



Day 4: Wilderness Frightens

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Matthew 14:22-30

Scripture Focus: Matthew 14: 27

“Just then, Jesus spoke to them, “Be encouraged! It’s me. Don’t be afraid.”

Theological Summary: Even when we are afraid or asked to do difficult things, the Lord is with us.

Daily Goals...

- Honor the tradition of Jesus entering the wilderness to reconnect, refuel, and be renewed.
- Hold safe space to acknowledge that wilderness may be disorienting or even frightening.
- Explore what it means to take bold steps, facing our fears and doing awesome thing through God.
- Affirm that no matter what our wilderness moments may bring, God is always with us.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ The Wind Blows	LEARN CREATE	Paint with air blown through straws
__ Walk on Water	PLAY CREATE	Footprint painting
__ Boats that Float	LEARN CREATE	Create boats with marshmallows
__ Across the water	PLAY LEARN	A cooperative game using “floats”
__ Dough for All	SERVE PLAY	Make your own cloud dough!
__ Fill me up!	PRAY	Body tracing and self-reflection
__ Get in the Boat!	PLAY	Play an adaptation of “Steal the Bacon”
__ Prayer Purpose	PRAY	Create prayers for Matthew 14:22-30

Leader notes: Walking on water is just a small part of Matthew 14:22-30. This verse has a strong focus on prayer and faith, as well as taking bold steps with God’s support.

Prayer: “Dear Lord, thank you for teaching me the importance of prayer, faith in you, and being brave, with your help. Amen.”

Daily Activities

The Wind Blows

LEARN CREATE

Supplies: Straws, tempera paint, water, and paper.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30 together. Ask campers what they think a storm might have sounded like. Why were the disciples so scared? What does Jesus tell them? Provide a straw to each camper. Practice blowing out through the straw (not sucking in). Campers can put their hand at the end of the straw to feel the strength of the air flow as they blow. Place a few small blobs of paint on each camper's paper. Make sure campers are not facing another camper who might get paint blown on them. Paint may need to be lightly thinned with water. Using a straw, campers move the paint across the paper using only the wind (air) that they blow through the straw. The straw should not touch the paper.

Try This: Using a straw and their own air, campers can attempt to move items from one place to another. Use some items that are lighter or move easily, and some items that are heavier or harder to move.

Walk on Water

PLAY CREATE

Supplies: Paint, a container big enough to fit a camper's foot, dish soap, water, roll of paper, crayons, a towel, and a container of water for cleanup.

How: Lay out the roll of paper. As a group, decorate the paper with the boat scene from Matthew 14:22-30. Place paint in containers. Thin the paint with a little water and add a drop or two of dish soap and stir. Pair campers up. One camper places their bare feet into paint containers and walks slowly across the paper. Their partner holds onto their hand for balance- paint can be slippery! After journeying across the paper, the camper steps into a bin of soapy water and then onto a towel. The partners switch so the other camper has a turn to "walk on water!"

Try This: Each camper can trace and cut out their feet. Decorate the large roll of paper as indicated above, but simply glue the traced feet onto the scene from Matthew 14:22-30.

Boats that float!

LEARN CREATE

Supplies: Full-size marshmallows, toothpicks, containers of water, construction paper, scissors, and tape.

How: Campers construct "boats" out of marshmallows and toothpicks. Be sure to add a toothpick with a sail taped to it. After the boats are made, put them into a container of water and see how they float!

Try This: Have a sailing competition with the boats - either within your group or with another. Use a large container of water or an available water source.

Across the Water

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: Cardboard pieces about 12x18.

How: Designate a start and finish line. Break the campers up into teams and give each team fewer cardboard pieces than there are campers. For example, if there are four campers on a team, provide three cardboard pieces. The team must move from the start to the finish line, only stepping on the cardboard pieces. The first camper in line should put down the first cardboard piece, while carrying a second to lay down in front of the first. More than one camper can stand on a cardboard piece. Invite campers to think about how they can move the pieces in different ways.

Try This: Repeat the activity with the full group and a few less pieces than campers. Afterwards, ask them how the experiences they had in the first round helped them complete the task. Then, ask the campers how the things we experience, even the scary ones, can help us in the future.

Dough for All

SERVE PLAY

Supplies: Hair conditioner, cornstarch, baggies or saran wrap, and bowls.

How: Make homemade cloud dough! Campers mix equal parts cornstarch and conditioner. Add more cornstarch as needed until a light dough is created. Once well mixed, add drops of food coloring and continue to mix. Roll small amounts of cloud dough into balls, wrap in Saran Wrap or baggies, and hand it out to other groups.

Try This: Invite the campers to recreate the scene from Matthew 14 using the dough.

Fill Me Up!**PRAY**

Supplies: Large pieces of banner or roll paper, tape, scissors, and crayons.

How: Read Matthew 14: 22-30. Invite campers to share how they think Jesus helped people. What good things does God give us to help us (food, water, friends, acts of kindness, the Lord, family, etc.)? Have campers assign a color to each thing in their list. One camper lies down on a large piece of roll or banner paper. Another camper traces their body. Switch so that each camper has a full body tracing. Color in the body tracing, filling up the body tracing with the things that they need.

Try This: This can also be done with sidewalk chalk outside or on a single piece of paper, simply drawing a body outline instead of tracing an entire person.

Get in the Boat!**PLAY**

Supplies: An object to represent a boat.

How: Like “Steal the Bacon,” divide the kids up into two teams sitting horizontally across a space, with the “boat” in the middle of the two teams. Assign each child on each team a number, letter, or name from the bible story. When that number, letter, or name is called, the two children assigned that number run to the middle and touch the “boat” and race back to their spot. The child who sits first gets a point. Consider adding movement challenges, like hopping on two feet, bear walk, crab walk, etc.

Try This: Have the campers pretend they are walking on water as they go back and forth.

Prayer Purpose**PRAY**

Supplies: None.

How: Discuss the characters in Matthew 14:22-30. What might Jesus have been praying about when he was on the mountain alone? What might the disciples pray for when they thought Jesus was a ghost? If the boat were a person, what might the boat pray for? What about the wind or the water? Create a prayer for yourself when you are trying something new. Invite campers, as a group, to create a prayer for when they need God’s help. Close with that prayer or the prayer of the day.

Try This: Jesus and Peter walked on water. What seemingly impossible activity would you undertake if Jesus were there to help you?



Story Resources

Owl Moon By Jane Yolen

A young girl follows her dad through the woods to go owling. The girl has strong faith in her father and carefully follows all the directions she has been given.

Toy Story, Disney Pixar 1995

This is a story of friendship and believing in your friend. The song “You’ve Got a Friend in Me” from the same movie also discusses the strong bond of friendship.



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Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Matthew 14:22-30

Scripture Focus: Just then Jesus spoke to them, “Be encouraged! It’s me. Don’t be afraid.”

Theological Summary: The wilderness can be frightening, but God is right there in it with us.

Daily Goals...

- Honor the tradition of Jesus entering the wilderness to reconnect, refuel, and be renewed.
- Hold safe space to acknowledge that wilderness may be disorienting or even frightening.
- Explore what it means to take bold steps, facing our fears and doing awesome things through God.
- Affirm that no matter what our wilderness moments may bring, God is always with us.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ I Got You	PLAY	A seated partner race
__ Ups & Downs	PRAY	Contemplation with liquid motion
__ Move Through	PLAY	A wet game of keep away
__ Seeing Clearly	LEARN CREATE	Finding clarity in the storm
__ Go Boldly	PLAY	Obstacle blob tag
__ Take What You Need	SERVE	Offering comfort
__ Still There	LEARN PRAY	Watercolor resist painting
__ Un/Familiar	PRAY	Night hike observations

Leader notes: It is tempting to tell someone “Don’t be afraid” when they are in a wilderness moment, and to leave it at that. Make sure campers recognize that though Jesus encouraged courage, he was also present through the fear.

Prayer: “Through storms and scary moments, you stay with us, O God. Thank you. Amen.”

Daily Activities

I Got You

PLAY

Supplies: None.

How: Divide campers into pairs and sit on the ground at one end of a space, sitting with backs touching. Invite campers to move from one side of the space to the other, always touching, without standing. How do the campers work together? Do they each have the same idea on how to move? Do they trust one another? When they reach the other side, invite them to go back, still seated and touching backs.

Try This: Time the campers. Ask if they think they can go any faster. How will they work together to move more efficiently?

Ups & Downs

PRAY

Supplies: Clear plastic jar/cup with lid, baking soda, vinegar, small bowl, food coloring, cooking oil, measuring spoons, and measuring cups.

How: At the bottom of the jar, add 4 tablespoons of baking soda. Cover with at least 2 cups of cooking oil. In the small bowl, mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar with food coloring—pour colored vinegar into the oil and wait. Invite campers to watch the progress of the vinegar as it sinks down and meets with the baking soda. As the chemicals react, the color should begin to migrate up and down. Invite the campers to study the movements, contemplating how there can be reason behind the chaos. Sometimes we have to back up and just observe to find peace.

Try This: Invite campers to each make their own, and place them throughout the space. As the day goes on, invite campers to visit the various jars between activities. How long does the reaction go on for? What is it like to stop and be still between other things?

Move Through

PLAY

Supplies: Medium-sized plastic storage tubs and water balloons.

How: In advance, fill water balloons. Divide campers into two groups; in one group, invite campers to pair off. Pairs of campers are invited to stand facing each

other, holding a tub between them, hands free. The pairs are then invited to move from one side of the space to the other without dropping the tub, and without allowing any water into it. The other group of campers is invited to throw water balloons from the pairs' starting point to fill the tubs as they move. When the pairs make it to the other side, invite the two groups to switch. What is it like trying to move together that way? What's it like trying to fill a moving tub? In the potential chaos, how does one maintain any focus?

Try This: Invite the group with the water balloons to move around rather than stand still.

Seeing Clearly

LEARN CREATE

Supplies: Copy of Matthew 14:22-30, heavy paper, glue, and tissue paper.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30 together. What must it have been like in the boat, rain pouring, waves rising, trying to see out? Invite the campers to create an image of that scene using only tissue paper and glue (no scissors, they can tear the paper if need be). Encourage campers to add overlapping, even crumpled, layers until the scene on the paper matches that in their heads. Does creating that scene change the way the campers read it?

Try This: Try this same technique, but this time invite campers to create the image of a storm they've experienced personally. How do the two images compare? Is there more clarity in one than the other? Can the campers empathize with the disciples' predicament?

Go Boldly

PLAY

Supplies: Pool noodles and floor/yoga mats.

How: In advance, scatter the mats around the floor of the space. Give each camper a noodle. Tell the campers that the floor is raging water, and the mats are boats—they may only stand on the mats. One camper will be "it," and they use the pool noodle to tag people. Once someone has been tagged, they must hold onto "it's" pool noodle and help tag someone else. When every camper has been tagged, the game ends.

Try This: Add a rule: once a blob is forming, all campers must move from the same mat at the same time.

What You Need**SERVE CREATE**

Supplies: Handout printed on colored paper, markers, scissors, and masking tape.

How: Invite campers to brainstorm words that help comfort or center them when life feels like a storm. Give each camper a handout and invite them to fill the vertical spaces with words from the list. Use scissors to cut between the spaces, leaving them still attached to the paper. Place these flyers around camp and invite others to take what they need.

Try This: Invite others at camp to take a strip for someone else.

Still There**CREATE LEARN**

Supplies: Heavy/watercolor paper, watercolor paint, paint brushes, water, white crayons/oil pastel, and a copy of Matthew 14:22-30.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30 aloud. The disciples had difficulty seeing Jesus for who he was because there was so much happening around them. Invite campers to draw a heart (any size) on their paper with the white crayon, pressing firmly. Invite campers to flick watercolor paint over the paper, filling every space with color. Invite campers to observe as the crayon heart resists the paint and shows through. Can we always sense God's presence when the paint is flying? What do we need to do to become aware again?

Un/Familiar**PRAY**

Supplies: Flashlights and a familiar hiking trail.

How: Take a short night hike! Invite campers to walk along a path that is familiar in the daytime. When you've reached your destination, invite campers to form a circle. Ask campers to consider the path they just walked—what was familiar? What felt different without daylight? Invite campers to become quiet for a time—what sounds do they notice? What smells? How does the air feel? How are these sensations different/similar to what they experience during the day? Encourage campers to contemplate the differences they have noticed and the sensations they are experiencing. After an interval, thank God for all they've noticed and experienced.

Try This: Invite the campers to continue the contemplative experience by walking back in silence.



Story Resources

What Do You Do With an Idea?, Kobi Yamada/Mae

Besom: Sometimes, sharing an idea gets a person mocked or ridiculed, but the idea is still there. It takes courage and time (and sometimes some help!) to take the bold steps to help an idea become a reality, but once it does, it's a whole new world.



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Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Matthew 14:22-30

Scripture Focus: Matthew 14:29

“And Jesus said, “Come.”

Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus.”

Theological Summary: The unknown can cause us distress and fear, but by connecting back to God and God’s creation, we can find guidance.

Daily Goals...

- Honor the tradition of Jesus entering the wilderness to reconnect, refuel,
- and be renewed.
- Hold safe space to acknowledge that wilderness may be disorienting or even frightening.
- Explore what it means to take bold steps, facing our fears and doing awesome things through God.
- Affirm that no matter what our wilderness moments may bring, God is always with us.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Come Together	PLAY	Campers find their team
__ Boats Away	CREATE PRAY	Rotating coloring activity
__ Nature Spooks	CREATE	Scary nature creatures
__ Fearlympics	PLAY	Conquering fears
__ Identifying Mountains	PRAY LEARN	Discovering self-care
__ Boat, Ghost, Mountain	PLAY LEARN	Game of choices
__ Dissolving Fear	CREATE PRAY	Water based reflection
__ Calming Friends	CREATE SERVE	Make sock friend

Leader notes: The scripture gives a great example of being afraid of the unknown. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on water, they assumed he must be a ghost. Lean into the humor and allow it to reveal how silly our worries about what we don’t understand can be.

Prayer: “God, find us as we lose our way in fear. Help us to be courageous and know that even in the darkest times, you are with us. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Boats Away

CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Boats Away handout, markers, and crayons.

How: Provide each camper with a boat handout and coloring tools. Invite them to spread out, write their name on the back of the handout, and design/color their boat for two minutes. After the two-minute mark, ask campers to leave their materials and move to the left to another camper's boat. Once arriving at a new boat, give campers one minute to add to the designs. Do this rotation four times, giving campers one minute at each new boat. Once the time has ended, bring everyone together, asking them to bring the boat they are working on and return it to the original designer. Allow campers to react to the changes made to their art, and then invite them to respond to the following questions:

- How did it feel to see someone else change your designs?
- Was it difficult to leave your boat?
- What did someone add to your boat that you enjoyed?

At the end of the conversation, close with the Serenity Prayer, saying, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen."

Try This: This activity can also be done in groups. Have each half of the group rotate in opposite directions. In this version, campers must adapt to changes in their art, and those they are working to create designs with.

Identifying Mountains

PRAY LEARN

Supplies: Bible.

How: Ask a camper to read Matthew 14:22-30 aloud for the group. Next, ask the campers what they know about the importance of self-care: What is self-care? What are ways you can enact self-care? What does self-care look like when you are hanging out with friends? Invite another camper to read Matthew 14:22-30, but this time have campers take note of moments of self-care. What form of self-care do we see Jesus enacting? Could self-care have helped calm Peter and

the disciples during the storm? Relate these answers to camp. At camp, what can we do to feel calm and more present? Are there times when you need a Jesus moment away from the rest of the group? What can be your mountain this week to maintain self-care? Close with a prayer saying, "God, thank you for showing us that it is okay to take space for our hearts and minds. Help us find our ways of self-care to be fully present and energized for the days of camp to come. Amen."

Try This: Give campers a paper to make a list of things they can do every day to ensure they are caring for their hearts, minds, and bodies. This can be as complex as meditating or as simple as brushing teeth in the morning.

Come Together

PLAY

Supplies: Blindfolds and hula hoops.

How: In advance, place one hula hoop on the ground for every three campers in an open area/field (make sure they are nicely spaced out). Next, gather campers and divide them into teams of three. To begin the game, campers will be blindfolded, moved by a counselor to space out, and spun around five times. Once all campers are in position, on "Go," they must find their teams of three. When a team of 3 campers has reunited, they must find a hula hoop and all stand inside of it. Once everyone in the team of three is in the hula hoop, they can take off their blindfolds and help their other campers reach victory. If multiple groups find the same hula hoop, you can decide if they may share it or must find one of their own. Encourage the campers to be patient so they don't move so fast that they knock each other down or inadvertently cross personal boundaries.

Try This: To make this activity more difficult, try adding obstacles, having counselors spin campers around during the game, and giving the campers a time limit of two minutes to find their team.

Boat, Ghost, Mountain

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: None.

How: In this game, you will offer the campers different scenarios. Based on what they would do in that situation, they can either respond with Boat (while making wave motions), Ghost (while doing spooky arms), or Mountain (while making a mountain with their hand above their head). Boat means that they would be okay with the described situation, Ghost

means that it would stress or freak them out, and Mountain means the situation would make them want some personal space to decompress. This activity can help campers learn more about one another's personalities and how they handle situations differently. There will be five prompts to start, and then invite campers to take turns making up their own:

- Performing a speech in front of a large audience
- Riding a rollercoaster
- Competing in a math competition
- Being famous
- Sharing your feelings with someone you like

Try This: Have campers try to incorporate boat, ghost, and mountain into their slang the rest of the week. What do we do at camp that is boat, ghost, or mountain to them?

Dissolving Fear

CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Wafer or water-soluble paper, markers, water, bowl, and Bible

How: Gather campers around a table and read Matthew 14:22-30. Together, enter a time of wondering: What fears do we have? How do our fears affect our decisions? What can we do to let go of our fear? Next, provide campers with paper and markers. Ask them to draw or write their fears on the pieces of paper. Then, prepare a bowl with water. Once all campers have finished their creations, have them take turns sharing their fears, place the papers into the bowl of water and mix it with their hands. Allow them to watch as the paper dissolves and washes their fears away. At the end, ask the campers how it felt to watch their fears dissolve. End this activity with a prayer saying, "God, thank you for being present with us as we wrestle with things that scare us or cause us distress. Help us to remember that through courage we can conquer and wash away our fear. Amen."

Try This: Use edible markers on wafer paper to allow campers to eat their fears.

Nature Spooks

CREATE

Supplies: Glue, tape, googly eyes, markers, paint, and paintbrushes.

How: Invite campers to go out into nature and collect items to bring back to the group. Remind campers not to pull anything out of the ground or harm animals.

Give the campers about five minutes to gather their materials and then meet back around a table. With the materials found in nature, campers must use glue, tape, googly eyes, markers, and paint to transform them into scary creatures. Once campers have finished their creatures, ask them to share what elements of nature they used as the base for their spooky creation. Enter a time of reflection. Would these creations be scarier if they didn't know what they were made of? What things look scary but become less scary once you know what they are made of? Is there a source of our fears that can make them less frightening?

Try This: In advance, create some scary creatures and place them around the area campers will explore to find their natural materials. See if any camper brings one back, or if they are talked about as they gather around the table. Ask the campers if these creatures scared or shocked them before inviting them to create their own.

Fearlympics

PLAY

Supplies: Paper, markers, and hat/bowl.

How: Ask campers to write down a fear they are willing to share with the group on a slip of paper. Next, place all papers in a hat and mix them up. In ten minutes, campers must draw from the hat, one piece of paper at a time, and find ways to conquer each fear as a group. For example, if fear of heights is drawn from the hat, campers can go and sit on the top bunk of a bunk bed. To move on to the next slip of paper, all campers in the group must participate in conquering the fear. If campers are at a loss for how to conquer a fear, they can say pass, but they can only use pass two times.

Try This: Divide campers into teams to compete for who can conquer their fears first. The slips will be read aloud by a counselor, and teams will break off to complete them. Once a team has conquered a fear, they can be given the next one. The first team to conquer all the fears wins.

Calming Friends

CREATE SERVE

Supplies: Fuzzy socks, rice, bowl, spoons, felt, super glue, scissors, clear elastics or rubber bands.

How: Around a table, provide each camper with two fuzzy socks. Pour the rice into a bowl in the center and, using spoons, have campers fill up their socks to their desired weight and feeling. During this time, they can use two elastics to tie off ears of their choice (they can

have no rice and be floppy or have a little rice and be round, bearlike ears). Next, tie off the end of the sock with a clear elastic and roll up or cut off any excess fabric. Using felt and scissors have campers design faces and eyes for their fuzzy friends. The result will be two small weighted plushies - one to keep the campers' company anytime they are nervous or afraid, and one to give to someone at camp or home who might need some extra comfort.

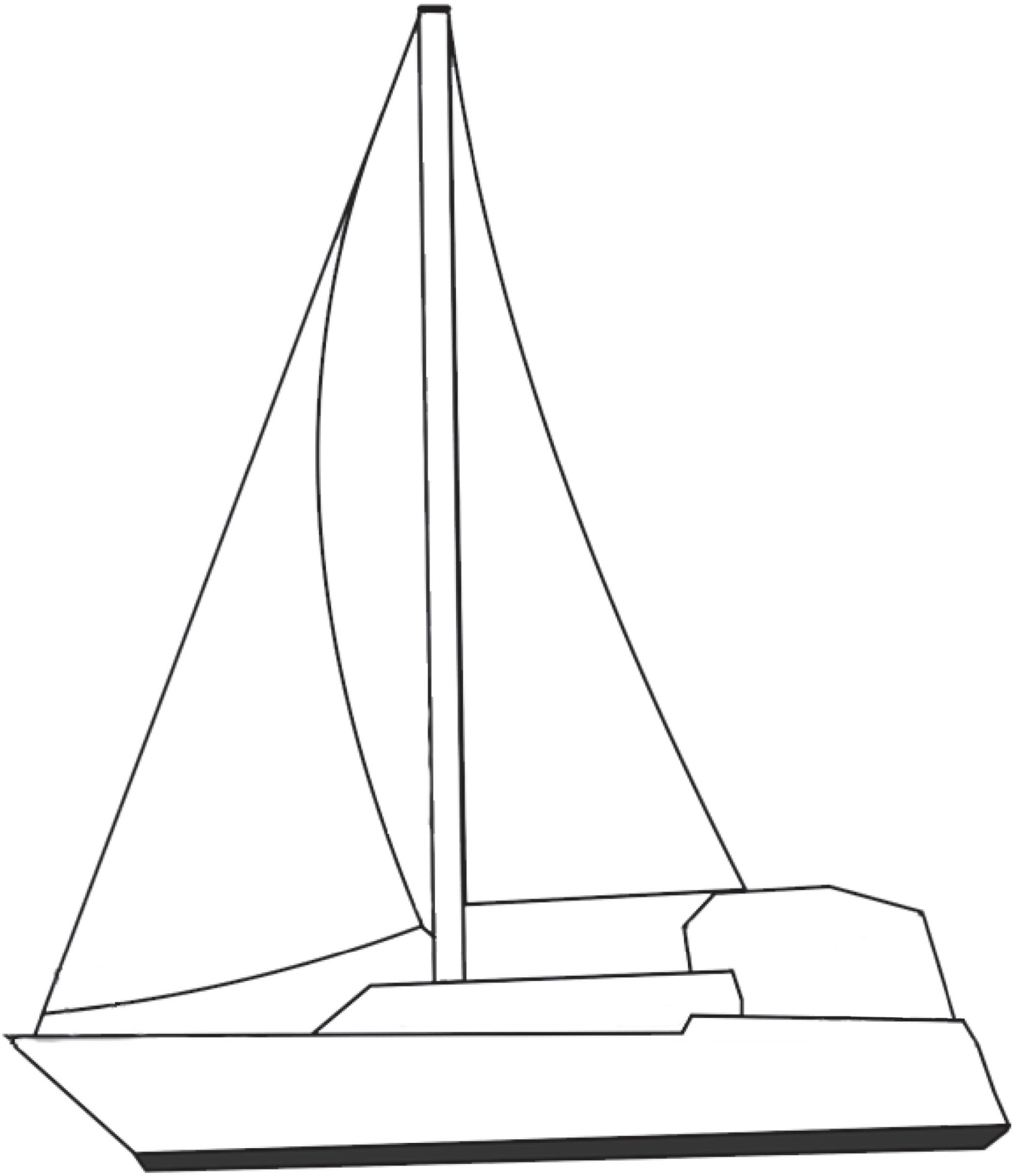
Try This: Add essential oils to the outside of the fuzzy friend for an extra calming element.



Story Resources

Frozen (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2013): Sisters Elsa and Anna reunite after being torn apart due to Elsa's icy powers. However, after sending their Kingdom into perpetual winter, Elsa flees the kingdom. Anna must journey through the winter storm to save her kingdom and bring her sister home.

Boats Away Handout





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Scripture Focus: Matthew 14:29

“And Jesus said, “Come.” Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus.”

Theological Summary: Wilderness moments can be disorienting and scary, yet God meets us there. When we center ourselves in God’s presence through prayer, community, and creation, we are empowered to do brave, beautiful things.

Daily Goals...

- Honor the tradition of Jesus entering the wilderness to reconnect, refuel, and be renewed.
- Hold safe space to acknowledge that wilderness may be disorienting or even frightening.
- Explore what it means to take bold steps, facing our fears and doing awesome things through God.
- Affirm that no matter what our wilderness moments may bring, God is always with us.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Stepping Out	PLAY	Bold (and silly) leaps of faith
__ Packing List	PLAY	Packing for trip with Jesus
__ From Boat to Water	LEARN	Digging deeper into the text
__ Out of the Boat	LEARN PRAY	Reflection on courage
__ Breath/Bravery Journal	CREATE PRAY	Time for reflection
__ Encouragement Stones	SERVE	Bravery reminders
__ Sacred Stillness	PRAY	Experience the quiet

Leader notes: The most important thing you can do in group times today is make sure people feel safe. The theme invites vulnerability. You don’t have to be an expert or have all the answers. Just make people feel safe as they share or just listen.

Prayer: “Holy One, you call us to do bold, brave things in the world. Renewed in nature, as Jesus was renewed as he took time away. Let that renewal fuel our courage so that we can answer your call. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Stepping Out

PLAY LEARN

Supplies: None.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30. Remind campers that Peter, like many people, may not have known how to swim. He took a chance anyway. Form a wide circle. One at a time, invite campers to step into the center and give them a silly or bold challenge (examples: sing a line from a song, do a weird dance move, say the alphabet backward, walk like a crab, etc.). Adapt your challenges based on the comfort of campers and the trust built within your group. Encourage the group to cheer them on. Be careful to keep the challenges silly rather than difficult or embarrassing. After everyone has had a turn, debrief with the group:

- How did it feel to step out of your comfort zone?
- What helped you be brave?
- What keeps us from stepping out sometimes?

Try This: Invite campers to pick their own silly or bold challenge to use and repeat the exercise. Invite them to reflect and think about what was more difficult - an outside challenge or their own self-challenge?

Or Try This: If your group does not have the requisite trust to do this activity you could pose hypotheticals such as “If I asked you to ____, how might you react?”

Packing List

PLAY

Supplies: A variety of small objects easily borrowed and returned.

How: In advance, collect small items that easily moved and will be returned as soon as possible. Some examples might be saltshakers, shoes, pens, notebook, tennis racquet, box, etc. The goal is a big variety of things to choose from, but also only enough for each camper to have one item.

Divide campers into groups of 3. Explain to campers that you’ve been invited on a boat trip. The destination, timeline, and duration of the trip are unknown, and space is limited, so each person can only bring with them besides the clothes on their back. Each group sends one camper at a time to select an object and return it to the group. After the camper returns,

another one runs to select an object. Repeat until all the campers have selected items. Then give each group five minutes to come up with the “why” for each object they selected. It must be an actual reason, but the reason doesn’t have to be serious or realistic. Have the groups share their reasoning with one another. Who has the most interesting ideas? Who has the silliest? Who has the most practical? After everyone has shared, gather the campers back into one group and ask them to think about the reasons for various items. See if there are similar thoughts. To help remember things? To protect against the weather? To protect them against things they might be afraid of? Ask the group if they need anything at all if Jesus is in the boat. Allow time for answers and discussion, but be sure not to challenge or diminish anyone’s answers. Ask them if it changes any of their thinking from the beginning if they got the invitation for the boat trip from Jesus. You can ask the campers to return the items at the end of your group time.

Try This: Instead of random objects, have teams make a list of ten items they would pack and why. Pick one group to go first. If they mention an object that is listed on the other groups sheets, all groups must cross that object off. Repeat for each group. Who has the most items left?

From Boat to Water

LEARN

Supplies: Bible, large paper, and markers.

How: In advance, draw a large boat and water on a poster board or large paper. Label the boat “Comfort Zone” and the water “Risk/Trust.” Read Matthew 14:22-30 aloud, then invite campers to write or draw things we cling to when we’re afraid (in the boat), and bold steps we feel called to try (in the water). Ask questions like:

- Why might Jesus call Peter out of the boat? Why would Peter hesitate?
- What might the boat represent for us? Is it ever a good idea to stay in the boat?
- What would stepping out in faith look like this week, this year, or even today?
- How do we know if it is Jesus calling us out of the boat?

After sharing, invite the group to name “lifelines”—people or moments when they felt God’s presence, like Peter being pulled back up by Jesus. Campers could draw lines between the boat and the risks they took

thanks to these people, or the fears they overcame by trusting. Let them write the names of those people the lines represent on the line.

Try This: Invite campers to create individual pictures of a boat and water. What would they put in their own, personal boat? What are some challenges that call them out of that boat? What are some ways they can respond?

Out of the Boat

LEARN PRAY

Supplies: Bible.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30 aloud and invite campers to listen with their eyes closed so that they can picture/imagine the scene as it unfolds. Explain that while Jesus may not ask us to step out of a boat to walk on water, he does invite us to do hard, brave things like loving our enemies, caring for people on the margins, practicing forgiveness, and making big changes in our lives. Invite campers to spend a few minutes thinking about a hard, brave thing Jesus is inviting each of them to do – something that perhaps they’ve been avoiding because it is difficult or scary.

Have the group stand up and gather in a tight circle for a modified, gentle trust fall. Those in the circle should have one foot back from the other and both hands up, ready to keep the person in the middle from falling. One by one, invite individual campers to stand in the middle of the circle. As the leader, say to the camper in the middle of the circle, “Jesus wants you to get out of the boat by: _____,” and invite them to either answer out loud or in their head. Then invite them to close their eyes, make their body rigid, and lean back into the hands of their fellow campers, whose job is to catch, redirect, and help the camper stand back up straight. Be sure to stress to campers that this is not a good time to goof off and fail to catch someone. Every person who chooses to participate needs to trust that they will remain physically and emotionally safe.

After all participating campers have been in the middle, lead campers in a prayer: *Holy One, getting out of the boat into the unknown can be so scary. Thank you for being with us wherever and however you call us. Help us to be courageous and willing to serve. Amen.*

Try This: If your camp has access to low ropes/ challenge course elements, this activity could be ramped up a notch by doing a full trust fall. If you choose to go this route, be sure that the course is

properly staffed and that all campers are taught how to do a trust fall safely. Another option, depending upon the mobility constraints of your group, is to simply invite people to sit in a circle and enter the center to share the thing they are feeling called to do.

Breath & Bravery Journals CREATE PRAY

Supplies: Journals, pens, markers, and calming music.

How: Give campers journals or paper, pens, markers, and other writing/drawing materials. If you completed the journal exercise earlier in the week, use those journals for this exercise. Play calming, meditative music. Read Matthew 14:22-30 to the campers.

Invite campers to settle into the calm and reflect on these prompts:

- When have I been brave, even in small ways?
- What fears do I carry with me into the wilderness?
- What would I do if I trusted God more?

Encourage campers to journal, draw, or write letters to God as they reflect on the prompts.

Try This: Teach a calming breath prayer to help center campers:

Inhale: “Here I am.”

Exhale: “I trust You.”

Encouraging Water

SERVE

Supplies: Water, cups, or coolers.

How: Find a place where campers can help serve cups of water to other campers or refill water bottles. This would be especially good to serve younger campers. Have the campers pass out water with encouraging words like “God loves you, You’re doing a great job!”, etc. Invite campers to reflect on how small words of encouragement can make a big impact on someone, especially when they feel like they are sinking.

Try This: Decorate plastic or paper cups with markers, making cheerful designs, using encouraging words, etc., and give to other campers throughout the camp.

Sacred Stillness

PRAY

Supplies: None, blanket or mat (optional).

How: Invite campers into a time of quiet reflection. Explain that before Jesus walked on the water, he went to a quiet place to pray. Sometimes, when we face difficulty, the most powerful thing we can do is be still. Guide campers through a short stillness/prayer practice. Invite campers to:

- Get comfortable and close your eyes.
- Breathe deeply.
- Imagine Jesus standing on the water, calling your name.
- What does he say to you?
- What might you say in return?

Close with a simple prayer like: “Jesus, we hear you calling. Give us the courage to listen and the strength to respond. Amen.”

Try This: Invite campers to help their minds be still by using simple breath prayers. Invite them to come up with two short phrases (God is here, I am God’s; Deep love in, deep love out, God is here, I am loved, etc.) and use those words as prayers, and they slowly inhale and exhale.



Story Resources

Finding Nemo (Pixar 2003): This animated film is an excellent metaphor for stepping into the unknown. Nemo leaves the safety of home, Marlin (his father) learns to let go and trust, and Dory’s mantra—*“Just keep swimming”*—echoes the persistence and courage needed in scary, uncharted waters. It offers opportunities to talk about fear, trust, community, and growth. While this movie is designed for younger audiences, older youth can still relate to the themes.

The Book Thief (20th Century Fox, 2013) This is the story of a young girl who braves Nazi oppression in WW2 by reading books they want burned. She is living with a foster family, knows of a family hiding a Jewish person, and other challenges. It’s a good story of stepping out into the unknown. Based on a novel by the same name.

The Empire of the Sun (Warner Bros. 1987) This is a great Steven Spielberg story of a young boy in Shanghai during WW2 who is separated from his parents and sent to a Japanese confinement camp. It’s a story of being thrust into the unknown and how the boy maintains his spirit and hope throughout. Great discussion about how sometimes we don’t choose to leave the boat of safety, we get thrown out, and how does God show up for us in those times?



Day 4: Wilderness Frightens

Daily Quick Reference Guide

Scripture Passage: Matthew 14:22-30

Scripture Focus: “Very early in the morning he came to his disciples, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified and said, ‘It’s a ghost!’ They were so frightened they screamed” (Matthew 14:25-26).

Theological Summary: This story is strange, and confusing, and more than a little bit silly; you can lean into that when sharing the story with campers. One big takeaway is that fear and doubt don’t disqualify you from being a follower of Jesus.

Daily Goals...

- Honor the tradition of Jesus entering the wilderness to reconnect, refuel, and be renewed.
- Hold safe space to acknowledge that wilderness may be disorienting or even frightening.
- Explore what it means to take bold steps, facing our fears and doing awesome things through God.
- Affirm that no matter what our wilderness moments may bring, God is always with us.

DAILY ACTIVITIES		
TITLE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Primary learning activity that explores the daily scripture is highlighted.		
__ Paper Prayers	PRAY CREATE	Fortune teller prayer prompts
__ Walking Water	PLAY	Get from one side to the other
__ Water Basins	LEARN	Learn about your local ecosystem
__ Feelings Wheel	PRAY	Pray through your emotions
__ Create a Game	PLAY	Make up your own game
__ Divina Drawings	LEARN	Guided Scripture meditation
__ Solid Water	PLAY	Fun messy craft
__ Foot Washing	SERVE	Rely on community support

Leader notes: When Peter tries to walk on water, he does so with a trained water-walking professional present. This story is not meant to encourage campers to be reckless without supervision in the name of God and courage.

Prayer: “God who walks through storms, guide us through the storms of our own life. When we, being human, cannot walk on water like you, remind us that we are good enough anyways. Amen.”

Daily Activities

Paper Prayers

PRAY CREATE

Supplies: Square pieces of paper, markers, and Paper Prayers Handout.

How: You may use blank paper or print out a handout for each camper to use as a template. Find the folding instructions in the “Paper Prayers Handout.” You might recognize this craft as a “fortune teller” or “cootie catcher.” Guide campers in making their own, but instead of writing fortunes on the inside of the paper, have them write prayer prompts. These can be categories like “prayers for the Earth,” “prayers of thanksgiving,” “prayers for other people,” “prayers for myself,” etc. On the four outside folds, campers can keep the traditional “fortune teller” categories of colors, and on the eight middle folds, they can use numbers. When campers need to say grace or pray before bed, they can use their Paper Prayer Teller to help guide them in coming up with ideas!

Try This: Instead of colors and numbers, use camp-specific categories, like locations at your camp or various camp activities.

Walking Water

PLAY

Supplies: Cardstock or cardboard pieces.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30 together. Provide a few pieces of cardboard or other firm material, but not too many. Challenge the group to get from one end of your activity space to the other without stepping on the ground. There should not be enough pieces to create a continuous straight line, so they’ll have to be creative in where they stand and how they move.

Try This: Add rounds with variations, like taking away items to increase the difficulty, or assigning some items to be “immovable,” as in, once they’ve been placed, they cannot be adjusted.

Water Basins

LEARN

Supplies: Bibles, paper, and pens.

How: Find your camp’s water basin on the United States Geological Survey website: https://water.usgs.gov/wsc/watershed_finder.html. Tell campers the name of your local water basin, rivers, lakes, etc., and where they all flow into. Then, challenge the campers

to see how many stories they can think of from the Bible that involve water. You can invite them to do this in pairs, teams of four, or as a full group. Provide Bibles so they can look through to help them remember or find something new. Provide 5-10 minutes for brainstorming and list building. Invite everyone to share their lists, then ask the group to discuss why water is so important, and what human society, governments, businesses, and individuals can do to keep our water clean. Ask the campers how the place they live impacts their relationship with water and how living somewhere else might change that.

Try This: If you have access to a local body of water, host this activity there.

Feelings Wheel Prayer

PRAY

Supplies: Printed copies of “Feelings Wheel Handout” and writing utensils.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30 as a group. Invite campers to say what emotions they hear in the story. Give campers the Feelings Wheel, a tool that can be used to help discuss emotions. Invite each camper family group to come up with prayers that address an emotion from the middle and outer rings in each color. Invite campers to share the poem they think the disciples might have prayed in Matthew 14:22-30. Campers will then have unique prayers to bring home with them, addressing a wide variety of emotional experiences.

Try This: Spread this activity out over multiple days instead of doing it all at once, and increase the number of prayers per color.

Create a Game

PLAY

Supplies: Random assortment of objects, paper, and pens.

How: Assemble a collection of different objects that don’t normally go together. This is a great chance to use all the odds and ends from a supply closet. Give your group an assortment of objects, ranging from 5-15 unique pieces, then instruct them to make up a game that utilizes each piece. They can come up with a competitive game, a cooperative game, or something else. Campers should write down the rules of the game and how to play it. Once they’ve created the rules and objectives of the game, they can demonstrate it to the other groups. This may need extra time throughout the day.

Try This: Play each game together as a camp community.

Divina Drawings

LEARN

Supplies: Copies of Matthew 14:22-30 and crayons.

How: Tell campers that there are many different ways to read and listen to Scripture. Today, we will be reading from a *contemplative* or *meditative* perspective through the tool of Lectio Divina, or “divine reading.” Read Matthew 14:22-30 to the campers and ask them to circle, draw a line under, or highlight a few words that stood out to them. Then read it a second time, inviting campers to focus on one sentence that stands out to them and draw something around the edges to highlight it. Read the story one final time, this time asking campers to hear just one word that stands out to them. In the following moment of silence, invite campers to pray using their word as guidance and draw a picture of that word or how it makes them feel on the back of the paper. If this is too abstract for younger campers, simply invite them to draw whatever the scripture inspires.

Try This: Invite campers to draw as they listen to the scripture passage and to use those pictures to explore what God might be saying to them through this passage.

Solid Water

PLAY

Supplies: Cornstarch, water, pie pan, mixing spoon, blue food coloring, and measuring cups.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30 together, then give each camper one cup of water and one and a half cups of cornstarch. Campers should mix one cup of water and one and a half cups of cornstarch in a pie pan or other wide, low bowl. Add a few drops of blue food coloring for effect. Stir until all ingredients are fully mixed into each other, then remove the spoon. Invite campers to hold their new creation in their hands tightly, rolling it into a ball and applying pressure. Invite campers to describe how the substance changes. Invite campers to “walk” their index and middle finger along the surface of the pan firmly, then gently, and see the difference. Invite the campers to experiment with the substance, having fun, and coming up with theories for why it works the way it does. Dispose of the material in a trash can.

Try This: Supersize this activity in an inflatable pool to simulate walking on water! If using this option, be sure you have a way to dispose of the material safely, as it cannot be put down a drain.

Foot Washing

SERVE

Supplies: Water, washcloths, tub, and towels.

How: Read Matthew 14:22-30, then invite campers to discuss how Peter didn’t try to walk on water by himself. He had a responsible and experienced water-walker in Jesus, and he did not try this activity unsupervised. Similarly, when we are trying new things or performing acts of courage, we are not expected to do so alone and without the support of others. If possible, play quiet music as you invite campers to wash each other’s feet in water as Jesus once did with his disciples. Have one camper sit on a chair while another uses a cloth to wash their feet and dry them with a towel. Remind campers that walking on water isn’t possible, but they can feel supported and loved just as the disciples did. Jesus and this community of camp care for them. Close with the prayer of the day.

Try This: Instead of feet, invite campers to wash each other’s hands

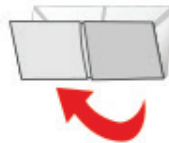
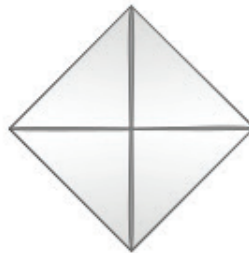
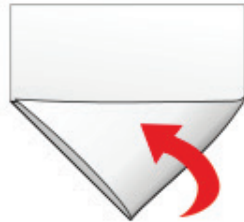


Story Resources

Picturing God, by Ruth Goring

A charming, collage-illustrated picture book that explores diverse images of God, leaning especially on images pulled from the natural world. Today, we’ve learned to associate God with water, and this story can invite a discussion on all the many ways we experience God’s presence.

Paper Prayers Handout (Folding Instructions) 1 of 2



Paper Prayers Handout 2 of 2

Fold square paper two directions to create visible creases, then open.



1.

Fold corner to the middle and crease well.



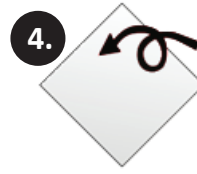
2.

Repeat till you have a square.



3.

Flip so folds are facing down.

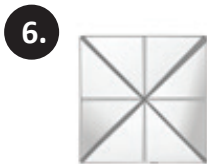


4.



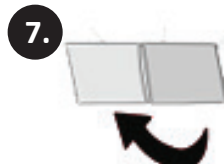
5.

Fold each corner in to the center.



6.

Repeat till you have a square.



7.

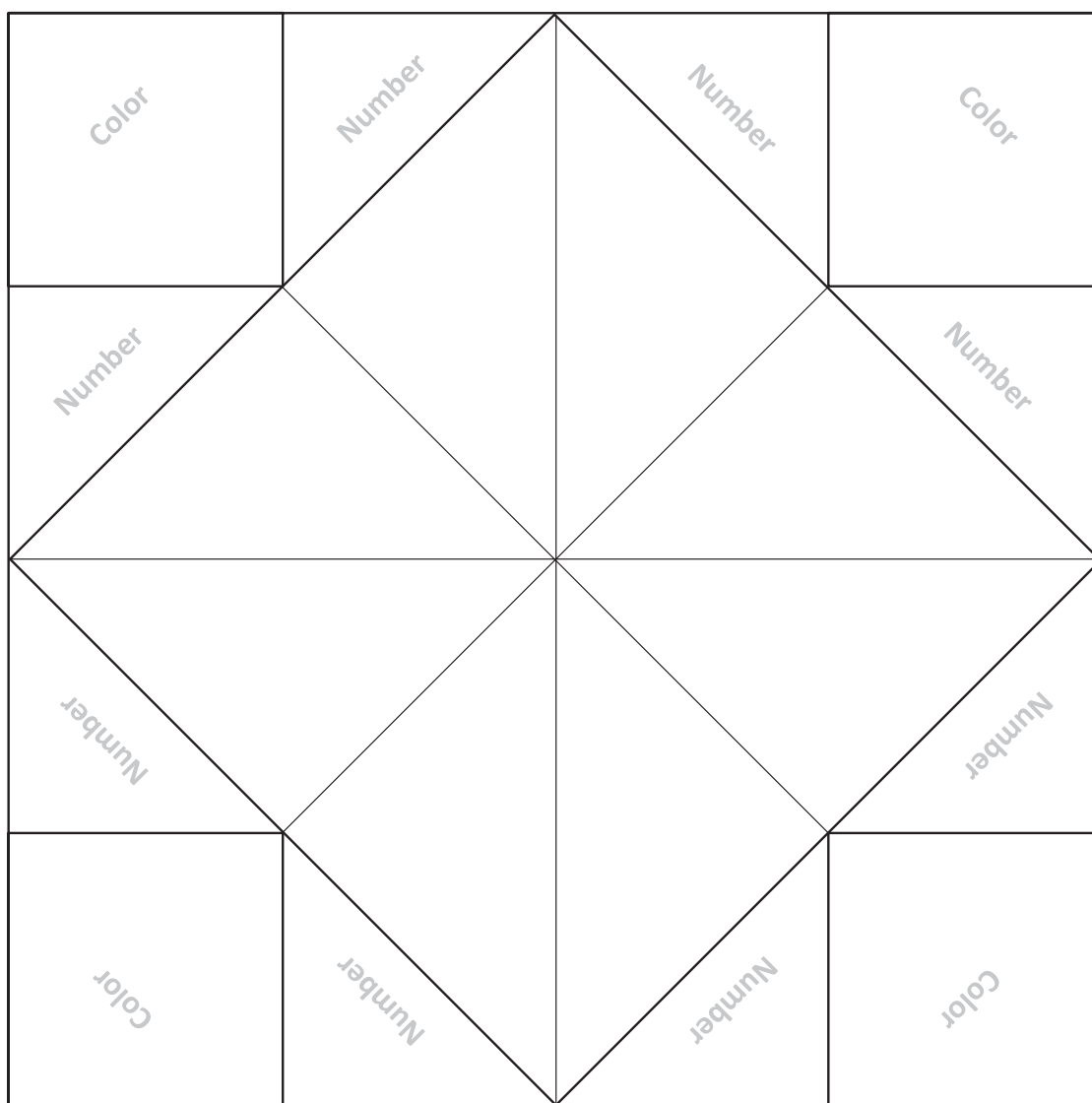
Fold in half—undo, then fold in half the opposite direction.



8.

Open corners and insert fingers

Write prayer prompts in the center triangles



Write prayer prompts in the center triangles

Feelings Wheel Handout

