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**YMCA
RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM
STUDY GUIDE FOR
THE BROWN RAG**

For campers 14 years of age and over who are already Silver Ragers and are accepting the challenge for Christian Service.

A. "Four Things"

Four things a man must learn to do,
If he would make his record true:
To think without confusion, clearly;
To love his fellow man sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely;
To trust in God and Heaven securely.

B. Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

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C. I Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient and kind, love is not jealous or Boastful, it is nor arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

D. Not to be Served, but to Serve

O, Lord, I pray, that from this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent my good intent
Not to be pleased, but to please.

This, too, I pray, that from this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand from Thy command
Not to be served, but to serve.

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E. The Gate of the Year

I said to the man who stood at the
Gate of the Year,
“Give me a light, that I may tread
Safely into the unknown.”
He said to me,
“Go out into the darkness,
And put your hand into the hand of God.
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YMCA RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM

THE BROWN RAG

Instructions:

This is not a part of the Ceremony and is not to be read aloud, but it should be studied carefully by all Ragers who have parts in conducting the Ceremony.

In the presentation of the Rag there is a very close, inter-personal relationship with a strong emotional impact. Your sincerity in what you are doing and saying as you take part in the Ceremony and as you welcome the Ragger into this step is an element which makes for a meaningful experience.

READING

Persons with special parts speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. As you prepare, if there are words which are unfamiliar to you, ask about them. Remember to speak in a warm, personal tone. Be sure to read your part over in advance several times so that you know what you are saying.

HOW WE LEARN

We learn best by the “feeling” that moves between us, rather than by just what we say. Show a deep feeling of affection for those whom you are welcoming into the Rag Society.

Explanations during the Ceremony appear in parenthesis and are not to be read aloud.

This Ceremony should be held in a secluded spot away from camp, including in any one Ceremony only the number of persons for which space is available at the Ragers’ Emblem.

PERSONNEL NECESSARY FOR THE BROWN RAG CEREMONY:

Director – who stands at the side of the Square.
Four Reminders – who stand at the corners of the Square.
Guides for the candidates.

**Blindfolds are necessary for the Brown Rag ceremony.
The rag itself is an integral part of the ceremony and cannot be used as a blindfold.**

The Brown Rag cont.

Ideas For Making Your Rag Ceremonies Special

Use music.

PERSONALIZE: i.e., “Tom, whom do you bring?”
“I bring Kathy and Ben, who wish...”

Use readings, scriptural and others, which are personalized to reflect the individual’s counseling sessions. Use them at the end, or interspersed throughout the Ceremony.

Speak slowly and clearly. Use pauses.

Be purposeful and serious; no unnecessary talking.

Open and close with prayer.

Everyone should be standing or sitting behind or to the side of the candidates when they take off their blindfolds, so they have an unobstructed view of the point.

Whenever possible, have one person guide each candidate up the trail. This is more personal and intimate than the “chain gang” method and eliminates the need for spoken instructions on where to walk.

Be conscious of rustling papers, etc. Plan ahead when pages will be turned.

Go over the sequence of events at the point beforehand, to eliminate uncomfortable pauses while we figure out “What’s next.”

At night, candles provide a nice light at the point if it is fire safe and regulations permit.

Put a Rag on the cross that symbolizes the Ceremony in progress.

Keep the blindfold on the new Ragers until all wishing to speak privately with him/her have had the opportunity. Ask the newcomer(s) to sit and be comfortable during this time.

Allow time after for the new and old Ragers to share some personal thoughts before the Ceremony is closed.

Leave the newcomer(s) alone at the point after the Ceremony. Be sure to tell them that you’ll be waiting a few yards down the trail.

The Brown Rag cont.

The Brown Rag – A Challenge for Christian Service

CEREMONY

GUIDE: (The Brown Ragers are blindfolded. Following a short prayer by the Guide, they are lead to a spot a few yards from the Rag Emblem.)

By your growth in body, mind, and spirit you are ready to take the third step toward the ideals which we have set for ourselves as Ragers. In accepting the Blue Rag, you accepted the goal of loyalty toward God, Country, and others. When you accepted the challenge of the Silver Rag you became a disciple of God, committing your life to Him and His cause. This third step, the Brown Rag, carries the challenge of Service...through development of a well-rounded life. The blindfold merely shuts out the world around you, and aids you to think clearly about the reminders of the Brown Rag challenge.

(Lead Ragger(s) to Director – standing at lower side of the Rag Emblem Square.)

DIRECTOR: You will now kneel on your **left** knee, in the tradition of the Brown Ragers. I am placing in your hand a Brown Rag, emblematic of a well-rounded life. Henry Van Dyke had this to say about such a life:

“Four things you must learn to do
If you would make your record true;
To think without confusion, clearly,
To love your fellowman sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely,
To trust in God and heaven securely.”

Guide, you will lead the Ragger(s) to the first reminder, where he (they) will take the position of a Brown Ragger, kneeling on the left knee.

FIRST REMINDER: You will now hold securely the first corner of your Rag. (Guide(s) help with the Rag.) I am the First Reminder. Four things you must learn to do, if you would make your record true. I would remind you of the first requirement...**“TO THINK WITHOUT CONFUSION, CLEARLY.”**

St. Paul’s letter to an early church has given us an excellent pattern for thinking. He wrote:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever is true, whatsoever is honorable,
whatsoever is just, whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is lovely,
whatsoever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is
anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

May I suggest that as a reminder of the first corner of your Brown Rag that you make these things the pattern for your everyday thoughts. There is another scripture that says, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” We tend to become like the kind of things we think about. If you would build yourself the best possible record, the first corner of your Rag must remind you to “Think without confusion, clearly.”

You may proceed to the Second Reminder.

(Guide leads Ragger(s) to Second Reminder and instructs him (them) to again kneel on the left knee.)

The Brown Rag cont.

SECOND REMINDER: You will now hold securely the second corner of your Rag. I am the Second Reminder. Four things you must learn to do, if you would make your record true. First, “To think without confusion, clearly.” Second, **“TO LOVE YOUR FELLOWMAN SINCERELY.”** It has been said, “For growth, love is needed as much as bread. A heart that is starved completely of the food of love will surely die.” A person who loves will give, and forgive, and thus will truly live. John Oxenham has stated for us how love works in this poem:

“Love ever gives, forgives, outlives,
And ever stands, with open hands,
And while it lives it gives,
For this is love’s prerogative
To give, and give, and give!”

If you really want to love your fellowman, you might remember these words of St. Paul:

“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong; but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

Whenever you deal with others, remember well these words. May I suggest as a reminder of the second corner of our Rag, that you accept this second goal for yourself...**“To love your fellowman sincerely.”**

(Guide leads Ragger(s) to Third Reminder and bids him (them) to again kneel on their left knee.)

THIRD REMINDER: You will now hold securely the third corner of your Rag. I am the Third Reminder. Four things you must learn to do, if you would make your record true. “To think without confusion, clearly; To love your fellowman sincerely; and third, **“TO ACT FROM HONEST MOTIVES PURELY.”** Someone has said, “What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say.” Our acts, after all, what we really are. Of course, our acts are determined by our motives, our inner reasons for what we do, and we may well test them to see that they are honest. When we think clearly, and when we love our fellowman sincerely, we will act with honest motives, in service to others.

“O Lord, I pray, that from this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent my good intent
Not to be pleased, but to please.

This, too, I pray, that from this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand from Thy command
Not to be served, but to serve.”

May I suggest that as a reminder of the third corner of your Rag that you add this goal to the others you have accepted and truly **“Act from honest motives, purely.”**

You may proceed to the Fourth Reminder.

The Brown Rag cont.

FOURTH REMINDER: In addition to the three corners, you will now grasp securely the center of your Rag, emblematic of the center of a well-rounded life. I am the Fourth Reminder. Four things you must learn to do, if you would make your record true. “To think without confusion, clearly; To love your fellowman sincerely; To act from honest motives purely;” and fourth “TO TRUST IN GOD AND HEAVEN SECURELY.” A successful life must put its trust in someone outside of self. God, the Creator, the Infinite Spirit, is the One in whom we place our trust. May I suggest that your last requirement points to the pattern of trust that will give you security in any situation you may face throughout the rest of your life. This ancient poem speaks of a faith that is as old as the history of mankind. Listen to its words:

“I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year,
‘Give me a Light that I may tread safely into the unknown.’
And he said to me,

‘Go out into the darkness,
And put your hand into the hand of God.
It shall be to you better than a light,
And safer than a know way.’”

I invite you to practice such a trust in God as your final goal.

You may proceed.

(Guide leads Ragger(s) to Director and instructs him (them) to kneel on left knee.)

DIRECTOR: You have been kneeling at the four corners of the square to hear the reminders of the goals of the Brown Rag. Let me review them for you:

“Four things you must learn to do
If you would make your record true;
To think without confusion, clearly,
To love your fellowman sincerely,
To act from honest motives purely,
To trust in God and Heaven securely.”

Do you accept these goals as your own? If so, answer “I do.”

Please kneel on your left knee to receive your Rag.

(While tying the Rag, a few words of encouragement should be shared with the new Ragger(s). As soon as the Rag is tied, have the person sit down, still blindfolded, and be comfortable. Other Raggings may wish to speak personally with the new Ragger(s). When all the Rags are tied and everyone is finished with their personal talks with the new Ragger(s), the Director asks for the blindfolds to be removed.)

You see before you the Emblem of the Ragger. The circle stands for the circle of friendship of all YMCA's and people around the world – wherever they may be. The square represents the foursquare life of a true Ragger: physical, social, spiritual, and mental. The triangle stands for strength because it is the strongest geometric figure known to man. Because of this strength – we have named the three points: Body, Mind, and Spirit – to remind you to keep the challenge that you have accepted for yourself. And at the center of our emblem and at the center of our hearts – lies the cross. It appears so that we never forget the wonderful lesson that Jesus taught to us through His life – His example and His words.

The Brown Rag cont.

(Each Ragger may now take the position appropriate to his or her Rag if they choose.)

It is traditional that no Ragger enters that portion of the Rag Emblem reserved for other Rags. This tradition dictates that Blue and Silver Raggars remain outside the Circle. As you grow in body, mind and spirit, and take on new challenges so too will you become closer to God. Brown and Gold Raggars may enter the Circle but shall remain outside the Square. After accepting more difficult challenges and dedicating yourself to helping others through personal sacrifice, your relationship with God will strengthen. Red and Purple Raggars are invited to enter the Square, but shall remain outside the Triangle. Those that choose a lifetime commitment to God and service to the YMCA, and except the challenge of the White Rag may enter the Triangle and stand beside the Cross as a sign of their unwavering commitment to God and the Raggars Creed.

(An appropriate story may be told.)

Shall we repeat, or sing, the Raggars' Creed?

"I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend to all – the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift."

We will ask our Chaplain to lead us in short prayer, followed by all of us joining in the Lord's Prayer.

As you now leave this place as a Brown Ragger, remember that you should no longer be the same person that you were just a short time ago. You have now taken upon yourself a new stature – a person committed to service for God with your fellowmen.

May God bless you richly in this new step that you have taken for Him.

(The new Ragger(s) may remain at the point to meditate after the others leave.)

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