



the great camp

17 camp-like experiences
for kids to explore God's
Word this summer **in**

Kids love summer camp. But the logistics and expense might be too much for your church to handle. Never fear! You can give kids a summer camp experience without ever leaving town! These experiences help kids feel like they're at summer camp—without all the work on your end! Mix and match or spread them out over the summer to help kids explore God's Word in camp-like ways.

CRAFT CABIN



Let Your Light Shine (elementary)

You'll Need: Bible, cellophane, chenille craft wires, glue, string

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Make fun shapes with the chenille craft wires.
2. Cut cellophane of various colors to fit their chenille craft wire shapes.
3. Apply glue to the back side of the chenille wire and stick the cellophane to the edges of the wires, trim off the excess cellophane, and tie on a string for a hanger.

Afterward, read aloud Matthew 5:16.

Ask:

- What does it mean for your good deeds to shine?
- What are some ways you've shown others Jesus through your actions?
- How is that like or unlike the way the sun shines through our sun catcher?



Mosaics Made Easy (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, different-colored construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, paper plates

Have kids follow these instructions:

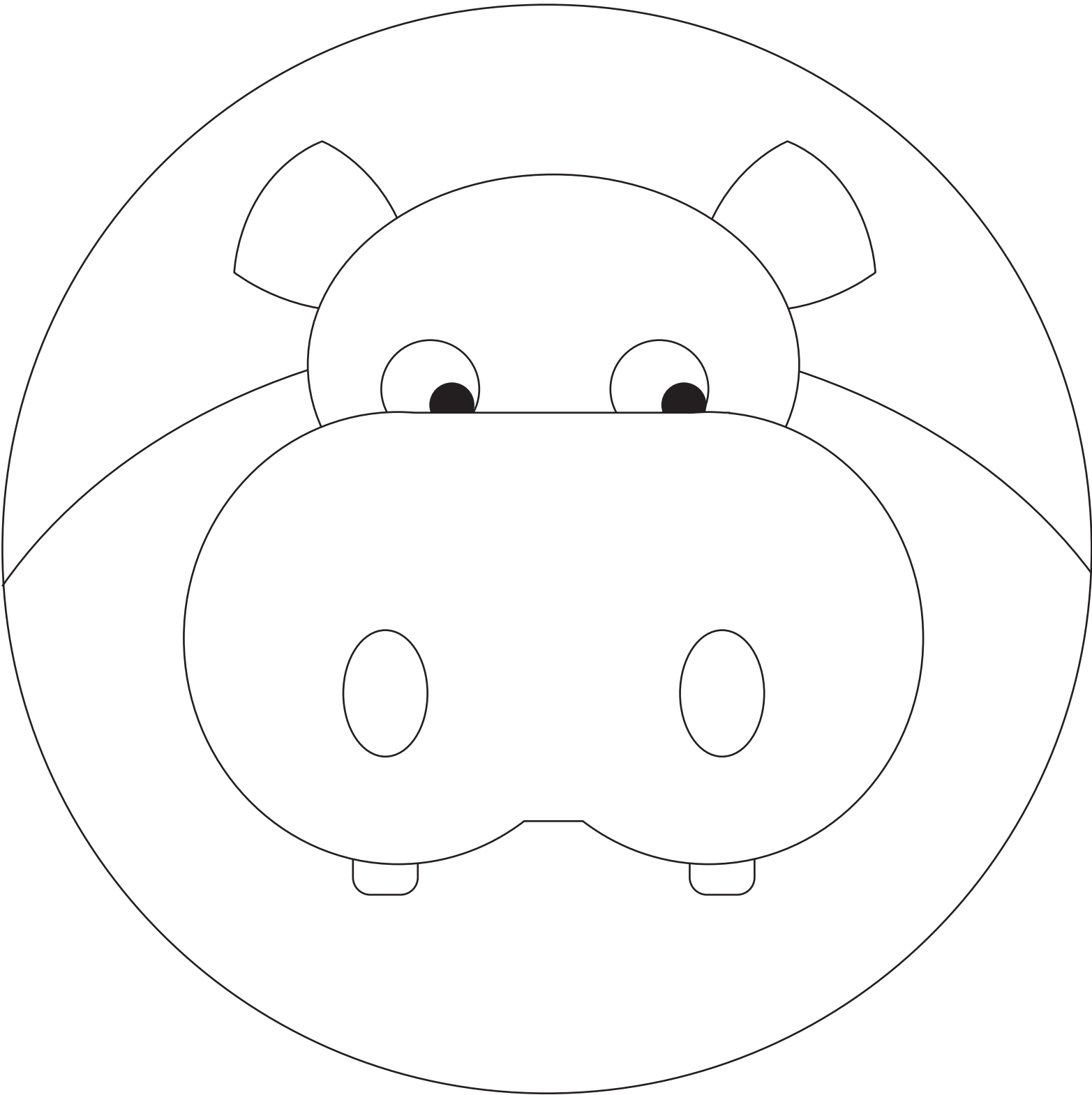
1. Cut the construction paper into many squares, about a half-inch wide.
2. Arrange the squares on a paper plate to make the shape of an animal, using different colors as needed. They can also use a contrasting color to form a background. Kids can use the patterns provided or make their own animals.
3. Glue down the paper squares.

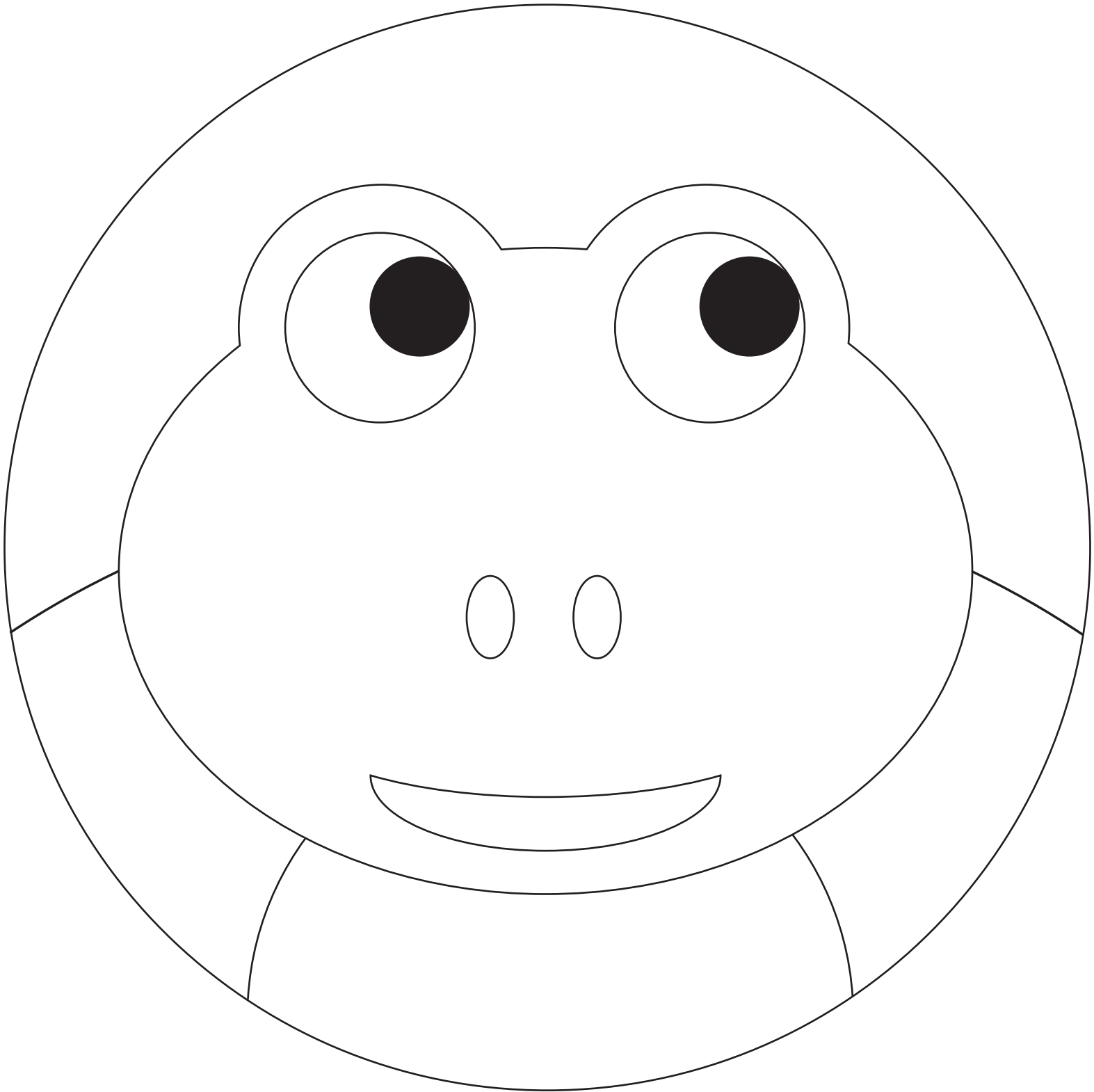
Afterward, set out all the mosaics as a "zoo," and have kids walk around to see the other animals. Then read aloud Genesis 1:24-25.

Ask:

- What process did you use to decide how to create your animal mosaic?
- How is that like or unlike the way God created animals?
- Why is it important to you that God made animals?

BONUS TIP! You can use this activity with pre-schoolers. Just print out the following templates and pre-cut the paper squares. Have kids glue the squares directly onto the templates.





SPORTS FIELD



Target Practice (elementary)

You'll Need: Bible, tarp, duct tape, sponges, bucket of water, water balloons

Hang the tarp on an outside wall of your church building, making sure it's taut and secured. Use duct tape to make jagged circles in the shape of a target. Decide where you want kids to throw the sponges from. Set a bucket of water and the sponges there.

Along with the kids, dip the sponge in the bucket so that it's soaking wet, and then throw it at the target.

After everyone has had a turn, read aloud Ephesians 6:13-17.

Ask:

- Tell about a time you felt like a target for people's attacks.
- What are reasons you think others might attack us for our faith?
- What does it mean to wear the armor of God and stand up to these attacks?

Have kids play again with water balloons. This time, the balloon "attacks" will break on impact! Afterward, pray that attacks from others will break apart like the balloons because your kids wear the armor of God.



Spouting Fish (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, 2-liter clear plastic bottle, googly eyes, glue, permanent marker, X-Acto knife (adults only), craft foam, duct tape, clean rags, access to water

Have kids follow these instructions:

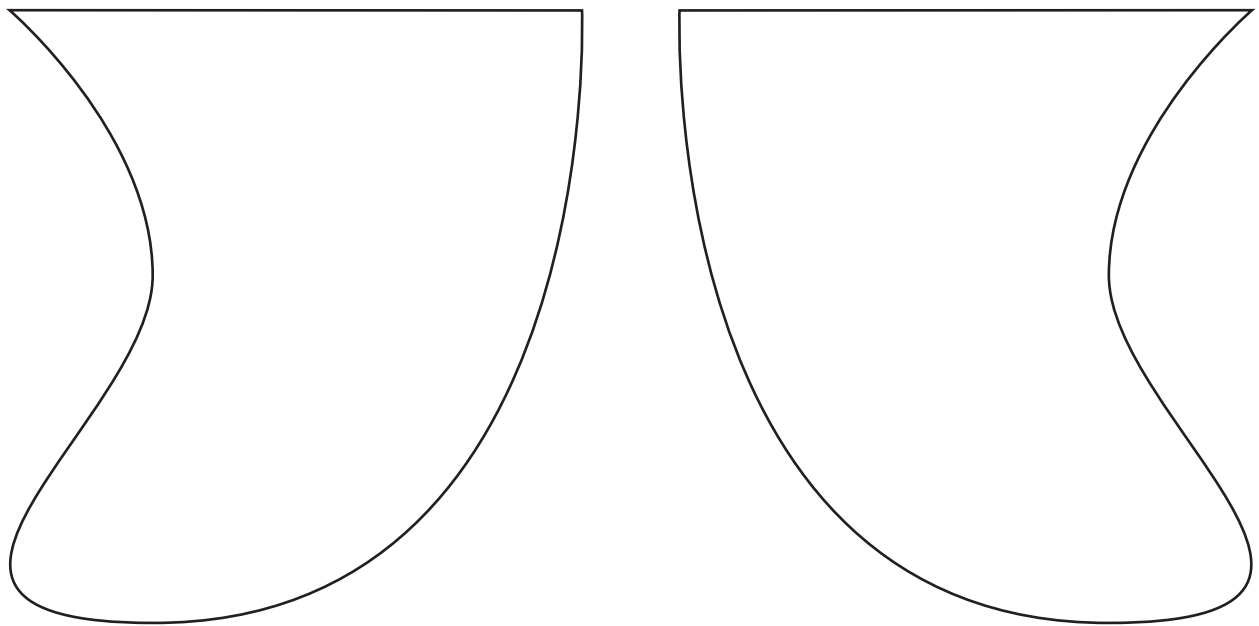
1. Take the label off the 2-liter bottle. Glue on googly eyes toward the bottom of the bottle, and draw a mouth around the bottom using a permanent marker.
2. Adults, use an X-Acto knife to cut a small hole in the bottom of the bottle, on the center of the mouth.
3. Cut out fins and a tail from craft foam. (You can use the pattern provided on the following page.) Duct-tape the fins to the sides of the bottle and the tail to the neck of the bottle just below the bottle cap.

Afterward, cover the mouth hole with your finger then fill the bottle with water. Place the cap back on the bottle. Squeeze the bottle to get the water to shoot out the mouth of the fish. Play a game of Water Tag. Designate an area as "the soak zone," and put several rags in the zone. Have one child stand in the soak zone and try to soak anyone who enters. That person can only aim the fish at kids in the soak zone. Everyone else will try to get a rag without getting soaked. Refill the bottle and play so several kids get turns to aim the spouting fish.

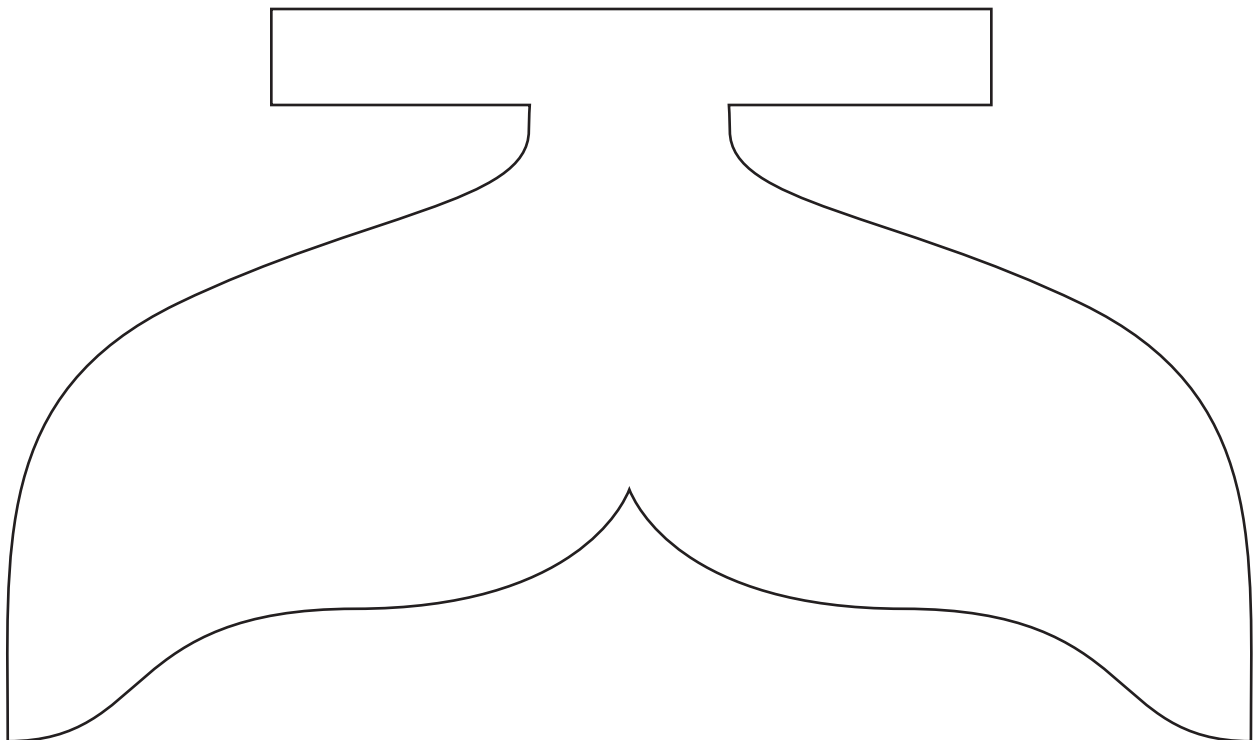
Read aloud Jonah 1:15-17 and 2:10. Say: **After Jonah disobeyed God, he was in the fish for three days before God had the fish spit him out.**

Ask:

- In our game, you got punished with a blast of cold water if you went into the soak zone. Tell about a place you're not supposed to go.
- Jonah went to the wrong place—the opposite way from where God told him to go. What can you do when you know you've done something wrong?
- Tell about a time you did something wrong, but were forgiven. What did you learn?



FINS TEMPLATE FOR SPOUTING FISH



TAIL TEMPLATE FOR SPOUTING FISH

FRIENDSHIPS



Castle Construction (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, a sand pit or a kiddie pool full of clean sand, buckets of water

Form trios, and challenge kids to a sandcastle-making contest. See which trio can build the biggest castle in 10 minutes.

Afterward, ask:

- In what ways do people sometimes try to build themselves up—to make themselves look good?

Say: People often try to make themselves look good or important. That's like building up their own kingdoms. But the Bible tells us we're part of something much bigger than our own kingdoms. We're part of God's kingdom! And when you're part of God's kingdom, you get to work toward building the best kingdom of all!

Read aloud Mark 10:13-16.

Ask:

- What things do you think you could teach others about your faith?
- What does it mean to you to be part of the kingdom of heaven?



Ropes Course (elementary)

You'll Need: Bible, a long piece of rope, a piece of card stock

Challenge kids to complete the first goal: Jump Rope. To do this, kids will line up side by side behind a rope and link arms. The kids on each end of the line will hold the ends of the rope flat on the ground (or 12 inches off the ground, depending on the age of your group). In unison, the rest of the kids will lift a foot up to step over the rope, but not set it down yet. They'll need to communicate with each other so they all put down that foot and lift the other foot at the same time, so no one has a foot over the rope when anyone else has a foot behind it. Try again, switching rope holders.

Challenge kids to complete the second goal: Criss Cross. To do this, kids will line up in two single-file lines facing each other while standing on a rope. Kids will work together to try to move past each other so the lines switch places and face away from each other—without anyone stepping off the rope.

Challenge kids to complete the third goal: Clothes Line. To do this, fold the card stock in half and place it on the rope at one end while kids hold the rope in the air. Kids will work together to shimmy the card stock to the other end without it falling to the ground. No touching the card stock!

Afterward, read aloud Romans 14:19.

Ask:

- How did you see harmony and building others up as we played these games?
- How have you seen people in our church live in harmony?
- What did you learn from our ropes games that'll help you live in harmony with others?

BONUS TIP! If you have a lot of kids and are using shorter ropes, set up several stations and form smaller groups.

SCIENCE CENTER



Light the Path (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, Super Miracle Bubbles Glow Fusion Bubble Solution, one small empty water bottle per child, chenille craft wires

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Remove the labels from the water bottles.
2. Follow the instructions on the Super Miracle Bubbles Glow Fusion Bubble Solution, then pour the solution into the empty water bottles.
3. Wrap both ends of a chenille craft wire around the bottle under the lid, leaving a section in the middle unwrapped for a handle.

Completely darken the room, and lead kids around the room using the lanterns to guide you. Then gather kids in a circle on the floor, and read aloud Psalm 119:105.

Ask:

- How is the Bible like a lantern?
- Tell about a time the Bible helped you find your way so you knew what to do.

BONUS TIP! Let kids use the bubble wand to blow bubbles from their container.



Fizzing Fireworks (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, vinegar, baking soda, clean spray bottle, water, coffee filters, spoon, several different colors of food coloring, vinyl tablecloth

Use a vinyl tablecloth to cover your work surface, or do this activity outside on the grass since it'll stain. Fill a clean spray bottle $\frac{3}{4}$ full with vinegar. Fill it the rest of the way with water.

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Place a small scoop of baking soda onto each coffee filter, and randomly add several different food coloring drops.
2. Take turns spraying the coffee filters with the spray bottle. The colors should fizz and create fun firework patterns.

As the coffee filters dry, read aloud John 8:36.

Ask:

- What do you think it means to be free?
- Explain whether you feel like Jesus has freed you.
- How can we celebrate that Jesus frees us?

Have kids each take their coffee filter firework home as a reminder to celebrate freedom in Jesus.



Bubble Rainbow (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, large bowl, warm water, dish soap, food coloring; for each child: the top half of a clean water bottle, a sock, a rubber band, resealable plastic bags

Beforehand, mix together warm water and dish soap, and then squirt several drops of various food colorings onto the bubbles, being careful not to mix them together. Read aloud Genesis 9:11-17. Say: **Let's make our own rainbows to remind us that God keeps his promises.**

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Put a sock over the lip of the water bottle and secure it with a rubber band.
2. Take turns dipping the sock end into the mixture, and then blowing through the other end to make a colorful bubble rainbow.

Ask:

- Tell about promises people have made to you and kept.
- Describe whether you trust people to keep their promises—and why.
- Explain whether you trust God to keep his promises.

Have kids take home their bubble blowers in resealable plastic bags so they can show friends and family.

SERVICE PROJECTS



Refresh the City (elementary)

You'll Need: lemonade ingredients, a table, pitchers, long spoon, poster board, markers, cups

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Create "Free Lemonade" posters, and mix up lemonade.
2. Set up the stand by the entrance to your church.
3. Provide free lemonade to people who stop. Invite people to return to your church, and share the service times with them.
4. Wish everyone goodbye by saying, "Hope God gives you a refreshing day!"



Leafy Postcards (elementary)

You'll Need: Bibles, leaves, paper towels, hammers, card stock cut into quarters, pens, postage stamps (optional)

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Collect fresh green leaves.
2. Arrange the leaves on a piece of card stock, cover the leaves with a paper towel, and then carefully hammer the leaves. This will leave leaf prints on the card stock.
3. Turn the card stock over, and draw a vertical line down the center of the card to create two columns. In the left column, write a message about Jesus to a friend. (Provide Bibles in case kids would like to include Bible verses such as John 3:16 or Romans 6:23.)
4. If kids know their friends' addresses, address the postcards in the right column, stamp the postcards if you've provided stamps, and put them in the mail. Otherwise, have kids take the postcards home to hand deliver or mail when they've looked up the addresses.

MESS HALL



Simple S'mores (elementary)

You'll Need: Bible, graham crackers, chocolate frosting, marshmallow fluff, plastic knives, paper plates, napkins

Show kids how to build simple s'mores by spreading frosting on half a graham cracker and fluff on the other half. Then put the halves together to make a sandwich. Have kids follow along to make their own simple s'mores.

As kids eat, say: Your s'more is one snack, but it has three parts: graham crackers, frosting, and fluff. The Bible describes three parts of God. We worship one God, but he has three persons.

Read aloud Matthew 3:16-17.

Ask:

- What three parts of God did you notice in these verses?
- How can God be one person but have three parts?
- Think about your s'more. Which part most reminds you of God the Father? Jesus the Son? the Spirit of God? Explain.



Locust Lunch (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, oval crackers, cheese slices, pretzel rods, pretzel sticks, paper plates, napkins

Read aloud Matthew 3:4-6.

Ask:

- Explain what you think about John the Baptist's food.
- Tell about the weirdest thing you've ever eaten.

Say: You probably don't want to bite into a big juicy locust, but we're going to make some tastier versions.

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Place cheese slices on the oval crackers to make a base.
2. Break off pieces of pretzel rods to be the locust's body sitting on the cheese.
3. Arrange pieces of pretzel sticks as locust legs around the body.

Let kids enjoy their snacks.

CHAPEL



Campfire Sing-along (all ages)


You'll Need: worship music, box fan, fire-colored streamers, tape, book (for propping fan), sticks, rocks, sleeping bags (optional), large marshmallows (optional), kabob skewers (optional), acoustic guitar (optional)

Tape fire-colored streamers to the slats of a box fan. Lay it on its side, propped up slightly on a book so that when you turn it on, the streamers will blow up to look like fire. Have kids help you build a fire pit by placing the sticks and rocks around the fan. For even more of a camp feel, set sleeping bags around the fire for kids to sit on.

Turn the fan on, and start a worship sing-along. This will have the best atmosphere if you have an acoustic guitar player lead the worship.

Want more camp fun? Have kids “roast” marshmallows on kabob skewers over the “fire.”

BONUS TIP! Get a more realistic electric campfire here rather than creating your own:

 store.grouppublishing.com/OA_HTML/ibeCCTpItmDspRte.jsp?item=2010178§ion=25360

Message in a Bottle (all ages)

You'll Need: Bibles, a water bottle for each child, a kiddie pool full of water, pre-printed messages (Bible verses), scissors, hole punch, ribbon, beads

Prepare the Bible messages by printing out these verses and cutting them into slips. Repeat them so you have one slip for every two kids. The verses: 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, and Hebrews 4:12.

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Form pairs and sit opposite from their partners around the kiddie pool.
2. One person in each pair will place a Bible message in the bottle and screw on the lid tightly.
3. On your count, place the bottles in the pool and try to blow them to their partners. This will get a bit crazy when they start to bump into each other!
4. When partners get their messages, open and read them. Have willing kids read each of the verses once.

Ask:

- What did you learn about the Bible from these verses?
- How is the way the Bible was made like or unlike the way you passed on the messages in a bottle?
- How is the way the Holy Spirit works like your blowing breath or like wind?

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Cut off the bottoms of the water bottles. (You may wish to do this ahead of time.)
2. Using just the top half, punch several holes around the new bottom edge and tie separate ribbons through the holes.
3. String a few beads onto each ribbon and tie a knot under them to hold them in place.
4. Tie a ribbon around the bottle cap so they can hang their wind chimes outside as a reminder of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives like wind—even though we can't see him.



BONUS TIP! For preschoolers, use the provided pictures (on the following page) and read aloud the corresponding verses. You won't use the water bottle wind chime part of the devotion.

Message in a Bottle



"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."

2 Timothy 3:16

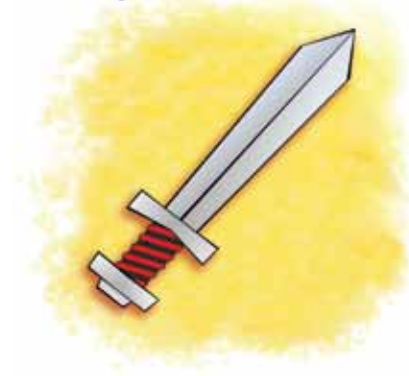
Message in a Bottle



"Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding...No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God."

2 Peter 1:20-21

Message in a Bottle



"For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires."

Hebrews 4:12

CAMP MEMORIES



Camp T-Shirts (elementary)

You'll Need: Bible, fabric paint, disposable pie plates, permanent markers, plain white T-shirts in child sizes

Set out the pie plates with various colors of paint in them. Read aloud 1 Corinthians 12:14-17.

Ask: If the church is a body, what part do you think you are? Explain.

Say: We're going to make "handy" T-shirts to remind us that we need more than just hands, and that everyone here is part of the body of Christ.

Have kids follow these instructions:

1. Dip hands into the paint and carefully mark everyone else's shirts with handprints.
2. Add signatures in permanent marker under the handprints.
3. Allow the T-shirts to dry in the sun till the kids are ready to go home.

Have kids take their shirt home and let it dry thoroughly before washing or wearing it. Encourage them to pray for the people represented on their shirt whenever they wear it.



Rooted in Jesus (all ages)

You'll Need: Bible, large pieces of foam board, X-Acto knife (adults only), flower and tree templates (on following pages), paint, paintbrushes, digital camera

Create face frames by having a print shop enlarge the flower and tree templates (from the following pages) approximately 250%. You can then mount the copies onto foam board and cut them out. Or, copy the templates free-hand directly onto foam board. Then cut out a hole in the middle for the kids' faces.

Read aloud Ephesians 3:17.

Ask:

- What happens to plants when their roots grow?
- What makes our roots grow in God's love?
- How can your relationship with God be like that?

Have kids take turns posing behind the face frames, and take a picture of each child. Send kids their pictures later (or print them on the spot if you can) as a reminder to grow in God's love the way trees and flowers grow bigger and taller.

