



Day 1: Wilderness Is

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Psalm 139: 7-14

Scripture Focus: Psalm 139: 14

“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.”

Theological Summary: God protects and cares for us every day. God surrounds us with love and will be with us, wherever we go.

Daily Goals...

- Ponder what wilderness is and all the ways that it intertwines in our lives.
- Proclaim God’s presence in the wilderness.
- Foster a nurturing and brave community space for exploration.
- Celebrate that all are wonderfully and marvelously made!

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Name Game	PLAY	Using rhyme to learn names
__ Find It!	PLAY SERVE	Scavenger hunt
__ Helping Hands	SERVE CREATE	Create a “helping hands” display
__ God Finds Us	LEARN CREATE	Make a Tambourine
__ Light in the Dark	PRAY LEARN	Play Eye Spy with flashlights
__ Where to go?	PLAY PRAY	Movement Game

Leader notes: Psalm 139: 7-14 is focused on God’s presence in our lives and God’s ability to be with us at all times. Remember to help campers make connections to each other

Prayer: “Dear Lord, thank you for creating me, helping me, and being present in my life. Thank you for the wilderness you have created. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Name Game

PLAY

Supplies: Flower or another item from outdoors.

How: Invite campers to sit in a circle and use the rhyme from “Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet and so are you!” Change the wording to “Roses are red, violets are blue, we are wonderfully made, so let’s say hi to you!” Hand a child the flower/item and say the poem as a group. After saying the poem, the camper holding the flower states their name and hands the flower to another camper. Repeat the process until each camper has had at least one turn.

Try This: Play again, but this time hand the flower to a camper without saying their name. See who in the circle can remember that camper’s name. Repeat until all campers have had a turn

Find It!

PLAY SERVE

Supplies: Paper, markers, and camp map (optional to use as a model).

How: Discuss with campers all the different locations they will be visiting during the week. Walk from place to place, and as you do, discuss how you went, landmarks you saw, etc. Return to the starting place. Using paper and markers, create a group map to use throughout the week. Have campers work in pairs to create and decorate maps so that there are extras to share with others.

Try This: As you travel around the camp, decide on fun ways to travel from place to place. For example, decide as a group to skip to the kitchen, clap to the cabin, etc. Be aware of physical limitations of campers and adjust as needed.

Helping Hands

SERVE CREATE

Supplies: Construction paper (half sheets), scissors, crayons or markers, glue, hole punch, string, and tape.

How: Invite campers to think about people who are helpers in their family and community, and then share their ideas. Next, discuss how campers might help others at camp. Campers should trace one hand on paper, then cut out the hand. Invite each camper to

pick one way that they will put on their display, and then write that way on their hand. Punch a hole in the hand-shaped cutouts. String the hands at eye level in a high-traffic location. Remind campers throughout the week to look at the hands and use their ideas to help others.

Try This: As the campers cut out their hands, have them start at the wrist and after the hand is cut out, gently remove it from the outline. Using the outlines, mount them on different colors of paper and form a quilt. Invite campers to think of ways they might help others at home, or people who help that they could pray for. Hang this ‘quilt’ somewhere that it would be visible to all in camp.

God Finds Us!

LEARN CREATE

Supplies: Uncooked rice, paper plates, crayons or markers, a stapler, and an area to collect small stones or pinecones if possible

How: On a short walk, invite campers to find small pebbles or other small items from the ground that might make noise (pinecones, twigs). They should only collect what they can hold in their hand or use one large bag for all. Give each camper two paper plates. Campers should decorate the bottom of both plates. Place a few pebbles or other collected items and a handful of rice on one plate. Turn the other plate over so it is bottom up and staple around the edges. Invite campers to shake their paper plate tambourines as you all sing a familiar song, such as “Jesus loves Me,” as you march around the area.

Try This: Invite another group over to sing songs with your campers and use the tambourines to add joyful noise to the singing.

Light in the Dark

PRAY LEARN

Supplies: Flashlights (one for each camper, or one flashlight that is shared), easily identifiable items from your space, or items that represent portions of the bible verse.

How: Read Psalm 139:7-14. Show campers items from around your space or choose items that represent portions of the Bible verse. Place campers so that they can see the whole area, or set boundaries where they can turn around to see all sides of the area. Use hands to make “binoculars” and play “I Spy” by inviting one camper at a time to choose an object, and describe it

using one word. Invite campers to guess, and whoever guesses gets to go next (or if they have already gone, they may choose the next person to lead). After everyone has had a turn, lead the campers in praying for the items “Thank you, God for...” and close with the prayer of the day.

Try This: If possible, use flashlights for this activity. Have campers all look in one direction, and as each camper has their turn, they get to hold the flashlight on the area where their item is. This is best played at dusk when the flashlight can be seen, but so can the items to be chosen.

Where to go?

PLAY PRAY

Supplies: Four pieces of paper labeled A, B, C, and D.

How: Begin by reading Psalm 139:7-14. Remind campers that the writer of Psalms talks about how God is with us everywhere. Talk with campers about the places they like to go. Pick four corners of the area and place the markers for A, B, C, and D in each corner. Campers start in the center of the space. Call out a place for each letter (A is a desert, B is a big city, etc.), and how the campers should move (Large steps, hop, jump, etc.) to their chosen corner. Repeat with different options. You can make some more specific, or keep them vague. Gather campers and close with the prayer of the day, or by thanking God for each of the places mentioned.

Try This: Try doing this using a format of “Coke vs Pepsi,” where campers start in the middle and move to one side for one of two choices. (Left if you like the beach, right if you like the pool.)

Story Resources

All the Colors of the Earth, By Sheila Hamanaka (Harper Collins, 1994)

This picture book highlights the differences between us, as well as fantasy travel to different locations. God loves us all; we are all wonderfully made!

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, By Judith Viorst (Simon & Schuster, 1972)

Alexander is having a day where everything goes wrong. Much like a day when we might wonder if God is watching, helping us, and loving us. After reading the book, discuss where God might be in Alexander’s Day, and how God might be present, even when we don’t feel like he is there.

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (Disney, 2014)

A movie version of the picture book, chronicling Alexander’s very hard day.

Where the Wild Things Are, By Maurice Sendak (Harper & Row, 1963)

After a tough day at home, Max uses his imagination to travel to an imaginary world. He decides to return home when he wants to feel loved.

Where the Wild Things Are (Warner Brothers, 2009)

A movie version of the picture book, where Max uses his imagination to travel to a fantasy location after a hard day at home.

“Where Can I Go- Psalm 139 By Ellie Holcomb (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eb2mpkdhRHM>)

This beautiful song is a close rendition of the bible verse for today, Psalm 139: 7-14.



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Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Psalm 139: 7-14 (NRSVUE)

Scripture Focus: even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Theological Summary: God is everywhere, even in the scariest places.

Daily Goals...

- Ponder what wilderness is and all the ways that it intertwines in our lives.
- Proclaim God's presence in the wilderness.
- Foster a nurturing and brave community space for exploration.
- Celebrate that all are wonderfully and marvelously made!

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Where I'm Found	PRAY CREATE	Naming where God finds us
__ Wherever You Are	PLAY LEARN	Blob hide and seek
__ Wilderness Is...	CREATE	Explore through acrostic
__ God Is Here	LEARN PLAY	Scavenger hunting God in camp
__ Light In Darkness	LEARN SERVE	Upcycling a lit path for the camp
__ Wherever You've Been	PLAY	Get to know you name game

Leader notes: The idea that God is everywhere will be welcome to some, but not all campers. Allow campers to set boundaries as they become more comfortable.

Prayer: "God of light and darkness, guide us on our way through and beyond the wilderness. Amen."

Daily Activities

Daily Activities

Where I'm Found

CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Multi-colored construction paper, hole punch, ribbon/yarn, markers, scissors, and stickers (optional).

How: In advance, cut paper into large squares, then slice on an angle to form triangles. Punch holes in two corners, so that the triangle will hang pointiest end down. Gather campers in a circle. Ask the campers about where they like to hang out at home and if they have favorite places at camp yet. Where do the campers spend most of their time? Where do they most enjoy spending time? Are they in the same place? Give each camper a triangle and invite them to write their name on one side, and the place God is most likely to find them on the other. Invite campers to decorate their triangles and to thread them onto a ribbon together. Place the garland of names and places in a common worship space, thanking God for being in each space named.

Try This: Use different sizes of triangles - small for names and larger for places. Allow campers to draw images that represent the place and their names on one side of the triangle.

Wherever You Are

PLAY

Supplies: Bible

How: Read Psalm 139:7-14 together. Ask the campers, "What does it mean for God to be everywhere? Invite campers to choose one in the group to be "it." Invite the other campers to hide in the gathering space. As "it" finds each person, they are invited to join hands and continue looking together in a growing blob. At the end of the game, ask questions like:

- What does it feel like to be found?
- What does it feel like to belong to a group, even when everyone is new?

Try This: If possible, combine one or more groups to play. How does the process of finding each camper

change with more people in the blob? Is every voice heard? How is each camper included?

Wilderness Is...

CREATE

Supplies: Legal-sized paper, markers, and masking tape (optional).

How: Invite campers to sit in a circle. Hand out one sheet of paper to each camper, as well as markers. Invite campers to spell out "wilderness is" down the left side of their papers. Then ask campers to write a word or phrase starting with each letter, explaining what they understand wilderness to be, and trying not to repeat any words or phrases. Invite campers to share their acrostics. How are their understandings similar/different from one another? Is there a right/wrong way to consider wilderness?

Try This: In advance, draw each of the letters of "wilderness is" on its own sheet of paper in block lettering. Invite the campers to add the acrostic words/phrases that stood out to them on each letter sheet. Hang these letters in order on the wall of the gathering space with masking tape.

God is Here

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: Bible, 3x5" pieces of paper (optional), markers (optional), masking tape (optional).

How: Read Psalm 139:7-14 together. Invite campers to find/think of places around camp that fit the description of each prompt below.

- A place where people gather together.
- A place where people eat.
- A place that can be very dark.
- A place where light shines through.
- A place where we can be very quiet.
- A place to be very loud.
- A place that feels very high up.
- A place that feels very, very low.

Explain that according to the Psalm, God is everywhere. Ask the campers, how is God's presence apparent in each place? How do we find God? Can we wait to see if it isn't obvious? If God is in each place, do we have to look, or is it enough for God to find us there? How is a place changed when we acknowledge that God is there?

Try This: In each place, leave a note in an easily spotted place saying, “God is here! And so was _____!” (Fill in the blank with the name of your small group. Invite campers to consider: How is a place changed when we acknowledge that we were there?) If another group is doing this activity and you affirm a sign they have left, you could add your small group’s name to theirs.

Light in the Darkness CREATE SERVE

Supplies: Clean plastic milk/juice jugs, Sharpie markers, scissors, electric tea lights, yarn (optional), and hole punch (optional).

How: Give each camper a jug and a pair of scissors. Invite campers to cut the top third of the jug off. Invite campers to decorate the jugs any way they like with the markers, so long as light can still shine through. Place a tea light in each jug and set the jugs along a path to a place in camp that will be used for programs/events or worship that evening. Before the event or worship, turn each light on so that the path is illuminated even after the sun sets.

Try This: Invite campers to poke holes in the sides of the lanterns along the top edge and tie each end of a length of yarn to each hole. Hang lanterns in trees or alongside a building to create a different path.

Or Try This: Fill jugs with water and place a glow stick under it. This is a simple way to create an illuminated beacon.

Wherever You’ve Been PLAY

Supplies: Chairs (or other way of marking where each camper is sitting).

How: Invite campers to stand inside a circle of chairs (one for each camper). After removing one chair, tell the campers to sit down. Whoever no longer has a chair is invited to say their name, and name one place (or type of place) they’ve spent time in. Every camper who has ever spent time in the same place is invited to stand and move to another chair, and the one who began is invited to find a seat. Whoever is left standing starts again. Play until everyone has been introduced.

Try This: Invite campers to name someplace they don’t enjoy spending time.

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Story Resources

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak: A boy named Max finds himself in a wilderness experience after some decisions made at home go awry. In this wilderness, he must navigate new realities before he can return to something more familiar. Campers could explore the theme of wilderness with a (likely) familiar story, asking questions like: Do we make our wilderness or does it find us? How do we navigate the unfamiliar? Are we alone as we do?



Day 1: Wilderness Is

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Psalm 139: 7-14 (NRSVUE)

Scripture Focus: Psalm 139:11-12 (NRSVUE)

“Surely the darkness shall cover me, and night wraps itself around me,” even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Theological Summary: God meets us whenever we need a helping hand. We are reminded that God offers comfort in the unknown and calls us to practice supporting others through hardship.

Daily Goals...

- Ponder what wilderness is and all the ways that it intertwines in our lives.
- Proclaim God’s presence in the wilderness.
- Foster a nurturing and brave community space for exploration.
- Celebrate that all are wonderfully and marvelously made!

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Leaf Lanterns	CREATE	Create lanterns
__ I See You	PLAY	Seeking while still
__ Fears to Dreams	PRAY LEARN	Write fears and make stars
__ Wilderness For Two	PLAY LEARN	Buddy obstacle course
__ Visiting Prayer	PRAY SERVE	Enhancing community
__ Task Around	PLAY	Complete tasks in time

Leader notes: The unknown is approaching junior high campers as they transition from childhood to teenage years. Remind campers that it is okay to be vulnerable and not have all the answers.

Prayer: God, thank you for traveling with us in the wilderness and guiding us through our fears. Give us the strength to appreciate the beauty of the unknown and help others in their times of need. Amen.

Daily Activities

I See You

PLAY

Supplies: None .

How: This game is a version of hide and seek. One camper will be chosen as the seeker and must stand in the middle of a large space with places for other campers to hide. The seeker will close their eyes and count to 30 as the other campers hide. The goal is to find a hiding spot where one won't be visible to the seeker from their position in the middle. Once the 30 seconds are up, the seeker will open their eyes to look for campers, but is not allowed to move from their starting position. Each camper found will be added to the seeker's circle to aid in the next round. After each round, the hiding space will be reduced, until eventually all campers are found.

Try This: Play in a dark space and provide the seeker a flashlight to search for fellow campers with.

Wilderness For Two

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: Miscellaneous items for obstacle course, blindfolds, rope, and Bible.

How: Set up an obstacle course large enough for two campers to complete side by side. Campers will be divided into pairs. Each pair will be blindfolded and have their right hands tied together. Once a pair is ready, they will navigate the course as a team. The goal is for each pair to successfully complete the course having worked together to brave the wilderness. After the course has been completed, have a camper read Psalm 139:7-14 and discuss whether having a partner made the journey difficult. Ask the campers how this might relate to how we view God's presence in our lives. Are we more likely to look for God when things are good or when we face challenges? When are we more likely to take time to ask for God's help? How can we recognize God's presence when the world feels uneasy, or even chaotic?

Try This: As a pair enters the course, give the remaining campers pool noodles or other objects to add to the course at random times to make the path more challenging.

Fears to Dreams

PRAY

Supplies: Bible, paper, scissors, markers, and Origami Star Handout.

How: In advance, cut paper into half-inch strips. Have someone read Psalm 139:7-14 aloud. Reread verses 11 and 12, and point out that the reader might be afraid of the dark. Ask the campers what fears they have and what scenario in creation would be frightening for them. Some may be more comfortable with storms or with wild animals than others. Some might be more nervous around water or the cold. Invite campers to write their fears on strips of paper. Reread the scripture, then ask the campers:

- What part of creation might bring you comfort?
- How might God meet you in your fear and give you comfort?
- How might God work through your fears to help you grow?

Next, follow the template on the star origami handout to turn the strips of paper into stars. While the campers are folding their stars, ask them how they deal with fears. Can they be transformed into a dream of overcoming or letting go? What might motivate them or support them in this journey? Once the stars are done, invite the campers to hold them up and have a silent prayer on their own, asking God to meet them in places of fear and help them grow.

Try This: Use straw wrappers (typically already a ½ inch), used paper, or other recycled materials to emphasize the transformation.

Leaf Lanterns

CREATE

Supplies: Toilet paper, white glue, bowl, balloons, and scissors.

How: Invite campers to scavenge around the campsite for fallen leaves, flowers, grass, etc., to decorate their lanterns. Remind them not to harm anything as they collect. Once campers have gathered all their natural decorations, give each camper a balloon, toilet paper, and a bowl of glue. Have campers blow the balloon to the size of a grapefruit and tie off the end. Next, apply a thin layer of glue and place one layer of toilet paper on top. Repeat this for the second layer. Next, apply decorations by placing the natural elements on the balloon and sealing them with a layer of glue using one's fingers. Once all decorations are applied, add another layer of glue and toilet paper. Finally, add one

last layer of glue to hold everything together. Allow the lanterns to dry for up to eight hours. When dried, use scissors to cut a small circle around the tied end of the balloon. Pull out the balloon and invite campers to take their lanterns home and add a light inside.

Try This: Tea lights or fairy lights can also be included with this craft for campers to use as night lights during the week.

Visiting Prayer **PRAY SERVE**

Supplies: Bible, paper, and markers.

How: Ask campers about places they would or would never travel to and why. What makes these locations different, and why is one more desirable to them than the other? Next, invite campers to wonder about places God may like to visit. Is there anywhere that God would not want to go? Once discussed, have a camper read Psalm 139:7-14. Encourage campers to ponder why someone would go somewhere even if they did not want to. For example, a child’s parents made them go to school, someone was sick and had to go to the doctor, a family was in danger and had to leave their home, etc. Then, have campers discuss reasons someone would go somewhere. Connect this discussion to camp by asking if camp is somewhere they think people would like to visit. Invite campers to think of ways to make camp more inviting, welcoming, and safe while they are here. List of all the ideas and cross them off throughout the week as they are completed. Finally, open a time of silent prayer for the places we love to visit, people in places they don’t want to be, and the gift of God being with everyone in all places.

Try This: Expand the list to ways campers can make their communities and homes a place someone would like to visit as well. Invite them to think of ways to get involved with their schools, neighborhoods, etc. to make it happen.

Task Around **PLAY**

Supplies: Copies of the Task Around Handout for each camper and scissors.

How: In advance, cut up the handout to prepare ten task notecards per camper and one group task card. Two of the ten individual tasks will require campers to ask others for help. The first will be a two-person activity, and the second will be a three-person activity. Once a camper is done with their individual tasks, they

must wait in the center of the game space to complete the group task. Once all campers are in the center, they can read the group task, which is that they must sit in alphabetical order without talking. If they do talk, the campers must start over this time, ordering themselves by birthdate. If all tasks are completed in two minutes, the campers win the game. If the tasks are not completed, the game restarts.

Try This: In advance, prepare extra note cards to switch out between the campers’ attempts; this will keep them from being able to establish a pattern or anticipate upcoming tasks.

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Story Resources

Moana (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2016): A young girl named Moana must brave the ocean to save her island and the world by restoring the heart of nature. Along the way, she develops a connection with the spirit of her ancestors and discovers her life purpose. With the help of her friend Maui, Moana is able to save nature and her home. This film can be used to discuss fear of the wilderness and the beauty of the unknown.

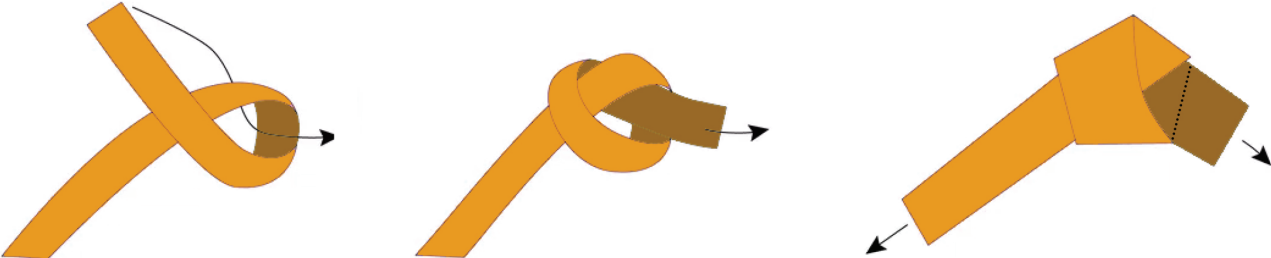
Task Around Handout

Do 10 Jumping Jacks	Sing one full verse or chorus of song	Pretend to be a pet begging for attention
Play Rock, Paper, Scissors with a Partner	Make up and exchange a secret handshake with a partner	Get someone to tell you their name while only quacking at them
Collect three items from nature already on the ground	Roll over and play dead like a opossum	Cheer for someone else doing a task in this game

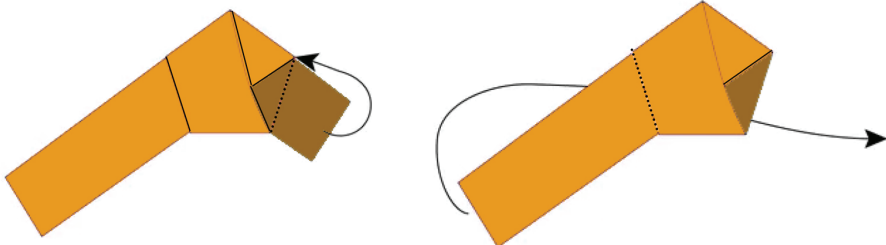
Have everyone sit in a circle facing outward with their arms linked, then all stand up together without disconnecting.

Fears to Dreams Handout (Origami Star)

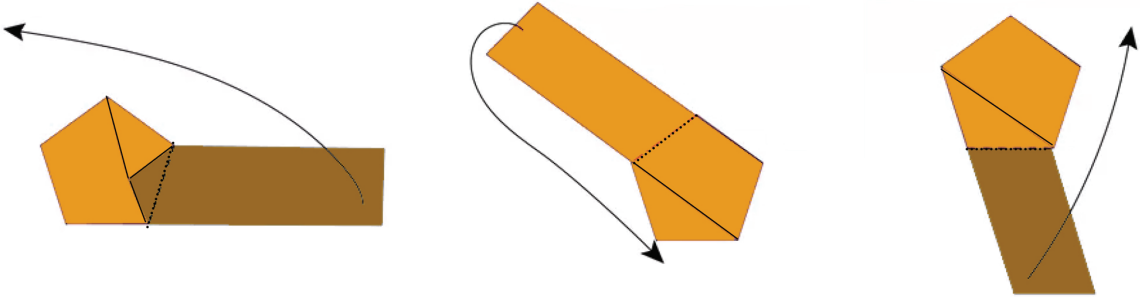
Cut strips of paper 3/4 inches wide and 10 inches long. Us these directions to fold your star.



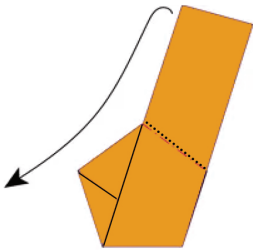
Make a loop, and run the top end through the center. Pull, tighten and flatten.



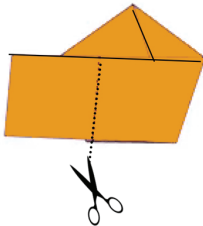
Paper strip on the left should be longer than the right. Fold the excess right end behind or cut if it's too long



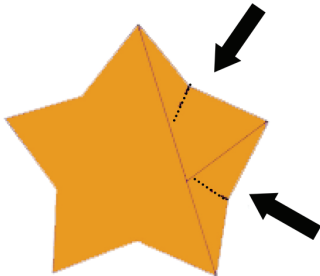
Fold the long trip up to the left, then down across the right in repetition till paper is mostly folded.



Repeat till complete



Tuck extra or trim if needed.



Pinch gaps and repeat to form star.



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Scripture Focus: Psalm 139:11-12 (NRSVUE)

“Surely the darkness shall cover me, and night wraps itself around me”, even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Theological Summary: Wilderness is all around us, perhaps even within us. Even when we are in the thick of it, God is with us because all of it – the valley, the sea, darkness, light, and us – is made by, known by, and loved by God.

Daily Goals...

- Ponder what wilderness is and all the ways that it intertwines in our lives.
- Proclaim God’s presence in the wilderness.
- Foster a nurturing and brave community space for exploration.
- Celebrate that all are wonderfully and marvelously made!

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Known By Name	PLAY	Name game
__ Safe AND Brave	PRAY CREATE	Creating a group covenant
__ Where Can I Go?	LEARN CREATE	Life maps
__ Presence Stones	SERVE	Naming God’s presence
__ Lost & Found Tag	PLAY	Seeking those who are lost/hidden
__ Mirror Messages	PRAY LEARN	Seeing ourselves through God’s eyes

Leader notes: On this first day of camp, the most important thing you can do is learn your campers’ names and begin sharing the message that God already knows their names by heart.

Prayer: “Holy One, you made everything and called it good. Even the darkness. Even us. Thank you for knowing, loving, and being with us through all life has to offer (including this time at camp). Amen.”

Daily Activities

Known by Name

PLAY

Supplies: None.

How: Invite campers to stand in a circle. Ask each person to say their name and something they love about themselves (or something they are good at). Invite a first camper to fill in the blanks of this sentence: “God knows me as name and made me trait/talent !” For example: “God knows me as Lara and made me daring!”

Invite each person in the circle to repeat the names and traits that came before them before sharing their name and trait: “God knows Lara as daring. God knows me as Jordan and made me athletic!” Continue around the circle until the last person has recalled everyone’s names/traits and then proclaimed their name/trait. Encourage volunteers to try saying every name/trait in the circle.

Try This: Consider taking all the names and positive traits and invite the campers to combine them on a large piece of paper with the words overlapping “Scrabble” style.

Or Try This: You can add a brief time of reflection by reading Psalm 139:1-2 and then asking campers to consider what it means for God to make us and know us as we truly are.

Safe and Brave

CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Posterboard or large paper, markers, and tape.

How: Using a piece of posterboard or a large sheet of paper and markers, create a covenant (agreement) with your group. Invite campers to list the behaviors and values guiding your time together during the week. Encourage campers to think about what is needed for them to feel safe and brave in the group. Try to keep the behaviors/values general so that they can apply to many situations at camp.

After the covenant has been written down, invite each camper to sign the document. Post it in your meeting space so that you can refer back to it if needed.

Close with a prayer of thanks for what this group will do and share. You can use the prayer from today’s overview page or share your own words.

Try This: Create an acronym using the first letters of each value/behavior listed on the group covenant. Have campers help you arrange the letters until you create a word that can be spoken (nonsensical or otherwise), that can become the group name or cheer for your group. Decide on a pronunciation and use the word as a reminder anytime the boundaries of the covenant are tested.

Or Try This: If you did the “Try This” in the *Known by Name* activity, write the covenant on the back of that same paper and let the campers sign with their name and the trait or talent they listed on the other side.

Where Can I Go?

LEARN CREATE

Supplies: Large sheets of paper, markers, stickers, pens, and Bible.

How: Explain to campers that scripture tells us God is with us in every part of our journey – the great, the difficult, the normal...all of it. Read Psalm 139:7-10 aloud.

Invite campers to use the large paper and art supplies to create their own life maps that show the important moments that have shaped who they are. Encourage them to include tough events, joyful events, moments when they have grown and changed, etc.

Use these questions to discuss:

- When has God’s presence been most apparent to you?
- When has it been harder to see where God is?
- Is it easier to see God at work in the moment or when you are looking back on past events? Why?

Try This: Give campers graph paper. Invite them to use the paper and art supplies to create their own fantasy-style kingdom maps (a la Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones, or the brain islands from Pixar’s Inside Out) that illustrate different parts of their lives. When their maps are complete, use the discussion questions above.

Presence Stones

SERVE

Supplies: Smooth stones/river rocks and permanent markers.

How: Explain that while God is always with us, we sometimes need reminders – especially when we are in the thick of life. Point out that in the Bible, people often used stones to build altars and markers in places where they encountered God.

Give campers 3-5 stones each. Invite them to decorate them however they would like, but to include the message “God is with you.”

Encourage campers to carry these stones in their pockets or bags so that throughout the week, they can give one to individuals who are having a tough day, who need a lift, or otherwise need a reminder of God's presence with them. They can also place stones where people might happen to find them. Be sure to let other groups know the stones are there for others to pick up.

Try This: Have campers collect any unclaimed rocks at the end of the week and add them to a landscaping space where they will not impact the natural environment, and could be added to by other camps, creating a rock garden filled with reminders of God's presence.

Or Try This: In addition to the stones created for others, invite campers to make stones for themselves. These should include the words "God is with me here." Encourage campers to carry their stones daily or to place them somewhere visible so that they can see the message of God's presence each day.

Lost & Found Tag

PLAY

Supplies: None.

How: Depending upon the size of your group, choose one or two campers to be "Seekers" (representing God's presence). Have them turn away and close their eyes while the rest of the group spreads out and hides. Be sure to establish boundaries for safety. When everyone is hidden, turn the Seeker(s) around and instruct them to find everyone. Each time a camper is found, have them link up with the Seeker, forming a chain. As more players are found, the chain will grow. This can be a symbol of how God finds and gathers us together, no matter where we might hide.

As time permits, you can play this game multiple times. At the end of the game, read Psalm 139:7-10 aloud. Encourage campers to reflect on how, no matter how lost we may be or feel, God finds and holds us close.

Try This: This game can also be played as a variation on group tag, where the seekers run after and tag others. When tagged, they join the chain of runners trying to tag other campers.

Mirror Messages

PRAY LEARN

Supplies: Small mirrors (or visit cabins/bathhouse), dry erase markers, and Bible.

How: Read Psalm 139:14 aloud: *"I praise you because you are wonderfully made, and your works are wonderful—I know that very well."*

Invite campers to write affirmations on their mirrors (e.g., "I am loved," "I am unique," "I am a good friend," "God made me creative"). Ask campers to reflect on how, even when we struggle to see our worth, God sees and knows us fully — wherever we are, even in the depths.

Lead campers in a prayer: "God, it can be strange to know that you know everything about us. It can be strange to know that you made us and are with us everywhere. Yet, it is also a comfort to know that no matter how twisted up we feel about ourselves, you see and love us dearly. Help us when we look in the mirror to see all the goodness, beauty, and power you see when you look at us. Help us to believe it. Amen."

Try This: Instead of using mirrors/markers, have campers take a selfie using their phone. Then have them add affirmations as captions on the selfie, so that they will have the photo where they can see it each day.

Story Resources

I Am God's Dream (Matthew Paul Turner,

Convergence Books 2022): This children's book is a reminder of the unique beauty and strength of each person and how God celebrates the diversity of all God's people. While it is written for younger readers, it has a message and positivity worth revisiting.

Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope (Lucasfilm

1977): The movie that started the epic Star Wars saga with its prequels and sequels, Star Wars Episode IV introduces us to the characters of Luke Skywalker, Obi Wan Kenobi, Leia Organa, Darth Vader, and all the other characters that are now so well-loved. Another "character" introduced in this film is The Force, the powerful energy woven throughout the universe that gives the Jedi their power. The Force is in all things and with the Jedi no matter where they are. This may provide a helpful comparison to get campers talking about how God is with us no matter how lonesome our wildernesses may feel.



Day 1: Wilderness Is

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Psalm 139: 7-14

Scripture Focus: “I give thanks to you that I was marvelously set apart. Your works are wonderful—I know that very well” (Psalm 139:14).

Theological Summary: God’s presence is with us in all moments, and we don’t have to earn it. God is with us because of who we are, not what we do. Even when we feel different, embarrassed, or like an outsider, we know that God has made each one of us with intentionality and care.

Daily Goals...

- Ponder what wilderness is, and all the ways that it intertwines in our lives.
- Proclaim God’s presence in the wilderness.
- Foster a nurturing and brave community space for exploration.
- Celebrate that all are wonderfully and marvelously made!

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Camp Tours	SERVE	Guide each other like pillars of fire
__ Rain Sticks	PLAY CREATE	Make easy music together
__ Acrostic Poetry	LEARN	Write in the style of Old Testament authors
__ Wonderfully Made	PRAY	Make a list of why you’re wonderfully made
__ Creation Identification	LEARN PLAY	Get to know God’s creation
__ Braided Yarn	PRAY	Pray with color and crafts

Leader notes: The end of this passage emphasizes biological family ties (being knit in your mother’s womb), but we don’t want to alienate campers with diverse origin stories (adoption, IVF, etc.) Focus more on the “knit” part of this passage—how God put time and effort and creativity into shaping each one of us, regardless of how we were born and where we ended up.

Prayer: God of fabrics and textiles and crafts, we pray to you as living art. We are all knit, or painted, or sculpted, or braided, or collaged as wonderful and marvelous beings. Remind us of that always, especially on those days when we struggle to like and appreciate ourselves. Amen.

Daily Activities

Camp Tours

SERVE

How: Read Psalm 139:7-14 as a group. Then, take a moment to share your observations of the story with one another. Invite campers who have been to camp before to guide new campers on a tour. Then, after the sun sets, reread Psalm 139:7-14, sharing any new observations that the group may have now that they've had time to process the passage. Go on a second tour, this time appreciating how camp can sometimes seem like a different place at night.

Try This: For the second tour, let your eyes adjust to the dark at intervals along the path while using flashlights for safety as you walk. If after dark is unavailable, just notice the differences from one part of the day to another. Ask the campers if one part of camp feels more like "wilderness" than another. What about different times of day at camp?

Rain Sticks

PLAY CREATE

Supplies: Cardboard tubes (from toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls), beads, duct tape, and aluminum foil.

How: Seal one end of a cardboard tube with tape. Twist some aluminum foil into an S shape and place it in the tube, then fill the tube a quarter of the way with beads. Cover the other side of the tube with duct tape in the same way. When you rotate the tube, you have a rain stick! Once everyone is finished, read Psalm 139:7-14 together as campers make music with their rain sticks.

Try This: Make music with other instruments at camp, voices, and the new rain sticks.

Acrostic Poetry

LEARN

Supplies: Paper and writing utensils.

How: Tell your campers that today's Bible passage is a psalm, part of a book of poems and songs. The psalms were written in Hebrew, and many of the psalms were written as acrostic poems, where the first letter of each line spell out a word. Read Psalm 34:2-23, then tell campers that in Hebrew, each line begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. An English translation that preserved this style would have the verses go in order, too: A, B, C, D, E, and so on. Discuss

with campers how that might change how we read or understand psalms in English. How might knowing this help us understand or appreciate psalms more fully? After the discussion, invite campers to write their own alphabetical acrostic poems that praise God.

Try This: Acrostic poems can also use words. Campers could choose a word from the Psalm and create a new psalm.

Wonderfully Made

PRAY

Supplies: Large paper and markers.

How: As a group, create a giant, colorful list of how each camper is wonderful, marvelous, and spectacular! Remind campers that God knit them together with care and purpose; naming and celebrating the best parts of ourselves can be a form of prayer. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for all the special gifts of this group.

Try This: Use smaller paper to make individual lists instead.

Creation Identification

LEARN PLAY

How: Go on a nature walk to appreciate God's carefully made creation! Before the walk, invite campers to pick one kind of nature and see how many different types of it they can find. For example, if they pick leaves, see if they can find leaves with smooth edges, jagged edges, pointy tips, round tips, long stems, short stems, all different colors, etc. If rocks, try to find some that are rough and smooth, rocks with speckles, rocks that are just one color, etc. Marvel at creation's diversity, then discuss how human diversity is just as important as leaf/rock diversity.

Try This: Collect items that have fallen on the ground. Spread them out on a table and invite the group to practice some deeper thinking. How are the items similar in form, or used? How are they different?

Braided Yarn

PRAY

Supplies: Multiple colors of yarn or embroidery floss.

How: Read Psalm 139:7-14, then ask the campers to share their experiences with knitting, weaving, crocheting, or even friendship bracelet making. Remind campers that all these textile arts can bring us closer to God's creative process. Invite campers to choose colors that they like or colors that represent parts of themselves: personality traits, family histories, ethnicities, and important aspects of their identities. Have campers tape one edge of their yarns to a table, and braid by crossing strands one over the other. Encourage campers to thank God for all that makes them who they are, as they are braiding. Explain that braiding can also be a style of prayer. Invite the campers to pick something or someone to pray for that is represented by each color. As they focus on that color, they can lift up the corresponding prayer.

Try This: Weave all the braids together into one long rope representing how individuals come together to form a community. Ask campers to reflect on how all the colors work together



Story Resources

***When God Made the World*, by Matthew Paul Turner**

This children's book creatively explores God's creative process in making the world and all its inhabitants. It encourages readers to see themselves as existing in community with plants, animals, and each other. Read this story at bedtime or worship to celebrate that all are wonderfully and marvelously made!