Guiding Principles for Staff 2022

I pray that you and all of God’s people will understand what is called wide or long or high or deep. I want you to know all about Christ’s love, although it is too wonderful to be measured. Then your lives will be filled with all that God is.

Ephesians 3:18-19
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Long ago God’s people in exile in Babylon experienced the devastating loss of almost every part of their lives that had given them identity, purpose, confidence, and hope. In this uncertain time, they began to write down what they had shared for generations, the story of God and God’s people. In doing this they rediscovered their God, who created and sustained them and held them and all creation in loving hands. The awesome God of creation was also the merciful God of everyday life. No matter how tough and challenging life would be, God’s people were never alone and never without hope. No matter how far they had strayed in disobedience to God, God who breathed life into them would not abandon them—even in their exile in Babylon.

With this curriculum, Boundless: God beyond Measure, campers and their leaders will enter the hopeful and saving story of God and God’s people. They will experience the good news of God’s boundless creating, loving, and merciful power for them in their lives. Just as God was loving and faithful at the time of creation, then in the life of Israel, then through Jesus Christ, so God continues to be in this world now. Enter the story of God and God’s people (you!) and rediscover boundless goodness, love, welcome, forgiveness, and generosity. So boundless that they cannot be measured. But they can be trusted.
Day 1: Goodness Beyond Measure

Bible Text: Genesis 1: 1-5, 26-28
Spark Bible: p. 2-7

Concept: Each of us and all the different parts of this interconnected creation matter and share in God’s creative, sustaining purposes for the sake of the whole creation.

Objectives: What will campers...
- KNOW: That God is Creator of everything, and that all creation is good.
- FEEL: Awe at the universe's immensity, beauty, and goodness.
- DO: Care for God’s creation and be good to each other.

Song Ideas: Peace Like a River, Shout to the Lord, This Is the Day, Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (ELW 752), Earth and All Stars (ELW 731), God is so Good

Main Text (NRSV):
In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

Biblical Interpretation
God freely chose to create and to be in a relationship with all that was created. God wanted light, stars, water, plants, humans, and all that exists, so out of darkness and chaos God brought goodness and order (vv. 1-5). Creation and every living thing within it were desired and designed by God. To fully understand God’s boundless goodness and involvement in creation, it is best to read Genesis 1-3. These chapters reveal the goodness of God’s creation and the loving, active relationship God desires to have with all creation. Creation is not just matter or stuff; it is a dynamic event. Chapters 1 and 2 describe for us a God who spreads billions of stars across space as well as lovingly breathes life into the first human being. This beginning (genesis) is the start of God’s dynamic, creative relationship with all creation and forms the faithful understanding of who God is—and forever will be—in relationship to all creation.

Everything that God creates is “good.” The word good comes up several times in Genesis 1 and frames the first creation account (Genesis 1:4, 31). The Hebrew word good means “beautiful.” There is intrinsic beauty and goodness in everything, human and nonhuman. There is goodness in how all parts of creation are interconnected, providing a delightful, livable habitat for one another (Genesis 1:11-25). God cares for every aspect of creation, not just humans. All created things function together within God’s good created order; all are held together in the hands of the Creator. The holy scriptures testify that God, the Creator, continues to be involved with all creation.
in a good and loving way. When the man and woman must leave the garden, God sews clothes for them (Genesis 3:21). When the Hebrews are slaves in Egypt, God rescues them. When Israel sins and strays, God disciplines, reorients, and forgives them. God does beautiful work even in the face of disobedience and disaster.

Humankind is called to live in faithful relationship with God as God’s creatures sharing in God’s creative work and deep care for the sake of the whole creation (v. 26). Made in the image of God, humans care as God cares (v. 27). The call to “subdue” the earth and “have dominion” implies responsibility for the well-being of all creation. Genesis 2:15 reinforces this responsibility of creation care and keeping: God puts the man in the garden of Eden “to till and keep it.” To “be fruitful and multiply” (1:28) is not simply about fertility but invites all creation to prosper from one generation to another. God gives humankind the ability to creatively care for creation, always with God’s good purposes in mind. God did not intend humans to simply be subjects of God’s absolute divine control. Instead, God has gifted humankind so that, faithful to God’s purposes, they will care for and prosper God’s creation with God-given intelligence and creativity.

God, the Creator, remains faithful to every generation. In Jesus Christ, God does a new thing on behalf of all people and all creation. Ephesians 3:16b-17 tells us that through Christ, God draws us into close relationship with God and empowers us by the Spirit to be strong, faithful followers of Christ. In Christ, crucified and risen, the goodness and love of God continues to be at work in all creation.

Additional Texts
Psalm 8
Psalm 139:1-14
John 1:1-5
Colossians 1:15-20
Galatians 3:6-9 (The promise is to all who rely on faith like Abraham)

Day 1 Games and Activities

Nature Walk Goody Bag (Preschool Look)
Give every camper a paper lunch bag to take with them on a nature walk. Before your walk, help campers write their name on the bag, along with the words “Goody Bag,” or do it for them. Show campers items from a sample Goody Bag you’ve prepared in advance. Talk about how God makes everything good! Distribute markers or crayons and invite campers to draw on their bag a picture of something good that God created. Some of the treasures from God’s creation that campers might like to collect include leaves, twigs, rocks, plants, seeds, shells, and discarded or potential nest-building materials. Remind campers not to pick or pull apart living things. Leaders should also carry a trash bag with them to care for God’s good creation by picking up things that are harmful to the environment. Campers could be given small magnifying glasses to help them look more closely at God’s creation and to explore their treasures later. Explain to campers how they can help care for creation, and each other, by looking more closely at God’s creation. Find a comfortable place to sit where you can talk about campers’ nature walk experience. Use these questions to guide the conversation.

• What treasures from God’s creation did you collect today?
• What was the best treasure you found today, and how is it good?
• How is picking up trash a good way to care for God’s creation and for each other?
Hook (Pioneer & Junior)
Introduce campers to the idea that God’s goodness can be found inside of us and everywhere around us. Then take them on a walk, real or imaginary, to look for God’s goodness. You might tell them in advance that the answer to every one of your questions is yes. Perhaps they will get animated as the activity continues with rather amplified yeses! If outside, touch or walk around in nature and briefly invite campers into a conversation about how God’s goodness is in creation. For example, touch a leaf and ask, “Is God’s goodness in this leaf?” (Yes!) If inside, invite conversation about animals and briefly invite them to talk about how God’s goodness is in animals. Have them mimic the animals they discuss. For example, a camper might say that God’s love is found inside their dog. Perhaps they would get on all fours and bark like a dog. Follow up with conversation about God’s goodness inside of us. We can see God’s love and care for us in the intricacy of how we are made. Just by looking at a freckle on our skin or the shape of our hands, we see the work of an artist who loves their creation. Looking at plants and animals, the sky and the earth, and ourselves, we see that God’s love is way beyond our ability to measure.

The Goodness of What God Created (Pioneer & Junior Book)
Introduce the book of Genesis to campers, explaining that Genesis tells stories from people long ago. They were people like us, trying to understand God’s goodness. Genesis is the name of the first book of the Bible. It tells stories—two stories in fact—about day and night, water and grass, birds, fish, monkeys, and even how people were made. Today they will focus on only one of those stories. Read the Genesis 1. Through the beginning of the book of Genesis, creation (the things God created) is repeatedly described as good. Ask the following:

- What are some other words for “good” that you can think of?
- What are some things that feel good? Invite campers to practice some things that feel good, like touching their toes, scratching their back, and giving themselves a hug. Perhaps, God gave God’s self a hug when finishing creation! Like stories campers may have been told about the day they were born, there was so much going on during creation that not all of it was written down. But that’s okay; stories sometimes only highlight the funny parts or the good parts. Turns out, God calls every day “good.”

The Goodness of Both Darkness and Light (Pioneer & Junior Book)
Read Genesis 1:1-5 from the Bible. Suggest to campers that we can think of the book of Genesis in the Bible as God’s “Growing Up” book—you know, that book parents keep that shows their little ones learning to walk and to ride a tricycle, going to the first day of school, and so on? Similar to that, Genesis captures the new relationship between God and humanity. Like a Growing Up book parents keep for their kids, Genesis has some stories about how things began, but not about everything. For example, it was a formless void and dark in the beginning. And after God created light from the darkness, God saw the light was good. That doesn’t mean the darkness was bad. The darkness was there from the beginning. God created all things out of darkness. So, darkness must be good too! Share some examples of light and darkness, such as these:

- Outer space is dark, and stars provide light.
- Deep down in the ocean where there is darkness, certain fish can create their own lights in their bodies: see for example “Surprising History of Glowing Fish” by Ed Yong, National Geographic (https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/phenomena/2016/06/08/the-many-origins-of-glowing-fish/).
- Seeds need light to grow, but first they need darkness under the soil.
- Our human bodies absorb vitamin D from sunshine needed for strong bones, and our bodies need the rhythm of darkness that tells our brains to release the hormone melatonin to help us rest.

Kids this age might be scared in the dark. Take care not to belittle any of their fears.
Just remind them that what is in the darkness is the same as what’s there in the light—you just can’t see it!

**The Goodness of Us! (Pioneer & Junior Book)**

Read Genesis 1:26-28. God can’t imagine creation without us! All of us are part of God’s Growing Up book, the record of God’s new relationship with humanity! Perhaps also read Matthew 13:31-32 or share the mustard seed story from memory. Have as many kids as would like act it out: sowers, seeds, plants, and birds. Talk about dirt: what it feels like, looks like, smells like. Lead them to see that seeds need darkness first, then light, in order to grow. God creates good things in darkness and in light. There’s no light too bright, or darkness too dark where God’s love does not go. God’s goodness is so big that it can’t be measured! And God’s goodness, like a seed, grows within us. When we talk with God, pray together, read our Bibles, and help others in Jesus’s name, God’s goodness grows inside us—just like God’s goodness grows everywhere outside us too: in dirt, in leaves, in water, all around. Select from the following questions to help campers grow in understanding of the Bible text for today.

**Basic:** These questions compare the earth to a gift that humans have responsibility to take care of.

- I wonder how God wants us to treat the earth that God created. (*Protect it, treat it carefully and with respect because it is good.*)
- Creation is a gift. Do you have an example of a gift you protected or took good care of? (*An example might be using the kickstand on their bike instead of dumping the bike on the ground or putting the bike in a nice place in the garage or washing the bike if it got muddy.*)
- How could we protect the earth like the gift you protected? (*Answers will vary. For example, not throwing trash out in nature is like not trashing your bike by leaving it outside in the sun and rain.*)

**Digging deeper:** These questions focus on the vastness of God’s goodness by looking at how we are part of that goodness, made in the image of God.

- I wonder what it means to be made in the image of God. Allow time for campers to offer their ideas. To some degree, it might mean our appearance, but since we all look different, it might be more about us all being beautiful because of our goodness! Perhaps it is more closely aligned with characteristics or fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23): “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”
- If you have a Growing Up book, you might place pictures of how much taller you have gotten, how long your hair has grown, or what sports team you are on now. Can you think of an example of when you have shown goodness that you would highlight in a Growing Up book? (*Answers will vary. For example, the time I let my brother borrow my book, or when I patiently trained my puppy.*)

**Challenging:** These more challenging questions are open-ended to explore how campers feel about the vastness and the nature of God.

- I wonder what God’s goodness feels like inside us. (*For example: calm, peaceful, warm.*)
- I wonder how God’s goodness can be so big that it can’t be measured, because I have a hard time being good all the time. (*One mystery of God is although we are made in the image of God, we are not exactly like God; some things that may be hard for us may not be hard for God.*)

**Look (Pioneer & Junior)**

If not already outside, move outside at this time. Have the kids walk around where they are sitting, not more than a few steps, and pick up something from nature. Discuss where these items are found.

- Are they found in both darkness and light?
- Do they need both darkness and light to live? (*Some do and some don’t. Mushrooms need darkness and lots of moisture, most trees need lots of light, and worms live in the darkness of the soil*)
to make it rich and healthy for green and growing things.)

Have the kids lie on their backs with their hands on their bellies. Hopefully, they can feel their stomachs going up and down with each breath. Try a breathing exercise. (For ideas, see the yoga books identified in the materials list above.) Talk about how their skin feels the heat of the sun or other light. Note that the inside of their bodies is in darkness—their bellies with food, their lungs with air, their hearts with blood, and their heads with their brains. Invite them to touch each described body part as you name it. All of their insides live in darkness! And their insides are good. Then sit up. Other things inside them are good too—like their kindness, thoughtfulness, and patience. Jesus shows us how to share the goodness inside us.

- Jesus listened to people who needed to be heard (Matthew 15:21-28). What do you do to get a parent’s attention when you need to be heard?
- Jesus washed his friends’ feet (John 13:5). Have you ever helped a sibling wash their hands or brush their teeth, or fed someone food?
- Jesus allowed others to help him, like his friend Mary who washed Jesus’s feet with perfumed oil (John 12:3). Has a nurse given you a Band-Aid? Has a parent sung you to sleep? God’s goodness comes to us in too many ways to count.

Creation Care (Pioneer Took)

God’s good creation is a gift. We protect and respect the gift of creation by reducing how much we use of it, reusing what we have already taken, and recycling what we have so that we take care of the gift. Pick up trash around camp. Play with a light switch and practice turning it off when we leave a room. Make a big deal of it, cheering your hearts out when they do it.

Body Care (Pioneer & Junior Took)

Practice yoga stretches or mindfulness breathing as a way to pay attention to and take care of our bodies as part of God’s good creation.

Growing Up Books (Junior Took)

Have campers create a small Growing Up book with three or four pictures or stories about being part of God’s good creation or being made in God’s image. Perhaps turn it into a thank-you for their parents.

Creation Care—Reuse (Junior Took)

God’s good creation is a gift. We protect and respect the gift of creation by reducing how much we use of it, reusing what we have already taken, and recycling what we have. Have on hand materials with which the campers can create something to be reused beyond its original purpose. These might include fallen leaves to make a wreath for your cabin door or cardboard from small, empty cereal boxes to make postcards to send home.

Breath Prayer: “Peace, Be Still” (Intermediate/Senior High Hook)

A breath prayer uses the rhythm of the breath and a short phrase to center ourselves in God’s presence and love. Youth can use this calming form of prayer both at camp and later at home. Breath prayer can be a helpful ritual when working with youth. It provides a moment to pause and transition from other activities into the Bible study. It also provides youth with a spiritual tool for handling stress and big emotions. Best of all, the practice is easy to learn. Follow these steps:

1. Invite campers to find a comfortable position where they can focus on their breath: sitting cross-legged, for example, or lying flat on their backs. It’s best to find a position that doesn’t constrict their breathing in any way.
2. Ask for God’s presence.
3. Take a few big breaths together with eyes closed. Inhale for a count of seven. Exhale for a count of seven.
4. Next, invite campers to silently repeat the prayer “Peace, be still” according to the rhythm of their breath. Think “Peace” while breathing in. Think “be still” while breathing out. Try at least ten rounds of this.
5. Reassure campers that it is okay to become distracted. They can simply bring
their attention back to their breath and their prayer.

6. To close, you may simply say, “Amen.”
What do you picture when you hear the word chaos? Invite each person to share an image or experience of chaos.

**Human Knot (Intermediate/Senior High Hook)**
Have campers stand in a circle. Ask campers to reach across the circle to join hands with two different people. Once they’ve formed a human knot, have the group try to untangle themselves until they are untwisted back into a circle. Ask campers to think about the jumbled chaos of the knot at the beginning and the process of returning to a recognizable circle. What was it like to work on this together?

**Puzzle Time (Intermediate/Senior High Hook)**
If you have access to a jigsaw puzzle and a good space to set one up, perhaps you could start a puzzle you work on throughout the week. Dump out the pieces. Note how the pile of pieces looks nothing like the picture on the box—yet. Ask campers how they might begin the puzzle, how they might bring order to this chaotic pile. Examples: turn the pieces so they are all facing up, sort out the edge pieces with flat edges. To complete a puzzle, they will need to bring some order to the chaos. Our world is more complex than a knot or a puzzle. But God, in the beginning, created in a similar way by bringing goodness out of chaos.

**(Intermediate/Senior High Book)**
Have campers locate today’s passage in their Bibles as needed. The creation story from Genesis 1 is the focus of today’s Bible study, particularly verses 1-5 and 26-28. Read Genesis 1:1-28 together. For this age group, encourage youth to take the lead in reading. Then explore the passage using these questions and key points to guide the discussion.

**The Basics:** The creation story sets the stage for the whole story of the Bible. Have campers divide up into pairs to explore Genesis 1:1-28. Ask them to look for and discuss the following:

- What does God do in this text? (Examples: God speaks, God forms, God invites, God calls.)
- What is God like? What is God’s character? (Examples: God is good, God is powerful, God is demanding.)

Come back to share some responses, and then reinforce these points: The biblical writers want us to know God is almighty. There is only one God, and God has no rival power in the universe. God speaks, and it happens. Period. They also want us to know God’s original desire for us and our world. God’s dream since the beginning has been a good and life-giving universe. These two features make the creation story of Genesis unique among similar ancient cultures. Origin stories from the same era in nearby Egypt and Mesopotamia, for example, describe creation as a cosmic battle between multiple gods. The intentions of these other ancient deities are less clear and less predictable as well. In contrast, the creation story in Genesis says there is only one God and God’s intentions are benevolent. There is no sense of cosmic battle or of multiple gods with competing agendas. The text says: “The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:2). These symbols of chaos are presented as neutral matter, which God forms into goodness, like a potter forming clay. No matter how chaotic our world may become, Genesis 1 wants us to know this: God is good, and nothing in all creation is as powerful as our God. This frames the whole story of the Bible. God’s desire from the beginning is goodness.

**Senior high adaptation:** In addition to the discussion above, you may add some discussion about our place in the universe and the meaning of life. Teenagers are often quite open to these “big questions.” Ask some of these big questions out loud and invite some response.
- Why is there something rather than nothing?
Why do I exist?
What does it mean to be human?
What is the meaning of life?
Silence in response to such questions is okay and appropriate. We may have our own answers to these questions, but the creation story has some responses as well. Ask campers to summarize the meaning of life as they hear it in the creation story. After those who wish have offered a summary, reinforce these important points: We were created for relationship with God, each other, and all creation. We were created to represent God’s will on earth (see “image of God” in Genesis 1:26-27) and partner with God in the ongoing creation of abundant life.

More Challenging: The creation story tends to divide the world into binaries. Binary thinking turns the world into black and white categories without seeing the gray parts in the middle. The downside of binary thinking is that it overlooks diversity. It’s good to be aware that these verses have been used to harm and exclude transgender people. Youth may raise questions about this, and you may have transgender youth as part of your group. Ask campers to identify some of the binaries in the text. (Day and night, land and water, and male and female.) Transgender interpreters of this text have helped us see diversity beyond these binaries. Austen Hartke—the author of Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2018)—is one excellent example. Invite campers to think of categories in between and around these binaries, because God’s good world is rich with diversity. (Examples: dusk and dawn in addition to day and night; marshes as a place between land and water; and transgender, nonbinary, intersex in addition to male or female.) It is important to affirm again and again that people of all gender identities and expressions are made in the image of God. God’s love for humanity is boundless.

The Deep End (primarily for senior high): The creation story raises as many questions as it answers. Here are some big questions to ask with your group.

Is this story true?
The creation story describes a six-day creation process. Contemporary science describes the evolution of life on earth over billions of years. How do we reconcile the two?
If God created a good world, why does God allow natural disasters—like hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes? A few key things to emphasize regarding science and faith: It’s important to say out loud that it is possible to trust the evidence of evolutionary science and have a Christian worldview based on the creation story. The ancient Israelites who wrote this story down weren’t trying to write a modern science or history textbook. They were trying to get at deeper questions: Who is God? What does it mean to be part of God’s chosen people Israel? What does it mean to be human? The creation story endures because it speaks directly to these questions. Many Christians are able to reconcile their belief in God the Creator with a scientific understanding of evolution. In fact, the study of science can increase our awe at the complexity, beauty, and goodness of creation. To explore the question of natural disasters (stated above), pull out a large piece of paper and some markers. Write two columns: one labeled “Good” and the other labeled “Perfect.” Brainstorm with campers the difference between “a good world” and “a perfect world.” Can a natural disaster be part of a good world? A perfect world? Why or why not? Or have campers complete these phrases:

In a good world, ______ could happen (or exist).
In a perfect world, ______ would not happen (or exist).

After making your lists, emphasize these key points about the text: God declares the world “good,” but doesn’t use the word perfect. There is mystery here, so it’s okay to wrestle with this question. God does not micromanage creation, but neither does God abandon it.
Practice Radical Amazement (Intermediate/Senior High Look)
The twentieth-century rabbi and civil rights activist Abraham Joshua Heschel once said: “Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. . . . Get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed” (God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976). The creation story places us in the presence of almighty God and locates us in an expansive and good universe. If we let this story permeate our worldview, we will be drawn into the experience of awe and the practice of praise. If possible, go for a nature hike or go stargazing or find a beautiful spot outside as part of this Bible study. Whenever someone spots something amazing, pause and praise: “Wow! So good!” Alternatively, write down ideas for parts of creation that inspire awe. Ideas can be big (mountains, oceans) or small (ants, fireflies) or cute or beautiful. Using your list, create a Litany of Radical Amazement with your campers. Have the group respond after each one with “Wow! So good!” An example follows:

Leader: Boundless God, we are so amazed by . . .
Camper 1: Pine forests
All: Wow! So good!
Camper 2: Mule deer
All: Wow! So good!

God declared creation good and this activity invites us to recognize God’s good creation.

Rally for Creation (Intermediate/Senior High Took)
At the age of fifteen, Greta Thunberg began her strike outside of the Swedish parliament. She often carries a sign that reads “Skolstrejk för Klimatet,” which means “school strike for climate.” Invite campers to imagine themselves at a rally or protest on behalf of God’s good creation. Hand out supplies to create these signs. What might God put on a protest sign?

Senior high adaptation: Have campers share environmental issues that interest them. As a group, identify ways you could take action on behalf of God’s good creation: write a letter to local, state, or national government leaders; educate yourself and others; organize a neighborhood cleanup; and so forth. Or if you have access to a recent newspaper, have campers clip out headlines and stories related to care for creation and use these headlines as bookmarks for their Bibles.

Letter to your future self (Intermediate/Senior High Hook)
One of the challenges of camp is finding a way to bring it home. Invite campers to begin a letter to their future self. Ask them to include anything they want their future self to remember from this time. Have them include a response to the following question for Day 1: What amazes me about God’s good creation?

The Image of God in Every Face (Intermediate & Senior High Service Option)
Have the youth open their Bibles to Genesis 1:26-27 and read the verses. They contain some powerful words about human dignity. Your service project may bring you into contact with vulnerable people. Sometimes vulnerable people—those who are poor, homeless, sick, young, elderly—are treated as “less than” in society. But every human being bears the image of God and is worthy of equal dignity and respect. Imagine this with your group: What if every face we encountered today gave us a glimpse of what God looks like? Review your day together: Where did you see the face of God today?

Under the Dome (Pioneer & Junior)
Use a parachute to simulate the dome in the midst of the waters in Genesis 1:6. Have the group stand around the outside of the parachute, holding on to the edges. Bend down so the parachute is flat on the ground. On the count of three, everyone raises their arms, which causes the parachute to float
over everyone’s head to its maximum height. When it reaches full height, the campers should take one step forward while also bringing the parachute behind their bodies as they sit down. This causes the entire group to be inside the parachute, creating a dome. Ask the campers about some of their favorite plants, animals, or sea creatures that are all under the earth’s dome. Then talk about the ways these things, including the campers, are interconnected and interdependent.

I Love Creation (Pioneer & Junior)
Have campers sit in chairs in a circle with a counselor standing in the middle, who will first give instructions. The person in the middle will say, “I love my neighbor who loves ________” and insert something from creation. For example, “I love my neighbor who loves sunny days.” Then, anyone who that phrase applies to gets up and moves to a different seat, the person in the middle included. It cannot be the seat they were sitting in or the seats next to them. As the person in the middle also finds a seat, someone else will be left to stand and call out more neighbors and creation items. After the game, talk about all the good things God created and how God’s love through creation is boundless. Ask the following question: Where have you seen goodness at work during camp today?

Earth and Seas Tag
This game will work for about twelve campers or more. Divide the group in half and set up three playing areas next to each other. The two areas on the outside will be the earth and the middle section will be the sea. Half of the campers will be on one side of the earth; the other half on the other side of the earth. One (or more for a large group) camper will be It and be designated as the shark, who is in the sea. Campers on the earth turn into fish and have to swim to the other side of the earth without getting tagged by the shark. Afterward, use the following questions to guide conversation. What was good about being a fish? About being a shark? What do sharks and fish have in common?

Interconnected Chain
Materials: small strips of paper, staples and stapler. Ask campers the following questions.
- In what ways are we connected to one another?
- How can we make those connections stronger?
- How are we connected to God?
Take some time to discuss, then give each camper a strip of paper. Have campers write one of the “connections” on the paper. Then use the paper strips to make a chain. Begin by rolling the first paper strip to create a circle and staple edges together. Then, another camper will put a strip of paper through that link to create another link, doing the same thing. Continue until all campers have added to the chain links to remind us that we are interconnected. Another option would be to see how long you can make the chain. Display the chain in a prominent location in camp.

Service-Learning-Reflection
In the creation story, God gave humans the responsibility of taking care of the earth. To build up your group and do a shared experience, participate in a service-learning-reflection activity. Find something to do in service to your camp that will help take care of the earth. When finished, process the activity by asking the following questions.
- What feelings were you experiencing during the service work?
- What is one thing you learned through this experience that showed you how we are connected with others?
- How might you continue the practice of serving others in the future?

Order Out of Chaos
Divide your group into two fairly equal teams. One team begins with the playground ball and stands in a line one behind another. The other team is in a circle with one camper holding the beach ball. When the leader says “Go,” the team with the playground ball begins to pass the ball back through their line, going over the head of the first person and then between the legs of the second, and so on in
an over-under pattern. When it reaches the last person in line, that person runs to the front of the line and the whole team yells, “STOP.” While that ball is being passed, the group in the circle passes the beach ball around the circle as fast as they can. When the ball gets back to the starting point in the circle, the team gets a point. The whole team should shout out “one” or “two” or “three” and so forth as they continue to score, keeping track of their points. When the team with the playground ball yells “Stop!,” both teams will toss their balls any place in the play area. The teams should now get the opposite object from what they were doing to begin “scoring” or “stopping.” The team originally with the playground ball will get the beach ball, form a circle, and start counting points. The team originally with the beach ball will get the playground ball, form a line, and start passing. Follow this pattern for as long as you want. Usually, campers get so wrapped up in the game, they forget how many points they actually scored! When they are ready, gather the teams and ask the following questions.

- Where did you see order in the game?
  Where did you see chaos?
- How did working together provide order in the game?
- How were the two teams interconnected?

### Separate the Waters
God separated the waters under the dome from above the dome, and the group will do the same. Place an empty bucket approximately 50 feet [15 m] away from the source of water. The source of water could be another bucket filled with water or could be a pond, lake, or stream. The object is to fill the bucket by finding some way to transport water to the bucket, without using a bucket, such as cupping your hands, using a piece of bark, or if the water is clean enough, even using your mouth. Add stipulations if you wish, such as you can only use natural objects that you find, or you cannot cup the water in your hands or use your mouth. Afterward, use the following questions to guide conversation about working as a group.

- How did you work together to complete the task?
- Was it easy or harder to have to work with others?
- Could you have done the task by yourself?

### Day 1 Worship Ideas

#### Call to Worship
Leader: We are going to thank God for all of creation! I’m going to say, "God made the fill in the blank," and you are going to respond, “God loves the fill in the blank.” Let’s practice. God made mac and cheese.

**All:** God loves mac and cheese.

Leader: Get it? Good. Let’s go! Thank you, God, for the darkness that wraps around us like a warm hug and for the light that wakes us up and gets us moving. God made the darkness and the light.

**All:** God loves the darkness and the light.

Leader: Thank you, God, for the earth, where worms play and trees take root and for the sky, where hawks soar and butterflies flutter. God made the earth and the sky.

**All:** God loves the earth and the sky.

Leader: Thank you, God, for the waters where manatees swim and jellyfish blub, and for the tiny seeds that grow giant sycamores and delicate dandelions. God made the waters and the seeds.

**All:** God loves the waters and the seeds.

Leader: Thank you, God, for the sun and the moon that makes ocean tides and marks the passing of time. God made the sun and the moon.
All: God loves the sun and the moon.
Leader: Thank you, God, for the birds that sing their songs on the breeze and for the fish of the sea that skitter and glide. God made the birds and the fish.
All: God loves the birds and the fish.
Leader: Thank you, God, for the creatures of the land, the camels and dogs, hamsters and lions, snakes and three-toed sloths, and for the creatures that we call humans, made in God’s image. God made the creatures of the land. God made us.
All: God loves the creatures of the land.
God loves us.
Leader: And on the seventh day, God rested. God had poured out so much love. And afterward, God looked at it all. And said, it is good. Then God took a nap. God made naps.
All: God loves naps!
All: is with us!
Leader: The Lord
All: is with us!
Leader: Let us pray. Loving God, you said long ago that creation was good. And God says again, today, about you, me, this day, this camp—it is good. We give you thanks, God, for making all things and loving us beyond measure. Continue to bless the world, our families back home, this camp, our friends, and all who we love. We love because you loved us first. In the name of the God who still says, it is good. Amen.

Scripture Reading
Reader 1: A reading from Genesis: In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the world was a formless void and chaotic, and no light covered the world, while the spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters. Then God said . . .
Reader 2: “Let there be light.”
Reader 1: And there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the night.
Reader 2: And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.
Reader 3: God, help us to remember that you are the source of all life and that we are connected with all living things. You bring life out of chaos and call all things into being. Everything that we have is thanks to you.
Reader 1: And God said,
Reader 2: “Let there be a dome that separates the waters below from the emptiness above.”
Reader 1: And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening, and there was morning, the second day.
Reader 3: The air we breathe is yours, O God. Too often, we have polluted the air. Forgive our neglect, let us use our voices to speak up for clean air for all to breathe.
Reader 1: And God said,
Reader 2: “Let the waters be gathered together and let the dry land appear.”
Reader 1: And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters God called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Reader 2: “Let the earth produce plants and trees.”
Reader 1: And it was done. And God saw that it was good.
Reader 2: And there was evening, and there was morning, the third day.
Reader 3: The oceans and the land are yours, O God. Too often, we don’t treat them well and forget that you created us all. Continue to remind us to care for all the world.
Reader 1: And God said,
Reader 2: “Let there be lights in the sky to give light to the earth.”
Reader 1: And it was so. God made the sun, the moon, and the stars to shine light upon the earth. And God saw that it was good.
Reader 2: And there was evening, and there was morning, the fourth day.
Reader 3: God, you created not only the earth but every star above. Let us look at the stars tonight and be reminded that you not only made all the stars in the sky, but you created each of us and said we are good.
Reader 1: And God said,
Reader 2: “Let the waters teem with countless living creatures, and let birds fly across the sky.”
Reader 1: So, God created the sea creatures of every kind, and all the birds in the air. God blessed them saying,
Reader 2: “Bear fruit and be many, that they fill the waters in the seas, and the birds be many on the earth.”
Reader 1: And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the fifth day.

Reader 3: The animals of the sky and the sea belong to you, O God. Let us be mindful and thankful as we care for the creatures you created.

Reader 1: And God said,

Reader 2: “Let the earth be filled with countless living creatures of every kind.”

Reader 1: And it was so. God made the wild animals, the livestock, puppies, kittens, and everything that creeps upon the earth. Then God said,

Reader 2: “Let us make human beings in our image and give them responsibility to care for the fish, the birds, the cattle, the wild animals, and every creeping thing.”

Reader 1: So, God created humankind in God’s image, and God blessed them.

Reader 2: And God saw that it was very, very good.

Reader 3: We call on your mercy and your grace, O God, to carry us into a new relationship with the created order. Forgive us when we don’t tend your creation as you intended. Give us a vision of healing and togetherness for your entire world. We know that, with Christ as our helper, we can restore justice and balance and live in harmony with all that you have made.

All readers: God saw creation, and God sees you and says, “It is very, very good!”

Prayers of the People
Leader: We are going to pray! Our prayers are not just for us but the whole world; we pray for people and places we don’t even know. At the end of each prayer, I will say, “God, be near them.” You respond, “God be near them.” Let’s try it. “God be near them.”

All: God be near them.

Leader: And today will you be close to those who wonder, who look for inspiration, who long to be with the one or the ones they love, who hope to recognize the right time when they can say “I’m sorry,” or “I love you,” or even “Enough is enough.” (Pause and let the silence grow.) God be near them.

All: God be near them.

Leader: And God, listen to us as we share with you whatever joys or sorrows, discoveries or questions we will take with us through the day. Hear the prayers that are in our minds. (Pause and let the silence grow.)

Leader: God be near us.

All: God be near us.

Leader: Into your hands, we commit ourselves, our souls, our bodies, our minds, our futures, our families, and all of creation, because all things come from you and are best kept in your care.

All: Amen.

Skit
Person 1: In the beginning . . .
Person 2: (asks curiously) What beginning?
Person 1: In the beginning, beginning.
Person 2: The beginning of this skit?
Person 1: No, the beginning of all things.
Person 2: So, you mean the beginning of camp?
Person 1: No. I mean, in the beginning, when there was God, and there was nothing.
Person 2: But, there was God?
Person 1: Yes. In the beginning, there was God.
Person 2: Wow. In the beginning, beginning.
Person 1: Yes. In the beginning, beginning... there was God. And there was chaos.
Person 2: I know all about chaos.
Person 1: You think you know about chaos. But this was void and nothingness—all banging up against each other, with nowhere to go and nothing to be.
Person 2: But there was God?
Person 1: Yes. In the beginning, there was God. And God looked out over the nothing and made something—something extraordinary. Something so beautiful it can make you cry just to look at it. That kind of amazing can only be made with love. (They pause.)
Person 2: (asks impatiently) Well. What was it? Tell me, tell me, tell me!!
Person 1: You.
Person 2: Me?
Person 1: Yes, you. And more.
Person 2: (puffs out chest) Well, I am pretty awesome. But tell me more about this.
Person 1: God formed the foundations of the earth and flung the stars into the night sky. The waters were parted, and whales with hearts the size of cars started swimming around with fish of every imaginable color. God made the dove announce the rising sun and the hippopotamus and the daisy and every flying, creeping, digging, walking, slithering, swimming creature and growing thing. And God created you. And everyone like you and not like you—people in every shape and size and color. And God said it was good. (They pause and smile at each other. Then Person 2 looks puzzled.)
Person 2: And what about God?
Person 1: What about God?
Person 2: Well, in the beginning, there was God.
Person 1: Yes. In the beginning, there was God.
Person 2: Well, what about now?
Person 1: Yes. There is still God. And with God, every day is a new beginning.
Person 2: So, God is still creating? (They pause and look around at the people gathered and the creation around.)
Person 1: Yes. And it is good.

Sending
Leader: The story of Genesis 1 tells us that our boundless God created light, life, and order out of darkness and chaos, declaring it “good.” Each of us and all the different parts of this interconnected creation matter and share in God’s creative, sustaining purposes for the sake of the whole creation. What is your part? (After 90 seconds, break the silence with “Amen.”) For our sending today, we are going to use our whole body. Repeat the phrase I say and follow my movements.

All: God above me!
Leader: (Throw your hands above your head.) God above me!
All: God above me!
Leader: God in creation!
All: God in creation!
Leader: (Point all around as you turn in a circle.) God in creation!
All: God in creation!
Leader: God, in my friends!
All: God, in my friends!
Leader: (Air high-five the people around you.) God, in my friends!
All: God, in my friends!
Leader: God in me!
All: God in me!
Leader: (Give yourself a big hug.) God in me!
All: God in me!
Leader: Thank you, God, for this day!
All: Thank you, God, for this day!
Leader: We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.
Leader: (Send a big kiss by using your hands to gesture outward from your lips rather than blowing a kiss.) We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.

Prayer
Ask for a volunteer to read the following prayer or to lead a prayer of their own creation. Dear God, Wow! You created a great, big, beautiful universe. And you created us. Teach us to be your partners in care for the earth. Give us abundant life today and always. In Jesus’s name, Amen.
Day 2: Love Beyond Measure

Bible Text: John 3: 11-17  
Spark Bible: p. 416-419

Concept: Nothing can separate us from the love of God, through Jesus Christ. We and all creation are healed and renewed by God’s boundless love.

Objectives: What will campers...
• Know: That God’s love for everyone, through Jesus Christ, knows no bounds.
• Feel: The joy of God’s love through God’s son, Jesus.
• Do: Love God and each other, help one another, and practice sharing the good news.

Song Ideas: Awesome God, Jesus Loves Me, Thy Word, Go Tell It On the Mountain

Main Text (NRSV):
“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has as ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Biblical Interpretation
Who is Jesus? Nicodemus would like to know and secretly seeks out Jesus (John 3). This question dominates all of John 3. Today’s focus text, verses 11-17, expands our understanding of what Jesus means for the whole world. Written toward the close of the first century, mostly likely by a follower of John, the entire Gospel gives testimony to Jesus as the Messiah, the son of God. This testimony is shared so that all may hear, believe, and have life in Jesus’s name (John 20:31). The testimony of the community shines through Jesus’s words beginning in John 3:11. The “we” indicates Jesus and the community. “Very truly . . . we speak” is solemn language and signals a revelation coming. “Earthly things,” verse 12, may have to do with Jesus’s words to Nicodemus. “Heavenly things” refer to what God is doing in Jesus.

Who is Jesus? The one who has come from heaven and returns to heaven. This is Jesus’s absolute claim to divine authority. Jesus will be lifted up on the cross, like the bronze serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9) so that people may look on him, believe, and receive eternal life. “Must” (3:14) also means “it is necessary” and makes it clear that this is God’s will for Jesus and God’s plan of salvation for the world. To be “lifted up” has a double meaning. Literally it is being nailed and raised up on a cross. Figuratively in the Bible this same verb refers to the enthronement of a king. In John’s Gospel the cross is Jesus’s throne. Here we see most clearly who Jesus is and what he is about.

God’s goal is and has been to live in loving relationship with all creation. In Jesus, crucified and risen, we see how determined God is to bring us to faith and new life (v. 16). God gave Jesus for the world, which represents the realm of darkness and unbelief. God sent Jesus into a world that would not receive him, that would crucify him. This underlines the depth of divine love for the world. This is love for the broken world beyond measure. In Romans 5:8 the apostle Paul strikes a similar chord when he writes that “while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” Paul understands
sin as our separation from God. Sin is not just about our behavior but first and foremost about our relationship with God. Sin is separation due to unbelief—that is, our failure to trust the gracious promises of God. We do not trust God both when we fall into pride, trusting only in ourselves, and when we despair and do not trust that God is gracious to us. All people, whether lost in despair or in pride, are in need of reconciliation with God. God claims us through Christ crucified and risen and makes our faith possible. Ephesians 2:8-9 states this clearly: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast." For Paul this “gift of God” proves God’s love for us. In Romans 8:37-39 Paul points to the determination and power of God’s love. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is ours in Christ Jesus. This same proclamation is made for a creation “subjected to futility” hoping to be set free (Romans 8:20-21). The boundless love of God for all of creation continues for a broken world.

Who is Jesus? Jesus is God’s son sent on God’s mission so that we may not “perish” (live apart from God) but instead so that we may live eternally with God (John 3:16). Jesus does not come to “condemn the world” or judge the world (v. 17). That is, he doesn’t come to pass a death sentence on the world, but to save the sinful world God loves. John 3:16-17 proclaims the love that is described in Ephesians 3:18-19: it is hard to understand and “too wonderful to be measured” (CEV). But it is there for us, a gift given through Christ crucified and risen. Such boundless love—pure gift—is meant to fill our lives.

Additional Texts
Psalm 136:1-14, 23-26
Isaiah 49:1-7
Romans 5:6-11; 8:31-39
Philippians 2:5-11

Day 2 Games and Activities

Puppet Show (Pioneer Book)
Ask campers to think about a time they went for a visit to see a friend or someone else.
• Who did they visit?
• What time of day was it when they visited?
• Have they ever gone for a visit at night when it was dark outside?
After campers have told about their visits, retell the children’s Bible story of Nicodemus at night, with puppets. You will need two puppets, one for Jesus and one for Nicodemus. After the puppet show, explain how Nicodemus visited Jesus at night because he didn’t want anyone to see him. He was embarrassed to ask Jesus questions. Note that asking questions is good! Further engage campers in the story, using the following questions as a guide.

• What is your favorite part of the Nicodemus at night story?
• How do we know God loves us?
• If you could ask Jesus any question, what would you ask?

Love beyond Measure (Preschool Look)
Introduce the day’s theme, Love beyond Measure, by giving campers space to play again with a variety of measuring tools (measuring tape, cups, and spoons for measuring volume; scales for measuring weight; metronome, timer, clock, and stopwatch). After reading the theme verse, Ephesians 3:18-19, aloud, remind campers that we can measure many different things in God’s creation (height, weight, volume, size), but God’s love is so big it can never be measured!
Provide time for campers to measure a few more things, different from the items they measured during orientation. Invite campers to

- Measure how many cups of water are in a water pitcher or bucket.
- Trace and measure their feet and hands on paper, measuring how wide they are.
- Use the earth ball and measuring tape to measure the distance from Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, to the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized (or another visible or familiar location on the ball), and from the Jordan River to your summer camp.

Find a comfortable place to sit where you can talk about the experience. Use these questions to guide the conversation.

- Do you remember how many cups of water were in the water pitcher or bucket?
- How many cups of water do you think there are in a baptismal font or in the river where Jesus was baptized?
- Is it possible to measure how much God loves us?

**John 3:16 Prayer Sandwich (Preschool)**

*Materials:* card stock in colors appropriate for a sandwich (bread, butter, salami, tomatoes, cheese, lettuce), one set per camper resealable envelope or plastic bag, one per camper. *Preparation:* Make the parts of the sandwich in advance, one set per camper.

**Directions**

Play a memory game to help campers learn John 3:16 (paraphrased). Since most preschool campers are not yet able to read, read the words written on each part of the sandwich aloud, with campers repeating after you. Use the "sandwich" recipe below or your own ideas for ingredients. Make enough copies of each part of the sandwich prayer, so every camper can take home their own memory game. Prayer sandwiches can be printed on card stock in appropriate colors and kept inside a resealable envelope or bag. Play until campers are familiar with the verse.

*Slice of bread:* God loved the world so much

*Butter:* that God gave his only Son, Jesus,

*Salami:* so that everyone who believes in him will live with God always.

*Tomato:* Jesus always loves us. There is no best version of us we have to reach in order for Jesus to love us. Have all the campers go to the center of the room or outdoor area where you’ve gathered. Then name an ordinary preference they can identify with and invite them to move to the one side or the other of the room or outdoor space. “Walk to the left side for X and to the right side for Y.” Each time, respond resounding, “Jesus always loves us.” Use these prompts or create your own.

- Which do you like better: chocolate or vanilla ice cream?
- Which do you prefer to wear: sandals or tennis shoes?
- Which pet do you prefer: a bird or a hamster?
- Which dessert do you like better: brownies or pie?

**Nicodemus at Night Flashlight Game (Preschool)**

Remind campers how Nicodemus went to see Jesus at night, embarrassed and afraid to ask questions. Explain that questions are good! Questions help us learn about God, other people, and the world God created. Ask campers what questions they had today. Use a flashlight in a darkened room for this simple and fun “night” game. Stand on a stepping stool and shine a circle of light from above onto the floor. Once everyone is illuminated, move the light to a different location. Campers pretend to be Nicodemus at night, following the light (Jesus) as you move it around the room. Everyone is a winner in this game!

**Hook (Pioneer & Junior)**

Whether lots of people love us or few people love us, Jesus always loves us. Whether we are cool, nerdy, sporty, artsy or ordinary, Jesus always loves us. There is no best version of us we have to reach in order for Jesus to love us. Have all the campers go to the center of the room or outdoor area where you’ve gathered. Then name an ordinary preference they can identify with and invite them to move to the one side or the other of the room or outdoor space. “Walk to the left side for X and to the right side for Y.” Each time, respond resounding, “Jesus always loves us.” Use these prompts or create your own.

- Which do you like better: chocolate or vanilla ice cream?
- Which do you prefer to wear: sandals or tennis shoes?
- Which pet do you prefer: a bird or a hamster?
- Which dessert do you like better: brownies or pie?
Which holy day do you like best: Christmas or Easter? Follow up by talking about how, of course, Jesus loves us no matter what our favorite color is! That’s how silly it is to Jesus when we think there are reasons why Jesus would not love us. God through Jesus came into our world to love us. That’s real. God’s love isn’t made up of words. God’s love became human in Jesus. And Jesus will always love us.

Book (Pioneer & Junior)
Use a Bible storybook for both lower and upper elementary campers today. The Bible text, John 3:11-17, picks up mid-conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. The Spark Story Bible starts earlier in chapter 3 of the Gospel of John so that there is more context about Nicodemus’s questions. Note not to overly demonize darkness as a place of “mean, hateful, and horrible” things, as the Spark Story Bible mentions. God is present in both darkness and light, as campers explored yesterday. Read the John 3 story aloud. With upper elementary, have several campers take turns reading the story to the group, if possible. This would allow you to creatively act out the Bible verses along with the kids as the story is read. For instance, the Spark Story Bible begins, “In the middle of the night, a man named Nicodemus came to see Jesus. It was a strange time to visit someone . . . .” Engaging in creative play with storytelling in this beginning can be fun and can go on for some time. Select from the following questions to help campers grow in understanding of the Bible text for today.

**Basic:** These questions tease out simple responses to the text about love, light, and darkness.
- Does Jesus say God loves part of the world or ALL the world? *(All the world.)*
- At camp you are together all the time, so you can ask questions morning, noon, or night. How do you feel about Jesus being available to talk any time, even at night? *(Affirm their answers.)*
- How does God’s light shine through you? *(Affirm their answers. Examples include when you show love or help others.)*

**Digging deeper:** These questions invite the camper to connect with the story of Nicodemus and how he related to Jesus. They also require the camper to not just read the surface of the Bible passage, but to infer such things as what Jesus might have been feeling. In the Bible storybook it says, “Jesus and Nicodemus talked for quite a while. They argued and wondered together about many things” *(from the Spark Story Bible; revise the quote as needed to reflect the version of the Bible from which you are reading). Note that argue isn’t a negative in this case. Jesus’s and Nicodemus’s religious tradition encouraged back-and-forth discussion.
- What have you ever argued about? *(Examples might include recycling, toys, books.)*
- What important back-and-forth discussions have you had? *(Family rules, playing fairly with friends.)*
- Nicodemus and Jesus also “wondered” together. Our faith invites us to wonder and not always have answers (hence “faith”).
- What have you ever wondered about? *(Examples: Why does the earth have a moon? What makes macaroni and cheese so good?)*
- How do you think Jesus felt about loving the whole world and not just his family and friends? *(Maybe he didn’t like the idea at first; maybe it was scary; maybe he was excited.)*

**Challenging:** These questions get more personal for the camper and perhaps ask them to be a little vulnerable. They may or may not want to answer aloud—and that’s okay. Nicodemus felt uncomfortable asking questions in front of other people. When have you ever felt that way? *(Affirm their responses. For example, in school, here at camp, with parents.)* Jesus basically says, “Really, all you need to know is this: God loves you.”
- What are some ways you feel God’s love for you? *(Affirm their responses.)*
- If Jesus says that God loves the whole world, do you think that includes not just humans but other parts of the world, like animals or the planet? *(Affirm their*
responses and that God loves all aspects of creation, human and beyond.)

Look (Pioneer & Junior)
We are God’s children, loved through Jesus’s words and deeds. Sometimes it is hard to translate Jesus’s words to our modern day but acts of love are usually easy to understand. While the campers are sitting, invite them to respond to the following examples by standing up if they see it as an act of love. Have them sit back down after each subject is mentioned.

- Giving someone flowers.
- Making someone a meal.
- Giving a friend a hug.*
- Rolling your eyes at someone.
- Holding the door open to let the other person go first.
- Saying no when asked to help.

Add as many of your own ideas as you would like.

Tag Team Stare-Down (Pioneer & Junior Took)
This is a variation on the classic staring competition, but rather than not blinking, it’s about not smiling. You will need four or more players (it must be even) to make one complete group and room to sit facing each other with one partner standing behind each seated partner (the poker face). The job of the seated person is simply to keep staring and not smile or laugh, while the second teammate stands behind the seated person and does whatever they like to make the facing seated person laugh—leap around, make crazy noises, and so on. Afterward talk about how God’s love is for the whole world, no matter what we look like or what we are doing, whether we are being silly or weird. There’s nothing stopping God smiling at the whole world in love.

“God's Love” Banner (Pioneer Took)
Make a banner for camp or your cabin. Express God’s love for the whole world, possibly using hand prints to create various designs, symbols of Jesus as the light of the world, and so on.

United We Clap (Junior Took)
Campers have been hearing in today’s Bible study that there’s nothing additional they can do or say to make God love them, since God already loves them—no matter what! As you play this game, remind them that God loves them no matter what (and you do too)! So, whether they all get in sync clapping or just end up keeping their own rhythm, it’s all good! Make a circle with everyone standing shoulder to shoulder. Invite them to take a couple of deep, focusing breaths in and out. Using eye contact to hold their attention, explain that you are going to shout the word “Hey” while clapping your hands and stamping. Their challenge is to clap, stamp, and shout “Hey” at the same time you do. They will focus to try to sense exactly when you’re about to make your move. Make your move: without any warning, shout “Hey!” and clap and stamp just once. Bring out their competitive streak: the first time you do this, there will be an inevitable gap between your movements and theirs. Feel free to tease them a little, telling them a sloth moves faster! It might take a couple of rounds, but soon their competitive side will force them to scrutinize your every move, hoping to prove you wrong by clapping at the exact time you do.

Breath Prayer: “Jesus Loves Me” (Intermediate & Senior High Hook)
Begin the Bible study with this breath prayer to transition from other activities. Invite campers to silently repeat the prayer “Jesus loves me” according to the rhythm of their breath. Think “Jesus” on the inhale. Think “loves me” on the exhale. Ask: What’s the best news you’ve ever heard? Invite each person to share an example of good news that they have received. Today’s Bible study will focus on the boundless love of God and how we meet that love in the person of Jesus. The love of God for us in Jesus Christ is the heart of the gospel (gospel means “good news”).

“God’s Love” Banner (Intermediate & Senior High Book)
Today’s Bible text is John 3:11-17, but before reading it take a moment to talk about the
importance of context with your campers. John 3:11 is the start of a long quotation. Before reading, it will be important to identify who is speaking (Jesus), to whom he is speaking (Nicodemus), and why the two of them are talking (Nicodemus comes at night to find out who Jesus is). Work together with campers to scan the wider context for these details. For instance, many Bibles will include a heading for John 3—something like “Nicodemus Visits Jesus.” Teach campers how to pronounce Nicodemus: nick-oh-DEE-mus. Then have a volunteer read John 3:11-17.

Provide some background for campers using the following information: Jesus and his followers were all Jews. As Jesus’s movement grew, a conflict grew with the leaders of another Jewish group called the Pharisees. Nicodemus is a Pharisee and a leader in his community (see John 3:1). Perhaps this is why Nicodemus comes to see Jesus at night (see John 3:2). It’s possible he didn’t want to be seen with Jesus the rabble-rouser in the daylight. At the heart of Nicodemus’s visit is a curiosity about who Jesus is and his significance.

Have campers pair up to discuss how they might describe who Jesus is to a curious friend. (Examples: born two thousand years ago, Savior, friend, died on the cross, rose from the grave.) To add some extra challenge for senior high campers, ask them to discuss how they might tell the story of Jesus to an alien from outer space with no knowledge of the earth’s history. One of the core beliefs Christians hold about Jesus is that he is both human and divine at the same time. We describe Jesus as God incarnate. Share this definition of incarnation: To incarnate is to take on flesh, to embody, to make concrete and particular. Think of carne, the Spanish word for “meat,” which comes from an older Latin word for “flesh.” To speak of Jesus as the Incarnation means that he is God in the flesh.

Divide your group into two. Have one group read John 1:1-14. (Tip: clarify that “the Word” indicates a reference to Jesus.) Have the other group locate and read Philippians 2:5-11.

If campers are comfortable writing in or highlighting in their Bibles, have them highlight the parts of the texts having to do with incarnation. (If they have trouble finding these on their own, direct them to Philippians 2:7-8 and John 1:14.)

Return to the question of describing who Jesus is to a curious friend or alien from outer space. Ask campers how they might include incarnation in their answer. After hearing their responses, emphasize this key point: Jesus is how God’s boundless love becomes real to us. Have campers underline or highlight John 3:16-17 in their Bibles. Then say this chant with your campers three times to internalize these verses.

Leader: Did Jesus come to condemn?
All: No!
Leader: Did Jesus come to save?
All: Yes!
Leader: And why did Jesus come?
All: Love!

More Challenging: Many people consider John 3:16 to be a favorite Bible verse. Sometimes you’ll even see people holding a sign at sporting events that simply says: “John 3:16.” Discuss the following questions:

• Why do you think people like this verse?
• Does it sound like good news, bad news, or a mixture to you? Why?

On the one hand, John 3:16 is good news because it talks about God’s great love for us and our world in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, sometimes Christians seem to use it to imply “you’d better believe—or else.” In other words, “If you want eternal life, you’d better believe—or else.” John 3:17 isn’t as well known, but it includes some incredibly good news: Jesus didn’t come to condemn, but to save!

• Why do you think John 3:16 is better known than John 3:17?
• What difference does it make when you read them together?

The Deep End (primarily for senior high)
The boundless love of God became real for us in Jesus Christ. But when God incarnate came to earth, we crucified him. Ask campers to
reflect on this question: If Jesus is God’s love in the flesh, why do you think humanity crucified him? Have campers locate Romans 5:6-11 in their Bibles, and then ask for a volunteer to read it. Ask campers the following question: What do you think the cross has to do with God’s love? After listening to those who wish to speak, share these key points: According to Romans 5:6-11, Christ died for us while we were still weak and living as enemies of God. We didn’t do anything to earn it. Christ didn’t wait for us to clean up our acts. This is how far God will go to love us—even to the point of death on a cross.

Embody Something (Intermediate & Senior High Look)
Remind campers of the meaning of incarnation. In this activity, each person is going to experience incarnating, or embodying, something with their body. Have campers stand up and explain to them that you are going to share an abstract concept and their challenge will be to express what it means using only their body. For example, if you were to say “happiness,” a camper might smile or jump up and down or dance. Here is a list for campers to try:
- happiness
- sadness
- imagination
- truth
- justice
- art
- faith
- grace
- honesty
- forgiveness
Make a connection to Jesus. Jesus is the embodiment of God’s grace, love, and truth.

Cross Necklace or Keychain (Intermediate & Senior High Took)
God’s love for us became real in Jesus Christ, and nowhere is this love more powerful than on the cross. When John 3:14 says the Son of Man must be “lifted up,” the Gospel writer is referring both to Jesus’ crucifixion and his glorification. The strange truth is that the cross becomes Jesus’s throne, and a tool of death becomes for us a source of life. Steps to create a simple cross necklace or keychain:
1. Each camper will need six pony beads and a piece of string.
2. Run the string through the first bead until the bead is in the middle of the string. This is your bottom bead.
3. Take your second bead and run both ends of the string through it.
4. Your third and fourth bead will form the cross bars. Run one end of the string through your third bead. Run the other end of the string through your fourth bead.
5. Now run both ends of the string through your fifth bead and push it down snugly with the other beads. This will be the top of your cross.
6. Finally, take your sixth bead and push it between your third and fourth bead. It should stay with enough pressure, but you could also add a small dot of glue to keep it in place.
7. To keep everything in place, tie a knot along the top of your cross.
There are other more complex versions of this that junior and senior high youth could handle. Use your best judgment based on your time, group, and materials. These cross necklaces could be worn or tied onto a backpack. Have campers place their cross where they will frequently be reminded of God’s love.

Share Your Spiritual Autobiography (primarily for senior high - Took)
Part of learning to share the good news of Jesus is learning to tell your own story. Ask campers to reflect on their own spiritual autobiography and how the love of God has become real for them. Give campers a moment to write down some key details of their life:
- Where they were born.
- How they first became connected to church.
- Milestones: baptism, confirmation.
- What adults and friends have been important in their life and faith?
- How they feel about faith now.
• What they hope for their faith in the future.

After giving them a few moments to write and think, have campers pair up to share their spiritual autobiographies with another person.

Intermediates could abbreviate this exercise and have the group focus on a person in their life—a caring adult or a friend—who has made the love of God real for them.

Letter to your future self (Intermediate & Senior High Took)
Invite campers to continue their letter to their future self. Have them include a response to the following question for Day 2: Who in my life has made God’s love real for me?

You Are the Presence of Christ (Intermediate & Senior High Service Option)
As you serve others, you are loving the world that Jesus loves. Have campers locate John 3:16-17 in their Bibles again. We need to be reminded again and again that God’s motivation from the beginning and in the life of Jesus is love. Then have a volunteer read these words attributed to Teresa of Avila (https://www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers/Teresa_Of_Avila_Christ_Has_No_Body.shtml):

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Originally a Spanish noblewoman, Teresa of Avila was a sixteenth-century mystic, church reformer, and writer. She reminds us that when you serve, you are continuing the mission of Jesus to love the whole world. Ask campers to reflect together on the following questions:
• Have you ever thought of your body as the presence of Christ for others?
• What difference would or does that make for you?

Make a Splash
This is a variation of Duck, Duck, Goose and can remind campers that through baptism, we are connected to Jesus, who died on the cross for us. Have campers sit in a circle and warn them that they are going to get wet! Fill a large bucket with water and place it near the circle. Choose one camper to be It and give him or her a large cup. It fills the cup with water and walks outside the circle saying, “Splish, Splish,” passing behind each camper. It says “Splash” and pours the cup of water over a camper in the circle. That person then chases It. Whoever reaches the empty place in the circle first sits down and the other person becomes It. Play continues as long as the water lasts, and campers remain involved. End by talking about baptism. Say that in baptism, water is a sign of God’s community in Christ. Invite campers to tell what they know about their own baptisms, being sensitive to campers who might not be baptized.

Nicodemus Tag
Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to ask him some questions. Play a game of freeze tag to help illustrate this story. One person is It. When It tags someone, they are frozen and stand where they were tagged. Another person is chosen to be Jesus. Jesus “unfreezes” people saying, “God loves you and will never leave you.” The player that was frozen is then free to continue playing the tag game. A twist might be that the people who become unfrozen join “Jesus” (like in blob tag) in unfreezing people and saying the message. After you have played for a while, ask the campers the following questions.
• What was it like to hear the words from Jesus?
How does it make you feel that God will never leave you?

“God So Loved the World” Gift Giving
Cut out strips of card stock to make bookmarks (or another gift; see the Crafts section of this curriculum for ideas). Have the campers write the words of John 3:16 on the bookmark (or another gift) and decorate it. Then, during the day, invite campers to give those gifts to other campers who are not in their camper group or to camp staff. Encourage them to share the words “God loves you” when giving the gift to another person. After the campers have distributed the gifts, ask them the following questions.

- How did the person react? If they initially looked sad, did the gift make them look happier?
- How does doing acts of kindness for others help us to offer healing?

Random Acts of Kindness
Today’s Bible story describes God’s great love for the world by sending Jesus. One way that we show our appreciation for that love is to do acts of kindness for others. As a group, think of ways you can serve other campers and staff at your site. Then, do those random acts of kindness in secret, knowing that you do not need to be shown appreciation for showing God’s love to others. When finished, process the activity by asking the following questions.

- What feelings did you experience when you did the kind act?
- What is one thing you learned through this experience that showed you how service can help healing?
- How might you continue the practice of random acts of kindness in the future?

Giant Jigsaw Puzzle
Make your own giant jigsaw puzzle from wood or cardboard. Then, have a group of six to ten people sit in a small group on the floor. If you have more than ten people, the additional participants should be observers. Provide blindfolds to those sitting on the floor or ask those who are seated to close their eyes. Put the puzzle pieces within arm’s length of the participants and ask them to put it together. When the construction is completed or time is up, ask them to share their observations.

- Who were the helpers during the activity?
- What was a workable plan and who created it?
- How does this remind us that we are connected to God and that connection can never be broken?

“God’s Huge Love” Bag Skits
Fill the paper bags with a variety of nonrelated items. Choose random things from various places around camp and put them in the paper bags. Fold the bags shut and put them in a central location. Divide your group into small teams of three or four and allow them to come up and choose a bag. They can pick any bag, but they can’t look inside before choosing one. Using all the items in the bag, the teams will create a skit that’s a modern version of the Nicodemus story. You may want to read the Bible passage (John 3:1-17) first so they know the story. After allowing some time to prepare, have the actors present their skits. When finished, ask the following questions.

- Which skit, in the camper’s opinion, portrayed God’s huge love the most? Encourage different answers among campers to reinforce the idea that this isn’t a contest.
- Which skits showed how love heals? Have campers give specific examples.

Lifted Up Like a Serpent
Tie a rope between two trees; the rope should measure about 6 feet [1.8 m] above the ground. The object of this activity is to lift participants over the rope, getting everyone from one side to the other as quickly and efficiently as possible. (Be aware of those who might be self-conscious of their size and allow anyone who wishes to, to opt out.) Use spotters for this activity and make sure there are no dangerous objects (like tree branches) in the way! This is to simulate the serpent being lifted up in the wilderness, as
mentioned in today’s Bible story: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” No aids are allowed. Belts, shirts, and other items cannot be removed and used. The two support trees may not be used in any way. Once a person is over the rope, they cannot assist other persons except by spotting them when they are coming over the rope. When finished, ask campers these questions.

• How was Jesus being lifted up on the cross a source of healing for the world?
• How does working together on this task remind us that we are not separated from God’s love?

Day 2 Worship Ideas

Call to Worship
Leader: God, our Creator, help us to remember that you are the giver of life. Repeat after me: “You gave us life and called us good.”
All: You gave us life and called us good.
Leader: God, our Redeemer, help us to remember that through Jesus Christ you save. Repeat after me: “You save us with your love.”
All: You save us with your love.
Leader: God, our Sustainer, help us to remember that through the Holy Spirit you guide us. Repeat after me: “Your Spirit is with us always.”
All: Your Spirit is with us always. Amen.
All: is with us!
Leader: The Lord
All: is with us!
Leader: Let us pray. Jesus, you ask us to love one another, just as you have loved us. But it’s hard. People can be really annoying, which you probably already know. But they can be pretty fantastic too. If you can look at us with all of our brokenness and still love us and see the beautiful parts, then please give us the strength to choose to love other people, even when it is hard. Thank you for choosing us, again and again, loving us beyond measure. In Jesus’s name, the people of God say,
All: Amen.
Scripture Reading: John 3:11-17

Two readers are needed for today’s scripture reading. Have one person in the front reading the part of Person 1. Another person will run around the assembly, loudly and energetically reading the part of Person 2.

Person 1: A reading from John 3:11-17. “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony.”
Person 2: (loud from assembly) For God so loved the world!
Person 1: “If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?”
Person 2: (loud from assembly) For God so loved the world!
Person 1: “No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.”
Person 2: (loud from assembly) For God so loved the world!
Person 1: “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”
Person 2: (loud from assembly) For God so loved the world!
Person 1: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”
Person 2: (loud from assembly) For God so loved the world!
Person 1: “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”
Person 2: (loud from assembly) For God so loved the world!
Persons 1 & 2: For God so loved the world!
(Gesture to everyone to repeat the phrase.)
All: For God so loved the world!

Prayers of the People
Leader: We are going to pray! Our prayers are not just for us but for the whole world; we pray for people and places we don’t even know. At the end of each prayer I will say “God of love,” and you respond “make your love known.” Let’s try it. God of love,
All: make your love known.
Leader: Let us pray. God, you love this world beyond measure, help us to stop measuring the worth of people around us, instead, help us see them through your eyes. Be with our friends. Be with our enemies. Be with people we do not know, but who you call your own.
God of love,
All: make your love known.
Leader: God, you love this world beyond measure, and we mean the whole world, all creation! Be with all animals. Be with all trees and plants. Be with all skies and seas.
God of love,
All: make your love known.
Leader: God, you love this world beyond measure, and you make us confident that we are never alone. You are always with us. Be with people who feel alone. Be with people who are scared. Be with people who are sick.
God of love,
All: make your love known.
Leader: God, you love this world beyond measure. There is nothing we can do to make you love us more or less. Your love is a gift, given freely. Help us to know how amazing the gift of your love is, and to live into your love, making your love known to the world. In Jesus’s name, the people of God say,
All: Amen.

Skit
Ten to twenty people are needed but there is just one speaking role. You’ll also need a set of measuring cups, a ruler, and a long tape measure.
Person 1: (standing in front of the assembly) Have you ever tried to measure something? I have a ruler here. Anybody know how many inches are on a ruler? How about centimeters in a meter?
Wait for answers from the assembly. Twelve inches and one hundred centimeters are the correct answers.
Person 1: Are twelve inches enough to measure God’s love? One hundred centimeters?
Hopefully, the answer from the assembly is no. If not, say no, and get the whole assembly to say it with you.
All: NO!
Person 1: Do you know what these are? (Hold up the measuring cups for everyone to see. Starting with the littlest cup and moving to the biggest, ask the question for each.) Is this big enough to measure God’s love? (Get the whole assembly to say no for each size.)
Person 1: Do you know what this is? (Hold up the tape measure.) Right, a tape measure. Invite Person 2 to come to pull the end a few feet at a time. Decide on the length ahead of time, based on the total length of the tape.
Person 1: (When Person 2 pauses every few feet, ask the assembly each time until they get to the end of the tape.) Is this enough? All: NO!
Keep adding five to ten people, enough to create a long human chain. Ask the question with each person added. Once there is a long chain of people, ask the following.
Person 1: Is there any way to measure God’s love?
All: NO.
Person 1: Correct, there is no way to measure God’s love because it is boundless!
Sending
Leader: Nothing can separate us from the love of God. In the face of human brokenness, God doesn’t give up on us. Instead, God sent Jesus Christ, not to condemn the world but to save it. What does it mean to be loved by God? (After 90 seconds, break the silence with “Amen.”) Use the actions suggested below or come up with your own.
Leader: For our sending today, we are going to use our whole body. Repeat the phrase I say and follow my movements. God loves me!
All: God loves me!
Leader: (Point to your heart.) God loves me!
All: God loves me!
Leader: God loves you!
All: God loves you!
Leader: (Air high-five the people around you.) God loves you!
All: God loves you!
Leader: God loves all of creation!
All: God loves all of creation!
Leader: (Point all around as you turn in a circle.) God loves all of creation!
All: God loves all of creation!
Leader: God really loves me!
All: God really loves me!
Leader: (Give yourself a big hug.) God really loves me!

All: God really loves me!
Leader: Thank you, God, for this day!
All: Thank you, God, for this day!
Leader: (Clap.) Thank you, God, for this day!
All: Thank you, God, for this day!
Leader: We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.
Leader: (Send a big kiss by using your hands to gesture outward from your lips rather than blowing a kiss.) We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.

Prayer
Dear Jesus,
In you God’s love becomes real and near to us. Help us to know your boundless love, and help us to share the good news with others. In your name we pray. Amen.
Day 3: Welcome Beyond Measure

Bible Text: Ephesians 2: 11-22
Whirl Story Bible: p. 462-465

Concept: In God’s household all are welcomed and joined together through Christ.

Objectives: What will campers...

- Know: That everyone belongs in God’s family.
- Feel: Assured of God’s welcome, which includes them.
- Do: Build up other children of God through words and actions, practicing active listening, and expand their circles of friendship. Work for reconciliation and welcome.

Song Ideas: Father, I Adore You, All Are Welcome (ELW 641)

Main Text (NRSV):
So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Biblical Interpretation
Church unity and inclusivity are main concerns of Ephesians, a letter most probably written by a follower of Paul in the context of ongoing division between Jewish and Gentile Christians. This letter was circulated among many Christian congregations in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) beginning around 90 CE. By this date, the church had grown to include a diverse number of both Jews and Gentiles who generally despised one another. The writer of Ephesians points out that the true unity of the church is in Jesus Christ (vv. 11-13).

In late first century CE, Jewish Christians viewed Gentiles (non-Jews, of mixed race and non-observers of Torah Law) as lawless outsiders. Gentile Christians viewed Jews and Jewish Christians as intolerant of other nations and exclusive in their law code, custom of circumcision, and strict food laws. Today divisiveness continues between many world religions as well as within Christian denominations and congregations. In view of this, Ephesians has a liberating word for us all: unity in Christ overcomes all divisions, differences, and estrangements. “But now” (v. 13) stops all believers in their hot pursuit of boundaries, exclusivity, and presumed superiority. Christ, crucified and risen, makes peace by making all believers one in him (v. 14).
Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6; 57:19) and the primary source of Christian identity. Law, legalistic codes, and racial or national distinctions do not determine who we are or whether we are accepted (Ephesians 2:15). Christ as our Lord and Savior does. The doors are flung open in the name of Christ. There is welcome beyond measure. All who are near and far are brought together in Christ (v. 17). Both Jew and Gentile have access "in one Spirit to the Father" (v. 18). Ephesians describes a twofold peace: there is peace between Jew and Gentile and peace between humanity and God. Everything has changed because of what God has done through Christ. It is a new day and "one new humanity” in Christ (v. 15).

Verses 19-22 serve as a summary of this passage. Unity, reconciliation, peace, and inclusion are the building blocks of the new household of God. A “stranger” or “alien” is a nonresident who has no rights in the community in which they live. But a “citizen” has the same rights as every other citizen (v. 19). The “saints” may refer to Jewish Christians. The main point is that all are one in Christ in God’s household. Verse 20 makes two important points. It recognizes the early church’s proclamation of Christ through its apostles and prophets as Christ’s church grew. It also points to Christ as “the cornerstone.” In the ancient building process, a large cornerstone was laid first and determined the direction and shape of the rest of the building. The Greek verb translated here as “built upon” is in passive tense, making clear that it is God who is the builder, not us (v. 20). We are part of the construction crew. This building grows (see also Ephesians 4:15-16) and is “joined together” (or harmonized) in Christ (2:21). The church as a “holy temple” is where God meets God’s people. "You . . . are built," also in divine passive tense, tells us that it is God who does this spiritual building (v. 22). Ephesians 3:20 (CEV) agrees: God’s “power” is at work in us doing more than we can ask or imagine. Part of God’s crew, we welcome all in Christ’s name, regardless of race, ability, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or cognitive differences.

Additional Texts
Psalm 27:1-6
Psalm 127:1
Romans 14:17-19
Ephesians 4:11-16
Hebrews 3:1-6

Day 3 Games and Activities

Together through Christ (Preschool Book)
Invite campers to listen carefully to a story about how all are welcomed and belong to God and to each other through Christ, practicing sign language for the words belong and family when you prompt them. Read the story of Jews and Gentiles together (Romans 15:4-13) from a Bible storybook, such as the Whirl Story Bible (Minneapolis: Sparkhouse, 2014, pp. 462-465).

Building Blocks (Preschool Book)
Engage campers with blocks that can be joined together (Legos or Duplos) to make the shape of a building while reading this paraphrase of Ephesians 2:19-22 (based on the International Children’s Bible):
All of us belong to God’s family! We are like a building that God owns. That building has a strong floor and strong walls made of stones. Jesus is the most important stone in the building. And the whole building is joined together in Jesus. He makes it grow and become a holy place where God lives. All of us belong to God’s family!
Help campers connect the foundational blocks of the building they are making with one that represents Christ, “the cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). Then add blocks or bricks for campers, leaders, and family members. Next teach campers this variation of the action rhyme “Here Is the Church” using the actions below (Ashley-Anne Masters, https://tinyurl.com/y5shumv9). Here is the church, (Lock fingers so that your fingertips are on the inside of your palms; your hands are the church building and your thumbs are the doors) Here is the steeple. (Release and point both index fingers upward, to form the steeple) The doors are wide open, (Move thumbs, so the door of the church opens) To welcome all people! (Keeping fingers locked, turn hands up and wiggle fingers) Invite campers to share with each other how they engaged the story and materials.

- Who is welcomed and included in God’s church family?
- How does it make you feel to be welcomed and part of God’s church family?
- Is God’s church family a building or is it the people?

Build Each Other Up (Preschool Took)
Trace the outline of each camper’s body on a large piece of butcher paper. Provide crayons, markers, and other creative supplies so that everyone can draw and color themselves—the details of their faces and the clothing they wear. Remind preschool campers that together we are God’s family, the church, and that we can build each other up with our words and actions.

- Who is welcome in God’s family?
- What are some of the ways we take care of each other, as members of God’s church family?
- How can we “build each other up” with the things we say and do?

Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes (Preschool)
Teach campers the classic song and game for naming different parts of the body. Sing the song slowly at first. After a few tries, see how quickly everyone can sing and touch each part of the body named with both hands. Explain to campers that sometimes we call church “the body of Christ.” Mention that each of us is a welcomed part of the body of Christ and God’s church family. Head, shoulders, knees and toes, Head, shoulders, knees and toes, Eyes and ears and mouth and nose, Head, shoulders, knees and toes. Knees and toes.

Hook (Pioneer & Junior)
Start by telling about a time when you felt welcome. Explain how you knew you were welcome. Explain this in detail, in order to serve as an example for them for the following activity. Tell them what you saw, heard, and said and how you felt. Have them role-play welcoming someone into a classroom, to camp, to eat at a table; sharing a handshake; giving a wave; saying “words like hello or hey,” with a side hug, bear hug, or “European” kiss on both cheeks. (Modify as needed for health and safety, and be sure to talk about the importance of asking permission to give a hug or kiss and of being able to say no.) Remind campers that yesterday’s Bible study was about how God loves us no matter what. Today’s Bible study is about God’s great big welcome. Act out a scenario of welcoming into their group of friends someone from campers’ experience who is sometimes excluded, such as a differently-abled young person. Perhaps use a blindfold for someone who is blind, borrow crutches from the camp nurse, borrow sound-blocking earplugs from maintenance, or other ideas. Take a few minutes to do some of the following things during the scenario: walking someplace new, praying together as a group, doing an icebreaker, and so on. If the activity is physically risky, have a counselor do it rather than a camper. It probably won’t take long for campers to notice the varied-ability person sometimes cannot participate in the same way as everyone else. Then discuss together what accommodations are needed. Ask what they think Jesus would do. Perhaps draw on the Day 1 Bible story that all people are created in God’s image.
Campers will hear two Bible passages today. They are from two different letters written by the apostle Paul to churches in Rome and Ephesus. (Some scholars say Ephesians was more likely written by one of his followers.) The letters are about how God in Christ welcomes people and brings them together—even people who disagree with each other. Read the story of Jews and Gentiles together (Romans 15:4-13) from a Bible storybook, such as the Whirl Story Bible (Minneapolis: Sparkhouse, 2014, pp. 462-465). Then read these verses from Ephesians 2 from The Message translation of the Bible. Shorten or paraphrase the verses as needed.

Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. . . . Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father. . . . God is building a home. He’s using us all . . . in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he’s using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home. (Ephesians 2:16-18, 19-22; The Message, Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson)

Have campers create a people pyramid to help them understand the “home” in the Ephesians text. If you are indoors, move furniture out of the way. If you are outdoors, find a level, clear area. Build the pyramid more than once if you have a large group and everyone wants a chance.

- Kids on the bottom layer are like the apostles and prophets building the foundation, telling stories about God in the world and how to live.
- Make a second and third layer (don’t go much higher for safety reasons), explaining that God is using each person “brick by brick, stone by stone” to build a home where everyone is welcome.
- Don’t forget to include the “Jesus cornerstone”!

**Basic:** These questions invite a basic response to the scripture reading.

- The Bible story talks about God being in relationship with us using what example? (A home.)
- God used the “apostles and prophets,” Jesus’s friends, to start building the home: the foundation. We represent what part of the home that comes next? (The bricks and stones.)
- What holds the home all together? (Jesus, the cornerstone.)

**Digging deeper:** These questions invite examples from everyday life to help flesh out scripture’s idea of welcome.

- Who is welcome in this building made up of God’s people? (Everyone, even those who have different ways of understanding who God is.)
- Jesus was Jewish and welcomed everybody. Name some faith traditions or categories of people Jesus would welcome today. (Affirm responses; add to their list as needed to illustrate that Jesus would welcome everyone—Christians, Muslims, Jews; people of all skin colors; and so on.)
- Remind campers of the scenario that they acted out above (“Hook” activity). What could be done to show that person that they are welcome at your church? Your school? Your neighborhood park, and so on? If needed, help campers identify adaptations made for people with physical disabilities, such as designated parking spaces; with hearing challenges, providing sign-language interpreters or hearing devices; with visual impairments, signs and books in braille or with special type and contrast; and so on.

**Challenging:** These questions are open-ended for campers to explore more personally how Jesus’s welcome affects how they live their life. There are really no “right” answers, just opinions.
• Wonder together what it means for Jesus to be the cornerstone of the home, our lives. Explain that a cornerstone is the most important piece of the building. It is the first brick laid down and it sets the direction for how every other piece is built on top of it. *(We make decisions based on Jesus’s love and welcome.)*

• Wonder together what would happen if there were spaces between the bricks? Do we need all the bricks? *(If there were spaces, the house would crumble, therefore all the bricks—everyone in God’s house—are needed.)*

• What’s another place you might describe a sense of being welcomed by God, besides a home? *(Camp! Belonging to a team or church youth group.)*

### Look (Pioneer & Junior)

God’s big love feels like a friendly welcome. Perhaps Jesus learned about friendly welcomes when he was a kid. The story of Jesus has relatable examples about feeling like a stranger or feeling welcome. If possible, read aloud the short children’s book *Refuge* by Anne Booth and Sam Usher. It offers a moving perspective on the nativity story, evoking the struggle of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus as refugees traveling in a strange land, seeking the protection and kindness of strangers. *Refuge* asks readers to consider the modern-day implications of being forced to flee your home country. Or you could briefly tell the story of how the shepherds visited Jesus after he was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-20). You could mention how later the magi visited the family in Bethlehem, and then Jesus, Mary, and Joseph traveled far from home, to Egypt, in order to stay safe (Matthew 2:1-23). Discuss the following:

- I wonder what Jesus and his parents felt like as strangers in Egypt.
- I wonder if being a stranger as a kid is part of what made Jesus so welcoming as an adult.

Pair up campers. A group of three is fine if needed. Coach the kids to ask each other the following questions:

- At camp, what’s a way you have felt welcomed?
- Based on what you experienced at camp, how will you show what it feels like to be welcomed when you get back home, either at school or in your neighborhood? If your group of campers likes to talk together, come back together, and share in a large group.

### Free Hug Signs (Pioneer & Junior Took)

Make signs to wear that say “Free Hug” and wear them around camp. Remind them to ask if someone wants a hug and not just approach and give someone a hug without their permission. Also be sure to be sensitive to some in your group who aren’t comfortable with hugging. Give campers the option of offering a high five instead. Also be sure to follow the latest health and safety guidelines about physical distancing.

### Red Rover Revamped (Pioneer & Junior Took)

Play Red Rover. Discuss what a welcome would look like if the person running were able to *join* the chain instead of having to break it.

### What’s in a Name? (Junior Took)

Ask campers if they know what their name means and look the names up online if desired. Ask if they have ever felt that their name made them feel like an outsider or a stranger because it didn’t sound like other people’s names. As an example, explain that in Bible times some people felt so much like strangers that they even named their kids that! Moses and his wife Zipporah had a child whose name was Gershom. The name Gershom means “a stranger living in a strange land” (Exodus 2:21-22). No matter what our names sound like or mean (if our names are of Irish origin or Botswanan origin or any other place in the world), we are all part of the world God loves. God’s big, friendly welcome that includes us means that we also go out of our way to be welcoming. As a matter of respect, we can learn to
pronounce people’s names correctly, even if the names sound different to us.

**Breath Prayer: “Jesus Welcomes Me” (Intermediate & Senior High Hook)**

Begin the Bible study with this breath prayer as a way to transition from other activities. Invite campers to silently repeat the prayer “Jesus welcomes me” according to the rhythm of their breath. Think “Jesus” on the inhale. Think “welcomes me” on the exhale. For a step-by-step guide to breath prayer, see Day 1 of this Bible study. Have campers pair up to discuss this question: When and where have you felt welcomed?

**Mime “Welcome” and “Unwelcome” (Intermediate & Senior High Hook)**

Divide the group into two. Have one group create a skit demonstrating a welcome into their home and the other demonstrating an unwelcoming response into their home. In each skit, a guest (played by one or more campers) will come to the door and knock. A host will open the door and either welcome them inside or turn them away in dramatic fashion. Here’s the catch: the skit must be silent. After sufficient time to prepare, have the groups perform their skits for each other. We all experience both hostility and welcome in our lives. In God’s household, however, all are welcome. **Senior high adaptation:** Change the setting of the skit from a home to a church. How would a church demonstrate welcoming or unwelcoming behavior?

**Book (Intermediate & Senior High)**

Have campers locate Ephesians 2:11-22. Ask for a volunteer to read the passage.

**The Basics:** Have campers flip backward in their Bibles to read Ephesians 1:1. Note that in this verse we find out that (1) we are reading a letter, (2) it is from Paul—although most scholars believe it was written by a follower of Paul—and (3) this letter is addressed to “the saints who are in Ephesus.”

Many Bibles will include a map of the region around the Mediterranean Sea in the time of Paul. If your Bible or one of the campers’ Bibles has a map, take time to locate Ephesus. Hint: It is east of the Aegean Sea in what is modern-day Turkey. Now have campers turn back to Ephesians 2:11-22. Have them write on a sticky note, in the margins of their Bible, or on a slip of paper these questions:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?

These are the five W’s journalists use to piece together news stories. Work through these questions together to help campers understand what they are reading. Write the answers next to the questions.

- Who? (Paul—or most likely a follower of Paul)
- What? (A letter)
- When? (Around 90 CE)
- Where? (Ephesus)
- Why? (The letter was written to address a lack of unity, a disagreement between Christians.)

With this information as background, ask for a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:11-22 again. Use these questions for discussion.

- What seems to be the problem causing disunity? (Circumcision and uncircumcision, Jew and Gentile, alien and citizen, outsider and insider.)
- What does the writer of Ephesians say about unity? (Jesus is our peace, Jesus breaks down the dividing wall, a new humanity is created, we can be members of the household of God.)

After listening to responses from campers, emphasize these key points: The issue causing problems in Ephesus was a division between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Remember that the Jesus movement came out of Judaism, so one of the big debates of the first century was whether outsiders needed to become Jewish (that is, practice Jewish dietary laws, practice circumcision, and so on) before becoming Christian. “Gentile” was the name for non-Jews who didn’t observe these laws from the Torah. Jewish Christians viewed Gentiles as
lawless outsiders. Gentile Christians viewed Jewish Christians as exclusive and intolerant. Note: If campers ask about circumcision, it’s best not to dwell on the anatomy of it. Instead focus on how this was an outward physical sign of who was an insider (Jew) and who was an outsider (Gentile). After describing the division between Jews and Gentiles, say this call and response to drive home the message of unity in Ephesians.

**Leader:** When we divide ourselves into insiders and outsiders . . .

**All:** Jesus is our peace!

**Leader:** When we feel far from God . . .

**All:** Jesus is our peace!

**Leader:** When we feel near to God . . .

**All:** Jesus is our peace!

**Leader:** When we divide ourselves into citizens and aliens . . .

**All:** Jesus is our peace!

**Leader:** When we build walls between us . . .

**All:** Jesus is our peace!

**Leader:** Jesus is our foundation.

**All:** Jesus is our peace!

**More Challenging:** Direct campers’ attention to Ephesians 2:19-20. Ask for a volunteer to read these verses again. These are good verses to highlight and underline. Emphasize this key point: All are welcome in the household of God because of Christ. Use these questions for discussion.

- Many churches will say “All are welcome.” But do you think there are ways churches unintentionally communicate unwelcome? And if so, what barriers do you see in the church?
- What do you think the writer of Ephesians would say about those barriers? (*Remove them, break them down, Jesus is our peace.*)
- How might God use you to remove those barriers?

Jesus is our cornerstone (see verses 20-21). One of the key insights of Ephesians is that Christians of all types and backgrounds have the same foundation. Use these questions for discussion.

- Do you have friends who go to other churches? If so, do you know what kind of churches they are?
- Have you ever encountered a Christian from a different country or culture?

After hearing about the experiences of campers, emphasize this key point: Jesus unites us with Christians of different denominations, cultures, and backgrounds.

**The Deep End** (primarily for senior high)

Ephesians 2:11-22 speaks in language that resonates with the present day. Read Ephesians 2:14. The writer names a “dividing wall.” In our own time, physical walls divide communities across the globe. In present-day Palestine and Israel, for example, walls separate communities. In Belfast, Northern Ireland, walls divide Catholic and Protestant communities. Likewise, in the United States, a debate goes on about a wall along the US-Mexico border. In Ephesians 2:19, the language of “citizen” and “alien” also holds contemporary significance. Use these questions for discussion.

- How does this text speak to you today?
- What small steps might the Spirit be prodding you to take to address the dividing walls in our world?

**Create a Welcome Sign (Intermediate & Senior High Look)**

Using paper and markers or whatever materials you have available, make a welcome sign for your cabin or tent. Try to include a word of welcome in another language in addition to English. For example, *bienvenidos* is Spanish for “welcome.” Ask around camp; it’s likely that a camper or a staff member speaks another language. Ephesians 2:19 reminds us that all are welcome in the household of God.

**Build and Tear Down a Wall (Intermediate & Senior High Look)**

If you’re outside, use natural materials such as sticks, fallen branches, or stones to build a wall. Build the wall as high as time and safety allow. Remind campers that Christ breaks down the walls between us. Say a prayer for
the dividing walls in our world to come down, and then have campers break down the wall.

**Walkie Talkies: Practice Active Listening (Intermediate & Senior High Took)**

Ephesians 2:11-22 calls us into the work of reconciliation and peacemaking. Active listening is an important skill for the resolution of conflict. Divide campers into pairs. Have the pairs find something they disagree about but try to keep things relatively light. Here are some sample topics for disagreement: food likes and dislikes, favorite sports teams, favorite subjects in school. After each pair finds something to disagree about, send them on a walk where they talk—a “walkie talkie.” But here’s the catch: their goal is to deeply listen to a perspective with which they disagree. The best way to do this is to take turns. Person 1 talks while Person 2 listens, and then they switch. The listener can ask clarifying questions, and then should try to summarize what they heard. For example, “What I heard you saying was . . . Do I understand you correctly?” The job of the listener isn’t to argue or respond, but instead is to make the speaker feel heard. **Senior high adaptation:** Senior high youth may be able to discuss tougher subjects. But don’t put a person’s dignity on the line. For example, don’t send an LGBTQ+ youth on a walkie talkie to listen to someone question the self-worth or faith of LGBTQ+ people. Use your best judgment.

**Learn about the Global Church (Intermediate & Senior High Took)**

This takes some extra preparation, but today’s theme provides a good opportunity to make global connections. Local synods or congregations may have cross-cultural relationships that could be highlighted, and perhaps some campers are aware of these connections. Help campers learn a song or a prayer in a foreign language, such as “Siyahamba” (“We Are Marching in the Light”), *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* 866. Remind campers that the church is beautifully diverse and that we find our unity in Christ (Ephesians 2:19-20).

**Letter to Your Future Self (Intermediate & Senior High Took)**

Invite campers to continue their letter to their future self. Have them include a response to the following question for Day 3: What dividing wall in my life does God want to break down?

**Notice Dividing Walls and Share the Peace (Intermediate & Senior High Service Option)**

Mission trips and service projects will sometimes take you into communities different from your own. Have campers return to Ephesians 2:14 in their Bibles. In the case of the early Christians, a dividing wall separated Jewish Christians from Gentile Christians. Christ made them one and broke down the dividing wall between them. Divide campers into pairs to discuss the following question: Where have you seen dividing walls either at home, in your church, or in the community where we are currently serving? Note how some communities are segregated by race or economic status. Martin Luther King Jr. once decried that Sunday morning was the most segregated hour in America, lamenting that white Christians and black Christians didn’t worship together. Reflect on your service work by discussing this question: Where and how did we, or can we, share the uniting peace of Christ today? End your devotion by sharing the peace with each other, saying: “Peace be with you” or “God’s peace” or “La paz” or “Shalom.”

**Human Snail (Pioneer & Junior)**

Have all campers stand in a circle and clasp the hand of the person next to them. The leader then drops hands with one person and “weaves” inside the circle, going inside the circle and forming a tight coil like a snail’s shell as more people come inside the circle. Continue to do this until everyone is part of the snail shape. Once the coil has been fully completed, the leader reverses course until the circle is restored. If everyone keeps their hands clasped, the group ends up in a big, connected circle. Afterward, discuss the following questions.
• How did you feel during this activity?
• If you weren’t all connected, could this activity have been done?

Lego Wall (Pioneer & Junior)
To demonstrate how we are joined together through God, have each camper pick out of a bucket of Lego bricks the same number of bricks as there are letters in their first name. If you have campers with short first names or a small group of campers, perhaps use, in addition, the number of bricks to match the camper’s age or the number of people in each camper’s family. The idea is to choose a quantity that will allow campers to build a collective wall of reasonable size. Then, ask the group to build a wall together out of the bricks they have chosen. Once that is done, instruct campers to stand back and admire their work. Then divide the group in half and have each group stand on opposite sides of the wall. Last, have a counselor start taking the wall apart. Ask campers the following questions.
• How did it feel to work together to build the wall?
• How did it feel to have it taken down?
• How does God work to bring us together, removing the walls between us?

Hula Hoop Game
Have campers stand in a circle and hold hands. Place a hula hoop around the arm of one of the campers and have them reconnect to the circle. The campers’ goal is to get the hoop around the circle from its starting point and back to the initial person without releasing hands. Additional hula hoops can be added, and another alternative would be to have one hoop go one direction in the circle and the other go the opposite direction. When finished, debrief by asking these questions.
• What was challenging about this activity?
• How did we work together to achieve the task?

Blind Polygon
Have campers form a circle. Give the group one portion of the of rope or string to hold in the circle. Give them each a blindfold and have them place it over their eyes. Then ask them to make different shapes with the string or rope while they are blindfolded, such as squares, pentagons, or other polygons with sides of equal length. A variation could be that one person is not blindfolded and helps the others form the shape. After a trying a number of shapes, ask the following questions.
• How well did the group work together in this activity?
• Did you feel better knowing others were blindfolded too?
• How did being joined together help the group achieve the goal?

Jump
This is like a jump-rope activity, group style and without a rope. Have the entire group form a circle with arms over shoulders. On the word “Go” everyone tries to jump with both feet off the ground, all at the same time. Continue trying until you accomplish it. Then, ask these questions.
• How is jumping made easier or harder by being connected together?
• In what ways does being connected give us strength to accomplish tasks?

New Human Laws
In the Bible passage today, we read, “He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace” (Ephesians 2:15). With a large piece of white paper (or a wipe board), have campers work together to make their rules for the rest of the week. What are some group-living guidelines that they’d like to see for the second half of their camp experience? Campers will need to agree and form consensus to add rules to the list. After they have finished, discuss the following questions.
• How did the group work together to gain consensus?
• What was easy and hard about this activity?
Worship Space Creation
In the final verses of the Bible passage from Ephesians, we read, “In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God” (2:21-22). Have campers find a place that they’d like to worship today and then work together to create the worship space. They could decorate it, set up places to sit, and create an altar. The idea is to have everyone work together to create a space that reminds us that we join together to praise God. If possible, use the space for daily worship the rest of the week. Ask the campers these questions when finished.

• How did creating this space bring us together and closer to God?
• How does the space remind us we are special to God?

Hospitality Committees
Because God joins us together and all are welcomed by God, divide your group into smaller “hospitality committees.” Have them work together to find ways that they can help others at camp feel welcome. Maybe you can have a welcoming committee at the door to a meal; make signs of welcome for camp buildings; or do a service project to help beautify an entryway. The idea is to come up with new ideas to spread hospitality. Then, put those ideas into action. Following the exercise, ask campers these questions.

• Were there times this week when people may not have felt welcome and included? How did it make you feel? How did it make others feel?
• What was it like to try to make others feel welcome and included? How did this make you feel? How did this make others feel?

Human Knot
Have campers stand in a circle and place their right hand in the middle, grabbing the hand of someone not on either side of them. Then, have them reach out their left hand and do the same (and not grab the hand of the person they first grabbed). Without letting go of each other’s hands, campers are to “untie” themselves into one larger circle. Repositioning their grip is fine if wrist safety is in question. The result might be one large circle or a few circles within a circle. Talk together about the experience, using these questions to guide your conversation.

• How did it feel to be tangled as the knot in the beginning? How did you feel when the knot was finally untangled?
• Did being connected make the task of untangling frustrating or fun? Did the task seem impossible or doable together?
• How is this like relationships with other people—in our camper group, in families, in the church, and so on?

Day 3 Worship Ideas

Call to Worship
*Explain the assembly’s part in today’s call and response.*

Leader: With different names and faces, we come to worship.
All: We come to worship.
Leader: We all have good days and bad days; we come to worship.
All: We come to worship.
Leader: With new friends, we come to worship.
All: We come to worship.
Leader: With people we know and don’t know, both near and far, we come to worship.

All: We come to worship.

Leader: We are all welcome here because God welcomes us; we come to worship.

All: We come to worship.

Prayer
*Leader: When I say “The Lord,” you say “is with us!” Let’s try it. “The Lord . . .”*

All: is with us!

Leader: The Lord
All: is with us!
Leader: Let us pray. Loving God, Be with us as we watch, Be with us as we imagine, Be with us as we remember, Be with us as we tell our stories. Amen.

Scripture Reading:
Person 1: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians: “For he is our peace; in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.”
Person 2: I belong here, you belong here—because God welcomes us!
Person 1: “He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.”
Person 2: I belong here, you belong here—because God welcomes us!

Person 1: “So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.”
Person 2: I belong here, you belong here—because God welcomes us!
Person 1: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.”
Person 2: I belong here, you belong here—because God welcomes us!
Person 1: “In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”
Person 2 & 2: I belong here, you belong here—because God welcomes us! (Invite everyone to say together) We all belong!
All: We all belong!

Prayers of the People
Leader: We are going to pray! Our prayers are not just for us but for the whole world; we pray for people and places we don’t even know. When I say, “We all belong to God,” you will repeat: “We all belong to God.” Let us pray. God of all people, sometimes we feel like we don’t fit in. We aren’t sure where we belong. Remind us that we belong with you. In you, God, we are welcomed as we are, and as we are becoming. Be with everyone who feels alone. Be with everyone who feels forgotten. Be with everyone who feels lost. We all belong to God.
All: We all belong to God.
Leader: God of all creation, this world is full of miracles and marvels. Sometimes we forget how wonderful creation is, and we think that we are separate from it. But we are part of creation. We have a place here. We are called to take care of this world. Be with animals being driven out of their homes. Be with waters choked by pollution. Be with wildlands losing ground to drilling. We all belong to God.
All: We all belong to God.
Leader: God of all, We belong to each other. You created us to be in community. We are citizens with the saints and members of your household. Be with all communities struggling under poverty. Be with all communities that face racism daily. Be with all communities that are taken advantage of. We all belong to God.
All: We all belong to God.
Leader: God, your welcome is beyond measure! You embrace us, our hopes, our dreams, and our fears. Receive our prayers, those we say out loud and those prayers we whisper in our hearts. In Jesus’s name, the people of God say,
All: Amen.

Skit
Four speaking parts plus extras are needed for today’s skit. Begin with three or more people sitting in a circle and one person sitting outside the circle.
Outside Person: (looking at the circle) Hello?
Person 1: Hi.
Outside Person: Um. What are you doing?
Person 1: We are belonging.
Outside Person: (bewildered) Be-long-ing?
Person 2: Yes, belonging. Being accepted for who we are and who we are becoming.
Outside Person: Cool. Cool. Um . . . What do you need to do to belong?
Person 3: You just are. We all belong because God says so.
Person 2: We all have a place and a purpose because God said so.
Person 1: We are all loved because God said so.
Outside Person: (looking sad) That must be cool.
People in the circle look at each other and open the circle.
Person 1: Why do you look so sad?
Person 2: Yeah, didn’t you hear what we said?
Person 3: We all belong. We all have a place and purpose. We are all loved. Because God said so. You do know you are part of that, right?

Outside Person: (looks up hopefully) Me? But I don’t know. I mess up a lot, and I don’t always say the right thing. I can’t possibly be . . . (interrupted)
Person 1: Of course, you are part of all this! We all mess up. We all don’t always say the right thing. But we all belong not because of what we do, but because God said so.
Person 2: God’s love is like that!
Person 1, 2, 3: Yeah! Get in here! Come on. Come on in!
Outside Person: Yeah. Okay. I guess I can do that. I guess I do belong. (looks at everyone gathered) And so do you! Join the circle.
If possible, encourage everyone in the camp to be part of the circle—and remind them to keep a spot open for more people.
Outside Person: (once everyone is situated) Repeat after me: We all belong. ("We all belong.") We all have a place and a purpose. ("We all have a place and a purpose.") We all are loved. ("We all are loved.") Because God said so! ("Because God said so!")

Sending
Leader: God’s welcome knows no boundaries. The household of faith where Christ is the cornerstone includes all who call him Lord, regardless of race, ability, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or cognitive differences. What does it mean to welcome? (After 90 seconds, break the silence with "Amen.") Use the actions suggested below or come up with your own. For our sending today, we are going to use our whole body. Repeat the phrase I say and follow my movements. I belong!
All: I belong!
Leader: (Point to yourself.) I belong!
All: I belong!
Leader: You belong!
All: You belong!
Leader: (Point all around as you turn in a circle.) You belong!
All: You belong!
Leader: Creation belongs!
All: Creation belongs!
Leader: We all belong!
All: We all belong!
Leader: (Give yourself a big hug.) We all belong!
All: We all belong!
Leader: Thank you, God, for this day!
All: Thank you, God, for this day!
Leader: (Clap.) Thank you, God, for this day!
All: Thank you, God, for this day!
Leader: We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.
Leader: (Send a big kiss by using your hands to gesture outward from your lips rather than blowing a kiss.) We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.

Prayer
Dear God,
When we were far off, you brought us near. Make us your people of peace. Use us to break down the dividing walls. In Jesus’s name we pray. Amen.
Day 4: Forgiveness Beyond Measure

Bible Text: Luke 15: 11-32
Spark Bible: pp. 378-383

Concept: God’s grace and forgiveness are unexpected and worth sharing with others.

Objectives: What will campers...

- Know: Experiencing God’s boundless forgiveness is like feeling lost, then found. God forgives us always because God’s love for us is so big.
- Feel: Secure in God’s unwavering love, no matter what.
- Do: Practice forgiveness of others and ask for forgiveness for themselves (confession).

Song Ideas: Go, My Children, with My Blessing (ELW 543)

Main Text (NRSV):
Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate. “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoted your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

Biblical Interpretation
What is the meaning of Jesus’s mission and how does it reveal the very heart of God? The anonymous writer of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles seeks to answer these questions (Luke 1:1-4). Writing in the last third of the first century, the author offers clarity, assurance, and consolation to the Christian community consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus is Lord, even though difficult times of hostility and persecution make it seem otherwise (Acts 9).
The parable of the two lost sons, Luke 15:11-32, reveals the very heart of God through the role of the father. In 15:1-2 the Pharisees and scribes grumble against Jesus eating with tax collectors, so Jesus tells this parable to describe his God-given mission in seeking out and saving all God’s children.

First, the younger child (vv. 12-16) demands his inheritance, milks his dad for a lot of money, and takes off. Then, the money runs out and he is humiliated. Coveting pig food, he comes to himself and decides to return home, admitting his sin (vv. 17-20). This youngest took his relationship with his father for granted, finding no joy or direction in that relationship.

Second, the older child stays at home, but we learn that he thinks his father is a slave driver and he, too, has found no joy in that father-child relationship (vv. 28-30). The younger child is like the tax collectors and sinners (people judged by the community to have broken God’s commandments—the Law) who are eating with Jesus (15:1-2). The older child is like the resentful Pharisees and scribes in 15:2. What is a parent to do? What is God to do with any of us who are lost in selfishness and despair or lost in our resentment and pride? Send Jesus. Send Jesus to seek us out, reconcile us to God, and bring us together into God’s household.

Beginning with verse 20, the focus is on the father. With undignified, wild abandon he welcomes home his younger child (vv. 20-24). No father in ancient times would have hiked up his garments and run out in front of all the neighbors to greet a sinful, ungrateful son. But this one does. He declares his child worthy and a restored member of the family with gifts of a kiss, robe, ring, sandals, and a banquet (vv. 22-24). This is forgiveness beyond measure, more than the younger child dreamed of. But what about the oldest child, understandably resentful but refusing to receive his wayward sibling back into the family (v. 28)? His father does not abandon the oldest but again humbles himself by leaving the very party he is hosting in order to plead with his son to come in. Patiently, the father listens to the bitter, resentful words of the oldest (vv. 29-30). In response there is no scolding but rather reassurance. The oldest is still “son” (v. 31). The phrases “always with me” and “all that is mine is yours” assure the child of a secure place in the family and certainty of inheritance. This father is determined to forgive both children; there is no stopping that. The father’s words “we had to” mean “it is necessary” (v. 32). This is how a God of measureless forgiveness acts, especially through Jesus. Neither child is worthy; none of us are. But God’s extravagant love and forgiveness are for the sake of the relationship, the sake of all of God’s children. It is as Ephesians 3:18-19 says: God’s love is too wonderful to be measured, and it fills our lives, bringing hope and promise to us right where we are in life.

Additional Texts
Psalm 31:1-8, 19-24
Psalm 32
Isaiah 55:6-9
Jeremiah 31:18-20
Matthew 18:21-22
Acts 2:36-39
Day 4 Games and Activities

Floor Labyrinth (Preschool Book)
Before campers arrive, use masking tape to make a floor labyrinth for engaging campers in today's story. Make your labyrinth big enough for children to follow the path. (A labyrinth is different from a maze.) Place three figures at the center of the labyrinth, to represent the father and his two sons. Place the play money near the father and the toy pigs on the outside of the labyrinth, where the younger son travels after receiving his inheritance money. Tell the parable of the two sons a second time, moving the younger son from the center to the outside of the labyrinth and back again. Explain that campers can walk the labyrinth one at a time too. As they walk they can think about God who loves and forgives them.

Forgiveness Party (Preschool Look)
Prepare a feast of crackers or cookies, juice, and other snacks to celebrate God’s love and forgiveness. Decorate the room and table with balloons and streamers, a fancy tablecloth, and festive serving ware. Tell campers you are having a party for the son who left and then came back. Explain to campers that there is nothing that can separate us from God’s love, and that God loves and forgives us, no matter what. This is also a good time to let campers take turns walking the labyrinth and to play other fun party games! After the party, use these questions to further engage campers in the story.

• How does it feel to say you’re sorry and to be forgiven?
• How do you think the son felt when he returned home and his father was happy to see him?
• How does it make you feel to know that God loves and forgives you, no matter what?

Five Little Pigs Rhyme (Preschool Took)
Teach campers the Five Little Pigs rhyme (à la the song “Five Little Ducks”) below, adding animal sounds (snorts or oinks) and hand motions you make up. Hold up your fingers in the correct amount to help campers track how many pigs the father is calling for each time (also to cue how many “snorts or oinks” they will make).

Five little pigs went out to play,
over the hill and far away.
Father pig called “snort, snort, snort, snort,
snort,”
but only four little pigs came home.

Four little pigs went out to play,
over the hill and far away.
Father pig called “snort, snort, snort, snort,”
but only three little pigs came home.

(Continue until there are “no pigs” left.)

No little pigs went out to play,
over the hill and far away.
Father pig called “snort, snort, snort, snort,”
and all five pigs came home!

Briefly talk about how campers might be like the little pigs in the rhyme, wanting to play outside all day long and also wanting to be home with their families at night.

• When do you like to be outside playing?
  What do you like to do outside?
• When do you like to be home with your family? What happy things do you do at home with your family?

Pig Snorting Game (Preschool)
Teach campers how to pass a pig snort from person to person during circle time. Campers who don’t want to snort always have the option of saying “oink” instead. See if you can make it all the way around the circle without laughing. Anytime someone laughs who is snorting or being snorted at, that person moves to the “pigpen” at the center of the circle. The object is to be the last person in the circle, without landing in the pigpen.
Lost and Found (Preschool)
Challenge campers to help find the “lost” objects you’ve hidden around the room and to return them to their “home.” Home can be a toy box, basket, or bucket. Hide objects so they can be found by preschoolers. If children really enjoy this game, hide the objects again while campers close their eyes or leave the room. Explain that Jesus told many stories about being lost and found, and that God is always here for us, loving us, finding us, and forgiving our mistakes no matter what.

Hook (Pioneer & Junior)
With lower elementary campers, play a short game of Mother, May I? (Captain, May I?) or Simon Says, then talk about the rules of the game. Mention always having to ask for permission (“Mother, may I?”) before moving, or in Simon Says, following the instructions only when the leader includes the phrase “Simon says.” With upper elementary campers, give a brief example from your own life about a time when you disobeyed your parents. Invite campers to share their own examples if they wish. Then with upper and lower elementary campers, have a discussion about real-life rules, saying “I’m sorry,” and forgiveness.

• What are some rules your family has? (Examples follow: don’t say bad words, don’t talk with your mouth full of food, clean up your toys when you’re finished playing with them, don’t hit anyone.)

• Have you ever disobeyed a family rule? What did you do? How did you feel about that? Try not to dwell on how parents may have punished the camper for their disobedience, which could be upsetting for some campers. Instead, focus on how the camper might have worried that someone (their parents, a sibling, or friend) wouldn’t forgive them.

Book (Pioneer & Junior)
Introduce today’s Bible story, explaining that it is about a family with two sons and a father. They both matter to their father and to God, but they didn’t always feel that way. They seemed to think that life wasn’t fair. The younger son broke some family rules, left home, spent all his money, and got into trouble. The other son stayed home to help the father, but he wasn’t happy either. Read Luke 15:11-32, the parable of the lost son, from a Bible or Bible storybook, such as the Spark Story Bible (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009, pp. 378-383).

Basic: These questions help campers reflect on what they heard in the Bible story.
• What did the younger brother do? (Asked for money from his father, left home, then came back when he ran out of money, asked for forgiveness.)
• The story doesn’t say, but how might the younger brother have felt when he left home? (Excited about his future, that he deserved to take his father’s money, that what he was doing was right.)
• How might he feel after he had run out of money and was taking care of pigs? (Bad, guilty, hungry, sad.)
• What did the older brother do? (Stayed home and did his chores, helped his father.)
• How did the older brother feel? (He got angry with his father about unfair treatment within the family.)
• What did the father do? (The father ran out to welcome the younger son home and then gave him a party.)
• How did the father feel about his younger son? His older son? (He loved them both; he was happy they were at home with him.)

Digging deeper: These questions ask how the campers feel in relation to how the biblical characters might have felt. You could also invite listeners to name the part of the story most important to them.
• In the story the younger son returns home to where he is loved. Sometimes it takes us a while to remember we count and for us to feel loved. Where is your favorite place to remember what it feels like to be loved?
• Sometimes we listen to what we are told by our parents, but sometimes we don’t. Sometimes we disobey their instructions.
For example, parents tell us not to touch a hot stove, but we do anyway and burn our hand. Sometimes we disobey our parents and do something that hurts another person. How does it feel when you disobey a family rule and anger your parent(s), or you hurt someone’s feelings? (Sad, bad, scary, upsetting.)

- What can you do when that happens? (Admit that we did something wrong, say “I’m sorry,” talk to someone about how you’re feeling.)

Challenging: This is a complex Bible story. The questions below invite thinking beyond what campers might have heard about this story before and hopefully help them see it with new eyes. The goal is also to relate the story to the campers’ lives.

- How important is it to you to say “I’m sorry” or “Please forgive me” when you do something that hurts others? How important is it to others?
- Who did the father in the story love? Forgive? (Both sons, the obedient one and the disobedient one.) Who does God love? Forgive?
- How big is God’s forgiveness? (Too big to measure.)

Explain that this story has been given different titles over time, but the Bible didn’t originally have titles. Titles were added based on what people of a particular time saw as important in the story: for example, it has been called Two Sons, The Lost Son, The Prodigal Son (prodigal means “wasteful,” “reckless,” or “lavish”). What title you would give to today’s story? (Accept all answers.)

Look (Pioneer & Junior)
If possible, go to a natural water source like a lake, pond, or stream, or have a bucket of water on hand. The parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Luke 15:1-7; Luke 15:8-10; and Luke 15:11-32) are meant to go together. Have campers act out Luke 15:3-7 as it is read out loud. God is like the shepherd searching for his sheep. Ask which sheep matter or count? (All one hundred of them!) Have them act out Luke 15:8-10 as it is read out loud. God is like the woman searching for her coin. How many coins matter or count? (Even just one.)

Remind them that both brothers in Luke 15:11-32 mattered to their father. God is like a loving and forgiving parent. Then gather near the water source. Talk about how sometimes we may feel lost or far away from God or people we love—especially at times when we have disobeyed our parents or hurt someone else. Point out that even though we feel lost, God never loses us. Have campers make the sign of the cross or a heart on each other’s foreheads or hands as a sign of God’s claim on us. (It’s okay if a child doesn’t want to be touched or participate and modify as needed for health and safety.) Have campers say to each other as they make the sign, “God loves you. God will never lose you.”

Fair or Not Fair? (Pioneer Took)
Play an unfair game. For example, do Simon Says but let everyone stay in the game, even if they misread the cue. Be sure to explain why everyone is allowed to stay.

Hide and Seek—and Found (Pioneer Took)
Play Sardines, which is a variation of Hide and Seek. Modify the game as needed to follow current health and safety guidelines. One person hides while everyone else closes their eyes and counts to twenty-five. Then the seekers look for the person hiding, and when the seekers find the hider, they join the hider in that spot, squeezing in like sardines in a can, until eventually everyone finds them.

Scavenger Hunt (Junior Took)
God will never stop loving us or finding us even when we feel far away from God. Go on a scavenger hunt for a hidden coin or a stuffed animal. Or don’t hide anything but have them look around camp for a particular worship site, staff leader, or monument unique to your camp.
Breath Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on Me, a Sinner”  
(Intermediate & Senior High Hook)  
Begin the Bible study with this variation on the breath prayer. This longer breath prayer is often called “The Jesus Prayer” and is widely practiced among Eastern Orthodox Christians. Invite campers to silently repeat the prayer according to the rhythm of their breath. Think “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God” on the inhale. Think “have mercy on me, a sinner” on the exhale. For a step-by-step guide to breath prayer, see Day 1 of this Bible study. Ask (and discuss this topic): Is it possible to be too forgiving? Why or why not? Today’s Bible study will focus God’s extravagant mercy and forgiveness. The following activity is meant to provide an experience of grace.

(Intermediate & Senior High Book)  
Have campers locate Luke 15:11-32 in their Bibles. Ask for five volunteers to read.

Volunteer 1: Narrator—reads the parable except for the lines of dialogue.  
Volunteer 2: Younger son—reads the dialogue in verses 12, 17-19, and 21.  
Volunteer 3: Father—reads the dialogue in verses 22-24 and 31-32.  
Volunteer 4: Slave—reads the dialogue in verse 27.  
Volunteer 5: Older son—reads the dialogue in verses 29-30.  
After dividing up these parts, have the volunteers read the passage.

The Basics: One of the learning objectives for this day is that campers learn this parable about the lost son. In order to further internalize the story, have campers act it out. You can keep the parts from the scripted reading the same as written in your Bibles or you can mix it up. You can also be creative in how you include the whole group. There are various other roles—the person who hires the younger son in a distant land, the pigs, the celebrators, and so on. If it helps, you can divide the story into four different scenes:

Scene 1: At home (The younger son asks his father for his inheritance.)  
Scene 2: In a distant country (The lost son loses all he has and ends up with the pigs.)  
Scene 3: Back home (The lost son returns. His father runs to meet him and throws a party for him.)  
Scene 4: Out in the field (The father goes out to plead with his older son to join the celebration inside for the son who returned.)  

After acting out the story, return to sitting in a circle where you can continue the discussion. This parable has often been called “The Parable of the Prodigal Son.” Have campers look in their Bibles to see if this story has a heading. For instance, in the HarperCollins Study Bible, this story is called “The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother.” Compare the headings in your various Bibles. Share that prodigal means to spend extravagantly or irresponsibly. The story says the younger son “squandered his property in dissolute living” (Luke 15:13). On the other hand, the son’s misfortune wasn’t only due to his actions. Luke 15:14 says that a “severe famine” also occurred. Another name for this parable is “The Parable of the Lost Son.” “Lost,” after all, is the word used by the father to describe his son (see Luke 15:24 and 15:32). Discuss the following question: Which name best fits the story in your opinion: “lost son” or “prodigal son”? Why? Perhaps another name for this parable could be “The Parable of the Forgiving Father.” The father in this story is forgiving in an over-the-top and even foolish way. Without even hearing his son’s confession, the father runs down the road to forgive him and embrace him. In this culture, it would have been seen as undignified and even ridiculous for him to hike up his robe and run to greet his wayward son. And not only that—he throws an extravagant party for him. Jesus suggests this forgiving father has something to teach us about what God is like. Ask campers these questions.

- What do you picture when you hear the word God?
Does this ridiculously forgiving father change how you picture God? If so, how so? If not, why not?

More Challenging: Direct campers to Luke 15:1-2. Have a camper read these verses. Why do you think the scribes and the Pharisees were “grumbling” about who Jesus ate with? Have campers reflect on people in their school or community who might be considered the “wrong crowd.” If “sinners and tax collectors” were the outsiders in Jesus’s time, who are the outsiders in our own time? Share this key point: The parable of the lost son and his brother is told in response to the grumblings of the scribes and Pharisees. Like the scribes and the Pharisees, the older brother grumbles out in the field when the father forgives the lost son and welcomes him home. He refuses to join the party. In a way, the older brother is also “lost” and needs forgiveness as well. Divide campers into two groups. Explain that the two teams are going to debate which of the two brothers is more in need of forgiveness. Team 1 must put together an argument that the younger brother needs more forgiveness. Team 2 will do the same for the older brother. Campers argue for their designated side even if they believe the opposite. When both sides have offered their arguments, declare both teams the winners because both brothers are in need of forgiveness. We all need the forgiveness of God.

The Deep End (primarily for senior high)
Without too much introduction, lead the campers in saying the Lord’s Prayer. After finishing the prayer, direct their attention to the Fifth Petition: “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us” or “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The forgiving God we meet in Luke 15 expects us to extend that forgiveness to others. Have campers locate Matthew 18:21-22 in their Bibles, and then ask for a volunteer to read it. For discussion, ask the following question: What makes it hard to forgive others?

Letting Go of Sin and Shame (Intermediate & Senior High Look)
Have campers begin in a seated position with their hands palms up and resting in their laps. Eyes should be closed. Now invite campers to think of something they regret or something that they feel holds them back in their relationship with God. As they think about this thing, have them slowly close their hands into fists like they are holding on to this thing tighter and tighter and tighter. Have them hold their fists tightly for 20–30 seconds. Next invite them to envision this moment from the parable: They see the father in the distance. Now they see the father running down the road to meet them with arms outstretched to embrace and with love and joy on his face. As they think of this, invite them to slowly release their fists and to let go of anything they feel separates them from God’s love. When their hands are completely relaxed, they can open their eyes. Assure them: they are forgiven. Nothing can separate them from God’s love.

Easter Egg Hunt (Intermediate & Senior High Took)
Before the Bible study begins, make sure there is a plastic Easter egg for each camper. Inside each egg place a piece of paper that says: “When you feel lost, you will be found by God” (Luke 15). You could also put each camper’s name on an egg. Then hide the eggs near the area where you will meet for Bible study. After explaining that they each have one egg to look for, turn them loose (without giving away what is written inside). After everyone has found their egg, have them come back together to discuss what they found. Invite campers to keep this slip of paper with them to remind them of God’s boundless passion for the lost. They can put it in a wallet or a pocket or tape it to a mirror. Senior high adaptation: For older youth, you could involve them in sharing this message with others. Have them write out and decorate the slips with the message: “When you feel lost, you will be found by God” (Luke 15). Have the campers hide the eggs in places where other kids or staff may find them and be reminded of God’s love for them.
**Letter to Your Future Self (Intermediate & Senior High Took)**

Invite the campers to continue their letter to their future self. Have them include a response to the following question for Day 4: How have I experienced forgiveness in my life, either at camp or elsewhere?

**Societal Sin and God’s Grace (Intermediate & Senior High Service Option)**

Your mission trip or service project may lead you to encounter systems of oppression and injustice. Too often we think about sin and forgiveness only in individual terms, but the power of sin affects us on a larger scale as well. We need God’s grace on a societal and global scale too. After a day of serving, ask campers if they have seen examples of the following today, or this week, by a show of raised hands:

- racism
- sexism
- homophobia
- transphobia
- ableism
- ageism
- environmental waste
- poverty
- hunger

Other forms of oppression

Emphasize that human sinfulness takes many forms, and often we are caught in these societal sins that are bigger than one individual. But God’s grace can lead us to address human brokenness on both an individual level and a societal level. Return to Luke 15:22-24. Note that the father in the story throws a party for the lost son. Imagine together a response to this question: What kind of party do you think God will throw when there is no more poverty, hunger, racism, sexism, and other types of oppression?

**Among the Pigs (Pioneers and Juniors)**

This game of chase helps simulate the younger son’s time working in a pigsty. One camper is the younger son (aka “prodigal”) and is It. Another person is designated as the farmer who has food. The prodigal tries to get to the farmer. The rest of the group are pigs who run around and try to block the prodigal from getting food from the farmer. If the prodigal gets to the farmer, the farmer becomes the prodigal, and the former prodigal picks a pig to become the new farmer. The game continues until time is called. When done, ask campers these questions.

- How did the prodigal feel when they could not get the food?
- What could we do to make the prodigal feel like things were being shared with them?

**Overflowing Cup Relay**

Place one large bucket filled with water about 50 feet [15 m] away from a second smaller empty bucket. Divide the campers into teams of two to five people, giving each team a small empty cup, each being the same size. The object of the game is to have one member of each team take turns taking water from the filled bucket to the empty bucket. The overall goal is for the group to work together to overflow the other bucket with water. Afterward, lead the campers in a discussion with the following questions.

- Was it hard or easy to fill the bucket until it was overflowing with water? What made it hard? What made it easier?
- How is the overflowing bucket like God’s grace?

**“Forgive Me” Kickball**

Divide the group into two teams to play a game of kickball. However, you will present this as a different kind of kickball game. Every time a camper makes a mistake or misses the ball, they can yell, “Forgive me!,“ and the team in unison yells, “You are forgiven!” After the game, discuss it with your campers through these questions.

- How did you feel grace during the game?
- How does God grant us “do-overs” in life?

**Prooey**

All but one member of your group should be blindfolded. The person who can see is the “Prooey.” Have everyone start walking around
in a confined, safe space. When a blindfolded camper runs into someone with their outstretched hand, they say, “Prooey.” The person, if they are also blindfolded, responds, “Prooey.” If they run into the Prooey, there is no verbal response. That person then removes their blindfold and joins hands with the Prooey, creating a large Prooey. The goal is to get everyone to be part of the large Prooey. When finished, ask campers the following questions.

- What challenges did you have in finding the Prooey?
- How is the large group Prooey like God’s love?

Forgiveness Marbles
Everyone in the group will need a 12-inch long piece of wide PVC pipe cut open-face. The object is for the group to arrange, and then rearrange, the sections of pipe to transport God’s Word of Forgiveness (a marble) to the people (a coffee can). Place the can about 10 yards [9 m] away from the starting point. The marble must touch everybody’s pipe, and while the marble is in one person’s pipe, the pipe cannot be moved. Also, the marble cannot stop, roll backward, be touched, or fall to the ground once it has started. If this occurs, the group must start over. When the task has been completed, ask campers these questions.

- How did it feel to finally get God’s Word of Forgiveness to the people?
- What were the challenges? What worked well?

Trust Falls
Today, campers are focusing on how God’s grace is abundant. This activity reminds them that grace is what catches us when we fall. Campers need to work together to make this activity safe, and staff needs to supervise this carefully. Have campers form a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Have them stand with one foot behind the other, knees slightly bent (not locking their knees) and place their hands in the air, ready to catch the camper in the center. One person stands in the middle with their feet planted on the ground and arms crossed over their chest. They should fall backward, not moving their feet. The people in the circle pass the center person around with their hands up and palms facing the center. If you have larger groups, the activity can be split into two parts. Another variation is to have them stand shoulder to shoulder in two lines facing each other. Alternating their arms with the people on either side, they should bend at their elbows, keeping elbows at their sides and forearms out, hands palms up. One group member stands on a chair or table and says “Falling” and remaining in a rigid, standing position, then falls backward into the group’s waiting arms. The rest of the group responds with “Fall away” and then catches the person in their arms. Encourage each member to attempt the fall, but don’t force anyone to participate. Debrief after this activity, asking these questions.

- What was it like to have the safety net of people to catch you?
- What is God’s grace like for you—is it like this activity?
Call to Worship
Leader: Amazing grace. Repeat after me:
All: Amazing grace.
Leader: When we are tired, we have amazing grace.
All: Amazing grace.
Leader: When we are happy, we have amazing grace.
All: Amazing grace.
Leader: When we are sad, we have amazing grace.
All: Amazing grace.
Leader: When we have messed up, we have amazing grace.
All: Amazing grace.
Leader: God’s grace really is amazing!
All: Amazing grace.
All: is with us!
Leader: The Lord
All: is with us!
Leader: Let us pray. Jesus, I mess up. We all do. And yet, you forgive us. You pick us up, you hold us close, you help us say I’m sorry, you forgive our broken places, and you set us back on our feet. Thank you. Help us to treat others with the same compassion and mercy. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:11-32
For today’s reading you will need people for four speaking and two nonspeaking parts.
Narrator: A reading from the Gospel of Luke. Jesus told this story to the people gathered around him. He said, once “there was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father,”
Younger Son: ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’
The younger son and people playing the pigs pantomime the following action as it is described.

Narrator: So [the father] divided his property between them. A few days later, the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything.” But then he thought: Younger Son: ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” ’
The younger son and father pantomime the following actions.
Narrator: “So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.”
Younger Son: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’
Servants, younger son, and father pantomime the following actions—dressing the son, preparing for the party, celebrating.
Father: (addressing two servants) ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’
Pantomime of celebration continues as older son approaches.
Narrator: “And they began to celebrate. Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.”
Servant: ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’

Narrator: “Then [the older brother] became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father,

Older Son: ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’

Father: ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

Prayers of the People
Leader: We are going to pray! Our prayers are not just for us, but for the whole world. We pray for people and places we don’t even know. At the end of each prayer, I will say “God, be near them,” then you respond “God be near them.” Let’s try it. “God be near them.”

All: God be near them.

Leader: Let us pray. God, in our waking and sleeping, you are with us. Continue to be with us and let your amazing grace flow over us. We worry about those who are ill, sad, mad, or hurt. Those we have hurt or those who have hurt us. (Pause and let the silence grow.)

Leader: God be near them.

All: God be near them.

Leader: And today we ask you to be close to those who wonder, who look for your amazing grace, who long to be with the one or the ones they love, who hope to recognize the right time when they can say “I’m sorry,” or “I messed up,” or even “I need you, God, now.” (Pause and let the silence grow.)

Leader: God be near them.

All: God be near them.

Leader: And God, listen to us as we share with you whatever joys or sorrows, discoveries or questions we will take with us through the day. Hear the prayers in our minds. (Pause and let the silence grow.)

Leader: God be near them.

All: God be near them.

Leader: Into your hands we commit ourselves, our souls, our bodies, our minds, our futures, our families, and all creation, because all things come from you and are best kept in your care.

All: Amen.

Skit
Speaker: Have you ever had to say you are sorry? It can be hard, but when we mess up, we can say, “I am sorry.” I want to practice with you. Say after me, “I am sorry.”

All: I am sorry.

Speaker: Now say that to your neighbor. (Allow time for people to say it.) Part of saying you are sorry is being able to accept forgiveness. Say that to your neighbor, “I forgive you.”

Allow time for people to say “I forgive you” to other worshipers

Speaker: While it is hard for us to forgive sometimes, we have a God who will always forgive us.

Speaker: Let’s practice. I invite you to shout, “My Lord, I am sorry!”

All: My Lord, I am sorry!

Speaker: (shouts back in a loud voice) I forgive you! You can do this any time. Tell God that you are sorry and know that God does forgive you.

Sending
Leader: The very heart of God is overflowing with mercy and patience, like a loving parent’s. Such forgiveness and patience are born of the divine desire to be in relationship with all those who are lost and separated from God. It’s all about God’s grace for us. What does grace look like for you? (After 90 seconds, break the silence with “Amen.”)

Use the actions suggested below or come up with your own.

Leader: For our sending today, we are going to use our whole body. Repeat the phrase I say and follow my movements.

Leader: Amazing grace.

All: Amazing grace.
Leader: *(Throw your hands above your head.)*
Amazing grace.

**All:** Amazing grace.
Leader: Amazing creation!

**All:** Amazing creation!
Leader: *(Point all around as you turn in a circle.)* Amazing creation!

**All:** Amazing creation!
Leader: Amazing friends!

**All:** Amazing friends!
Leader: *(Air high-five the people around you.)* Amazing friends!

**All:** Amazing friends!
Leader: God made me amazing!

**All:** God made me amazing!
Leader: *(Give yourself a big hug.)* God made me amazing!

**All:** God made me amazing!
Leader: Thank you, God, for this day!

**All:** Thank you, God, for this day!

Leader: We go in peace to share God’s love.

**All:** We go in peace to share God’s love.

Leader: *(Send a big kiss by using your hands to gesture outward from your lips rather than blowing a kiss.)* We go in peace to share God’s love.

**All:** We go in peace to share God’s love.

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**Prayer**

Dear God, We are lost without you.
Help us to trust that your grace is big enough for us and to know that you are always waiting for us with open arms. May we forgive as you have forgiven us. In Jesus’s name we pray. Amen.
Day 5: Generosity Beyond Measure

Bible Text: Mark 4: 1-9
Spark Bible: pp. 292-293

Concept: God produces the harvest, and all we need to do is sow God’s word of love for all.

Objectives: What will campers...
• Know: God’s love can grow anywhere and produces surprising results.
• Feel: Empowered by God’s generosity.
• Do: Live generously for each other. Sow seeds of God’s goodness, love, welcome, and forgiveness?

Song Ideas: Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ (ELW 674), Take My Life, That I May Be (ELW 583, 685), This Little Light of Mine (ELW 677)

Main Text (NRSV):

Again, he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching, he said to them: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” And he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Biblical Interpretation

The Gospel of Mark is the earliest written of the four Gospels and speaks to a community struggling to understand the life of discipleship as they follow a crucified savior and endure their own hardships. Written sometime before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE by an anonymous author, it focuses on encouraging Christians to be faithful and generous in discipleship.

The parable of the sower, today’s Bible text, is framed with the command to “listen” (vv. 3, 9). This command means to listen with all one’s heart, one’s whole self. Listeners are to perk up their ears because Jesus’s words here are the word of God that gives true understanding of Jesus and of the nature of discipleship. Discipleship is like the sowing of seed. There were many sowing parables in Jesus’s time, but this one is unique in its careful attention to the lack of success of the sower. This parable speaks directly to Jesus’s own ministry, which is misunderstood and finally results in his crucifixion. It all seemed a failure at the time. The parable also speaks to the work and witness of Christians after Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection. There will be many obstacles along the way: misunderstanding, hostility, unbelief, and persecution. The parable offers much to reflect on and to teach its listeners.

The sower is not a careless farmer. In first century Palestine, seed was first scattered and then plowed under. The sower does not judge where to scatter seed but sows, trusting that some will grow. Sometimes the seed will be eaten right away, and some will fall on rocky ground without the sower knowing it (vv. 4-6). There are places in Galilee where only a thin layer of soil covers the limestone base. This is not evident until after plowing or after the newly sprouted seed withers due to the shallow soil and hot sun. Again, the sower cannot judge this in advance but persists in sowing. The last obstacle is the thorns (v. 7). Perhaps the seeds of the thorns were resting in the soil unable to break through the crusty top layer. Then when all is plowed up, the thistle seeds...
grow abundantly, snuffing out the good seed. Again, the point isn’t that the sower must anticipate every possible problem and soil quality, but that the sower keeps scattering the seed.

Seed in early Palestine was of great value, so the broadcasting of it is a mark of incredible generosity and faith, trusting that there will be growth. And there is (v. 8)! Again, the sower could not have known exactly where and when the seed would grow, but her persistence pays off in an undreamed-of harvest. The generosity and persistence of the sower brings an extraordinary harvest—up to one hundred times more than the seed that was scattered. This is no one-time event either. The Greek verb for yield or brought forth conveys the meaning of a repeated, abundant harvest. Here is the main point of this parable. Faithful and generous discipleship will not be in vain, even when we cannot immediately see the results. Witness and service are done in the expectation of abundant harvest. The generosity and persistence of the sower brings an extraordinary amount of harvest. The generosity and persistence of the sower brings an extraordinary harvest. The generosity and persistence of the sower brings an extraordinary — up to one hundred times more than the seed that was scattered. This is no one-time event either.

God is good: listen, love, welcome, forgive, and share!

Additional Texts
Psalm 23
Psalm 46
Isaiah 55:10-13
Luke 12:22-32
Revelation 21:1-6

Day 5 Games and Activities

Garden Walk (Pioneer Book)
Show campers the seeds and soil from your story bag or backpack. Ask campers if they know what things seeds need to grow, and why good soil is important for growing healthy plants. Explain that seeds need sun and water and soil that is filled with microbes and nutrients. Take a walk outdoors, looking for the things seeds need to grow. If there an onsite garden, visit it. What do they notice about this garden? Find a comfortable place to sit, either near a garden or in a place that would be a good place to plant a garden. Read the parable of the sower a second time with objects from the story bag or backpack.

- What does a seed do? What does a seed need to grow?
- Why is good soil important for growing healthy plants?
- Where do seeds come from, and how do healthy plants make seeds for planting? (Seeds come from the fruit or seedpod of the plant; show campers examples, if possible.)

Dirt Cup Dessert (Preschool Look)
Help children scoop chocolate pudding into the bottom of their cup or jar that you have prepared in advance. Stir crushed-up chocolate sandwich cookies into the pudding and sprinkle more on the top to look like the good soil in today’s story. Campers can even add a gummy worm to their snack! While campers snack on their Dirt Cup Dessert, talk about what it means to sow or plant seeds in a garden, and how planting seeds is a sign of hope. We trust that the seeds we plant, when they are cared for, will grow into a generous harvest. Remind campers of God’s generosity, and how sign language for the word generous looks like someone planting a generous amount of seed in good soil.

God Grows a Garden (Preschool Look)
Planting seeds is a sign of hope. We trust that God will grow the seeds we plant into a generous harvest—when they are cared for. Show campers how to plant and care for the
two or three bean seeds you give each of them. Plant the bean seeds in a clear plastic cup so campers will be able to watch how they grow, above and below the soil. Explain that you hope one or more of the bean seeds will grow into a plant, but it’s not for sure. Caring for them by placing them in a sunny window (but not direct sun, which is too hot, like in the story today) and watering them when the soil gets dry will help! Then find a comfortable place to sit where you can talk about their experience. Use these questions to guide the conversation.

- When you plant a seed, do you trust it will grow? Why or why not?
- What are some ways to be generous with the number of seeds sown or planted?
- What are some ways to be generous with God’s love?

**Seed Theater (Preschool Took)**

God is at work in us, growing God’s love into a generous harvest! Explain to campers that they are going to pretend to be the seeds they heard about in today’s story. Begin by asking campers to scatter around the room, like little seeds. Guide their actions as seeds by asking questions like these.

- What does a seed look like?
- How does it feel to be a little seed? Make the sound of a gentle falling rain (or use your phone for a more realistic experience!).
- What do the thirsty little seeds do when the rains come to give them a drink?
- What do the soaked seeds do when the warm sun shines down on them?

Allow time for campers to fully imagine how they would feel, and what they would do, in each situation. Now that the seeds have the water and sunshine they need, pretend to be seeds in each of these situations:

- seeds eaten by birds,
- seeds that land in dirt with lots of rocks,
- seeds that land among thorny weeds,
- seeds that land in good soil and grow up into a generous harvest.

Further engage campers in this activity and today’s theme with the following questions.

- How does it feel to be planted in good soil and to grow into a healthy plant?

- What are some things that seeds need to grow into healthy plants?
- What are some things that people need to grow as God’s children?

**Dime, Nickel, Penny (Preschool)**

*Materials: can filled with coins (pennies, nickels, dimes), guitar or some other musical accompaniment for the “Magic Penny” song*

Shake a can filled with coins and challenge campers to guess what’s inside. Show campers a penny, nickel, and dime. Ask if they know the value of each coin. If they are US coins, then show campers where the words “In God We Trust” are written in very tiny letters on every kind of coin. Remind campers that we can trust God to be generous, helping us to be generous with and for each other. Teach campers the “Magic Penny” song by Malvina Reynolds. If time allows, make up your own actions. If you’re not familiar with this children’s song, it can easily be found online. Then play a variation of the game “Duck, Duck, Goose” called “Dime, Nickel, Penny.” The person who is It walks around the circle, gently tapping each camper on the head and saying the name of a coin (dime, nickel, or penny). When It says “penny,” that person gets up and runs after It, trying to tag him or her before It sits down in that person’s spot. Continue until everyone has had a turn to be It, with each player being It at least once.

**Gratitude Scavenger Hunt (Preschool)**

Give thanks for God’s generosity with a Gratitude Scavenger Hunt like the tour you took with campers at the beginning of the week. Again, show them the kitchen where their food is made. Explore the office and other staff spots. Look inside cabins. Say hello to staff. As you walk along, help campers look for and name the things they are thankful for. Use your own ideas, or ask campers to give thanks to God for something they see along the way:

- something that makes them laugh or giggle
- something that makes their heart happy
- something that they like to do
• something that tastes good
• something that is their favorite color
• something that brings them joy
• something that offers peace and calm
• something that reminds them of God’s goodness, love, welcome, forgiveness, or generosity.

Growing Up Game (Pioneer Hook)
Pretend to be a seed growing. Everyone starts together in a squat, arms around legs. Invite campers to shout out what seeds need to grow. (Water, soil, sun.) Then react bodily to their words: the group should together grow taller, finding a final form to arrive at and take. Ask the campers what their seed grew into (A flower, a tree, a weed?). Say that today they will be hearing a story about scattering seeds everywhere. The seeds are like God’s word of love.

Being Generous (Pioneer Hook)
Ask campers these questions.
• Who is more generous, you or your sibling? You or your best friend? You can note that these are hard questions to answer!
• Which do you prefer: Giving something nice or good to someone (being generous) or getting something from someone else who is generous?

Use examples like giving away a cookie or getting a cookie. Perhaps even give something (like a cookie) to one of the kids, then have them choose how or if they want to be generous with the cookie. Discuss what the decision making felt like, and what it felt like to be the one who received the cookie, as well as one who didn’t receive a cookie. Then surprise them all with a cookie. God’s generosity looks like more than we deserve or expect. It surprises us.

Book (Pioneer & Junior)
If you’re outside, ask everyone to pick up a handful of dirt. Ask these questions.
• What do you notice about the dirt? How does it feel? (Rocky, sandy, smooth, wet.)
• Does it seem like dirt that seeds could grow in?

In today’s story from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus paints a picture about God’s generous love by talking about dirt. We hear that wherever God’s love goes, good soil or not, a harvest is possible. Ask campers what the word harvest means. (It’s the grain or fruit a plant produces as part of its growing cycle.) Invite kids to talk about plants they grow at home and what the plants produce. Do they know how long it takes for a plant to grow from a seed into a plant that produces fruit, vegetables, or grain? (It varies, but it doesn’t happen right away. After planting the seed, we have to wait. Tomatoes take forty to fifty days; sweet corn takes sixty to one hundred days; wheat takes seven to eight months.) Read Mark 4:1-9 aloud, either from the Bible or a Bible storybook. Introduce it by saying that this is a story Jesus told. Then read verses 3-9 again and have campers act it out as you read it. Assign these parts:
• The sower
• The seeds or plants on the path with birds (1-2 campers)
• The seeds on rocky ground (1-2 campers)
• The seeds among thorns (1-2 campers)
• The seeds in good soil (3 or more campers)
• The birds
• The thorns

Discussion Questions
Select from the following questions to help campers grow in understanding of the Bible text for today.

Basic: These questions invite a basic response to the scripture reading.
• Jesus begins the story by asking people to “Listen!” Why do you think he starts the story this way? (Accept answers; reinforce the idea that it signals he’s about to tell them something important.)
• Who is the person in the story, and what are they doing? (A sower, farmer, planter; the person is scattering seed.)
• Where does the person scatter seed? (On the path, on rocky ground, in thorns, in good soil; everywhere!)
• What happened to the seed? (Birds ate some of the seeds; some grew into plants but they were scorched by the sun)
because they didn’t have time to develop deep roots; thorns choked some of the plants; some plants grew to be strong and healthy and produced lots of grain.)

Digging deeper: These questions explore the importance of scattering seeds of God’s word for faith to grow.

- Do you think the person scattering seed was being careful enough—or too generous with the seed? (Accept all answers.)
- Later, Jesus explains to the people listening to the story that the “seed” in the story is like God’s word (v. 14), which is God’s word of love for us. If you were scattering words about God’s love around like seed, would you be generous with it, spreading it everywhere, or be extra careful with it? (Accept various answers but move the focus to “everywhere!”)
- The seed of God’s word of love is planted in us and causes faith to grow. Our faith in God, like our bodies, needs nourishment. What helps our faith grow? (Answers will vary; for example, prayer, reading the Bible, going to church, Sunday school, camp, helping people.) All of these create good soil for faith to grow.
- How would others know that our faith in God is growing? How do our words and actions show that we are filled with God? (Accept various answers and reinforce that we say and do things that reflect God’s goodness, love, welcome, forgiveness, generosity, and so on.)

Challenging: These questions explore the images of soil and harvest. Jesus said that to be “good soil” for God’s word of love, we only need to “hear . . . and accept it” (v. 20). God’s word of love can grow in us, even when we mess up. We’re like rocky soil—we mess up. We might think we don’t deserve God’s love. Discuss how persistent and powerful God’s word of love can be.

- Have you ever seen a plant grow in between a sidewalk or through the pavement in a parking lot? How is that plant like God’s word of love? (It can grow anywhere; it’s powerful.)

- In the story, what happened to the seed that fell in good soil? (There was a huge harvest: times thirty, times sixty, times one hundred, the Bible says.)
- What might that abundant harvest look like in a person’s life? Does it mean they will be rich with material things—food, clothing, fancy home, cars? (No.)
- What does it look like to be filled with the things that God generously gives us? (Lives that reflect God’s goodness, love, welcome, forgiveness, and generosity.) We can trust the harvest (results) to God. Our job is to scatter the seeds of God’s love.

The Week’s Harvest (Pioneer & Junior Look)
On this last day of camp, invite campers to think about their week together and where they saw or experienced the “seeds” and the “good soil.” Make notes as they respond.

- Seed: When did they feel God’s love? Where did they hear or see acts of love and care?
- Good soil: What people and activities helped them learn about God, appreciate God’s good creation, welcome and forgive others, and make friends?

Then have them create a picture or write a story about a special part of their week at camp to take home and tell their family about.

Thank-You Notes (Pioneer & Junior Took)
Set out supplies for making and writing thank-you notes for people at camp. Talk about who campers might thank, such as the cook, nurse, or custodian. How have these people expressed God’s generosity beyond measure this week? Deliver the notes together after closing Bible study time.

Thanks Beyond Measure (Pioneer & Junior Took)
Put a piece of paper using tape on each person’s back (adult staff included). Invite everyone to write or draw something from
camp that they are thankful for on every other person’s back.

Fill the Circle (Pioneer & Junior Took)
Use a rope to make a circle around yourself. Talk about God loving you and therefore, you loving yourself. Then invite campers one by one to “fit” inside the circle as you make the rope wider. (Modify as needed for health and safety.) Remind them that God’s love feels like a circle that includes you, them, and everybody.

Breath Prayer: “God Works in and through Me” (Intermediate & Senior High Hook)
Begin the Bible study with this breath prayer as a way to transition from other activities. Invite campers to silently repeat the prayer “God works in and through me” according to the rhythm of their breath. Think “God works” on the inhale. Think “in and through me” on the exhale. For a step-by-step guide to breath prayer, see Day 1 of this Bible study. Ask campers to respond to this question as they are comfortable: Have you ever taken on a challenge that required persistence? What kept you going when things got tough?

Tend a Garden, Plant a Seed, Water a Plant (Intermediate & Senior High Hook)
This is the perfect day to engage campers in caring for something green and growing. If your camp has a garden or flower bed, have campers plant or weed or harvest. Or you could tend some potted plants on the camp grounds. This will provide a tangible way to enter the parable of the sower.

Intermediate & Senior High Book
Have campers locate Mark 4:1-9 in their Bibles. Encourage a volunteer to read it and then use the questions and key points below to guide discussion.

The Basics: Ask campers to share their experiences of gardening and farming.
- How do you know when it’s the right time of year to plant? (For example, average daily temperature, after the last freeze, number of hours of daylight; what’s “right” for one type of plant is not the same for all plants.)
- What is the soil like where you live?

See if anyone in your group has a map in their Bible of ancient Palestine, including the areas of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. If so, some maps will include elevation and different colors to reflect vegetation in that area. Note that some parts may be green (more lush) and others more arid (like the area north of the Dead Sea). Note that the climate, soil, and farming practices in your local area might be quite different from those of a farmer in Galilee two thousand years ago. Here are a few things to share about farming in Palestine in the time of Jesus:
- Seed was first scattered and then plowed under.
- In this part of the world, soil is often shallow over a harder limestone layer.
- Sometimes farmers had to plant not knowing if there would be enough topsoil for a plant to take root and survive in the hot sun.
- Seed in this time period was of great value and not necessarily easy to come by.

Ask the following question for discussion: How does knowing a little more about farming in ancient Palestine help us understand this parable? After encouraging campers to reflect, emphasize these key points: The sower was not being careless by spreading seed every which way, but was sowing trusting that some of the seeds would grow. Seeds were of great value, so it shows persistence and generosity to keep planting in this way. This pays off for the sower because the harvest comes back a hundred times greater than that which was sown! For discussion, ask the campers this question: What do you think Jesus wants to teach us about discipleship in this story? (Persistence, generosity, trusting God will do amazing things through our seemingly small efforts.)

More Challenging: When you plant a garden, you plant seeds for the kinds of fruits and
vegetables you want to eat. For example, you might plant a row of broccoli, a row of tomatoes, and some sweet corn. Ask campers to consider what God might want to grow in the divine garden.

- Is the parable of the sower talking about a "harvest" of new converts or transformed lives or something else?
- What does God want to grow in us and in our world?

One other way to think about this is to consider the fruits God is trying to grow in the lives of disciples. Have campers locate Galatians 5:22-23 in their Bibles. This is a good passage to highlight or underline. Have a volunteer read the verses. How does this passage help you picture God’s garden?

**Thirty, Sixty, and a Hundredfold (Intermediate & Senior High Look)**

Give campers an experience of how God multiplies our tiny efforts beyond our wildest dreams. Mark 4:8 says that the seed that fell on good soil yielded “thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” You can help campers picture this yield in a couple of different ways:

- Have campers lay out pennies or some other small object to represent the return. First, lay out one penny; this represents one seed in the story. Then, next to that, lay out thirty pennies. Next to that, sixty pennies. Finally, next to that, one hundred pennies. Have campers notice the increase and imagine a God who produces thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold beyond what we began with.
- Another way to demonstrate this would be with four volunteers. Have Volunteer 1 take one step from a starting point, Volunteer 2, thirty steps from the starting point, Volunteer 3, sixty steps, and Volunteer 4, one hundred steps.

**Identify the Fruits from This Week (Intermediate & Senior High Look)**

According to the parable of the sower, we can expect God to generously fill our lives with an abundant harvest. Camp can be a particularly fruitful time in our lives. Take some time to identify the fruits from this past week and talk about how you will bring the experience home with you. **Junior high adaptation:** Use
the nine fruits listed in Galatians 5:22-23 to look back at your week together.

- Where did you see love this week? Joy? Patience? And so on . . .
- Which of these fruits do you want more of in your life?
- How do you want to plant these kinds of seeds back home?

**Senior high adaptation:** High schoolers are at a time when they are discovering their unique gifts and discerning a sense of vocation. You could adapt this reflection into an affirmation circle for the group. Have the group name one by one how they have seen these fruits present in their fellow campers. Make sure every camper is affirmed.

### Take a Baby Plant Home (Intermediate & Senior High Took)
If your camp has the materials, a tangible way to send this experience home with campers is to send them with a plant or seed to tend from camp. Camp provides rich soil for young disciples.

### Letter to your Future Self (Intermediate & Senior High Took)
Ask campers to finish their letters to their Future Selves with anything else they want to remember. Have them respond to the following question from Day 5: What has God given me to share with others? Have campers sign the letter and seal it in an envelope to take home. Share ideas about when they might open their letters again—one month from now, one year from now, a special occasion? Campers can decide for themselves what timing seems right.

### Letting Go of Results (Intermediates and Senior High Service Option)
Sometimes it’s hard to know the impact you’re having on a mission trip or a service project. Often the size of the problem seems too big for the size of our efforts. Today’s Bible story invites us to let go of the results and trust that God will make use of our efforts beyond our time of service. At the end of your week, invite campers to consider the parable of the sower.

- How do you think the sower felt when some of the seed failed to grow? Suggest to campers that sometimes a small seed grows beyond our expectations. We never know the full outcome of our efforts. Go around and ask campers to reflect on this question: What seeds do you hope have been planted this week? Pray for these seeds to grow and bear fruit.

### Good Seed Tag
One person is designated as the good soil. Everyone else is a seed. The good soil runs around and tags the seeds. They then become a large “plant” that grows out of the good soil. (When someone is tagged, they grab hands with the good soil/plant to form a bigger plant.) The object is to get everyone tagged and be part of the large plant. Debrief by asking these questions.

- When you have lots of seeds and good soil, how does it make it easier to achieve the goal of the game (a large plant)?
- How can we be good soil for God’s word to grow, like seeds, in the world?

### Rock, Seeds, Good Soil Tag
This is a variation on the group version of Rock, Paper, Scissors. Divide your group into two teams. Establish two team “safe lines” at least 25 yards [23 meters] from the middle of the area. Each team huddles together and decides which hand sign (rock, paper, or scissors) they want to present. But, instead of “rock, paper, scissors,” use “rock, seeds, good soil.” Use the traditional rock sign (fist), a “thumbs up” for seeds, and a “spring forth” motion for good soil (for example, both hands reaching out). Remind teams that rocks cover seeds, seeds grow out of and cover good soil, and good soil covers rocks. After each team has agreed on a signal, the teams line up face to face. On the count of three, both teams show their hand signs. Then, the winning team chases the other group, tagging other members before they cross their team’s safe line. Those who make it to the safe zone stay there until the round is over. Members who are tagged join the other team. The game is complete when everyone is on one team. Then ask the following questions.
• When you were a rock, how did it feel to choke out the seeds?
• When you were a seed, how did it feel to grow out of and cover good soil?
• When you were good soil, how did it feel to chase the rocks?
• Which scenario did you like best?

Listening Gifts
In today’s Bible story, Jesus invites us to “listen” to a parable about the word of God, which helps us understand what Jesus wants his followers to do. Practice careful listening with your group. Go to a location, have the group sit in silence, and have them listen to the sounds around them. Then, work together to create a list of all the sounds campers heard. When finished, debrief by asking these questions.
• How could we have made our list even longer?
• In what ways can you listen to God?
• How can you share God’s message with others?

Farmer, Fox, Chicken, and a Bag of Feed
Begin this activity by dividing campers into groups of four. Assign each camper in the small group one of the following roles: farmer, fox, chicken, bag of feed. Then ask each group to find a solution to the following problem.

Task: A farmer must get a fox, a chicken, and a bag of feed across a river in a boat built for two. The farmer may make as many trips as are needed, but they must never leave the fox alone with the chicken or the chicken alone with the bag of feed.

Solution: On the first trip the farmer takes the chicken, on the second trip the farmer takes the feed across and brings the chicken back. On the third trip, the farmer takes the fox across, leaving the chicken behind. On the fourth trip, the farmer takes the chicken across.

When finished, discuss the challenge using the following questions to guide the conversation.
• How hard was it to come up with the solution?
• How does this activity remind you of God’s abundant harvest?
• In what ways can you share that harvest with others?

Lean In, Lean Out
A group stands in a circle holding hands. People are assigned a “one” or a “two,” alternating around the circle. On the count of three, ones lean in while twos lean out. The group should be able to support and balance itself. Those who lean in need to have their knuckles facing out, and those who lean out have their knuckles facing in. Then ask these questions.
• How well did we work together to achieve the task?
• Seeds need good soil to achieve their task or potential. How is working together as a group like being good soil for the seed of God’s word?
• What qualities make a group like ours good soil for the seed of God’s word?

Chaotic Team Juggle
In today’s Bible story, Jesus tells a story about seeds falling among many things. The outcomes are different. In this game, you can simulate those seeds by tossing several small objects (balls work best) around the group gathered in a circle. Players must get the person’s attention by calling out their name and getting permission (verbally, eye contact, nod, or smile) to then throw the object to them, which they should then do. Gradually add more objects until lots of objects are being tossed around. Afterward, ask the following questions.
• How did it feel when the most objects were being passed around?
• How was this game like or not like God’s abundant gifts?
• How do or should we respond to God’s generosity?

Log Activity
This activity uses a log or pole on the ground that groups can balance on. Have campers
count off and ask them to line up on the log in numerical order. Once on the log in order, the object of the activity is to reverse the order of people. So, when the activity is finished, where person number one started, the person with the last number should be. The campers must do this without leaving the log or pole. In other words, they cannot touch the ground. Debrief with these questions.

- How was this task like overcoming obstacles in our lives?
- How do we help others overcome obstacles in their lives?

Learning from One Another
During their week at camp, campers have discovered many things. To help them remember their experiences when they go home, have the group work together to write one (or a few) letters to be kept by the counselors to share with subsequent camper group(s) in the coming week(s). The letter would tell the future campers what this week’s campers learned about God. They might use the daily theme (Boundless: God beyond Measure) and other themes from the week to think about what they learned. When done, have them sign their letter(s) and give it to their counselor for sharing with a future camper group. When finished, ask these questions.

- Of all the things you included in your letter, what was the most important?
- Why do you think it is important to share the things you discovered with others?

Day 5 Worship Ideas

Call to Worship
Explain the assembly’s part in today’s call and response.
Leader: Are you listening? Are you listening? Hey you! Yes, you! We have ears to listen! (Point to your ears.)
All: We have ears to listen!
Leader: Let anyone with ears listen! Are you listening? Are you listening? Yes, you! We have ears to listen! (Point to your ears.)
All: We have ears to listen!
Leader: Let anyone with ears listen! Are you listening? Are you listening? Yes, you! We have ears to listen and mouths to share the good news! (Point to your ears and mouth.)
All: We have ears to listen and mouths to share the good news!
When I say “The Lord,” you say “is with us!” Let’s try it. “The Lord . . .”
All: is with us!
Leader: The Lord
All: is with us!
Leader: Let us pray. God, you are our everything. Your love for us gives us purpose. Your compassion for us gives us hope. Your presence with us gives us strength. You are our all in all. May we never take for granted your generosity beyond measure. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Mark 4:1-9
Two readers are needed.

Narrator: A reading from the Gospel of Mark. “Again [Jesus] began to teach beside the sea.”
Interrupter: Again! This guy sure did a lot of teaching.
Narrator glares.
Narrator: Yes. As I was saying, “Again [Jesus] began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.”
Interrupter: That guy really could draw a crowd, couldn't he?
Narrator: (looks annoyed) Yes, he could. Can I continue now?
Interrupter: Sure, go ahead and do your thing.
Narrator: Thanks. (exasperated) “He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching, he said to them”:
Interrupter: Again, with the parables. I never really understood those.
Narrator: You don’t say?
Interrupter: I do say.
Narrator: I think I might know why. Do you know how this one ends?
Interrupter: Nope.
Narrator: It says, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” You’ve got ears.
Interrupter: Yup. (Points to ears.)
Narrator: Well, now is the time to use them. Because Jesus said: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”
Interrupter: And then he said, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” Wow! That sower is pretty awesome!
Narrator: How so?
Interrupter: Well, he was just throwing seeds everywhere. He wasn’t careful with them, not at all. The sower took a chance on all the soil.
Narrator: Hmmmm . . . I never thought about it that way. The sower is pretty generous.
Interrupter: I’d say! Recklessly, abundantly, life-givingly generous.
Narrator: You know the sower is God.
Interrupter: I guessed that. A recklessly, abundantly, life-givingly generous God.
Narrator: Amen.

Prayers of the People
We are going to pray! Our prayers are not just for us but for the whole world; we pray for people and places we don’t even know. At the end of each prayer I will say “God you are generous beyond measure,” then you respond “God, you are generous beyond measure.” Let’s try it. “God, you are generous beyond measure.”
All: God, you are generous beyond measure.
Leader: Let us pray. God, we thank you for all that is good in the world. We thank you for your guiding word. We thank you for your extravagant love. We thank you for your abundant mercy. God, you are generous beyond measure.
All: God, you are generous beyond measure.
Leader: God, we thank you for all that is good in the world. We thank you for the sunrise and the moonrise. We thank you for creepy crawlies and flying things. We thank you for water and land and leaves. God, you are generous beyond measure.
All: God, you are generous beyond measure.
Leader: God we thank you for all that is good in the world. We thank you for friends, new and old. We thank you for people who love us and for people to love. We thank you for new experiences that show us your fingerprints in all things. God, you are generous beyond measure.
All: Amen.

Skit
Three characters are needed: newscaster, sower, cameraperson (not a speaking role).
Newscaster: Hello, we are here today with the sower, live and in person, to get her accounting of this story. Hello, what is your name, madame?
Sower is sowing seeds.
Sower: I am who I am, and I will be who I will be.
Newscaster: That’s a mouthful. For now, I will call you Sower.
Sower: Whatever you need to call me.
Newscaster: Well then (looks uncomfortable), there has been a report that you are throwing seeds on all manner of soil. What do you have to say to that?
Sower: (starts humming "Amazing Grace" and keeps sowing)
Newscaster: (pauses) Aren’t you afraid you’ll run out?
Sower: (keeps humming, keeps sowing)
Newscaster: (getting more frantic) But what will you do if there are no more seeds!
Sower: (keeps humming, keeps sowing)
Newscaster: Don’t you understand? People need to know! How can you be so wasteful? That soil doesn’t deserve a chance.
Sower: (stops humming) Everyone and everything deserves a chance.
Newscaster: Why?
Sower: Because in the beginning, when the world was created, it was declared good. I should know. I was there.
Newscaster: And?
Sower: Everything and everyone has my holy fingerprints all over them. Even if it seems terrible right now, I created it to be good. So I trust that with time, love, and amazing grace, it will be again.
Newscaster: But what if you run out?
Sower: Of soil?
Newscaster: No, of seed!
Sower: How can I run out of seed? There is always good news to be planted. There is always grace to be given. There is always love to be sown.
Newscaster: (looks at feet) Even for me?
Sower: (lifts newscaster’s chin) Even for you. (Sower starts sowing again, humming “Amazing Grace.”)
Newscaster: There you have it, folks. Even for me.

Sending
Leader: Our boundless God fills our lives with all that God is, empowering all who follow Christ to be brave, persistent, and generous disciples. What have you discovered about the boundlessness of God this week?
(After 90 seconds, break the silence with “Amen.”)
Leader: For our sending today, we are going to use our whole body. Repeat the phrase I say and follow my movements. God gives me everything!
All: God gives me everything!

Leader: (Throw your hands above your head.) God gives me everything!
All: God gives me everything!
Leader: God gives you everything!
All: God gives you everything!
Leader: (Point all around as you turn in a circle.) God gives you everything!
All: God gives you everything!
Leader: God gives me friends!
All: God gives me friends!
Leader: (Air high-five the people around you.) God gives me friends!
All: God gives me friends!
Leader: Thank you, God, for this day!
All: Thank you, God, for this day!
Leader: (Clap.) Thank you, God, for this day!
All: Thank you, God, for this day!
Leader: We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.
Leader: (Send a big kiss by using your hands to gesture outward from your lips rather than blowing a kiss.) We go in peace to share God’s love.
All: We go in peace to share God’s love.

Prayer
Dear God,
Wow! You fill our lives with all that you are. Help us to live with boldness, persistence, and generosity as your disciples. We trust that you can take the seeds we plant and multiply them beyond our imagining!
In Jesus’s name. Amen.
**Off-Site Crafts**

Here is a suggested craft list for off-site camps. Congregations can adapt this in any way they wish or might even want to ask a crafty member of the congregation lead and create the crafts for day camp. The crafts are intended to reinforce and supplement what the campers learn in GROW Time. The activities selected hopefully allow for the variety of expressive skills of the campers. Leaders should focus on the desired learning outcome with campers, rather than the quality of the creation. Some campers will be reluctant to demonstrate or display their products to peers. Respect their sensitivities. **Several ideas are presented for each day. You may pick one or a few suggestions for each day.**

**Day 1**

**The Whole World in God’s Hands**

*Materials: white, round coffee filters, paper plates, blue and green markers, spray bottle filled with water, black construction paper white crayons, scissors, clear contact paper clear tape*

1. Campers color their own white coffee filter with blue and green markers. (Protect the surface by placing a paper plate under each camper’s coffee filter.)
2. After coloring the entire surface of their coffee filter, campers take turns using the water bottle to lightly spray the entire surface of their creation.
3. While the stained-glass earth dries (1–2 hours), use a white crayon to trace on black construction paper around each camper’s hands and part of each arm (halfway to the elbow). Then carefully cut these out.
4. Use contact paper to cover both sides of each completely dried stained-glass earth. Then use clear tape to attach the hands so that they look to be holding the earth.
5. Be sure to write each camper’s name with white crayon somewhere on the black construction paper hands so that campers know which one is theirs to take home at the end of the day.

**Handprint Earth**

*Materials: large pieces of paper, approximately 12 x 18 inches [30 x 45 cm] or larger, one for each camper; blue and green finger paint; paint trays; water source for rinsing hands; paper or cloth towels*

1. Cover the work surface and pour paint into trays.
2. Give each camper a piece of paper.
3. Show campers how to gently press their hands into the paint and then press their hands onto the paper to make the earth with their hands. Explain how the green paint represents land, and the blue paint represents water.
4. Remind and help campers to rinse and dry their hands between colors.
5. As campers paint, talk about ways that we can help take care of the world that God created.

**Button Sun Collage**

*Materials: blue card stock; liquid glue; glue trays; paintbrushes; yellow, orange, and gold buttons*

1. Cover the work surface and pour glue into trays.
2. Give each camper a piece of card stock and a paintbrush.
3. Show campers how to paint a circle of glue to represent the shape of sun on their paper, making sure that the entire circle is covered in glue. They can also make shapes for the sun’s rays.
4. Let campers choose a variety of buttons and have them glue them on their card stock to make a shining sun.
5. Allow the project to dry completely.
6. This collage can be a reminder that the sun and everything the sun’s light touches is part of God’s good, interconnected creation.
Bird Feeders
Materials: large bowl; spoons; rimmed cookie sheets; backyard bird seed (plan on using at least 1 cup [236 ml] per camper) coconut oil; cookie cutters, various shapes a straw; ribbon cut in 10-inch [25 cm] lengths, one per camper; scissors

1. Cover the work surface.
2. Pour bird seed into the bowl.
3. Add coconut oil to bird seed—one spoonful at a time—and mix. As campers take turns mixing, talk about what kinds of birds eat this kind of bird seed. (This information is usually shown on the package.)
4. Keep adding coconut oil until the mixture sticks together.
5. Spread the mixture onto the cookie sheet so that it is about ½ inch [1.25 cm] thick. Put the trays in a cooler or refrigerator to cool for 30 minutes.
6. Cut out shapes using cookie cutters, allowing each camper to cut out two or more shapes.
7. Using the straw, have campers make a hole in the top of the shape.
8. Give each camper a piece of ribbon and have them thread it through the holes made with the straw.
9. Campers can hang them outside their cabin or take them home to hang outside and help feed the birds.

Nature Print Necklaces
Materials: leaves and flowers, at least one or two per camper; air-drying clay; small stick acrylic paints; paintbrushes; jewelry cord, approx. 20-24 inches [50-60 cm] per camper; scissors

1. Take a walk and collect leaves and flowers that have interesting textures.
2. Cover the work surface.
3. Give each camper a small piece of clay and have them flatten it with their hands so it is about ¼ inch [.6 cm] thick.
4. Instruct campers to gently press a leaf or flower into the clay.
5. Using a stick, have them create a small hole at the top of the clay.
6. Have campers remove the leaf or flower, then allow the clay to dry.
7. When the clay is dry, campers can paint the imprint in the clay. Allow paint to dry.
8. String a 20-24 inch [50-60 cm] length of jewelry cord through the hole in the clay.
9. Tie a knot in the cord. Campers can wear this necklace to remember their time spent in God’s good creation!

“Caring for Creation” Seed Bombs
Materials: construction paper; wildflower seeds (look for seeds that are native to your state or region); old blender or food processor; large bowls; water; large cookie sheets or boards

1. Have campers tear construction paper into small pieces and place them in a large bowl. Then add water and soak for about 20 minutes.
2. Using their hands, have campers squeeze most of the water out of the paper. Discard the rest of the water. Place the mixture in a blender or food processor and mix until relatively smooth.
3. Have campers scrape the paper pulp into another bowl and mix seeds in with their hands.
4. Show campers how to take handfuls of the mixture and shape them into balls that are about 2 inches [5 cm] in diameter. If the mixture is too dry, slowly add water until it is easy to shape.
5. Put the balls onto a cookie sheet to dry overnight.
6. When campers take seed bombs home, they can plant them!

Thankfulness Sunburst
Materials: white paper or card stock; fine-point black permanent markers; pencils; watercolor paints; paintbrushes; cups to hold water; water source

1. Cover the work surface.
2. Give each person a piece of paper and a pencil.
3. Tell campers to draw a circle in the center of their paper that will be the sun. Make
sure they leave plenty of room for the sun’s rays.

4. When campers have drawn their sun, have them write a message about God’s creation, such as “Created by God,” in the center circle.

5. Invite campers to write positive things about themselves going out from the center of the sun as if the words are the sun’s rays. The suns will look better if they have a lot of rays, so encourage campers to think of lots of things to write.

6. After campers have drawn their sun and its rays, have them copy over the words in fine-point permanent marker.

7. When the ink is dry, campers can paint over their suns with watercolor paints.

Day 2

From Caterpillars to Butterflies

Materials: coffee filters, one per camper; plastic spray bottle filled with water; Do-A-Dot Art Markers; wooden clothespins (spring type); pipe cleaners in a variety of colors, one small piece per camper; paper plates to protect surfaces; permanent marker

1. Give each camper a flattened-out coffee filter (butterfly wings) on a paper plate to protect surfaces.

2. Dab coffee filters with Do-A-Dot Art Markers in a variety of colors.

3. Take turns spraying coffee filters with water to make a rainbow of colors.

4. After coffee filters are dry, scrunch the middle of each butterfly together with a clothespin.

5. Let campers choose a color for their butterfly’s’ antenna, made out of a small piece of pipe cleaner bent into a V shape, and held together by the clothespin.

6. Write each camper’s name or initials on the back of the clothespin with permanent marker.

Summer Valentines and Valentine Bag

Preparation: Cut out heart shapes and write “Jesus loves you, and so do I” on each one. Each camper will need enough to give each camper a valentine. If there are ten campers in your group, then each camper will need nine valentines, and you will need to make 90 total (10 x 9 = 90).

Materials: paper lunch bags, one per camper; adhesive foam hearts; red, pink, and white crayons, markers, and other craft supplies; valentine hearts with “Jesus loves you, and so do I” prepared ahead of time, enough so each camper signs a valentine for each camper

1. Campers decorate bags with adhesive foam hearts; red, pink, and white crayons or markers; and other craft supplies.

2. Write each camper’s name on their valentine bag.

3. Help campers write their name or initials on one valentine for every camper.

4. Set out all of the valentine bags, and then have the group fill each bag with one summer valentine from each camper to take home at the end of the day.

“Love My New Friends” Bracelet

Materials: construction paper; yarn cut in 10-inch [25 cm] pieces; markers; scissors; clear tape; hole punch

Preparation

- Trace small (1 inch x 1 inch [2.5 cm x 2.5 cm]) hearts on the paper.

- For younger campers, you may want to cut out most of the hearts ahead of time; however, save enough so that each person can cut out one or two.

- Wrap tape around one end of each piece of yarn.

Directions

1. Let each camper choose five or six hearts for their bracelets.

2. Have campers cut out a few more hearts.

3. Have campers decorate their hearts.

4. Using a hole punch, have campers punch a hole in each heart.

5. Give each camper a piece of yarn, with tape around one end. Show campers how to thread that end through the hole in one heart and repeat with the other hearts.
6. Tie the bracelets loosely around campers’ wrists. Campers can take these bracelets home as a reminder of their week at camp!

A Lovely Quilt
Materials: white or light-colored fabric cut into 8 inch x 8 inch [20 cm x 20 cm] squares, one square per camper; fabric markers; 6-inch [15 cm] pieces of ribbon (or needles and thread if the group will be sewing the quilt together); scissors; hole punch

1. Give each camper a square of fabric and explain that they are going to make a love quilt.
2. Tell campers to use fabric markers to draw something representing God’s boundless love for them on the fabric square.
3. When campers are done, use a hole punch to punch holes in the corners of each fabric quilt square.
4. Thread pieces of ribbon through the holes in the quilt squares and tie them together with bows. Younger campers might need an adult or older camper to help. Or the squares could be sewn together.
5. The finished quilt can be hung in your cabin for your whole group to see. Talk about the quilt as a group: What are some other examples of God’s boundless love for us?

Showing God’s Love Collage
Materials: old magazines and newspapers; scissors, one pair per camper; glue or glue sticks; construction paper, one sheet per camper; markers

1. Lay out the magazines and newspapers and invite campers to look for examples of people showing God’s love to others.
2. Make sure each camper has a pair of scissors and a piece of construction paper.
3. Instruct campers to glue their pictures on the paper to make a collage. Campers can accent their collage by drawing on it as well.

4. As they work on their collages, invite campers to talk about who has shown God’s love to them.

Lovely Stained Glass
Materials: aluminum foil; permanent markers in a variety of colors; thick yarn; scissors; Pencils; 8½ x 11-inch [22 cm x 28 cm] pieces of cardboard, one per camper; liquid glue; glue trays; paintbrushes; tape

1. Cover the work surface and pour glue into trays.
2. Give each camper a piece of cardboard and a pencil.
3. Talk about today’s Bible story from John 3:11-17. What symbols or images can campers think of that relate to the reading? Explain that today they’ll be making stained glass symbols of the story. Campers might make a cross, a heart, a simple earth shape, or another symbol.
4. Instruct campers to use a pencil to draw their symbol on their cardboard. To create the stained-glass effect, have them break up the space on their symbols with additional lines.
5. When everyone has drawn their design, show them how to carefully paint over the lines of the design with glue.
6. Next, have campers take pieces of yarn and lay them on top of the glue.
7. When campers have covered each line with glue and yarn, set the boards aside to dry.
8. Have campers cut a piece of aluminum foil that is bigger than their cardboard piece.
9. When the glue is dry, have campers lay aluminum foil on top of the yarn design and press gently with their fingers on either side of the yarn. This should be done over the entire design so that the design is now raised and can be seen in the foil.
10. Have campers turn their cardboard over to fold the extra foil over the edges and then tape the excess to the back.
11. Using permanent markers, have campers color in their symbol.
Love Language
Materials: pipe cleaners; scrap yarn; scissors

1. Make sure each camper has some pipe cleaners and yarn.
2. Explain to campers that they will be making the word love out of pipe cleaners. Campers can decide if they would like to make individual letters or the word in cursive.
3. Show campers how to connect pipe cleaners by twisting them together.
4. Instruct campers to tie one end of the yarn to one end of their letter or word and wrap the yarn around the pipe cleaner. Yarn can be wrapped over itself to give that part of the word or letter more thickness.
5. When a camper has wrapped all but a few inches of yarn around the pipe cleaner, have them tie on another piece of yarn and continue wrapping. Multiple colors of yarn can be used throughout the project.
6. When the entire word or letter has been wrapped, campers should tie a knot around the end of the pipe cleaner.
7. After the word or letter has been covered with yarn, it will hold its shape better. If needed, the pipe cleaners can be adjusted slightly to make the word more readable.
8. Campers can take their own “love language” home to display or to give to someone to remind that person of God’s love!

Day 3

“God’s Family” Picture Frame
Materials: children’s story Bible; Polaroid camera or smart phone with printer; adhesive foam picture frames for 4 x 6 inch [10 cm x 15 cm] or 3 x 5 inch [7.5 cm x 13 cm] photos (available online); fun adhesive foam shapes; markers in contrasting colors; adhesive refrigerator magnets

1. Show campers a picture of Jesus’s family from the Christmas story in a children’s story Bible. Then explain the activity.
2. Let campers choose the frame color for their own frame.
3. Use a Polaroid camera or smart phone to take a photo of each camper.
4. Place the developed or printed photo of each camper in their adhesive foam frame.
5. Campers decorate their frame.
6. Help campers write their name on the back of their frame and attach adhesive magnets.

Paper Doll Chain
Materials: recycled cereal boxes or other thin cardboard, poster board, or thick card stock; googly wiggle eyes; fabric, buttons, sequins, pom-pom balls, lace, trim, and other embellishments; yarn in a variety of colors; markers or crayons; scissors

Preparation
Use card stock or other sturdy paper to make a simple child-figure pattern to trace. The figure should be about 9 inches [23 cm] and 4 inches [10 cm] wide.

Directions
1. Cut thin cardboard or thick paper into a strip, at least 24 inches [60 cm] long and about 10 inches [25 cm] high.
2. Fold this long strip, accordion style, with panels about 6 inches [15 cm] wide.
3. Use the pattern you made ahead of time, or draw the figure of a child freehand, on the top panel, with the hands of the figure reaching the outer edges of the panel.
4. Cut around the edges of the figure, through all layers, being careful that the hands of the figure remain connected.
5. After unfolding your paper doll chain, campers can use the provided supplies to draw on, dress, and decorate the connected figures.
Welcome Place Mats

**Materials:** 9 inch x 12 inch [25 cm x 30 cm] sheets of construction paper, various colors, two sheets per camper; scissors; clear tape

1. Explain that campers will be making a woven place mat from construction paper. Have each camper choose two different colors of construction paper. (If you wish, campers can make two or more place mats.)
2. Show campers how to put one piece of paper on the table in front of them so that the long sides are at the top and bottom. Have them fold the paper in half like a book.
3. Holding the paper like a book with the fold on the left side, instruct campers to start on the folded edge and make a horizontal cut that is about an inch [2.5 cm] from the top of the book and parallel to that edge. The cut should extend to the opposite side, stopping about an inch from right side of the page. (You may want to do this ahead of time for younger campers.)
4. Next, have campers make five or six more similar, parallel cuts about an inch apart down the fold. The last cut should be about an inch from the bottom of the paper. Have them unfold the paper and lay it flat on the table. This will be the base for their place mat weaving.
5. Starting on the long end, have campers cut their second piece of construction paper into strips that are about an inch wide.
6. When everyone is done cutting, show them how to weave the vertical strips under and over the horizontal strips of the place mat base. If a camper starts by going over the first horizontal strip, they should start the next vertical strip by going *under* the second horizontal strip.
7. When campers have finished, have them turn their place mats over and tape around the edges so that the paper strips stay in place.
8. These place mats can be taken home to use when campers welcome someone into their home for a special meal.

Welcome Hands Wreath

**Materials:** construction paper, various colors; craft scissors; pencils; paper plates; 12-inch [30 cm] pieces of yarn; stapler; glue sticks

1. Give each camper a paper plate and show them how to cut the center out of the middle so that they have a ring. This will be the base for the wreath.
2. Give each camper a piece of yarn and have them staple both ends to one side of the wreath to make a loop for hanging the wreath.
3. Have campers trace their own hands-on construction paper with a pencil. It might be easier for young campers to work with a partner.
4. Once everyone has traced their hand, have them cut it out. This paper hand can be a template for tracing.
5. Instruct campers to trace more hands out of paper. They can use the same color, or multiple colors. Campers will need at least eight paper hands.
6. Once they have cut out all their paper hands, show campers how to use glue sticks to glue the hands around the paper plate ring so that they overlap, and the heels of the hands are at the center.
7. Campers can take their wreaths home and hang them up to welcome others as God welcomes us.

Welcome Weaving

**Materials:** paper plates; craft scissors; pencil; yarn scraps, various colors; blunt needles with large eyes (for yarn), one per camper

**Preparation**
Draw a zigzag line around the edge of each paper plate and cut out the triangles that are made by the line. (Junior high campers can cut out their own plates.) The zigzag should be about \( \frac{1}{2} \) to \( \frac{3}{4} \) inch [1.25 to 2 cm] deep and about \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch [1.25 cm] wide. The plate will serve as the frame for the weaving.

**Directions**
1. Give each camper a paper plate and have them pick one color of yarn to make the
warp and various colors of shorter strands of yarn for the weft.

2. To create the lengthwise (warp) yarns, wrap the yarn around two opposite triangles, crossing the yarn in the middle of the paper plate like an X. Knot the end of the yarn to one of the yarn strands at the center of the frame.

3. Have them continue to wind the yarn across the diameter of the front side of the plate (back side of plate will not have any warp), putting the yarn in the opposite triangle notches as they go around, and crossing the middle each time.

4. When yarn is wound around all the notches, tie it off on the back side of the paper plate.

5. Now campers are ready to weave the weft, which in this weaving will form a spiral.

6. Thread the yarn through a needle. Starting at the center by the knot, show campers how to use the needle to weave the yarn over and under the yarn. As campers weave, make sure that yarn is pulled tight to the center.

7. When a camper runs out of yarn, they can tie a new piece onto the yarn end. They continue until they don’t have any more room around the circle.

8. Tie off the end on the last strand of warp yarn.

9. The many colors that make up the weaving can represent the variety of people who make up the human race, and God welcomes all of us.

**Boundless Welcome Mosaic**

*Materials: heavy white paper, one piece per person; liquid glue; paint trays; pencils; paintbrushes; tissue paper of various colors, cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) squares*

1. Cover the work surface and pour the glue into trays.
2. Explain to campers that they are going to make mosaics, which are pictures that are made up of very small individual pieces. They will use colored tissue to make the pieces for the mosaic.

3. Together, brainstorm a simple shape, word, or short phrase from today’s Bible text (Ephesians 2:11-22) that campers would like to use for their mosaic, and have them draw it on their paper. For example, a shape could be a dove (for peace); a word or phrase could be “peace,” “one new humanity,” “household of God,” or “holy temple.”

4. Show campers how to take one of the tissue paper squares and roll them into a small ball. Let campers try this a few times and explain that they will be using these tissue paper balls to make their mosaic.

5. Using a paintbrush, have campers “paint” glue on their picture, filling in the drawing.

6. Instruct campers to place balls of tissue paper onto the glue and have them continue until the entire design is filled in.

**“Images of Welcome” Salt Painting**

*Materials: black construction paper; pencils white liquid glue; table salt (about ¼ cup [60 ml] per person); small cups; watercolor paints; paintbrushes*

1. Cover the work surface, pour glue into the trays, and pour salt into a cup for each person.

2. Give each camper a piece of black construction paper and a pencil. Encourage them to draw a simple design that reminds them of today’s Bible passage (Ephesians 2:11-22), such as a cross, a house or church, or the word welcome.

3. Instruct campers to use a paintbrush to “paint” glue over the lines of their design.

4. While the glue is still wet, have campers sprinkle their salt over the glue. Let the salt sit for a minute, and then they can pour the extra salt into a trash can.

5. Give each camper a paintbrush and a small cup of water. Show them how to get their paintbrush wet with a little water, dip the paintbrush into some watercolor paint and then touch the paintbrush to the salt. The color should spread through the salt.
6. Repeat until all the salt is colored. Then put each camper’s artwork in a safe place to dry.

**Friendship Pins**
*Materials: small safety pins; small beads that will fit onto a safety pin; small bowls; needle nose pliers*

**Preparation**
- Open a safety pin and use a needle-nose pliers to unwrap the loop at the bottom of the safety pin.
- Do this so you have several safety pins ready for craft time. If you are doing this craft with senior high campers, some may be able to do this step themselves.

**Directions**
1. Put beads in small bowls and make sure that each camper has a few safety pins that have been “unwrapped.” (See above.)
2. Show campers how to put beads onto a safety pin so that they are near the head. Depending on the size of the safety pins and beads, they should be able to get four or five beads on each pin.
3. Use the needle-nose pliers to recreate the loop at the bottom of the safety pin so that the beads stay in place and the safety pin can be closed.
4. Have your group make as many pins as they can. Encourage them to hand these friendship pins out to others as a message and symbol that all are welcome in God’s community.

**Welcoming Lanterns**
*Materials: empty tin cans; water; nails; hammers; votive candles*

**Preparation**
- Wash tin cans and remove any labels.
- Fill cans with water and put in a freezer.

**Directions**
1. Give each camper a hammer, a nail, and a can.
2. Explain that they will be making lanterns and encourage them to think of a simple design or pattern. What represents “welcome” to them? Campers could make the word *welcome* or a symbol (such as a heart).
3. Show campers how to hammer the nail into the can to make holes. The ice inside each can gives campers a solid surface to pound against.
4. After campers have finished their designs, set the cans in a place where the ice will melt.
5. Once the ice has melted, pour out the water and dry the inside of the cans, being careful of the sharp edges.
6. Give each camper a votive candle to place in their lantern. They can take their lanterns home and light the candles inside to welcome others to their home.

**Day 4**

**Muddy Pig Puppet**
*Materials: white paper lunch bags; paper pig ears, snouts, and hooves for campers to cut out, prepared in advance; glue sticks and clear tape; adhesive googly wiggle eyes, two for each camper; crayons or markers; craft sponge; washable brown paint; pipe cleaners, one 12-inch [30 cm] stem for every two campers; safety scissors, one per child*

**Preparation**
- Draw pig ears and snouts on pink paper and pig hooves on black paper.
- Cut 12-inch [30 cm] pipe cleaners in half and curl around a pencil to make pig tails.

**Directions**
1. Campers color a lunch bag with whatever crayon or marker color(s) they want their pig to be. The folded bottom of the paper bag serves as the pig’s head and face, with the mouth under the fold.
2. Campers cut out two pig ears, one pig snout, and two pig hooves, and glue or tape them onto their pig bag. Then attach two googly wiggle eyes above the pig’s snout, and tape on the curly pig tail.
3. Help campers write the words “Lost and Found” inside their pig’s mouth. Explain that God’s love finds and forgives us, no matter what, just like in today’s story.
4. Help campers “muddy up” their pig, using a craft sponge and washable brown paint.

**Handprint Hearts**
*Materials: heavy white paper; washable paint; paint trays; water source for rinsing hands; paper or cloth towels*

1. Cover the work surface, then pour paint into the trays.
2. Many campers have probably finger painted before. Explain that they will be painting with their hands but will be making handprints into different shapes.
3. Have campers practice how to make the shape of a heart with their hands. Hold the fingers of one hand together, and then place their other hand on top of the first one so that the closed fingers overlap but the palms of the hands are separated. Then tuck thumbs in. This should look like an upside-down heart.
4. Give each person a piece of paper and then show them how to gently dip their hands into the paint and make a handprint on the paper. Let campers experiment with making different shapes with their handprints.
5. Then invite campers to make handprint hearts while you talk about today’s story. The father in the story forgave his son because he loved him so much. God loves us and forgives us too!
6. Help campers clean their hands and hang the paintings to dry.

**A Hug from Afar**
*Materials: construction paper, various colors; pencils; markers or crayons; scissors; yarn cut in 18-inch [46 cm] pieces; hole punch*

1. Ahead of time, cut a heart out of a piece of 8½ x 11-inch [22 cm x 28 cm] paper to use as a template.
2. Have each camper choose two different colors of construction paper.
3. Tell campers to find a partner. Show them how to trace their partner’s hands on one piece of paper with a pencil.
4. Have campers trace the heart template on their second piece of construction paper and then have them cut out their hand shapes and hearts.
5. Show the group how to punch a hole in the middle of both sides of the heart and on the thumb side of each hand.
6. Give each camper a piece of yarn and have them thread it through the hole in one hand, then through both holes on the heart, and then through the hole in the other hand. There should be 5 or 6 inches [13 or 15 cm] of yarn between each hand and the heart so that the “hug” can be wrapped around someone.
7. Help campers tie a knot in the ends of the yarn so that it stays attached to the paper hands.
8. Have campers write a message to someone who they would like to send their hug to!

**“Gift of Forgiveness” Soap Carving**
*Materials: one bar of soap for each person (soft enough to carve easily); pencils; for younger campers: plastic knives or small craft sticks; for older campers: blunt carving tools*

1. Cover the work surface and give each person a bar of soap.
2. Explain that they will be carving simple symbols out of soap to remind them of God’s forgiveness (for example: a rainbow; a cross; a stitched-together, once-broken heart).
3. Instruct campers to draw a design on their bar of soap and then show them how to scrape the extra soap away from their design. Younger campers may simply want to experiment with carving the soap.
4. Soap scraps can be collected and melted to make larger pieces of soap.
5. As campers use the soap, they can thank God for God’s forgiveness and grace.
“Surprising Grace” Scratch Art

Materials: white construction paper; crayons; black paint; paintbrushes; paint trays; toothpicks or sticks

1. Cover the work surface.
2. Give each person a piece of paper. Tell them to press firmly and cover the entire piece with crayon. The finished product will look better if they use a variety of colors. The color coverage is what is important in this step, so campers can make abstract designs rather than an image of something.
3. Next, instruct campers to cover their entire piece of paper with black paint. To make sure that it is covered, more than one coat of paint may need to be used.
4. While the paint is drying, explain that they will be making scratch art. Scratch art is where the black covering is scratched off to reveal the colors underneath. They will start with black paper, but will change it into a work of art. As you’re working, talk with campers about how God’s forgiveness changes us.
5. When the papers are dry, give each camper a toothpick or a stick, and have them use it to create an image by scratching some black paint away to reveal the color underneath. For example, they could create a picture of a time when someone forgave them, or they forgave someone else. Now the picture looks totally different!
6. Hang up the finished pictures as reminders of God’s grace and forgiveness.

“You Tell the Story” Accordion Book

Materials: white card stock, approximately 10 inches x 12 inches [25 cm x 30 cm] cut in half lengthwise; scissors; markers or crayons; glue sticks; pencils; scratch paper; optional: cardboard scraps and decorative paper to use for book covers

1. Explain that campers will be making a book about today’s Bible story. Give each camper two strips of card stock and instruct them fold each piece in half.
2. Now show campers how to take the top flap and fold the end up to the fold. Tell them to do the same with the other flap. If they look at the paper from the side, it should look like a W. Tell campers to do the same with their second strip of card stock.
3. Have campers spread glue on the last face of one W and press the first face of the other W to it. Then they should crease the paper along the folds.
4. Have campers illustrate the story of the lost son (prodigal son) from Luke 15 on the pages of their books, using one end as the cover. Talk together about the scenes they might illustrate to help them fill the number of pages needed. They may find it helpful to sketch out the scenes on scratch paper first.

For older campers

1. Give each camper an additional strip of card stock to create additional pages for the book. Fold the strip and attach the ends of the two strips (like above) to make one long strip.
2. Give each camper some scrap cardboard and have them cut out two rectangles that are 3 inches x 5 inches [7.5 cm x 13 cm].
3. Have campers cut a piece of decorative paper that is a little bit larger than their cardboard, wrap it around the cardboard, and glue it in place.
4. Repeat this for the second piece of cardboard. These will be the covers for the accordion book.
5. Glue the covers to each end of the accordion pages.
6. Encourage campers to take their books home and share them with their family or friends.

“Book Art” Prayer

Materials: old books; pencils; markers; colored pencils; watercolor paints; paintbrushes; cups for water

1. Cover the work surface.
2. Pass out old books and instruct each person to carefully tear out a page.
3. Show campers how a simple prayer can be made by circling some words and crossing others out.
4. Give the group some time to look at their pages and then create a prayer.
5. After each person has chosen their words and circled their prayer, encourage them to embellish their page with the materials provided. Campers can use markers, colored pencils, or watercolors to decorate their page and draw over the words that aren’t being used.
6. Set campers’ pages aside so they can dry.

**Prayer Journals**

*Materials:* three plain, brown lunch bags per person; blunt needles, one per person; 18 inches [46 cm] of embroidery floss per person; scissors; art supplies to decorate journal covers, such as markers, crayons, or watercolor paints and brushes

1. Give each person three lunch bags and remind them to keep the bags flat.
2. Instruct campers to take one of their lunch bags and lay it flat on the table in front of them with the bottom of the bag facing up.
3. Leaving the bag with the bottom folded, cut through both layers of the bag to remove the bottom of the bag. Have campers do the same with their second bag. The leftover pieces can be recycled.
4. Have campers place their bags on top of one another and fold them in half so that it looks like a book with pages.
5. Give each camper a needle and a piece of embroidery floss. They should thread the needle and tie a knot with the ends of the thread.
6. Next, have them open the pages of a journal and, starting at one end, sew along the fold to hold the pages together.
7. When campers have sewn to the opposite end of the fold, tie a knot and then cut off any remaining thread.
8. Next, campers can cut the remaining folded edges of the paper bags to separate the pages of their journal.

9. Encourage campers to decorate the covers of their journals with a variety of art supplies.
10. Campers can write prayers and reflections in their journals about ways they have seen God’s grace at work.

**Day 5**

**Tissue Paper Flower Blossoms**

*Materials:* tissue paper in a variety of colors, three 12 x 6 inch [30 cm x 15 cm] sheets per flower, enough so each camper can make two or three flowers; green pipe cleaners, one per flower blossom; ruler or measuring tape; scissors

1. Give campers enough materials to make two or three flower blossoms, one to keep and one or two to give away.
2. For each flower, accordion-fold three pieces of tissue paper into 1-inch [2.5 cm] folds, folding from the shorter side.
3. Use scissors to round the edges of the folded tissue paper.
4. Twist one green pipe cleaner around the center of the folded tissue paper.
5. One side at a time, campers gently separate the folded tissue paper layers to make a beautiful flower blossom. Remind campers to be on the lookout for God’s generosity in nature and to live generously with and for each other.

**Thank-You Wind Sock**

*Materials:* large construction paper (at least 15 x 18 inches [38 cm x 46 cm]); markers or crayons; scissors; glue sticks; yarn cut in 12-inch [30 cm] pieces; hole punch; party streamers

1. Give each camper a piece of construction paper and encourage them to draw parts of today’s Bible story about the sower and the seed or to draw things that they are thankful for.
2. When a camper has completed decorating their paper, show them how to use a glue stick to attach the sides of the paper together to make a tube.
3. Have campers cut five pieces of party streamer that are between 12 and 18 inches [30 cm and 46 cm] long and glue one end of each piece onto the inside bottom of the paper tube.
4. Punch two holes across from each other in the top of the paper tube. Give each camper a piece of yarn and help them tie one end of the yarn into each hole.
5. Campers can hang their wind socks outside their cabin.

“Sowing God’s Word” Stained-Glass Window
Materials: white paper; pencils; crayons; baby oil; cotton balls; paint trays; black fine-point permanent markers; optional: black construction paper (to use for a frame)

Preparation
• Draw and cut out a simple plant template (stem, leaves, flower) that will fill up most of an 8½ x 11-inch [22 cm x 28 cm] piece of paper.
• Trace the template on several pieces of card stock or cardboard, then cut them out.

Directions
1. Cover the work surface.
2. Explain that campers will be making a stained-glass window to illustrate today’s Bible story about sowing the seeds of God’s word. Stained-glass windows usually have lots of small pieces of different colored glass in them.
3. Give each camper a piece of white paper and have them trace the plant template on their paper. They can use black markers to create a border around the edges of the paper like a window frame.
4. Next have the group brainstorm words based on the Bible passages from the week that describe God (such as good, love, welcome, forgiveness, generosity). Have them choose several words to write lightly in pencil around the plant, like scattered seed.
5. Then have them use pencils to draw different shapes and sizes inside the plant outline. Fill in the shapes with different crayon colors. Make sure that they color in the entire window.
6. When campers are done coloring or drawing on their stained-glass picture, put a little bit of baby oil on a cotton ball and rub the baby oil over each picture. This will make the picture more translucent.
7. Hang the “windows” to dry.
8. When their projects are dry, campers can use a black permanent marker to draw over the words to make them readable and also over the lines on their picture to make them look more defined, like stained glass.
9. When finished, hang them in a window to see how the light shines through!

Ojos de Dios (God’s Eyes)
Materials: small craft sticks or chopsticks (or have campers look for sticks), two per camper; yarn; scissors; optional: glue gun

Preparation
If you are making these with younger kids, it may be helpful to use small craft sticks or chopsticks and glue them together in a cross shape ahead of time.

Directions
1. If campers will be using sticks from nature, take campers to collect sticks. They will need two sticks that are about the same length and at least a ¼ inch [.6 cm] wide.
2. Have each camper choose their first color of yarn and put their sticks in the shape of a cross or plus sign. Have them tie one end of the yarn around the center of the cross.
3. To wrap the yarn, instruct campers to start by wrapping the yarn over the top and once around one stick. Then they should move to the next stick, wrapping the yarn over the top and around, and then on to the next stick, until they have wrapped it around all four arms of the cross.
4. Have campers keep wrapping until they come to the end of the yarn. Tie a new piece of yarn to the old and continue wrapping.
5. When the yarn is about \( \frac{3}{4} \) inch [2 cm] from the end of each stick, tie a knot around the last stick.
6. Campers can take these ojos de Dios (God’s eyes) home and remember that God’s vision is bigger than ours and always lovingly sees each one of us.

**Bouquets of Abundance**

**Materials:** clear plastic beverage bottles, one per camper (or another source of clear plastic); permanent markers in a variety of colors; green pipe cleaners; scissors; glue gun; oven; aluminum foil; cookie sheet

**Preparation**
- Remove the labels from the bottles and rinse them out.
- For elementary campers, you may want to cut out the flower shapes ahead of time.
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit [177 degrees Celsius].

**Directions**
1. Cover the work surface and set out supplies.
2. Give each camper a plastic bottle and a pair of scissors. The bottles serve as the source for the plastic.
3. Using a permanent marker, show campers how to draw a line around their bottle, about an inch [2.5 cm] from the bottom.
4. Instruct campers to cut around the bottle on the line that they just made.
5. Starting at the line where they cut in the previous step, have campers cut \( \frac{1}{2} \) to 1-inch [1.25 to 2.5 cm] slits around the bottom of the bottle. These will be the flower petals.
6. Next, encourage campers to color their flower petals using permanent markers.
7. If campers are interested, they can draw leaves and cut them out.
8. Place everyone’s flowers and leaves on the foil-lined baking sheet and bake for 2–5 minutes. The plastic will melt, making the flowers curl. Do not leave flowers in the oven longer than 5 minutes.
9. While flowers are melting, plug in the glue gun.
10. Remove the trays from the oven and allow flowers and leaves to cool.
11. Give each person a green pipe cleaner. Using the glue gun, help campers attach their flowers and leaves to their pipe cleaner stem.
12. Campers can take these flowers home and give them to someone whom they are thankful for!

**Generous Harvest Paper Cutting**

**Materials:** old magazines; sturdy drawing paper; pencils; black construction paper; scissors; glue sticks

1. Cover the work surface.
2. Give each camper a piece of drawing paper and some old magazines.
3. Instruct campers to cut thin strips out of colorful pages from a magazine.
4. Show campers how to glue magazine strips onto their paper so that the paper is entirely covered. Strips from multiple pages should be used, and campers shouldn’t try to put any strips back together like a puzzle—these pages are only being used for background color.
5. On their piece of black construction paper, have campers use pencil to draw harvest images, such as a plant, a tree, some fruits or vegetables, or other images that suggest God’s generosity and abundance. Simple drawings without a lot of detail will work best.
6. When they are done drawing, have campers cut out their design, making sure that the outline and outer frame is in one piece, preserving the frame that outlines the picture. You may need to show campers how to poke a hole in the middle of the part of the paper that they are trying to cut out. This will give them somewhere to start cutting without damaging the outside “frame.”
7. When campers are done cutting, they glue their black piece of paper on top of the magazine collage so that the colors from the magazines show through. Use scissors to trim any magazine strips that are visible outside the edge of the black paper.
“Sowing Seeds of Friendship” Bracelets
Materials: paper clips; strips of construction paper, ½ inch x 3 inches [1.25 cm x 7.5 cm]; liquid glue; glue trays; paintbrushes; fine-point markers

1. Cover the work surface and pour glue into the trays.
2. Give each camper a handful of paper clips and instruct them to take two paper clips and join them together. After they are joined, show campers how to wrap a strip of construction paper around the middle of a paper clip until it is wrapped all the way around.
3. Using a paintbrush, show campers how to paint a little bit of glue under the end of the paper strip and press it down.
4. Attach another paper clip and do the same thing. It will be much easier to attach the paperclips before they are wrapped with construction paper.
5. Have campers keep doing this until the bracelet is big enough to wear. Then have campers attach the first and last paper clip.
6. When the glue on all of the bracelets is dry, campers can write their names on each other’s bracelets. Wearing this bracelet will be a reminder of your group’s week together! Your group has grown together, like the seeds that grew in the good soil.

Pop-Up Thank-You Cards
Materials: construction paper, various colors; scissors; pencils; markers or crayons; glue sticks

1. Talk together about examples of generosity that campers have seen at camp this week. Then explain that they will be making cards to thank someone who has shown God’s generosity this week—someone who works in the kitchen or one of the lifeguards. In a day camp setting, campers might give cards to one of the church staff, such as the pastor or the church office administrator.

2. Let campers choose two pieces of paper and have them fold one piece in half, so that it looks like a greeting card.
3. The second piece will act as the part that “pops up” and delivers a special message when the card is opened. Use lighter-colored paper so that the message will be legible. Help campers brainstorm a simple shape that is smaller than the card, such as a bunch of flowers, a heart, or the word THANKS.
4. Have campers decorate the front of their card, then cut out the inside pop-up shape and write their message on it.
5. Then campers should fold the cut-out shape like a card. The writing should go over the fold.
6. Next, have campers use a glue stick to spread a little glue on two opposite edges of shape and glue it to the inside of their thank-you card.
7. Fold the cards shut. When they are folded, the shapes inside should fold as well.
8. Then go as a group to deliver their cards around camp.