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## EXPLORERS

Seeking God in the Great Outdoors

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WILDERNESS

## WEEK 6: WILDERNESS

**BIBLE VERSE:** *To Him who led His people through the wilderness, For His mercy endures forever... Psalm 136:16 (NLT)*

**Bottom Line:** God is always with you... even in the hard times!

### SUPPLIES

- Pack of copy paper and pencils
- Small poster boards and Sharpies (one for each small group)

### LEADER NOTES

*All of us go through seasons of life that could be compared to a wilderness – there's no clear path, we must push our way through, we don't know where we are going, we are afraid, etc.*

*For kids, they are just beginning to experience these times and may not know how to navigate them. They need guidance.*

*It's comforting to know that God is always with us, even in the hard times.*

*Pray that students will learn to lean on God in the good times and the hard times, knowing that He is always with us no matter what!*

### WELCOME

**Say:** Thanks for being here today! It's great to see each of you!

In this group, we are EXPLORERS.

We are going to the mountains, prairies, deserts, caves, and today we are going into the WILDERNESS... without ever leaving this room!

We want to learn as much as we can by seeking God in the great outdoors.

**Ask:** How do you "seek" God?

*Allow a few responses from students.*

We look for Him. We listen for His voice.

We ask God to speak to us through His Word.

Now, it's easy to do all those things when life is going really well, but sometimes we go through tough times.

We are going to call those times "going through the wilderness."

Today is all about being in the WILDERNESS.

Have you ever been in a forest or even a place that is overgrown where wild animals live?

Well, our Opening Activity is going to talk about all of the animals that you might encounter in the wilderness.

Before we jump into our lesson, let's start by going over some guidelines that will help us have an awesome day together.

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- Unless we ask you to stand up, please stay in your seats.
- We will give you time to talk, but when a leader is talking, please listen.
- We want to keep your personal items safe, so keep your phones, toys, and fidget toys under your seat.
- And most of all, we want to take a moment to pray and ask God to help us learn something about Him that we've never known before.

If you don't know God at all, today will be your day to hear who He is.

*Ask a leader or student to open in prayer.*

### **WORSHIP**

*This would be a great time to open with a time of praise and worship.*

### **OFFERING**

*Encourage students to give their offering willingly and with a grateful heart.*

### **OPENING ACTIVITY: ANIMAL COLLECTORS**

#### **GAME SET-UP**

Divide students into 4 equal teams.

*It really doesn't matter how many people are on each team.*

*Everyone will have a chance to participate.*

Give each team a piece of paper and a pencil.

Choose one student who will be the “writer” for the team.

## **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

This game is actually very simple, but pretty intense because of the time limit.

On GO, each team will name and write down as many animals as they can think of.

Give them 3-minutes to write their lists.

After they have finished, have the teams count how many animals they have written down.

The team with the most animals, wins!

If time permits, you can do variations of the game...

Write down as many animals you can think of that start with the letter “M” OR Write down as many types of pets you can think of.

The goals are to 1) See which team can come up with the longest list of animals and 2) Encourage students to work as a team, allowing everyone to give input.

*Just for Fun: Have each team give themselves an animal team name – like, the Chomping Cheetahs, or the Mad Monkeys.*

*After the activity, have each team pick up their paper throw it away.*

*Then, have students return to their seats for the large group lesson.*

## **TEACH**

**Say:** Wow! Your groups did an awesome job naming all of those animals!

What would you do if you walked into a wilderness and all of those animals were there?

That would be pretty exciting and maybe a little scary!

Today is all about the wilderness. It’s a pretty interesting place, so let’s start by learning a few fun facts!

*Show the "Wilderness Slide Show," either on TV/projection, or even print the slides and show them to the students.*

**Slide 1:** Title Slide

**Slide 2:** The Bible uses the word "wilderness" almost 300 times.

**Slide 3:** A wilderness is a place that has been untouched and uncultivated by humans.

**Slide 4:** Only 5% of the United States' landmass is designated as wilderness.

**Slide 5:** Visitors to wilderness areas can hunt, hike, camp, climb, fish, ride horseback, and paddle.

**Slide 6:** Insects and bugs are high in protein and are great survival foods in the wilderness.

**Slide 7:** Crickets chirp slower when it's cold; faster when it's hot.

**Slide 8:** God is always with you... even in the hard times!

**Slide 9:** Title Slide

**Say:** I hope you learned a couple of fun facts. The wilderness is a really neat place!

I want us to start our lesson by reading a Bible verse.

**Let's read Psalm 136:16 NLT.**

*Give thanks to him who led his people through the wilderness.*

*His faithful love endures forever.*

**Ask:** Who is the Bible talking about in this verse?

Who are the people that God led through the wilderness?

*Allow responses.*

In the Old Testament, we read the story of Moses and the Israelites (people who were from Israel).

The Israelites were God's people, but they had been held in captivity and treated as slaves by the Pharaoh in Egypt.

God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt... God even parted the waters of the Red Sea for them to walk across on dry land – it's an amazing story!

However, even though God had done great things for the Israelites, they ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years because of their disobedience to God.

FORTY YEARS! That's a long time!

But God is merciful, and He shows love to us, even when we have disobeyed Him.

He led the Israelites through the wilderness, where there was no path.

God led them by a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night, to show them the way in which they should go.

He didn't leave them by themselves in the wilderness.

He was always with them.

In your life, you might go through times that feel like you're walking through the wilderness.

Maybe something in your life is difficult.

Maybe your family is having problems, you're struggling with your grades in school, or you're having trouble with your friends.

You need to know that God is always with you!

He doesn't leave us during the hard times.

He doesn't leave us in the good times. He is faithful.

**Ask:** What does the word "faithful" mean?

*Allow a few responses from students.*

It means that God is committed and loyal to us, and that isn't based on how good or how bad we are – He just loves us!

We show how much we love God by what we do and say.

So, today, I want you to Just Remember *God is always with you... even in the hard times!*

We're going to take a few minutes to pray and ask God to remind us that He is always with us.

God will also give us encouraging words to share with other people when they are going through hard times.

*Take a few minutes to pray and then, divide into small groups.*



WILDERNESS

**SMALL GROUPS: LOWER ELEMENTARY**

**Say:** We are going to read two more Bible verses that tell us God is always with us.

**Read Psalm 16:8 NLT.**

*I know the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.*

**Read Deuteronomy 31:6.**

*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.*

**Ask:** How do you feel when you hear these Bible verses? *Allow discussion.*

**Ask:** Do you think there are people that don't know that God is with them?

How do you think that affects the way they live?

*They would be afraid and feel like they don't have hope...*

**Ask:** How can you share hope with those around you?

*Allow discussion.*

Now, we're going to pretend like we have to encourage each other when something bad has happened.

*Use the examples to have one kid act like they need encouragement and one kid give encouragement.*

Examples:

- Your dog has run away.
- You were mean to your little brother and now you feel bad.
- You missed out on doing something fun because you got in trouble.
- You broke your favorite toy.
- You disobeyed your parents and they punished you.

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WILDERNESS

## SMALL GROUPS: UPPER ELEMENTARY

### SUPPLIES

- Small poster board and a Sharpie

**Say:** We are going to read two more Bible verses that tell us God is always with us.

**Read Psalm 16:8 NLT.**

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**Read Deuteronomy 31:6.**

*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.*

**Ask:** How do you feel when you hear these Bible verses?

*Allow discussion.*

**Ask:** Do you think there are people that don't know that God is with them?

How do you think that affects the way they live?

*They would be afraid and feel like they don't have hope...*

**Ask:** How can you share hope with those around you?

*Allow discussion.*

### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

*Each group will receive a small poster board and a sharpie.*

*On the poster board write, "God is always with me, even when..."*

*Then, as a group write a list of scenarios where God is always with you.*

*(Examples: I'm bullied; I feel sick; On good days; I make straight A's...)*

*Each group will have 10 minutes to write on and decorate their poster.*

*One person from each group will read their poster to the entire group.*

*After the lesson, hang the posters up for the kids to see for everyone to see.*

## **BONUS: BIBLE QUIZ QUESTIONS**

*If you have extra time, use the following questions at the end of the lesson.*

*Call two students to the front. Hand each student a KJV Bible, read the question, and then give the Bible reference.*

*The first person to give the correct answer wins that round.*

*The winner remains up front, and a new “challenger” takes the other student’s place.*

### **1. How long was the journey in Exodus 8:27?**

We will go **three days'** journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.

### **2. What will rejoice on every side? Psalm 65:12.**

They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the **little hills** rejoice on every side.

### **3. What animal is mentioned in Psalm 78:52?**

But made his own people to go forth like **sheep**, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

### **4. What endures forever? Psalm 136:16**

To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his **mercy** endureth forever.

### **5. What kind of field is mentioned in Isaiah 32:16?**

Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the **fruitful** field.

### **6. What does Isaiah 64:10 say is a wilderness?**

Thy **holy cities** are a wilderness, **Zion** is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

7. **How many years are mentioned in Amos 5:25?**

Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness **forty years**, O house of Israel?

8. **Who was preaching in the wilderness? Matthew 3:1**

In those days came **John the Baptist**, preaching in the wilderness of Judae...