**Embodied in Nature Resources**

***Themes of Embodiment in the Bible—Devotional Ideas***

**Created whole and holy by God—**Psalm 139:1-18

God loves us just as we are. This psalm shows us that we are a beautiful creation, whole and holy. It also tells us that there is nowhere we can go that is outside the reach of God. God is always with us, in all times and places, no matter if we are sad or angry, even if we don’t believe in God. God is still with us.

*Reflection Questions:*

1. What words or phrases stand out to you the most in this psalm?
2. What does the psalm say to us about who we are?
3. How can you use the wisdom of this psalm in your everyday life?

**The embodiment of Jesus—**John 1:1-18

These verses are from the beginning of the Gospel of John, when John is telling the story of how Jesus came to be present in the world. The Word in this story can mean several things. It can mean the wise words that God speaks. It can also mean the wisdom that has been present since the beginning of creation. John is saying here that the wisdom of God became a human being, Jesus, who came to teach us more about God. A more literal translation of verse 14 is “The Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us.” God is with us where we are, making a home on the earth.

*Reflection Questions:*

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage?
2. What does it mean to you that we have received “grace upon grace” from God?
3. What do we learn about God from the things that Jesus taught and the way that he lived his life?

**Jesus weeps—**John 11:1-44 (or you can retell the story of Lazarus in your own words)

In this story of the death of Lazarus, Jesus shows great emotion, weeping when he learns that his friend has died.This story teaches us that powerful emotions are important, even sadness and grief. It also teaches us that even Jesus cried, and so it’s ok for us to show our emotions too.

*Reflection questions:*

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage? (If retelling): What idea from the story most speaks to you?
2. Verse 35 is one of the shortest verses in scripture, “Jesus began to weep.” How does it make you feel to hear that Jesus cries?
3. Why is it important to let ourselves feel powerful emotions like sadness?

**Communicating with others—**Acts 2:1-47 (or re-tell in your own words)

This passage tells the story of the Pentecost, when the first disciples were able to share the message of Jesus with people in Jerusalem even though they spoke many different languages. This story also shows how important it is to be able to communicate with each other. This can be hard because sometimes when we disagree with someone or they don’t understand us, it can feel like we are speaking different languages.

*Reflection questions:*

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage? (If retelling): What idea from the story most speaks to you?
2. When was a time in your life when you found it hard to communicate with someone? What did you do to be able to understand them and to help them understand you?
3. What are ways that we can share the good news of Jesus without using words? Through helping people who are homeless, or feeding people who are hungry? What other ideas come to mind?

**The Body of Christ—**1 Corinthians 12:12-26

In this passage Paul is telling the church in Corinth that they should honor all of their members and respect that everyone has different gifts that they bring to the congregation. The church was arguing about who was most valuable in the community, but Paul is reminding them that each and every one of them is equally valuable because they all contribute different things. Because Jesus is no longer with us in person, we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in caring for the people in our world. Together all of us make up the body of Christ.

*Reflection questions:*

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage?
2. What does it mean to be part of the body of Christ? What are some ways you can be the hands of Jesus in your own life?
3. What gifts do you contribute to the body of Christ? Being a good listener, helping your neighbors, cheering someone up when they feel sad?

**Right action—**Colossians 3:12-17

In this passage of his letter to the Colossians, Paul is encouraging the congregation to wear kindness, compassion, and love in the same way that we wear our clothes, putting of these traits each day as we put on our shirts, pants, and socks. This is a way of being the presence of God for others through actions that show love and kindness to everyone around us. This passage also encourages us to work with people that we are in conflict with to find a solution together and to ask for forgiveness when we have harmed someone.

*Reflection questions:*

1. What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage?
2. What does it mean to you to clothe yourself with compassion and patience?
3. Verse 15 says, “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” What is one way you can act out of this peace of Christ with the people in your life?

***Sensory Toolkit***

**Sensory Hike**

One option is to do this as a night hike. Those of us with normal vision often rely heavily on what we can see. When we walk in the dark, it’s an opportunity to engage our other, lesser-used senses. If a night hike isn’t feasible, it can also work well in the daylight.

Find a trail that has several different natural features if possible (i.e. partly in the forest and partly on open ground, or a trail that has both flat and hilly spots). If you’re hiking at night, see if it’s possible to walk without flashlights. This will allow a richer sensory experience. If there are obstacles or rough ground, consider illuminating just these areas instead of having every hiker carry a flashlight.

As you begin walking, remind the participants that this is a time when we will be using all of our senses to pay attention to the natural world around us. At various points have participants stop to pay attention to the sounds and smells around them. Perhaps encourage them to reach down and touch the ground or a nearby tree. As you walk try to keep talking at a minimum so you can hear all the sounds surrounding you. And by having the group talk about what they experienced and how it felt to use all of their senses to figure out what was happening around them.

**Sensory Devotionals**

Each day focus on a different sense in order to explore the many ways God reaches out to us. Adapt this as needed if you have campers with sensory differences (blindness/low vision, Deaf/hard of hearing).

* Listening— Start by having participants sit quietly for whatever period of time feels right (5-10 minutes depending on age), and ask them to listen to all the sounds they hear around them.
	+ Read Job 12:7-11.
	+ What sounds did you hear?
	+ How might God be speaking to you in the sounds of the natural world?
	+ What is one thing you would like to hear today?
* Seeing— Start by having participants sit quietly for whatever period of time feels right (5-10 minutes depending on age), and ask them to pay attention to what they are seeing around them as they sit.
	+ Read Psalm 104:1-6.
	+ What did you see this morning?
	+ How might you see God in the natural world?
	+ What is one thing you can do to help others to see the presence of God in you?
* Touching—Start by having participants wander quietly and invite them to gently touch things around them (warning of potential dangers like poison ivy) and pay attention to how different natural elements feel (a rock versus a patch of moss for example).
	+ Read Psalm 104:14-23.
	+ What are some of the things you touched on your nature walk this morning?
	+ How is God like a rock? How is God like the rough bark of a tall tree? How is God like the softness of a blade of grass or a patch of moss?
	+ How can you walk on the earth more gently today, in a way that helps heal the earth?
* Smelling— Start by having participants sit quietly for a few minutes, breathing deeply and paying attention to what they can smell in the air that morning. After this you can also pass around different-smelling objects from nature (pine cone, lavender or other flowers, dried leaves, soil in a container).
	+ Read Song of Solomon 2:12-13.
	+ What did you smell this morning when you were taking deep breaths?
	+ What does it show you about God that there are so many different smells in the world?
	+ Pay attention to how different places and things smell today and remember that God has created all of these things.
* Tasting—This one can be a little complicated with food allergies. If possible bring small samples of foods that activate different taste buds (a pinch of sea salt, a spoon of honey, a spoon of mustard). Invite participants to taste each food and pay attention to how it makes their body feel. A really cool thing to try is to have them try honeysuckle nectar if it is in season.
	+ Read Psalm 34:8.
	+ What did you feel when you tasted each of these different foods?
	+ What is your favorite or least favorite food to taste?
	+ How might eating good food help someone connect with God?