

THE CAMELS

We are called out of our little cozy Oasis to live for Christ and others.

We have to follow our star

Possible responses to the call of God.

Intent of this story.

- ✓ *To realize that being a Christian means to follow Christ unconditionally.*
- ✓ *To pick up generosity enough to say “yes” to God and willingness to sacrifice all we have.*
- ✓ *To follow the call of Christ, we have to face obstacles, criticisms and hardships.*

Uses of these notes:

- ✓ *Vocational Events.*
- ✓ *Prayer services*
- ✓ *Catechism classes*
- ✓ *Personal reflection and prayer*

Target Audience:

- ✓ *All Christian Audiences*

Preparatory Step

- Singing, hymns and / or bhajans.
- Opening prayer

THE STORY

Narrator: In an Oasis, in a far away desert, there lived a herd of camels.

Their life was peaceful, simple and secure. They had plenty of grass and dates to eat and plenty of water to drink

One night a strange and dazzling star rose on the horizon of their quiet and lonely existence. It was bright beyond all description, twinkling, charming and irresistibly bewitching!

Most of the camels were so engrossed in eating, drinking, sleeping and dozing off their time, that they did not even notice the presence of that little sparkling inviting star. They went on, living their drab and useless lives.

Only a few of them, who were not quite so preoccupied as not to care to look around between whiles, managed to raise their heads towards the sky. When they did so they noticed immediately the brilliance and fascination of the new star. They were puzzled at its presence and at what the meaning of it could be. One of the camels told his mates.

Camel: What a wonderful and enchanting star this is! I feel irresistibly drawn to it. I feel that this star is beckoning us all. I feel mesmerized, impelled towards it. I remember now an old dream of mine which I had when I was a child.

I saw a new star rising on the horizon of the world. I clearly heard that star beckoning all men to follow him in search of a new life, of a new country, of a new fatherland. Why? Could this not be the “star of my childhood’s dreams?”

Narrator: His companions laughed at him. First, those who didn’t see the star called him a mad visionary, a foolish dreamer! Those who had seen the star called him crazy. They said with one voice:

Camels: What, to follow a star? It never occurred to anyone before! Where? How far? How long? Why at all?

Camel: Where? Wherever it may lead me! How? Anyhow! For how long? For ever! Why? Because it invites me with its fascinating brightness and magic beauty. I feel drawn to it compellingly. Ah! Yes! Yes! I'll follow this star cost what may.

Narrator: Most of the camels left him alone. They parted company with him and went back to eat, to drink and to doze off. Only a few camels stayed behind with him. They were intrigued both with the new shining star and with the consuming passion of their fellow-camel toward that star. One of them asked:

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Camel one: Do you mean to leave behind this beautiful oasis with all its comforts and the security it offers us, to go out into the desert in search of a new life, of a new country?

Camel: Yes, I have made up my mind to forgo everything and to set out at once in the trail of this star. Look, it is already moving out, away from our sky. It is already fading from our horizon. We have to go immediately!

If anyone wants to join me, he is welcome! But delay is dangerous. Hurry! One minute more and the star may pass us by and never return again. It's now or never. This is the change of a life time!

Narrator: A few camels impressed with the eagerness and determination of their comrade, made up their minds there and then, to join him in following the star. They said:

Camels: We shall come with you too! But give us a little time to collect provisions for the journey. We need plenty of grass and fodder, a lot of water, dates and grain. We have to be wise and prudent.

Camel: Look, time is running out! The one who is calling us to follow him, who is inviting us to go with him, surely will see to our wants. He will look after us during the journey. I am leaving at once. Those who wish to join me come along; if not, stay behind and fend for yourselves!

Narrator: And with that, he started walking out of the oasis into the empty and endless desert; his eyes glued to the little shining star steadily vanishing from the horizon of the oasis. Only a few camels ran after him before it was too late and joined his company. All the other camels shook their heads in disapproval and muttered:

Camels: Crazy guys! They will surely die of hunger, thirst and exposure. And to think that they could have remained with us in the oasis and enjoyed all the good things life can offer!

Narrator: The few camels that went with our "visionary" got soon tired and weary of the journey, and quickly turning back they returned to their oasis.

Personal Work QUESTIONNAIRE.

write down your reflections on the following points.

1. What does the oasis of the story stand for in real life? And the dates, the grass, the grain and the water?
2. What does the little twinkling star signify
3. How many types of camels can you find in the story?

4. For what sort of persons do they stand in real life?
5. What is the new life and the new country our daring Camel set out in search of?
6. Could he have entered into possession of a new and better land and of a fuller new life had he stayed on in the old oasis? Why? What's the meaning of this for us?
7. Is God beckoning us also to follow Him through some star or stars? How?
8. What could be the star or stars in the horizon of our lives? Mention some of them.
9. What signs are there of God's summoning us?
10. What might God be asking us to leave behind in order to follow his call?
11. What obstacles and difficulties may come on our way to follow Jesus? Mention them.
12. Should we bargain with God and ask him to give us time to think and make provisions for the journey? Why?
13. In order to follow our star what are the dispositions and attitudes required?
14. For how long shall we have to search and strive for a new life, for a new fatherland?
15. What will be the results of our following Christ's star?

Small Groups Work: Sharing and Discussion.

The group members will share their replies to the questionnaire. They will follow this method:

- ✓ They will take one question at a time.
- ✓ When one has shared his reply, the group may ask for clarifications. No discussion will be allowed at this point
- ✓ When all the members have shared on the same question and clarifications if any, have been given, it will be open to discussion.
- ✓ The group will try to arrive at a consensus answer to the question.
- ✓ The same method will be followed till all the questions have been covered.

Teaching Time. The moderator may give an input on the following or similar ideas.

- Our little cozy world is like an oasis where we live comfy and selfish lives.
- The world is larger than our small oases. The world at large needs us.
- Life is a journey towards God, towards heaven, towards a new earth, to a new country.
- We cannot stop on the way and settle down in a comfy oasis, that is, just a place where we find comfort, pleasure and rest.
- If we do so - though in an oasis - we shall be stranded in the desert. We shall never reach our final destination.
- God sends us some stars that beckon us, that invite us to leave our small oasis and go to the larger world to live a life of service and sacrifice.
- Christ is the main twinkling star that tells us "Come! Follow me!"
- In our journey through life, He sends us many smaller stars inviting us to follow Him.
- He is calling us to a better, fuller and more satisfying life.
- He is inviting us to leave everything behind that stops us from following Him and push on forward with Him.
- We should not be so allured and entrapped in the things of this world.
- Riches, pleasures, and material things blind us to the call of Christ and to the stars God keeps sending us.
- We have for ever to say "yes" to God and follow him generously.
- With the daring and determined we have to stick to Him till the very end.
- To follow Christ our star, we have to be ready – like the generous camel of the story - to give up everything whatsoever, if he is asking us to do so.

- What sort of camel do you want to be? Go back to the story.
 - Some camels were so engrossed eating and drinking and enjoying the pleasures of life that they could not even see the star. Are you like them?
 - Only few of them, who in between whiles, raised their eyes to heaven could see the star. Can you be counted among them?
 - Some of them however, soon went back to their ordinary occupations and enjoyments and forgot all about the star beckoning them to better life. Are you like them?
 - Only a few of them kept thinking and inquiring about the star. They however, could not summon the courage and the generosity required to follow the star. Is this your case?
 - Finally, only one Camel, against all odds and criticisms, persevered till the bitter end. Why not you?
- In faith and confidence you too have to follow Jesus.
- He does not promise material “security” and “worldly success”, but he promises you his love and his company.

BIBLE PASSAGES given herewith, in which we see living examples of God asking man to leave behind everything and set out a journey towards a new life!

- The Call of Abraham. Gen 12:1- 4
- The Call of Moses. Exod 3:1-6; 10 -12
- The Magi. Mt 2:1- 11
- The Rich Young Man. Mk 10:17- 25.
- The Call of Saul (St Paul). Acts 9: 1 -18.

Group Activities (Optional; if time permits):

Activities will prove very useful for full- day sessions.

The best time for the activities is the afternoon hours.

Preparation of the Activities:

- ✓ If the number of participants are large, divide them into smaller groups.
- ✓ The activities can be based on the Scripture passages suggested above.
- ✓ The activities will try to portray some of the main ideas of today’s exercise.
- ✓ Each small group may take one of the passages and build on it an activity of its choice.
 - Bible study
 - Role - play
 - Symbolic representation
 - Poster
 - Mime
 - Photo – language story
 - Debate
 - Case – Study
 - Etc.

Presentation of the Activities:

- ✓ Each group will present its activity to the house.
- ✓ Each presentation will be followed by a short analysis, evaluation and discussion.

Closing Prayer Session:

Personal Prayer

Ask the participants to reflect and pray alone by themselves on the following, all by themselves

- Is God beckoning me now to follow his star? Which? How?

- Have I to leave behind something very dear to me? What?
- Am I ready? Have I the courage? Pray for it.

Group Prayer:

- The group will pray together, Invite the participants to pray aloud and spontaneously
- Use the texts suggested above or similar ones.
- Read the parable of the Camels and paraphrase it in a prayerful way.
- You may sing the following hymns:
 - ✓ “It takes Courage to Answer a Call.”
 - ✓ “I’ll say “Yes, yes, yes.”
 - ✓ “Take and Receive, O Lord.”
 - ✓ “Come, Follow Me.”
- Close the prayer session by reciting and paraphrasing the “Prayer for Generosity” of St. Ignatius:

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous,
 Teach me to serve you as you deserve,
 To give and not to count the cost,
 To fight and not to heed the wounds,
 To toil and not to seek for rest,
 To labor and not to ask for any reward
 Save that of knowing that I am doing your will!

APPENDIX

Themes Arising from the Story of “The Camels”. **Helpful for teaching , discussion and sharing**

(1) VOCATION:

- The star appeared in the sky for all the camels to see.
- Yet, most of the camels were so engrossed in the affairs and pleasure of life that they did not see the star at all!
- Only a few of them, who raised their eyes to heaven, saw the star. However, they did not follow it! They had no courage to get disentangles from the things and pleasure of life!
- Only one followed the star till the very end. Jesus sad: “Many are called, but few are chosen.”
- To follow Christ, to follow one’s star, to follow one’s vocation one has to BE READY TO GIVE UP MANY THINGS, maybe all he has!
- When God calls, he makes demands. He is the Master. We have to listen and obey!
- When God calls, we have to follow him in trust and confidence. He will provide. We have not to put conditions! Blind faith is wanted.

(2) IDEALS IN LIFE:

- Ideals are necessary to do something worthwhile in life and to become a disciple of Jesus.
- We have to live in this world with our eyes raised towards heaven. We should not keep our eyes glued to the earth!
- One has to dream dreams; yes, the “Impossible dream”!

- We have to see visions. To be prosaic, pedestrian, and materialistic and pleasure seeking is to live a life of a groundling, of a man without a vision, without ideals. To lead a “meaningless” life.
- If we have high ideals, lofty goals in life, dreams and stars will ring a bell in our hearts, like the generous camel when he saw the star.
- Lack of dreams and ideals make our lives drab and not worthwhile.
- It’s sad that the ‘Wisdom of the world’ condemns dreamers and visionaries and treats them like “Crazy and mad”!
- Great saints, heroes and extraordinary men had been great dreamers!
- The greatest dreamer of all was Jesus Christ!
- Today’s world is languishing not for want of knowledge or wealth, or pleasure, of which there are plenty, but for want of ideals and dreams!

(3) DETERMINATION TO STICK TO ONE’S GOAL:

- We need courage to be true to ourselves.
- We need “guts” to forge ahead in life, happen what may!
- Like the star-struck camel, we have to be ready to die, if need be, to carry out our ideals.
- We need not be discouraged by difficulties or daunted by fears.
- Once we have chosen a goal for ourselves we have to stick to it, cost what may.
- Die we can, deny our “true self” we can’t.
- We have to follow our ideals before they fade away.
- A goal once set, must be pursued without delay less it vanishes from the horizon of our lives, leaving us goalless, in the void.

(4) FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE FROM OTHERS:

- Do not be gregarious.
- Get out of the herd! Like our camel.
- Follow your conscience, not your peers!
- You owe loyalty to yourself, first and foremost.
- Stand by your principles and convictions.
- For something you have set your heart on, be ready to go it alone, all the way,.
- Do not be weighed down by the adverse criticisms and disparaging remarks of others.
- Be yourself! To yourself be true!
- Let not your life reflect the behavior of our faceless crowds!
- Respect others, accept others, but do not sheepishly follow them.

(5) LIFE IS A RISK:

- Without risk there is no gain, only stagnation.
- Unless you take risks you will not grow.
- To live life you have to risk it.
- If you risk your life to the point of losing it, you will gain it, if you want to keep it to the point of not taking risks you will lose it!
- For most people the greatest value in life is “peace” and “security”, meaning by peace the absence of struggle and by security the absence of risk!
- Risk your reputation if you want to keep it: risk your money if you want to make it pay dividends; risk your friendships, if you want to strengthen them; risk your happiness if you want to have it in abundance; risk your salvation if you want to secure it.

(6) THERE IS A LOGIC OF THE HEART.

- Human reason cannot comprehend the logic of the heart.
- The heart has reasons of which the mind knows nothing.
- In personal dealings and relationships we can't afford to be "cerebral", we have to be loving and trusting.
- True values like love, loyalty, generosity and magnanimity are not born in the mind; they are only born in the heart.
- All our reason can do is ratiocinate, conceptualize and philosophize. It extends the frontiers of knowledge, but not the frontiers of love, compassion and humane giving.
- Human wisdom cannot understand the wisdom of God.. (1 Cor 1: 18 – 31)
- Do not ask God for reasons when he is asking you for something.
- The generous Camel does not ask "Why? – How? – Where? – When? – How long?" And such questions? He needs not know such things. He only knows to love and to trust.

(7) DISCERNING GOD'S WILL:

- God speaks to us in whispers, dreams and visions.
- Only those who love God can understand Him.
- God's voice is silent! Only those whose hearts are silent and attuned to God's promptings will be able to hear Him.
- The call of God has not to be chosen, a vocation cannot be chosen; it's given! A vocation has to be discerned and accepted.
- Only those who are pure of heart and enjoy inner peace will be able to discern their vocation as the will of God.
- To discern, you haven't to ponder! You have no need to examine and speculate! You ought only to open your heart unconditionally, humbly and unreservedly and wait for God.
- True discernment is a matter of the heart and of the spirit. The mind cannot discern; it can only work out strategies on how best to accomplish what the heart has discerned.

(8) ATTACHMENTS:

- Most of the camels were attached to the oasis and to the security it afforded
- Being attached to what we have makes us prisoners in our own gilded cells!
- In point of fact, we do not possess anything we own, we are rather possessed by it.
- Attachments keep us a rut. When attached, we cannot change, nor improve, we remain static and fossilized.
- Attachments blind us to higher values. Most of the camels couldn't even see the star!
- Attachments stunt our growth. To grow is to part with what we have, to shed the old to enter into the new.
- To grow we have to die daily to our "today" to be able to enter into our "morrow"
- By being attached to our petty comforts and solaces we miss the wonderful adventure of life.

(9) TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD:

- Our camel entrusting himself to the beckoning star plunged into the desert.
- We have to place ourselves totally and unconditionally in the hands of God

- When God calls, we have to answer! We haven't to ask questions! We haven't to ask God how, when, where, why?
- When God summons us, we haven't to look for security, or search for proofs. Let He alone be our security.
- The companions of our camel wanted to make provision for the journey. Let us not bother! The one who calls us will provide for us!
- It is faith that gives substance to our dreams!
- It is faith that makes our dreams come true!

(10) WE ARE PILGRIMS ON EARTH:

- Life in this world, from birth to death, is a pilgrimage through a desert. We are travelers.
- In the world there little oases, but we cannot live in them forever.
- The world with her oases, is a passing stage Our final stage and destination is God.
- We cannot cling to worldly things if we want to enter into possession of our true life.
- As Christians, we have to forgo the "security" of our daily existence, in the hope of our triumphant resurrection with Christ in the glory of God.