Small group discussion, using multi-media, games or even simple tools like crayons, or cutting out pictures from magazines can be surprisingly thought provoking.
- Take some time to process how this theme impacts you personally. How does it reflect what you've gone through in your own journey, or what you're going through now? Often as staff, we're amazed each year how the theme is what WE need to hear, as much (or maybe more) as our participants do. We've found the most effective way to communicate our past themes has been letting God speak to us about them and impact us deeply before we ever even begin our program. Any time we start to think only in terms of "what do these kids need to hear?" without first asking God to search our own hearts, He seems to pull us back and causes us to be changed by the theme first. Isn't He good like that?
- Lastly, the notes are simply meant to be a guideline for you. While the more reinforcement we can give to our theme the better, we trust that you'll hear from God and present what He's saying to you for your particular group. In the past we've found it helpful to use what we call the four "p's" (Purity, Passion, Purpose, Proclamation) as guideposts for working through the theme.

SESSION 01 | Opening: Unbound | Stand Up - Stand Out

This means we can stand for what we believe in, standing out and being different, but also that as we stand out to be different, that we are truly ourselves. We are not morphed into what others expect us to be. We don't have to be bound by what others think about us. We can make a difference in this world as we are willing to be bold, to take a stand.

Session 1 is often a short session, simply introducing the theme for the week.

You can simply start with a bunch of questions that you want to throw out to have the students—sometimes called campers—think about. They don't have to be heavy or too deep, but questions that can provoke the young people to start to take a look at their lives to start to see areas where they may need to work on “standing out” in a crowd. Maybe it will be an area where they've never taken a “stand” on anything before, like standing up against a bully, or standing up for a friend who's being harassed? Our hope for each participant of Mission Adventures this year is that they'd walk away with a sense of destiny, knowing that they can make a difference in the world by their simple acts of courage, bravery, and refusal to compromise, thereby raising up a standard of excellence for others to follow. In order to do that, they have to be “Unbound” from the things that the world says that they are or are not. It's important they know they ARE valuable, they ARE important, they DO matter and that they CAN make an impact on the world; that they are NOT incapable, they are NOT an afterthought, they are NOT alone, they are NOT without hope.

The world would love to discredit God and confuse young people into thinking that they have no value. It would have them believe their opinions don't matter, that they can hide behind their twitter status and be just another number, be another face in the crowd and not be anything but ordinary.

God is calling them to be extraordinary; He wants them to know who they are in Christ, and to be bold about that, to stand for things that matter and to stand against the darkness of this world. As they take that stand, the chains that bind their thinking, their actions, and beliefs about who they are will change. They will become who God intends them to be. They will ultimately be people who can help set other captives free. And those others will also be “Unbound.”

Reflect:

- What is the definition of bondage
- What kinds of people are in bondage?
- What will it take to get out of bondage?

Suggested activities:

- Pass around locks and have students try to pry open the locks.
- Have a straight jacket and have someone attempt to get out of it.
- Have students tie their shoelaces together and attempt to walk without falling.

SESSION 02 | Jesus: Know Your Identity

In Daniel chapter one, the three teenage boys (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), along with Daniel are taken from their home in Israel to Babylon by order of King Nebuchadnezzar. The king is trying to better his kingdom by kidnapping young men from foreign lands to come to Babylon and be educated in his ways. It is important to note that these boys are Jewish, as are their real names (Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah), and they land in a pagan, foreign culture. Their gods are idols, gold, or the King himself. They are raised well and receive the best education in order to become the smartest, healthiest men; a generation to follow King Nebuchadnezzar and ultimately bring all of the Jews to follow Babylonian ways. But the Kings plan is soon foiled...

Not long into the story, Daniel refuses to eat food that is against the Jewish law, but would be permitted in Babylonian society. He follows it up by interpreting a dream for the King by praying for wisdom from the One True God. Winning the Kings favor, he puts himself in a position of authority without wavering on his personal beliefs.

Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah have quite the mentor to follow. Daniel was the first to stand up for his beliefs and his commitment to the Lord was contagious. Not long after, the King makes a giant statue, an idol, of himself and calls it god. He orders all to bow and worship it, but our three boys refuse. Rooted in their identity as followers of the One True God, they stand up and they stand out. They knew to whom they belonged and it didn't matter the consequences. As the story goes, the king ties them up and throws them in a deadly fire. But rather than perish, they appear in the midst of the flames, next to Christ, UnBound! King Nebuchadnezzar repents and declares that the entire nation will follow the God of these three boys. Their confidence in their identity and boldness in the face of adversity led to an entire nation being transformed. Know your identity, and you'll know the one who can change the course of history.

Reflect:

- What are some idols in your life?
- Have you ever had the chance to stand up for God? Did you take the opportunity?
- What are some ways to stand up for God in our culture?
- What are some stories of people who took a stand and changed the course of history?

SESSION 03 | Purity: Confront the Idolatry

Around Christmastime we all make lists of things that we want or need. We see the things in all of the stores, the advertisements on TV, and all we do is want more things, newer things, things that we don't really even need - just things, things, and more things. We all do this, don't we? Do you make lists? Do you ever think that the things you get will satisfy that hunger for "having it all?"

Webster's Dictionary says that to have "extreme admiration, love or reverence for something or someone," is to idolize it. Well, that settles it then. We all have a condition that Webster's Dictionary would say is idolatry. We'd be lying if we said that we think of Jesus 24/7/365, because we don't. Most of the time, It's ALL ABOUT US/ME. We think about ourselves far more than we think about God, so it's not a stretch to say that we actually idolize ourselves.

We probably want to want clean hearts, we probably want to want a purity that pleases God, but the bottom line is, is that we're just not there...yet. Mathew 5:8 says "*the pure at heart will see God.*" Do we want to see God? Do we want to do what it's going to take to get that pure heart? Will we lose sleep, food, money, or time to get all that God wants for us? Or will we think only of ourselves, our own will, our own way? We should want to walk in a purity that only comes when we're in His presence. But, we're bound in many ways to our own selfishness, bound by our own will, bound by our own way. Our own idolatry says that we mostly think about ourselves, and all that is us. We are bound; we are in bondage to our selves.

We're bound by this idolatry of self and in order to be "Unbound" we must first recognize the sin in our hearts and recognize that we need a savior. Only when we see how we fall short, can we lay down our foolish, selfish, idolatrous pride and ask for forgiveness, healing, humility, and for Jesus to be all that we want. We can be unbound from selfish desires, thoughts, and impure motives. We'll be so free that when he searches us and knows the intent of our hearts, as in Psalm 139:23, we will be found pure, with no wickedness in us. We will be unbound and led in the way everlasting. We'll be living free.

Reflect:

- What areas do you think of yourself more often than you should?
- What ways do you serve your selfish motives in words, actions, or thought life?
- When was the last time that you gave your heart a thorough evaluation?

Suggested Activities:

- Give each participant a small piece of paper or note card. Have them write down things that keep them from a selfless lifestyle, or areas where they know that they have not given over to God all that he wants from them. Maybe it's an area where they've felt bound by an inability to stop a bad habit, or stop doing the things that they don't want to do.
- Ask them to write down things or areas where they feel that they've set up idols in their hearts above God. You can have them answer the following questions:
 - What takes up most of your thought life?
 - What takes up most of your time?
 - What takes up most of your money?

SESSION 04 | Passion: Stand Up

We cannot be UnBound if we are passionless. If there is nothing we care about, nothing that sets fire to our very being, then we will remain mired in the quicksand of apathy. Apathy is a tool of the enemy used to keep us seated, bowed down on our couches before the idols of comfort and ease, and we cannot give in to that if we truly have a desire to be set free, to be UnBound. We have to stand up, to move, to make a choice to seek God and do His will and then to act on it. We cannot stand out if we stay in our easy chairs of lukewarmth and mediocrity.

The faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was such that they could not bow down to any idol, but only to the one true God. They were so passionate about who their God was, and who He had called them to be, that they risked their very lives in order to remain faithful to Him. God gives each of us passions and gifts, as well as the opportunities to pursue and grow in those things. The question is, how will we respond? How will we use those things He has given to us?

If we are truly passionate about an issue, an injustice, a cause, our God, then we will act. We cannot sit on our laurels and claim to be active, passionate disciples. We must pursue the things that God loves and pursues. We can have an effect on the world; we can make a change, even if it is only one moment at a time. Through the Bible, God provides us with a view into His desires and His passions, and gives us guidelines—though not a step-by-step guide—and basic principles for how to pursue those things ourselves. Step forward into who God is calling you to be; step forward into putting Him above all else, and having Him as your source for all things, even if it seems frightening.

Reflect:

- What are you passionate about? What moves you? What makes you angry?
- What makes you want to do something, change something, make a difference?
- Live out Micah 6:8, James 1: 22-27, Daniel 3:16-18

SESSION 05 | Purpose: Be Brave

When we think of the word *bravery* we tend to associate it with soldiers or war. Soldiers and policemen are brave. We might say, to be brave you cannot be afraid to die and you cannot be afraid to kill. To be brave one must be “tough” and “courageous.” To be brave you need a challenge and then you must be willing to face that challenge. And it will usually require a sacrifice, often someone’s life.

Is there a difference between a Christian and a brave Christian? To be a *Brave* Christian should we be willing to die and to kill? I agree that Christians should be willing to die, as scary as that sounds (John 15:13). However, I’m not sure that we should say *killing* is a requirement to be brave. We can be brave and never attempt or think of killing.

There is a small country called Yemen, just to the south of Saudi Arabia. In both of these countries it is illegal to be a Christian. Saudi Arabia has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Women were just approved to vote 2 years ago and it is still illegal for them to drive! Yemen is not any better. Not too long ago nine Christian relief workers in Yemen were kidnapped. They were accused of evangelizing. Three were killed. The other six? We don’t know, but we can only assume they were either also killed or are still being held hostage. It is important to note that in Yemen, as in most Muslim countries, it is illegal to convert from Islam to Christianity and the punishment is death.

In many Muslim and Islamic nations, Al Qaeda, ISIS, and many other extremist groups all tend to think of Christians as their enemy. Because of our title “Christian” we have enemies. We all know what Jesus said about our enemies right? *Love your enemies, repay evil with good.* (Luke 6:27).

There are thousands of Christians all around the world who can be killed or beaten instantly without trial for simply owning a bible, singing a hymn, or praying aloud. Would you call them brave Christians? Think about our three boys, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Were they not brave? Yet they never attempted to fight or kill the King. They stood firm in what God had taught them and refused to be derailed. They trusted God to handle their enemies. Those three boys then went on to transform and influence a nation for God.

So here is the question... How can we be brave Christians today?

Reflect:

- According to the Bible, who are our real enemies? (Eph. 6:10-18)
- How do you feel targeted because of your faith today?
- What do you know about the persecuted church? How can you learn more?

SESSION 06 | Proclamation: Stand Out

In order to be free to proclaim who God is and what He has done, we must be UnBound from the distractions and lies of this world. God has a great desire for us to be set free from sin, from the ways of the world that seem like release but actually bring difficulty and death.

If our focus is constantly on ourselves, there is no way we can stand up for God—or others—and no way we can stand out for our faith. As Christians, we have something precious—God’s presence in our lives and a relationship with Him. Our desire should be to share that with others, to proclaim His love over them as He has proclaimed it over us. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had the example set by Daniel, and, partially through that encouragement, chose to be UnBound by fear or reproach; they chose to proclaim the greatness of God no matter the cost.

For most of us, we will probably never have a literal do-or-die moment in regards to our faith, but we will have opportunities to proclaim who God is, and that we belong to Him, both in our words and our deeds. We will also have the chance to cast down our idols, and to proclaim that our God is Lord over all the earth, including our lives, that He is the only one who rules over us.

Read further in 1 Kings 18:20-39, Acts 17: 22-29, and Matthew 25:34-40.

Reflect:

- What opportunities do you have in your day to day life to proclaim God’s truth?
- How can others see more of Him through you?