

Meditations for the Scout Trail

Compiled November, 1997
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And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variations in your languages and your colors; truly in that are sign for those who know...

And among His signs He shows you the lightning by way both of fear and of hope, and He sends down rain from the sky and with it gives life to the earth after it is dead. Truly in that are signs for those who are wise. [Qur'an 30:22,24]

Father we thank Thee for the night,
And for the pleasant morning light;
For rest and food and loving care,
and all that makes the day so fair.

Help us to do the things we should,
To be to others kind and good;
In all we do, in work or play,
To grow more loving ev'ry day.

—Rebecca Weston and Daniel Batchellor
Father we thank thee for the night

Scout Benediction:
May the great Master of all scouts,
be with you until we meet again.

Introduction This guide is intended to help scouts organize a moment of reflection for a patrol or a troop, on the trail or in camp. The material has been collected from several sources, and much has been adapted from *Eagles Soaring High**. Appropriate songs can be found in the *Boy Scout Songbook*.

The 12th point of the scout law is “A Scout is Reverent.” Therefore it is appropriate that patrols and troops take a moment on Sunday, at meals, or at a stop along the trail so scouts can reflect upon the wonder of the universe, their direction in life, and their relationship with the Great Master of all Scouts. This guide is intended to help.

Use of this Guide. Outlines for a short service and a brief reflection are included below. Scouts leading such services may use the eight pre-arranged services, or may choose to select a particular Call to Worship, prayers, and reflections to which they can add their own materials and unique contributions. A service should reflect the place, spirit, relationships, experiences and faiths of the participants.

**Eagles Soaring High* Trail Worship for Christians, Muslims, and Jews, Rabbi Arnold Sleutelberg, Fr. Robert Guglielmone, Rev. Leo Symmank, Dawood Zwink, Gamal Hamid, Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico, No. 5-877, 1994 printing.

Outlines for Services. Here are two general outlines for scout services. The different parts may be selected from material appearing throughout this guide.

A Scout Service Outline

Call to Worship

Hymn (Kum By Yah,
He's Got the Whole World...,
This is my Fathers world,
Faith of our Fathers,
For the Beauty of the Earth,
Morning has broken)

Psalm or other Scripture

Reflection

Hymn

Closing Prayer

Short Scout Reflection Outline

Call to Worship or Prayer

Scripture or other inspirational reading

Reflection

Closing Prayer

Call to Worship. Here are selections that scouts may use as a *Call to Worship* to start a service, gather the community, and to set the mood for the service.

- Leader says a few words of welcome appropriate to the place and time.
- Read first two paragraphs from “A scout is Reverent” in Boy Scout Handbook, 10th ed., p. 561.

O God, open our mouths
that our voices may declare thy glory.
“Come join us in this place to worship.
This is the day the Lord has made
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

“I was glad when they said unto me
‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’ ” [Psalm 122:1]

“The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silent before him.” [Habakkuk 2:20]

Spirit of Love, Spirit of Truth
Guide us as we pray,
To think and wish and praise the best,
And mean the words we say.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands!
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come into his presence with singing! [Psalm 100: 1]

Possible Scriptures. The leader of a service may choose to use material from any number of religious references. Appropriate choices from traditional scriptures include:

Psalm 8 or 19:1-6 and 14
Psalm 23:all or 24:1-5
Psalm 61:1-5 or 67:1-7 (all)
Psalms 96:1-6, 11-13
Psalm 100: all or 105:1-5
Psalm 108:1-6
Psalm 139:1-12
Hebrews 10:22-25

Beatitudes

Luke 6:20-26; Luke 6:27-36
[also Matthew 5:1-11]

Isaiah 40:31

But those who look to the Lord
will win new strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
They will run and not grow weary.
They will walk on and never grow faint.

Prayers for use in Scout Services. It is traditional to end a service with a prayer (often called the Benediction) asking for support in ones life. Many prayers, particular when included earlier in a service, express thanksgiving for the blessings we enjoy in nature, through our families, and in our personal lives. The prayers below are appropriate for use in scouting services.

Philmont Opening Prayer

God, our father, we thank you for the beauty of the earth, for the food we eat, and for the comforts we enjoy. Help us to love others more, to be concerned with the problems of our day, and to understand Your will in our actions. Grant us the strength to live wisely and well, to be worthy users of Your creation, and ready and willing workers for the causes of Goodness. AMEN.

BSA Interfaith Service Benediction

Dear God, thank you for
the wondrous opportunity to be here.
Give us the energy
and the wisdom to enjoy each moment,
and the courage to push ourselves further
than we ever have before.
Bless our troop and its leaders as we continue
our journey through Boy Scouting. AMEN

Philmont Prayer of Thanks

We thank You, O God for this day,
for morning sun and evening star;
for flowering trees and flowing streams,
for life giving rains and cooling breeze;
for the earth's patient turning, the changing of the seasons, the cycle of growth and decay, of life and death. When our eyes behold the beauty and grandeur of your world, we see the wisdom, power and goodness of its Creator. We awake and behold! It's a great day.
AMEN.

A Scout Prayer

O God of the mountains and valleys,
of the forest, meadows and plains.
Be our guide as we walk
together the trail of life.
And may your love, made known to
us in the stories of our faith,
Be known to others through
the words and deeds of our lives.
This day and always. AMEN.

Baha'i Writings

Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made and His praise glorified.

Benediction, from Philmont all faith service

May God Bless us and protect us;
May God show us favor and be gracious to us;
May God show us kindness and grant us peace.

Jewish Service of the Heart

May the time be not too distant, O God, when all your children will understand that they are brothers and sisters, so that, one in spirit and one in fellowship, they may be forever united before you. Then shall your kingdom be established on earth, and the word of thy prophet shall be fulfilled: "The Lord will reign forever and ever."

An Early Morning Psalm

I behold the beauty of Thy early morning dawn.
Unto Thee will I lift mine eyes with thanks for the
 dawn of another day;
For all its beauty as the light of dawn breaks
 over the horizon.
We see in it Thy handiwork of blending colors,
 so beautiful.
And we thank Thee for the quietness of early
 morning
That we may worship and meditate
 and call upon Thee
For help and guidance throughout the day.
All the day long Thou art
 watching over Thy children.
Thou hast given us the beauty round about us
So that we might enjoy thy wond'rous works.

Grace and other Prayers. Here are additional prayers for a moment along the trail, or for grace at a meal.

Philmont Grace

For food, for raiment
For life, for opportunity
For friendship and fellowship
We thank thee, O Lord AMEN

Philmont Prayer

Almighty God of hill and plain,
Over which we hike in sun and rain,
on mountain pass and valley low,
protect us Lord where'er we go.
And from our grateful hearts we'll raise
glad hymns of thankfulness and praise.

A Simple Blessing

May you walk in Peace,
Live with Love,
Work with Joy, and
May your God go with you.

Traditional Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face to shine upon you,
And give you peace.

Old Irish Blessing

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rain fall soft upon your friends,
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Grace at a meal

For health and strength and daily food,
 we praise Your name, O Lord.
(may be sung, and even sung as a round)

Morning Grace: Gracious giver of all good,
thee we thank for rest and food.
Grant that all we do or say,
in they service be this day.

Noon Grace: Father for this noonday meal,
we would speak the praise we feel.
Health and strength we have from thee;
help us Lord, to faithful be.

Evening Grace: Tireless guardian on our way,
Thou has kept us well this day.
While we thank thee, we request
Care continued, pardon, rest.

1. SETTING DIRECTIONS

“Lord, make me know Your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.” [Psalm 25:4]

To take a long hike successfully requires much preparation. Physical readiness, adequate planning in terms of equipment, food, clothing, and a planning of itinerary are all ways to set a direction for your patrol. Mental and spiritual preparation are no less important. The wilderness is a place where God can speak to you in new and exciting ways. Just as you prepare for a trek by tapping the resources of advisors, rangers, and those who have gone before you, so too you should prepare for experiencing God on your trek by tapping the resources of God’s Word. Taking a moment each day for prayer and reflection can bring us into deeper contact with the Word of God.

For reflection:

How are you preparing yourself to make this trek a journey with the Lord?

What can you do to keep yourself aware of His continuing presence on the trail?

**Lead me in Your truth,
O Lord, and teach me!**

2. STARLIT SKIES ABOVE

“When I look at the sky, which You have made,
at the moon and the stars which You set in their places — What is man that You think of him,
Mere man, that You care for him?” [Psalm 8:3-4]

How beautiful are the clear nights in the outdoors! The stars are so plentiful; they seem so close that you can almost touch them. The silence and the beauty of the night helps us realize the power and majesty of God. Yet, this God loves each of us personally and intimately, and the greatest and most beautiful part of his creation lies not in the heavens, but right here on earth. You are the crowning glory of His creative hands.

For reflection: How do you see yourself as made in the image and likeness of God?

What can you do to deepen respect for the beauty and glory of God alive in you?

**Lord, thank you for life, and beauty,
and the bounty of your creation. Amen**

3. WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

The 23rd Psalm [As translated from English, to Kiowa Sign language, and back into literal English.]

The Great Father above a Shepherd Chief is.

I am His, and with Him I want not.

He throws out to me a rope, and the name of the rope is love, and He draws me to where the grass is green and the water is not dangerous, and I eat and lie down and am satisfied.

Sometimes my heart is very weak and I fall down, but He lifts me up again and draws me onto a good road. His name is Wonderful.

Sometime, it may be very soon, it may be a long, long time, He will draw me into a valley. It is dark there, but I'll be afraid not, for it is between those mountains that the Shepherd Chief will meet me and the hunger that I have in my heart all through this life will be satisfied.

Sometimes He makes the love rope into a whip, but afterwards He gives me a staff to lean upon. He puts His hand upon my head and all the tired is gone. My cup He fills till it runs over. What I tell is true. I lie not. These roads that are away ahead will stay with me through this life and after; and afterwards I will go to live in the Big Tepee and sit down with the Shepherd Chief forever.

Meditation A long trek crossing rivers and streams; and dealing with the weather, fatigue, and unexpected circumstances and challenges. At times it may seem that the difficulties are insurmountable, the hardships unbearable. However, it often happens that the greatest hardships in life become our greatest opportunities for growth. We have to realize that we are not alone—we have each other and the abiding presence and help of our God, Who will guide us and give us strength. Nothing can separate us from His love. He invites us to trust in Him and to realize that we walk with Him.

For reflection: Is there some way that you can help another realize the presence of God on this trek? Can God bring us

strength through each other?

Lord, help me to be cheerful in the face of difficulties. With Your help I will conquer all obstacles!

OR –

The Prayer of Chief Yellow Lark

O Great Spirit: Whose voice I hear in the winds, and Whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me.

I am a man before You, one of your many children.

I am small and weak. I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things You have made, my ears sharp to hear Your voice. Make me wise so that I may know the things You have taught my people – the lesson you have hidden in every leaf and rock. I seek strength, not to be superior to my brothers, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy – myself. Make me ever ready to come to You with clean hands and straight eyes, so when life fades as a fading sunset, my spirit may come to You without shame.

4. EAGLES SOARING HIGH

“Even those who are young grow weak;
young men can fall exhausted.
But those who trust in the Lord
will find their strength renewed.
The will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get
weary; they will walk and not grow weak.”

[Isaiah 40:31]

Have you seen an eagle on the trail yet? We can learn from eagles
and from so much in nature.

One day a fisherman watched as a mother eagle dropped a young
eaglet into the canyon below. The eaglet plummeted and
fluttered. It appeared that it was about to be dashed to its death on
the rocks below, when out of the sky plunged the father eagle and
caught his offspring on his broad back. Then he flew up high and
dropped the young one again. This time the mother caught the
little one on her back. The routine was repeated until the little
eagle learned to fly.

God gives us opportunities to try our wings so that we might learn
to fly on our own. Certainly the Scouting experience is one of
these learning and growing opportunities. Yet God always
watches over us and spreads His wings of protection beneath us.

God said, “I bore you on eagles’ wings.” He has promised, “I will
be with you always.”
So lift up your head and rejoice!

For reflection: What on the trail has caused you a fearful
moment?

**O Lord, when I grow weary, Lift me up on your wings. Give
me the courage and strength I need for tomorrow. Amen.**

5. WINDS IN WHISPERING PINES

“He (the Lord) traveled on the wings of the wind.”
[II Samuel 22:11, Psalms 18:10]

These words are a line from the book of Psalms. We can often
hear the wind moving through the pines and playing a soft
melody. It is almost as if the trees were whispering to one another
or to us below. Or as if God were playing a lullaby for us on His
wind instrument.

The Lord touches all of His creation. He caresses the pines with
His wind. He touches us with His love and forgiveness.

The “whispering pines” can become the sound in nature that
reminds us of these words, “Be kind and tenderhearted to one
another and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you.”
[Ephesians 4:32] He who lives by forgiving and being forgiven
lives in peace.

For reflection: Is there one whom you want to ask for
forgiveness?
Is there one whom you feel the need to forgive?.

**Dear Father, where I have sinned, forgive me, and where I am
afraid, quiet my fears. Amen.**

6. FOR LIFE, FOR OPPORTUNITY

In 1854 Chief Seattle sent a letter to the President of the United States protesting the offer to buy Indian land and move his people to a reservation. Part of that letter is reproduced below.

“Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath—the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow’s flowers.

This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We

may be brothers after all. We shall see. One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover—our God is the same God. You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. The end of living and the beginning of survival.”

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Meditation

How precious is the gift of life! In the outdoors we can come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of its importance. It is necessary to respect it in all its forms. We can take so much for granted — the air we breathe, the water we drink, the health we enjoy, the beauty of the earth. God gives us life to enjoy and He gives us opportunity to grow, to achieve, to find joy and to find happiness. God gives us the ultimate opportunity — life with Him and fellowship with each other.

For reflection: How can I show greater respect for life—my own, for others, for the world around me?

For life, for opportunity, for your wondrous creation, we thank You, O Lord.

OR–

American Indian Invocation

O Great Spirit! Watch over us as we begin this day. Protect us as we live in your care. Give us bounty and hold us from harm. We are your children and wish only to please you. We hold our Mother Earth close to our hearts and wish her goodness. We thank You for your love.

7. COUNTRY THAT I LOVE

“And you will live a long time in the rich and fertile land that the Lord promised to give to your ancestors and their descendants... The land that you are about to enter is a land of mountains and valleys, a land watered by rain. The Lord, your God takes care of this land and watches over it throughout the year.

[Deuteronomy 11:9, 11-12]

Meditation

Being outdoors does something to people—it is not something that can be put into words easily. Something “gets into the blood.” A love for the land, the atmosphere, the people—all these work together in you to make Scouting an experience that you can never forget. The base of that experience is the presence of God — an awareness that all we have and all we offer to others comes from God. The brotherhood that we share as God’s children and as Scouts brings us to a sense of peace, a feeling that in some strange way, everything is all right. In that sense we can call camping a “Scouting Paradise,” a glimpse of that “Paradise” all of us are called to and will one day experience. It can be called a “mountaintop experience,” when we are given a glimpse of the beauty of God’s presence.

For reflection: How can your own mountaintop experience help you to live in the valleys of your life?

Lord, it is good for us to be here.

**Help us every be mindful of the blessing all around us,
this day and forever. AMEN**

8. TRAIL'S END

Camper's Prayer

God of the mountains and hills,
make me tall and strong;

Tall enough and strong enough
to right some wrong.

God of the stars, make me steadfast and sure;

God of every lake and stream,
flow through my life and make it clean;

Let me do nothing base or mean.

God of the trees and woods, keep me fresh and pure;

God of the rain, wash from my life all dirt and stain;

Pure and strong let me remain.

God of the seed and soil, plant in my heart Thy love;

God of the darkness and day,

through shadows or light, be my stay.

Guide Thou my way.

God of the radiant sun, light Thou my life;

God of the glorious dawn,

make each day a fresh start.

God of the evening peace and quiet,

keep me free from fear and strife.

God of the gay, free birds, sing in my heart.

God of the surging waves and sea,

wide horizons give to me;

Help me to see the world as

Thou wouldst have it be;

God of the lovely rose, make me lovely, too;

God of the morning dew, each day my faith renew.

God of all growing things, keep me growing, too.

—George Earle Owen

run the full distance, and I have kept the faith.” You have come to the end of your time at camp. Do you feel good about having completed the adventure? What do you think was one of your biggest accomplishments?

Not all of your accomplishments have been physical. You have interacted with God’s creation and God’s people. There has been frustration and fun. Intermingled with this has been your reflection on God’s love and care. You have run the race and kept the faith.

Have you come to a better understanding of yourself and of your fellow campers? Have you grown in your appreciation of God’s gift to you in nature and in your friends?

Now is the time to look homeward to friends and family. You have matured. You are now an even greater and finer gift to your family and friends.

For reflection:

What have your friends at camp
given you to remember?

What would you like to give or do
for your family and friends when you get home?

Lord, thank you for every gift that You gave me these past days. As I go home, make me a special gift to my family and friends. Amen

The Apostle Paul at the end of his ministry wrote these words to his young friend Timothy: “I have done my best in the race, I have

10. PSALMS FROM THE INDIANS

Evening Meditation

Meditating on the Rim of the Grand Canyon,
Meditating in the stillness of the evening hour,
Meditating upon Him who made this
 wond'rous sight beyond description,
Our thoughts dwell on our God,
 the One, the Almighty.
Our eyes reach our o'er this magnificence,
To take in quickly the breath-taking scene
 before in darkness it shall slip away.

We think upon the God, Creator of this beauty,
We think upon the God who hath preserved
 all things for mortals such as we;
And so we glorify Him and in silence meditate beside
 the grandeur of this panorama great.

How manifold are all Thy works, O God!
In wisdom Thou hast made them all.
The earth is full of Thy riches.
Yea, He hath made His wond'rous works
 to be remembered.
And we rejoice to seek His face in meditation sweet.

A Shepherd's Psalm

Far above the four heavens
Our blue deep lands,
Sits our Holy One, the Holy Almighty God;
Who guided our forefathers
Down through the centuries.
Thou hast led them in sorrow and joy;
Therefore we praise Thy name forever and ever.

Thou hast also led us into this land.
Thou hast given us roots and berries to eat

And the pure animals for food and clothing.

We stand before Thee with the little lambs in our
 arms at noon hour;
Whose mothers have left them for the Far Beyond.
Which way to turn? To none other than to Thee,
 our Heavenly Father.
The footprints of our Elder Brother can still be seen
 faintly.
One cannot find those footprints but by very careful
 sight.
Their tread goes higher and higher.
But some day we will catch up with our Elder Brother in the Far
Beyond,
Above the four deep blue lands.

COME

Oh come let us adore our Triune God.
Let us bow down and worship Him;
Thank Him for His loving kindness;
Sing praises unto Him with the dawn.

Come, let us do service for the King.
Come young maidens and young braves.
Join hands with the youth of the world,
Answer our Saviour's call.
Reach out with strong hands,
And help the young and the aged.

Come from every tribe; fit yourself for service.
Come from plains, deserts, mountains and valleys.
Drink of the Word, that ye may not faint.
Adjust thy stride to that of the Master's and walk with Him.

Let us sing of our salvation,
Sing of the joy of Christian living.
Raise youthful voices and eager hearts.
Give praise unto our God, Saviour, and Holy Spirit.

A Nation's Life

So long as there are homes that pray
We can still hope
The nation will not lose its way,
In darkness grope.
For He Who goes before shall be our light
And guide our steps aright.

So long as there are homes whose anchors hold
With faith and hope and love and courage bold
There's strength to
labour, patience to endure;
Our nation is secure.

So long as there are homes with faith aglow
That seek and follow where God's banners go
And women pray and met to God draw nigh,
Our nation cannot die.