

FFWPU USA: CARP Retreat: Living a Life of Real Love

Demian Dunkley
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Photos courtesy of CARP Bay Area

"This retreat was enough to give me a lot of insight that genuinely impacted how I think and act," shared a first-time retreat participant and CARP member from California State University (CSU), East Bay. "I could express my true thoughts and feelings, allowing me to reflect and appreciate who I am and what I have in the present moment."

CARP members of the Bay Area Chapter recently explored the concept of enduring and unchanging love during their annual [fall retreat](#). The three-day program, "Living a Life of Real Love," was held October 27 through 29 at Heavenly Hills Christian Camp, tucked away in the scenic terrain of Twain Harte northwest of Yosemite National Park.



"Every year, the fall retreat comes at the perfect time of shifting seasons, and serves as a much-needed separation from the hectic onslaught of midterms, projects, and class essays for both CARP leaders and participants," said a retreat organizer. Driving down from the Bay Area to the campsite almost three hours away, "the changing landscape from urban gas stations and loaded highways, to rough dirt roads and autumn leaves makes it actually feel like fall," the organizer said. "We Californians don't get a lot of

seasonal variety, especially if one lives in the city, so the rarity of colored leaves makes this transformation that much more special."



Many of the retreat's 27 participants, including visiting Cheon Il Guk Youth Missionary volunteers, said they experienced God's presence strongly in nature.

"This retreat [brought] me closer to God, nature, and [showed me] how to stay happy and feel loved," shared another first-time participant and Chabot College CARP member. "The retreat taught me how to live a life full of love. Spending more time in nature with my friends and having deep conversations [were] the best moments at a retreat."



While the program covered CARP's national curriculum, it also focused on questions surrounding real love and applying it in daily life. Other presentations examined how our worldview is developed, as well as the sacredness of love and sexuality.

"One of the key concepts I learned was about worldview," shared the CSU, East Bay student. "Our worldview is mainly shaped by the environment we surround ourselves with, so there are many differences between each group of people from different backgrounds. [This] explains why putting ourselves in other people's shoes is crucial in finding common shared interests that connect people together."



Participants also received guidance on prayer, along with implementing practical spiritual habits. "Highlights for many of the participants were ... the thought-provoking presentations and following group discussions, and the appreciation letter activity we did on the final evening where everyone got to write their appreciation to other retreat participants," said the program organizer.

"Several participants expressed that this retreat was a much-needed time to pause and reflect on their lives and how to make God a more active part of their daily schedules," they said.

The group further bonded over various team-building activities, a pumpkin carving contest, and evening bonfires. "Participating in the morning silent prayer in nature and having quality time to discuss meaningful topics with my team members were two periods when I felt a strong connection with myself and others," shared the CSU, Bay Area student. "I realized that joy and happiness are sometimes found in the little things around us, but we often ignore them as we focus solely on our problems ... [This retreat] was one of the most beautiful experiences I've ever had."

Organizers said they hope the inspiration gained from the retreat propels CARP members through the rest of the school semester with more intention, growth, spirituality, and, of course, real love.

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Living a Life of Real Love

November 7, 2023



On Oct. 27th - 29th, 2023, CARP Bay Area hosted a 3 Day Fall Retreat at the Heavenly Hills Christian Camp. Contributed by Younng-Joo Scharf

What is real love? Does it exist? And what does it mean to live a life of real love anyway? These are the questions that inspired CARP Bay Area's 2023 Fall Retreat theme, "Living a Life of Real Love".

The drive from the Bay Area to Heavenly Hills Christian Camp is about 2.5-3 hours, depending on who's driving, and the changing landscape, from urban gas stations and loaded highways to rough dirt roads and autumn leaves, makes it actually feel like fall. We Californians don't get a lot of seasonal variety (especially if one lives in the city) so the rarity of colored leaves makes this transformation that much more special.

Every year, the Fall Retreat comes at the perfect time of shifting seasons and serves as a much-needed separation from the hectic onslaught of midterms, projects, and class essays for both CARP leaders and participants.

Around 27 participants, CARP members and visiting Cheon Il Guk Missionary volunteers, participated in this semester's 3-day, "Living a Life of Real Love" retreat. Our main content was CARP National Curriculum presentations, "Worldview" and "Love and Sexuality", as well as internal guidance on prayer and practical spiritual habits.

Highlights for many of the participants were the live-action Among Us activity we played the Friday night we first arrived at the campsite, the thought-provoking presentations and following group discussions, and the appreciation letter activity we did on the final evening where everyone got to write their appreciation to other retreat participants.

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In honor of the spooky season, another highlight was our classic team bonding activity: a pumpkin carving competition! Complete with pumpkin pie and ice cream as dessert, teams got to know each other better over pumpkin carving and delicious food. With highs in the 60s and lows in the 30s, it was quite cold up in the mountains in the evening, so bonfires, hot chocolate and tea, and warm food were a great help!

Several participants expressed that this retreat was a much-needed time to pause and reflect on their lives and how to make God a more active part of their daily schedules.



Here are some reflections from some of the first-time participants of our retreat:

"Although I was one of the last arrivals, spending just one day at the retreat was enough to give me a lot of insight that genuinely impacted how I think and act. One of the key concepts I learned was about worldview. Our worldview is mainly shaped by the environment we surround ourselves with, so there are many differences between each group of people from different backgrounds. It explains why putting ourselves in other people's shoes is crucial in finding common shared interests that connect people together. This is one of CARP's principles: 'We are one family, and each is a unique expression of God.' Furthermore, participating in the morning silent prayer in nature and having quality time to discuss meaningful topics with my team members were two periods when I felt a strong connection with myself and others. I could express my true thoughts and feelings, allowing me to reflect and appreciate who I am and what I have in the present moment. I realized that joy and happiness are sometimes found in the little things around us, but we often ignore them as we focus solely on our problems. Life is all about the little things and moments that make it worthwhile, isn't it?... It was one of the most beautiful experiences I've ever had."

— Tian Ho, CSU East Bay CARP member

"I am so grateful to be part of this retreat and CARP. This retreat makes me closer to God, nature, and how to stay happy and feel loved. The retreat taught me how to live a life full of love. Spending more time in nature with my friends and having deep conversations are the best moments at a retreat."

— Gracie Kouv, Chabot College CARP member

The retreat was a meaningful experience and we hope to use the energy gained from this time to propel us into the remaining part of the semester with more intention, daily spiritual practice and growth, and real love!

Much Love,

CARP Bay Area.

Thank you's:

Huge shout-out to Kazuya and Yelena Morita, our retreat internal coordinators, parental figures, and main kitchen staff.

Markus Von Euw for supporting the Cheon Il Guk missionary volunteers.

Main presenters: Kazuya Morita and Dinis Morita. Awesome father-son duo.

Yutaka Ono and Yuuki Tanaka for being Aunt Yelena's assistant cooks.

Our internal activities team: Joseph A-Beckett, Joshua Sohn, and Younng-Joo Scharf.

Our external activities team: Dinis Morita, Shae Wright, Millie, and Joseph A'Beckett.

Song team: Shae Wright, Kienyen Chen, and Maria Barragan.

MC's: Tiger Rai and Edward Osorio (both MC-ing for the first time)

Team Leaders: Seung-Se Morita, Reimi Mizuguchi, Joshua Sohn, Kienyen Chen, and Shae Wright.

Media Team: Kyung-Mi Cienfuegos, Keita Yamada, and Josh Fujikake.

And to the Heavenly Hills Christian Camp staff, who prayed for us, cleaned up after us, and got up early and stayed up late making bonfires to keep everyone warm.

And finally, for all the participants for whom all preparation was made worthwhile. Without all these hardworking individuals this retreat would not be possible!

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