



Sonlight Christian Camp's Gap Year Program:  
*The Barnabas Journey*  
All the Juicy Details  
[www.sonlightcamp.org](http://www.sonlightcamp.org)

*"The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."  
~ Acts 13: 2-3*

Sonlight's Gap Year: The Barnabas Journey offers high school graduates ages 18-22 the chance to connect with a small Christian community, to discover who God wants you to be, and to prepare for the lifelong journey God has for you. And Sonlight offers an ideal location: on the edge of the Weminuche Wilderness in the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado. The Barnabas Journey is guided by Sonlight's Director, Emrys Tyler, who holds an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary and served as a Presbyterian pastor for 10 years before coming to Sonlight.

***Why do we call it the "Barnabas Journey"?***

Barnabas was an unsung hero of the story of Acts. He quietly and tirelessly encouraged the Christians around him and was largely responsible for the Apostle Paul finding his calling. Sonlight hopes that we can serve as a place of encouragement and growth, being a "Barnabas" to you. We also hope that from your experience at Sonlight, you will become a "Barnabas" to others, encouraging them to become the people God wants them to be.

*"Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray. And he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them . . ." ~ Luke 6:12-13*

***Who Does God Want Me to Be?***

It's the critical question for everyone, but perhaps most for young adults. Before you make the leap from high school to college, do you need a little time to listen to the Spirit? Do you need a break from the academic grind to clarify your calling? Before you jump from college into the career pool, do you want to establish some holy habits to keep you grounded?

***If you answered "Yes" to any of the questions above . . .***

The Sonlight Gap Year offers a unique opportunity to live, work, and adventure in a community dedicated to living the love of Christ in the world. Barnabas Journey Gappers at Sonlight will:

- ⊕ ***Learn how to form and live in a small, intentional Christian community, both taking care of their own needs and contributing to the welfare of the group.***

You will participate in the day-to-day life and operations of Sonlight Christian Camp. Three days of the week will be work with the year-round staff, performing the amazing variety of tasks required to make camp and retreats awesome. Often these days will be on weekends, as much of Sonlight's ministry is done for weekend retreat groups.

That means coffee, tea, and hot chocolate together. That means doing dishes and vacuuming. That means devising creative solutions to plumbing problems. That means baking (and often eating—not gonna lie) a lot of cookies.

It means discovering your gifts for hospitality and service, and the blessed cycle of hard work and Sabbath rest. You will also develop essential life skills such as communication, conflict resolution, money management and home economics together.

⊕ ***Study and pray with pastoral leadership dedicated to helping others discern God's call on their lives.***

Here's the unique blessing of eight months away at Sonlight. On your Barnabas Journey, you will choose from one of three personalized courses whose content will include reading, reflection, and supervision from the pastoral leadership at Sonlight. On average, two days per week will go into this formation work. You'll choose from:

1) **Scriptural Study and Interpretation Course:** includes close reading of the Bible and biblical commentaries, rigorous application to our lives and the life of the community, and building disciplines of personal prayer and listening to the Spirit.

*"Happy are those . . . whose delight is in the law of the Lord. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in season, and their leaves do not wither." ~ Psalm 1*

2) **Vocational Discernment Course:** includes exploring your own personality, gifts, experience, and calling to serve, with a goal of discerning what education, profession or ministry you intend to pursue.

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." ~ John 15:16*

Curriculum includes: readings and papers developing each individual's ability to describe a sense of self and calling from God; Ian Cron & Suzanne Stabile's *The Road Back to You*: a Christian exploration of the enneagram and its implications for life; *Reclaiming Conversation* by Sherry Turkle: discerning the impact of digital culture on the Christian life; Dan Reiland's *Spiritual Gifts: A Tool to Discover Your Place in Ministry*, scripture-based gifts assessment.

3) **Wilderness Stewardship and Ethics Course:** includes studying paradigms of wilderness ethics, becoming familiar with the work of caring for and maintaining wilderness areas, and articulating how God calls Christians to tend creation in meaningful ways.

*"The Lord God took the human and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." ~ Genesis 2:15*

Opportunities will be provided for partnering with the local US Forest Service Ranger District and other entities dedicated to keeping the wilderness well. Readings will include essays by Wendell Berry, *Deep Survival* by Lawrence Gonzales, and others.

3) **Professional Camp or Adventure Ministry Course:** includes delving much deeper into the work of operating a residential camp or adventure camp program (backpacking, rafting, etc), with the goal of clarifying whether you are called to pursue more training in the field.

*“I will be with you. And this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.” ~Exodus 3:12*

4) **A personalized combination of the above courses.** We understand that the Gap Year is about exploration, so Barnabas Journey Gappers will be able to tailor their plans for the year according to what the Spirit reveals in the discernment process.

⊕ ***Enjoy the blessings of the Rocky Mountains with their millions of acres of National Forest and Wilderness.***

Either as part of your work or on your two weekly days off, you will have the chance to hike a mountain peak, kayak the San Juan River, sip a latte in the hot springs of Pagosa Springs, ski or ride the Wolf Creek Ski Area (“the most snow in Colorado”) or write poetry among the whispering aspens of Sonlight Camp.

*“Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Wild animals and cattle, creeping things and flying birds! Praise the Lord! ~ Psalm 148:9-10, 14*

***There’s More . . .***

As part of your personalized formation course, you will choose from the following:

Any **one** from elective group A:

- Participating in the National American Camp Association conference
- Receiving NOLS Wilderness First Responder training (80 hour course)
- Participating in a national Youth Specialties conference
- Other opportunity agreed upon by you and the Sonlight directors

**Or** any **two** from elective group B:

- Receiving NOLS Wilderness First Aid training (16 hour course)
- Participating in US Forest Service wilderness training and/or trail maintenance training
- Participating in the Rocky Mountain Regional American Camp Association Conference
- Pursuing leadership in Pagosa area church youth ministries
- Undergoing a professionally administered personality assessment (Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, Emotional Intelligence, etc) evaluated through a Christian lens
- Other opportunity agreed upon by you and the Sonlight directors

***Sonlight Provides:***

- ☞ Lodging for the entire 8 months of the program (10 September 2019 – 8 May 2020). Sonlight is a camp, which means we keep our facilities basic so we can focus on hard work, quality relationships, and getting outside. Yes, we have hot showers and flush toilets (and even hot tubs). We don’t have private bedrooms and your own bathroom. Cell phone service and internet are limited. If you want to know more details, feel free to ask!
- ☞ Coaching for Barnabas Gappers in how to plan, budget for, and prepare community meals. Under the guidance of Sonlight staff, they will provide complete, nutritious meals for retreat groups and also for themselves and the staff between groups.
- ☞ Weekly mentoring and pastoral leadership from Rev. Emrys Tyler, one of Sonlight’s Co-Directors.
- ☞ Curriculum for formation work and tuition fees for elective trainings.

- ☒ Assistance preparing for the next step: college application essays, scholarship searches, job interview preparation, deciding which mountain peak to summit, etc.
- ☒ A professional reference for future applications based on work, spiritual, and community experience.
- ☒ Just about all the coffee and tea you can drink.
- ☒ Opportunities for winter sports at Wolf Creek Ski Area (skiing, riding, snowshoeing, etc).
- ☒ One week leave for Thanksgiving, one week for Christmas, and one week on the Pagosa area schools' spring break.

***Barnabas Gappers Will Provide for Themselves:***

- ☒ An attitude of gratitude and readiness to learn at every turn.
- ☒ A desire to follow Jesus Christ wherever he leads.
- ☒ Willingness to plan and cook community meals, and do a lot of dishes.
- ☒ Joy in working hard, playing well, and resting easy.
- ☒ The ability to live well with a minimum of access to social media, cell service, and internet.
- ☒ Transportation to and from the camp, and for their own trips off-site.
- ☒ Health insurance.

**Cost**

The all-inclusive cost (room, board, and program fees) is **\$5,100**, with \$2,500 deposit due by 1 August and the balance (\$2,600) due by 1 September. Scholarship information is available upon request.

**\*\*Deadline for applications: 15 July \*\***

To apply please visit **[www.sonlightcamp.org](http://www.sonlightcamp.org)** and click on "Gap Year."

**The Fine Print: (*boring to read but really important to know*)**

- ✓ Gap Year participants will be expected to read the Sonlight handbook and abide by the community expectations therein. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the Gap Year program.
- ✓ Applicants who have not paid the portion due by 1 August or the balance by 1 September are *not* guaranteed a place in the program, even if Sonlight issued an offer.
- ✓ Applicants who submit their initial \$2,500 deposit but fail to appear on the September arrival date *will not* receive a refund for their deposit.
- ✓ Participants who leave the program early or are dismissed for any reason *will not* receive a refund for any portion of their tuition.
- ✓ Sonlight directors reserve the right to dismiss any Gap Year participant whom they believe fails to adhere to community standards, engages in unethical behavior, or poses an unnecessary risk to Sonlight Adventures, its staff, guests, or other Gap Year participants.
- ✓ All Gap Year participants, because of their involvement with Sonlight's ministry, must submit to background checks (criminal, state, federal, driver's record, etc) before being accepted into the program.

***Note to Parents of Barnabas Gappers***

The transition from high school to—whatever’s next—can be as intense for parents as it is for their children. Sonlight values the impact of parents on the development of their children in youth, young adulthood, and even in later adulthood. We hope, as part of that impact, you’re in conversation with your child about the significance of a gap year experience, and especially the Barnabas Journey at Sonlight. We recognize that you may even have financial stake in your child’s successful participation in the program. We’re used to the positive attention and involvement of parents—after all, we’ve been running 39 years of summer camps for youth!

However, the Barnabas Journey differs from coming to a Sonlight summer camp. We hope that Barnabas Journey Gappers will emerge more fully into adulthood over our eight months together. We hope that they will take more ownership for their path of discipleship, their finances, their meal planning, and their pursuit of future goals. Sonlight leaders do not intend to be surrogate parents, but rather wiser adults mentoring and forming younger adults.

We hope that you can embrace the Barnabas Journey not as an extension of the comfort of “life before adulthood,” but as a time for your child to stretch out their God-given wings and fly. If you have any questions or concerns about Sonlight’s role in the Barnabas Journey, please contact Emrys Tyler (970.264.4379 or [emrys@sonlightcamp.org](mailto:emrys@sonlightcamp.org)).

***We’re excited that you’re considering the Barnabas Journey! We are praying that you and all young adults will grow every day closer to the image of Jesus Christ.***